



By: TA | AP Brief

US envoys urge Netanyahu to move into Gaza ceasefire's second phase



Top U.S. envoys met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Saturday, urging his government to move into the **second phase** of the ceasefire in Gaza.

Netanyahu met with U.S. President Donald Trump's envoy **Steve Witkoff** and Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law and Middle East adviser, according to the prime minister's office, which did not give details.

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity to describe the talks, told reporters the envoys had been working closely with Netanyahu on recovering the remains of the last hostage in Gaza, and on the next steps for demilitarizing the territory.

The U.S. is anxious to keep the Trump-brokered deal moving, but Netanyahu faces pressure to wait until Hamas returns the hostage's remains.

The biggest signal of the second phase would be the reopening of the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt. Ali Shaath, the head of a future technocratic government in Gaza that is expected to run day-to-day affairs, said Thursday the border crossing will open in both directions this coming week.

There was no confirmation from Israel, which said it would consider the matter this week.

The crossing's Gaza side is currently under Israeli military control.

The family of Ran Gvili, whose body is still in Gaza, urged more pressure on Hamas. "President Trump himself stated this week in Davos that Hamas knows exactly where our son is being held," the family said Saturday.

"Hamas is deceiving the international community and refusing to return our son, the last remaining hostage, in what constitutes a clear violation of the agreement it signed."

Hamas said Wednesday it has provided "all information" it has on Gvili's remains to ceasefire mediators, and accused Israel of obstructing search efforts in areas it controls

in Gaza. The ceasefire took effect on Oct. 10.

Egypt pushes for Rafah crossing to open

Egypt's top diplomat pressed for an immediate opening of the **Rafah crossing** with the director of Trump's new Board of Peace in Gaza, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said Saturday, including the ability of Palestinians to enter and exit the territory.

Foreign Minister Bader Abdelatty spoke by phone with Bulgarian diplomat Nickolay Mladenov, the high representative for Gaza, the ministry said in a statement.

They discussed the implementation of the ceasefire's second phase, including the deployment of an international monitoring force, the opening of the Rafah crossing in both directions and the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the strip, the statement said.

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The statement didn't say when the crossing will open for travelers and the evacuation of sick and wounded.

Israel is expected to discuss opening the Rafah crossing during Sunday's Cabinet meeting.

Hamas in a statement Saturday said a delegation met in Istanbul with the head of Turkey's National Intelligence Organization about the ceasefire's second phase and "the fulfillment of the requirements of the first phase."