

INTERNATIONAL

DHAKA FRIDAY JANUARY 17, 2025

MAGH 3, 1431 BS

The Daily Star

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What are the details of truce deal in Gaza?

AFP, Doha

PRISONER HOSTAGE SWAP

Qatar said Wednesday that Israel and Hamas had agreed to a ceasefire in Gaza starting on Sunday and a hostage and prisoner exchange after 15 months of offensive.

Thirty-three Israeli hostages will be released in the first, 42-day phase of the agreement that could become a "permanent ceasefire", said Qatar's Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani.

Those first released would be "civilian women and female recruits, as well as children, elderly people... civilian ill people and wounded", he said.

Israeli government spokesman David Mencer said on Tuesday Israel was "prepared to pay a heavy price -- in the hundreds" in exchange for the 33 hostages.

ISRAELI POSITIONS IN GAZA

During the initial, 42-day ceasefire Israeli forces will withdraw from Gaza's densely populated areas to "allow for the swap of prisoners, as well as the swap of remains and the return of the displaced people", Qatar's prime minister said.

Negotiations for a second phase would commence on the "16th day" after the first phase's implementation, an Israeli official said. This phase would cover the release of the remaining captives, including "male soldiers, men of military age, and the bodies of slain hostages", the Times of Israel reported.

Israeli media reported that under the deal, Israel would maintain a buffer zone within Gaza during the first phase.

Israeli forces were expected to remain up to "800 metres (yards) inside Gaza stretching from Rafah in the south to Beit Hanun in the north," according to a source close to Hamas. Israeli forces would not fully withdraw from Gaza until "all hostages are returned", the Israeli official said.

END TO THE OFFENSIVE

Joint mediators Qatar, the United States and Egypt will monitor the ceasefire deal through a body based in Cairo, Sheikh Mohammed said, urging "calm" in Gaza before the agreement comes into force.

There was "a clear mechanism to negotiate phase two and three", Sheikh Mohammed added.



Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer stands with Ukrainian officials as he examines the wreckage of a vehicle along a street in Kyiv yesterday. Starmer and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed a landmark 100-year partnership agreement to deepen security ties and strengthen their countries' relationship.

PHOTO: AFP

'An earthquake struck'

Say Palestinians as air strikes in Gaza crush joy of ceasefire deal

AFP, Gaza City

After news of a ceasefire agreement sparked mass rejoicing in Gaza, residents woke up yesterday to columns of smoke, rubble and more deaths following new Israeli air strikes.

"We were waiting for the truce and were happy. It was the happiest night since October 7," said Gaza resident Saeed Alouloush, referring to the Hamas attack on Israel that sparked the war in 2023.

"Suddenly... we received the news of the martyrdom of 40 people," including his uncle, Alouloush said. "The whole area's joy turned to sadness, as if an earthquake struck."

The latest strikes came after Qatar and the United States announced a fragile ceasefire deal that should take effect on Sunday.

AFP has contacted the Israeli military for comment.

Mahmud Bassal, spokesman for Gaza's civil defence agency, told AFP yesterday that at least 73 people had been killed in Israeli air strikes since the announcement on Wednesday.

Among them were 20 children and 25 women, he said, with around 200 others wounded.

As day broke, crowds gathered to inspect and clear the remains of a building reduced to rubble, where chunks of concrete lay interspersed with rebar and personal items scattered across the site.

The scenes mirrored those in other parts of the densely populated territory of 2.4 million people, most of whom have been displaced at least once since the offensive broke out in October 2023.

At Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis, AFP journalists saw stained metal mortuary stretchers stained in red as staff drained them of the blood of the dead in a strike.

In Gaza City's Al-Ahli hospital, where several strike casualties were taken, grieving families knelt by the white shrouds enveloping their loved ones' bodies.

Rescuer Ibrahim Abu al-Rish told AFP that "after the ceasefire was announced and people were happy and joyful, a five-storey building was targeted, with over 50 people inside".



HRW warns 'fraying' rights system faces new Trump threat

AFP, United Nations

Human Rights Watch (HRW) yesterday blasted the "craven unwillingness" of governments to defend international norms and institutions last year, while warning that Donald Trump's return to power will compound pressure on the world's "fraying" rights system.

