



Paul Adams: Why the Gaza ceasefire is under growing strain



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In one of its official statements, released on Telegram, the group called its announcement a "warning" to Israel and said it was giving mediators Paul Adams: Why the Gaza ceasefire is under growing straight Getty Hamas fighters escort Israeli hostage Eli Sharabi to a stage before handing him over to a Red Cross team in Deir el-Balah, central Gaza, on February Getty Hamas freed more hostages, including Eli Sharabi, on, Why has Hamas announced a delay just days before it is due to release the next group of hostages?

In one of its official statements, released on Telegram, the group called its announcement a "warning" to Israel and said it was giving mediators "ample time to pressure the occupation [Israel] into fulfilling its obligations". It said the "door remains open" for the next scheduled releases to go ahead on Saturday. The group appears to be giving time for the impasse to be resolved.

But what exactly is the impasse? Hamas lists a series of complaints, from delaying the return of displaced people, continuing to open fire on them and failing to allow the entry of certain types of humanitarian aid. Other Palestinian officials not connected with Hamas have cited Israel's reluctance to allow caravans into Gaza to house the vast numbers of Palestinians whose homes have been destroyed. At a time when the Israeli government is openly discussing ways to encourage civilians to leave Gaza, the failure to give permits for badly needed temporary accommodation is bound to stoke Palestinian fears of expulsion.

Fears exacerbated, almost every day, by Donald Trump. What began as an apparently off-the-cuff suggestion that most Palestinians should leave while the Gaza Strip is rebuilt has morphed into the president's demand that all should leave and that the US should take over and run Gaza. As Trump continues to double down on his incendiary suggestion, Hamas may be wondering whether it's worth engaging in phase two of the ceasefire talks. What exactly are the talks for?

If Trump is serious, the Palestinians know that it will fall to Israel to make sure that Gaza is devoid of civilians. Depriving them of shelter won't be enough. It will almost certainly require force. Now Trump has said that if all the hostages held in Gaza are not returned by Saturday he will propose cancelling the ceasefire and "all hell" will break out. But he did say he was speaking for himself and "Israel can override it".