



Ceasefire in Israel-Hamas War Enters into Force

Michał Wojnarowicz

A truce between Israel and Hamas went into effect on 19 January, including the cessation of hostilities and exchange of prisoners. The deal contributes to the partial stabilisation of the situation in the Gaza Strip but is not a permanent end to the war.

What are the terms of the ceasefire?

The first phase of the agreement is to last 42 days, during which Hamas is to successively hand over to the Israeli side a group of 33 living (women, children, elderly, and sick) and dead [hostages](#). In return, Israel will release about 1,000 prisoners convicted of terrorist attacks, as well as around 1,000 Palestinians detained after the [7 October attack](#). Israel will withdraw troops from parts of the occupied areas (including the northern Gaza Strip and [Netzarim Corridor](#)), permitting Palestinian residents to return, and will allow increased humanitarian supplies in and the evacuation of some wounded Palestinians to Egypt. Negotiations are expected to begin on the shape of the truce's second phase, which calls for a complete end to the fighting, the release of the remaining hostages (men, including soldiers) in exchange for more Palestinian prisoners, and the withdrawal of the rest of the Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip.

How durable might the agreement prove to be?

The probability of implementation of the first phase of the truce is high. However, delays or violations by either Israel or Hamas cannot be ruled out, as [has happened in the past](#). The sustainability of the agreement will also be affected by the situation in the West Bank, where [the level of instability remains high](#), and a possible escalation there could affect the implementation of the Gaza truce and its subsequent phases. This is because the challenge is to make a smooth transition into phase two, especially given Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's declaration of the "temporariness" of the ceasefire and readiness to continue the war to defeat

Hamas. The framework of the planned third phase, dealing with reconstructing the Gaza Strip, remains undefined.

What does the truce mean for Israel?

Although the Israeli public overwhelmingly supports the ceasefire and the cessation of hostilities, the agreement with Hamas has sparked a government crisis. The far-right Jewish Power, [led by Itamar Ben Gvir](#), left the coalition in protest. Whether Netanyahu can hold on to his majority depends on the other ultra-nationalist party, Religious Zionism, whose leader, Bezalel Smotrich, is conditioning staying in the government on the resumption of fighting in Gaza after the current phase of the truce. While the prime minister can count on the support of part of the opposition *strictly* on the implementation of the current ceasefire and the release of the rest of the hostages, maintaining the coalition without the votes of the far right (even without its participation in the government) is unlikely and would mean early elections this year. The truce also halts action in other parts of the region, primarily by Yemeni Houthis.

What are the implications for Hamas and the Gaza Strip?

The agreement allows for an improvement in the extremely difficult humanitarian situation of the Palestinian civilian population and also for a broader and more accurate account of the human and material losses in the Gaza Strip. Hamas has lost a significant part of its military potential, but it has also demonstrated in recent months a strong ability to protect its remaining forces. The release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails represents a success for the organisation in terms of image and strength in the long run. On the political future of the Gaza Strip, in a variant of

PISM SPOTLIGHT

a permanent ceasefire, talks are still underway with, among others, Palestinian factions (including Hamas) and states in the region. A scenario cannot be ruled out in which Hamas formally withdraws from management of the Strip to let reconstruction and day-to-day administration begin while trying to maintain control over the process itself and the resources going into the Strip.

How are key foreign partners responding?

The truce lands in the hands of the new U.S. administration. On the one hand, now President Donald Trump pushed

hard—even before his inauguration this week—for an agreement and stabilisation of the situation in the Middle East in the first weeks of his presidency. On the other hand, U.S. support for Israel's continued offensive against Hamas was expressed by many members of the new Cabinet. The Arab states of the region are also interested in stabilising the situation in Gaza while raising their influence on the reconstruction process, which may also significantly influence decision-making processes. In turn, the U.S. will want to continue its close relationship with Israel. EU institutions will actively work to implement the subsequent phases of the truce and bring a lasting end to the war.