From Gaza to Sudan, Haiti and Ukraine – 2024 saw rights violations "at the most extreme," HRW chief Tirana Hassan told AFP in an interview.

Worldwide elections and deadly conflicts over the past year challenged

the "integrity of democratic institutions and the principles of human rights and humanitarian law" – but many governments "have failed the test," the 500-page document said.

It noted mounting repression in Russia, India and Venezuela as well as continuing devastation from the wars in Gaza, Sudan and Ukraine.

These conflicts and other humanitarian crises, marked by the "craven unwillingness of many governments to stand up to suffering and abuse," exposed the "fraying of international norms meant to

protect civilians and the devastating human cost when they are flouted," according to the report.

It called out authoritarian governments – including in Russia and Mali – for violating democratic norms, while also slamming liberal democracies, saying they were "not always reliable champions of human rights at home or abroad."

Hassan pointed to US President Joe Biden continuing to provide Israel with weapons, despite mounting evidence they have "been used in the commission of war crimes and the killing of civilians" in Gaza.

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's March 7, 1971 speech, his declaration of independence, and the proclamation of independence, which were included in the 5th, 6th, and 7th schedules, respectively.

He said these must remain parts of the constitution.

Zonayed Saki, chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolan, said the government would discuss the recommendations with political parties to reach a consensus.

"After thoroughly analysing the proposals, we will provide our opinions to the government," he said, declining to comment further.

When contacted, three standing committee members of the BNP declined to comment before discussing the proposals within their party forum.

"We will clarify our position on the proposals of the Constitution Reform Commission after holding discussions in our party forum," Iqbal Hossain Mahmood Tuku, one of the three, told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said many believe this provision is intended to give benefits to students involved in the Anti-discrimination Student Movement and youths currently forming political parties.

His party believes 21-year-olds may lack the knowledge and experience necessary for such responsibilities, as many would still be completing their education at that age.

Saiful, however, welcomed the proposal for the National Constitutional Council and called for a clear definition of the interim government's powers as proposed by the commission.

His party also advocated for a provision in the constitution to ensure the interim government is held accountable during its tenure and after transferring power to the elected government.

"We will provide our formal opinions through a press release once the commission submits its complete report," he told the newspaper.

Nasiruddin Patwary, convener of the Jatiya Nagarik Committee, said that his organisation would refrain from commenting until the full proposals of the commission were released.

The report includes "the heart-breaking comments" of the thousands of nursing staff working across the UK, the RCN said.

UK hospital standards 'collapse'

Says report as patients dying in corridors

AFP, London

UK patients are "coming to harm" with hospitals so overwhelmed people are dying in corridors awaiting treatment amid a "collapse in care standards", a report said yesterday.

In the latest indictment of Britain's beleaguered state-funded National Health Service, nine in 10 NHS nurses surveyed by the country's nurses union said "patient safety is being compromised".

Nearly seven in 10 (66.8 percent) said they were delivering care in "overcrowded or unsuitable places" on a "daily basis", including in corridors, converted cupboards, car parks and even bereavement rooms.

"The experiences of over 5,000 nursing staff across the UK highlight a devastating collapse in care standards, with patients routinely coming to harm," said the Royal College of Nursing (RCN).

The report condemned the "normalisation" of so-called "corridor care", with nurses unable to access life-saving equipment in cramped spaces. One nurse in east England said corridor care in their hospital trust was "not an exception, it's the rule".

Last month, some 54,000 patients in emergency departments in England had to wait over 12 hours until a hospital bed was available, up 23 percent from December 2023.

The report is a result of a Royal College of Nursing request at the end of December, asking members to fill out a short survey.

The report includes "the heart-breaking comments" of the thousands of nursing staff working across the UK, the RCN said.

