



Written by [Paul Dragu](#) on August 26, 2025

Protests Erupt in Israel Over Hostage Handling

Protests have once again erupted across Israel over the way the Israeli government is handling hostage negotiations with Hamas. People have set fire to tires and blocked several key roads throughout the country as top-ranking Israeli officials met to discuss the next step in Gaza.

"Thousands of protesters took to the streets from early Tuesday, blocking highways and demonstrating outside ministers' homes as part of an organized day of action demanding the government reach a deal for the release of 50 hostages still held by terrorist organizations in Gaza," *Times of Israel* [reported](#) Tuesday.



AP Images

Protestors block a street in southern Israel

The group Hostages and Missing Families Forum organized the protests. The police warned that "blocking roads without permission and in a manner that may endanger road users or harm citizens' freedom of movement will not be allowed." Police arrested at least one person, in Tel Aviv.

Of the 50 hostages Hamas still holds in captivity, about 20 are still believed to be alive. The people want their government to strike a deal that will bring them home.

Next Phase

Also on Tuesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held a meeting with his security cabinet to approve the next phase of Israel's military operations in Gaza. Earlier in August, the security cabinet approved a military takeover of Gaza City. Tuesdays' discussion, according to Israeli media, did not include debate or a vote on a ceasefire deal that Hamas has agreed to. The proposal has been described as a partial deal that would free some of the hostages and allow more humanitarian aid into Gaza. The deal would free 10 living hostages in exchange for Palestinian security prisoners during a 60-day truce "that could be extended to a second phase if the sides agreed to terms on a permanent ceasefire," according to reports. More details on the proposal from *Times of Israel*:

In exchange for each living hostage, the deal would see Israel release 60 Palestinian security prisoners serving sentences of at least 15 years, including a total of 140 prisoners serving life sentences. Israel would also hand over 1,000 Gazans detained without charge by the IDF since October 7. In addition, for each slain hostage's body, 10 bodies of dead Palestinian prisoners would be returned, according to a source familiar with the matter.

But Israel's decision makers insist the only deal they want to discuss is one that releases all the hostages, disarms Hamas, completely demilitarizes the Gaza Strip, allows for Israel to control the strip, and transfers governing authority to a government that is not Hamas or the Palestinian Authority, [according](#) to reports. Netanyahu said the region should be governed by other Arab forces. As of Tuesday, Netanyahu has not wavered. According to reports, "Netanyahu told ministers at the meeting



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that his stance on a comprehensive framework has not changed, and that he is moving ahead with the expanded operation to capture Gaza City to pressure Hamas to meet his conditions.”

The justification among Netanyahu and others who insist on total victory is that anything short of it would allow something like another October 7 to happen again.

War Fatigue

But signs continue emerging that the people of Israel are losing their taste for conflict. A poll aired by Israeli broadcaster Channel 12 in July found that 74 percent of Israelis wanted the war to end. [According](#) to a report on the poll, that 74 percent, including 60 percent of people who voted for Netanyahu’s coalition, back the standing agreement that Hamas has already singed off on.

One of Tuesday’s protestors echoed the poll’s sentiment. Yehuda Cohen said, “Israel is standing up, the people of Israel are standing up for the hostages, the people of Israel are with us, and the polls show it too. More than 80 percent want an end to the war and a hostage deal. The entire people of Israel want an end to this nightmare.” Others accused the government of “abandoning” the hostages. “The progress of a plan to occupy Gaza while there is a [hostage] deal on the table for the prime minister to sign is a stab to the heart of the families and the entire nation,” one person [told](#) Israeli news outlets.

Leaders Frustrated

Intermediaries between Israel and Hamas are frustrated as well. The Qataris are claiming that the standing agreement “matches 90 percent of what Israel wants,” but that Israel is not really interested in an agreement. The Egyptians, who are also involved on the talks, reportedly expressed “disappointment, frustration and anger” to Israel over its decision to wave off the deal on the table.

At least one high-ranking Israeli military official has warned that intensifying operations in Gaza would further diminish the hostages’ chances of coming back home. In July, Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir [reportedly](#) advised cabinet ministers that increasing military operations “could significantly endanger the lives of hostages still held in the Palestinian enclave.” He also worried that hostages were being badly tortured. “I am in favor of defeating Hamas,” Zamir said, “But the more we deepen the operation now, the more we endanger the hostages.”

Others who, like Zamir, believes Israel should try to reach a ceasefire deal include Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar, Shas party leader Aryeh Deri, National Security Advisor Tzachi Hanegbi, Mossad chief David Barnea, the Shin Bet’s negotiator, and Major General (res.) Nitzan Alon, who oversees the hostage file for the military.

Calls for Swift Victory

But not everyone in Israel’s government agrees with Zamir’s assessment. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said, “You can do both — defeat Hamas and return the hostages.” He also said there would be “no greater danger” to Israel than to make a deal with Hamas. He told Netanyahu to continue a “sharp and swift war that will destroy the enemy in Gaza and remove the threat it poses to Israel for many years to come.” Others reportedly in favor of increasing military operations in Gaza include Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, Military Secretary Major General Roman Gofman, and Cabinet Secretary Yossi Fuchs.

When Netanyahu approved a military takeover of Gaza City earlier this month, international backlash ensued immediately. Netanyahu responded shortly afterward. The premier said Israel didn’t want to permanently occupy Gaza, but to “free it from Hamas terrorists.”



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Is It Genocide?

Israel has taken a lot of fire for the developing humanitarian crisis in the region. Many have lobbed accusations that Israel is committing “genocide” in Gaza. Israel has rebuked such characterizations. But a recent [investigative report](#) conducted by left-wing outlets *The Guardian*, +972 Magazine, and Local Call, only poured fuel on those accusations. “Figures from a classified Israeli military intelligence database indicate five out of six Palestinians killed by Israeli forces in Gaza have been civilians, an extreme rate of slaughter rarely matched in recent decades of warfare,” *The Guardian* reported August 21.

The IDF denied the report, claiming that the reporters lack “fundamental military understanding.” Israeli outlets reported, adding:

The report cites intelligence sources as saying that the total number of terror operatives killed is likely higher than the number in the database, because it does not include Hamas and PIJ operatives who were killed but not identified by name; Gazans who participated in the fighting and were not members of the two groups; or Hamas members who were not members of its military wing.

The IDF said the figures in the article are not accurate.



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