# Hamas Uncertain About Fate of Hostages as Cease-Fire Negotiations Intensify in Gaza



### Middle East Crisis: Hamas Uncertain About Hostage Survival in Gaza

Hamas has stated it is unsure how many of the approximately 120 hostages still believed to be in Gaza are alive, according to spokesman Osama Hamdan. This uncertainty was revealed during a CNN interview aired on Thursday, June 14, 2024. Hamdan admitted that neither he nor the group’s leadership has any information regarding the hostages' current status.

The hostage situation has been central to cease-fire discussions aimed at ending the ongoing war in Gaza. Mediators from the U.S., Egypt, and Qatar have been facilitating negotiations between Israel and Hamas. Israeli authorities claim that at least a third of the hostages have already died. Hamas took these hostages during attacks on October 7, 2023.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces internal criticism over his handling of the conflict and external pressure to protect Palestinian civilians and secure the remaining hostages. Recently, Israel rescued four hostages in a mission in central Gaza, but this operation resulted in numerous Palestinian casualties.

A new cease-fire proposal suggests a phased release of hostages, starting with women and elderly individuals, in exchange for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from populated areas of Gaza and the release of Palestinian detainees by Israel.

The fate of the hostages remains a contentious issue, with Hamas demanding a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza as part of any agreement. U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken indicated that proposed adjustments from Hamas were unworkable for Israel. The Biden administration continues to work with other mediators to reach a truce.

Concurrent regional conflicts, including Hezbollah's rocket attacks on northern Israel and U.S. airstrikes on Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen, add complexity to the situation. Israel's Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich announced the diversion of $35 million in tax revenue collected for the Palestinian Authority to Israeli victims of terrorism, a move criticized by the U.S. State Department.

In Gaza, the humanitarian crisis worsens, with summer heat exacerbating living conditions for displaced Palestinians. The UN and humanitarian organizations have highlighted severe malnutrition and lack of medical supplies affecting thousands of children.

The viability of aid delivery remains compromised, with aid agencies struggling to access the Kerem Shalom crossing. A U.S.-made floating pier intended for aid remains inactive amid security concerns and technical setbacks. The international community continues its diplomatic efforts to facilitate a cease-fire and aid the affected populations in Gaza.