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INVITATION FOR RE-TENDERS

Notice no. 400/Ad/62/E-4/09

Dated: 12 January 2025

MILITARY ENGINEER SERVICES

1. Sponsoring Ministry/Division	Ministry of Defense				
2. Agency	Military Engineer Services				
3. Procuring Entity Name	E in C				
4. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka				
5. Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)				
6. Budget and source of Funds	GOB, Development Budget				
7. Development Partners (if applicable)	None				
8. Project /Programme Name (if applicable)	Establishment of 99 Composite Brigade for Safety and Security of Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project.				
9. Selling of tender will commence from	21 January 2025 (During Office hour).				
10. Selling of tender will Close on	03 February 2025 (During Office hour).				
11. Last date & time of submission of Tender	04 February 2025 at 1200 hours.				
12. Date & time of opening of Tender	04 February 2025 at 1230 hours.				
13. Name & Address of the Office(s)	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka & AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment				
Selling Tender Document	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka				
Receiving Tender Document	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka				
Opening Tender Document	Tender Selling & Information Centre at GE (Army) Central Dhaka				
14. Eligibility of Tenderer	<p>a. MES enlisted contractors Class 'B' & 'C' for lot no. 15(a).</p> <p>b. On receipt of DGFI clearance with others Govt. Department (equivalent classes) contractors may also apply for tender.</p> <p>c. Contractors having experience in similar works with enlistment in other Govt., Semi Government & Autonomous Organization may also apply.</p> <p>d. Having experience of similar work mentioned in lot no. 15(a) amounting Tk. 3,75,00,000.00 for each lot in single tender during last 05 (Five) years.</p>				
15. Brief Description of Works					
Lot No	Identification of Lot	Location	Price of Tender Document (Non Refundable)	Tender Security in the form of Bank Draft/ Pay order/ Bank Guarantee in favour of AHQ, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Canton (Taka))	Completion Time in weeks/ Months
1	2	3	4	5	6
a. Supply & Installation of Water Tender and Hydraulic Scissor Lift including ancillary works for Brigade Headquarter of 99 Composite Brigade under Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project at Sheikh Russel Cantonment, Janzira at Shariatpur	Padma Multipurpose Bridge	8,000.00	15,13,000.00	06 (Six) Months	
16. Name of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works				
17. Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Director of Works				
18. Address of Official Inviting Tender	Army Headquarters, E in C's Branch, Works Directorate, Dhaka Cantonment.				
19. Contact details of Official Inviting Tender	Fax No. 9832882, Tel No. 9832870				
20. The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders					

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BIPUL KUMAR GOON

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For Director of Works

Works Directorate

Engineer in Chief's Branch

Dhaka Cantonment

Tel: Mili: 8711111 Ext: 2874

Civil: 9832874

Fire-wrecked Los Angeles gets a break as winds drop

Threat of blazes remain as dry condition persists

AFP, Los Angeles

Fire-wrecked Los Angeles got a break late on Wednesday as dangerous winds dropped, giving hope to weary firefighters still battling to snuff out deadly blazes.

More than a week after fires fanned by hurricane-force gusts began a destructive march that has left two dozen people dead and large areas of the city in ruins, forecasters said the end was in sight – at least for now.

Onshore breezes were set to bring much-needed moisture over the coming days, forecasters at the National Weather Service told AFP.

There will be "a big improvement for tonight and tomorrow, though there'll still be some lingering areas of concern," Ryan Kittell of the National Weather Service told AFP, though he warned there was another possibly perilous dry system in the offing early next week.

The Eaton Fire, which together have scorched more than 40,000 acres (16,000 hectares) were still smoldering Wednesday.

Battalions of firefighters from across the United States, as well as from Mexico, were working to tamp down hotspots that could still flare, Los Angeles City fire chief Kristin Crowley told reporters.

"Infrared flights last night indicated there are still numerous hot spots burning within the fire footprint, and very close attention was paid to address any flare ups swiftly as to prevent any fire spread outside of the perimeter," she said.

With tens of thousands of people still displaced by the fires, life was far from normal in America's second biggest city.

But children whose schools were damaged or are still affected by evacuation orders were welcomed into other institutions.

Stay-at-home mom Caroline Nick took Emery, 11, and Andrew, 7, to Nora Sterry Elementary on Wednesday after their own school was lost to the blaze.

Nick, whose home was destroyed in the Palisades fire, said the children needed whatever semblance of normality they could get.