

Solidarity Across Borders: Understanding the Israel-Hamas Agreement and what it means for Palestinians

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Since 07 October 2023 Gaza has been at war and experiencing endless attacks leading to yet another genocide committed by Israel. Countless lives and homes have since been lost, countless Palestinian rights are being violations and the whole Gaza strip has been reduced to rubble. On 31 May 2024, United States, Egypt, and Qatar mediators drafted an armistice agreement, 15 months into the bombardment of Gaza. It was scheduled to come into effect on 19 January 2025.

The ceasefire agreement conditions Hamas and Israel to make exchange prisoners captured since the start of the war. The ceasefire agreement is meant to take three stages.

The first stage of the armistice calls for an exchange of prisoners held in Gaza and Israel, a permanent ceasefire with Israel's withdrawal from Gaza and a reconstruction process lasting from three to five years.

In the second stage, Israel should accept a ceasefire call while Hamas releases the remaining living political prisoners. In stage three the remains of deceased Israeli political prisoners will be released.

Firoza Mayet Karodia, an organiser for the Palestine Solidarity Alliance (PSA) shared her views on the agreement.

"After 15 months of Israel's genocidal onslaught on Gaza the ceasefire agreement is welcomed," shared Karodia. She shared that the ceasefire is the first step to end the severe humanitarian crisis experienced by 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza.

"As the three-phase agreement comes into force, Palestinians in Gaza are now grappling with the painful reality of mourning countless loved ones lost during Israel's 15-month war. [This is] while also coming to terms with the widespread destruction around them. The ceasefire is also an opportunity to finally uncover the true scale of Gaza's death toll, as bodies are found under the rubble. The missing is accounted for and hopefully the thousands of people who have severe and traumatic injuries may have access to some form of treatment, noting that the healthcare system has been decimated," explained Karodia.

Karodia also shared that during the first stage, for many Palestinians, there is a "feeling of loss", "being numb", and not knowing where to go as most of Gaza is rubble.

"The challenges Palestinians now face in returning home are places that are now unliveable. And basic needs, such as access to water, food, electricity, gas and the internet [are hard to find]. As well as the total absence of sanitation, health care and education."

This is devastating as the agreement only allows for "sufficient" humanitarian aid into Gaza. There is currently none of the needs required for decent living or survival, this, besides a space to mourn and begin to move forward from their losses.

Karodia about Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu when he announced that “Israel retains the right to resume war in Gaza and that it has US backing to do so should the second phase of the agreement collapse.”

“This is a clear indication that Israel with the backing of the US has no intention to implement a permanent ceasefire. Hence, for Palestine the struggle continues until the Occupation ends,” explained Karodia.

Therefore, the following demands are being made for justice:

Demands for justice

1. Demand that Israel does not renege on the ceasefire deal, particularly as almost 100 people have been killed since the deal was announced last Sunday.
2. Demand that humanitarian aid is allowed in without any restrictions. Noting that Israel has used starvation as a weapon of war since October 2023 and that Gaza has been under total siege since 2007. UNRWA and other humanitarian aid workers must be supported and allowed unimpeded access to Gaza and the West Bank.
3. Reparations must be paid by those responsible for the genocide. This includes Israel, US, Germany and other Western Countries.
4. The right to return of all Palestinians who have been ethnically cleansed by Israel since 1948 must be allowed to return to their homes and lands across historic Palestine.
5. Those who committed murder, torture, rape, traumatic injuries and destruction of civilian infrastructure must be held accountable in the International Criminal Court.
6. UN personnel, international journalist, faith-based organisations and health care workers tasked with collecting evidence and providing information on the impact of the genocide must have immediate access to the Gaza strip and all the refugee camps and villagers across Palestine.
7. The South African Government must pursue the ICJ case with renewed vigour and must lead the campaign to reactivate the UN Special Committee against Apartheid and suspending Apartheid Israel from the UN General Assembly.
8. All the South Africans who join the Israel Occupation Forces must be prosecuted.
9. The ongoing occupation, illegal settlements and the de facto annexation of the west bank and east Jerusalem must come to an end as affirmed by the ICJ Advisory Opinion. This is crucial for decolonization and achieving lasting peace and justice for the Palestinian people. A ceasefire in Gaza is not enough. A permanent ceasefire requires the occupation forces and the illegal settlers to leave Gaza, West Bank and East Jerusalem.

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