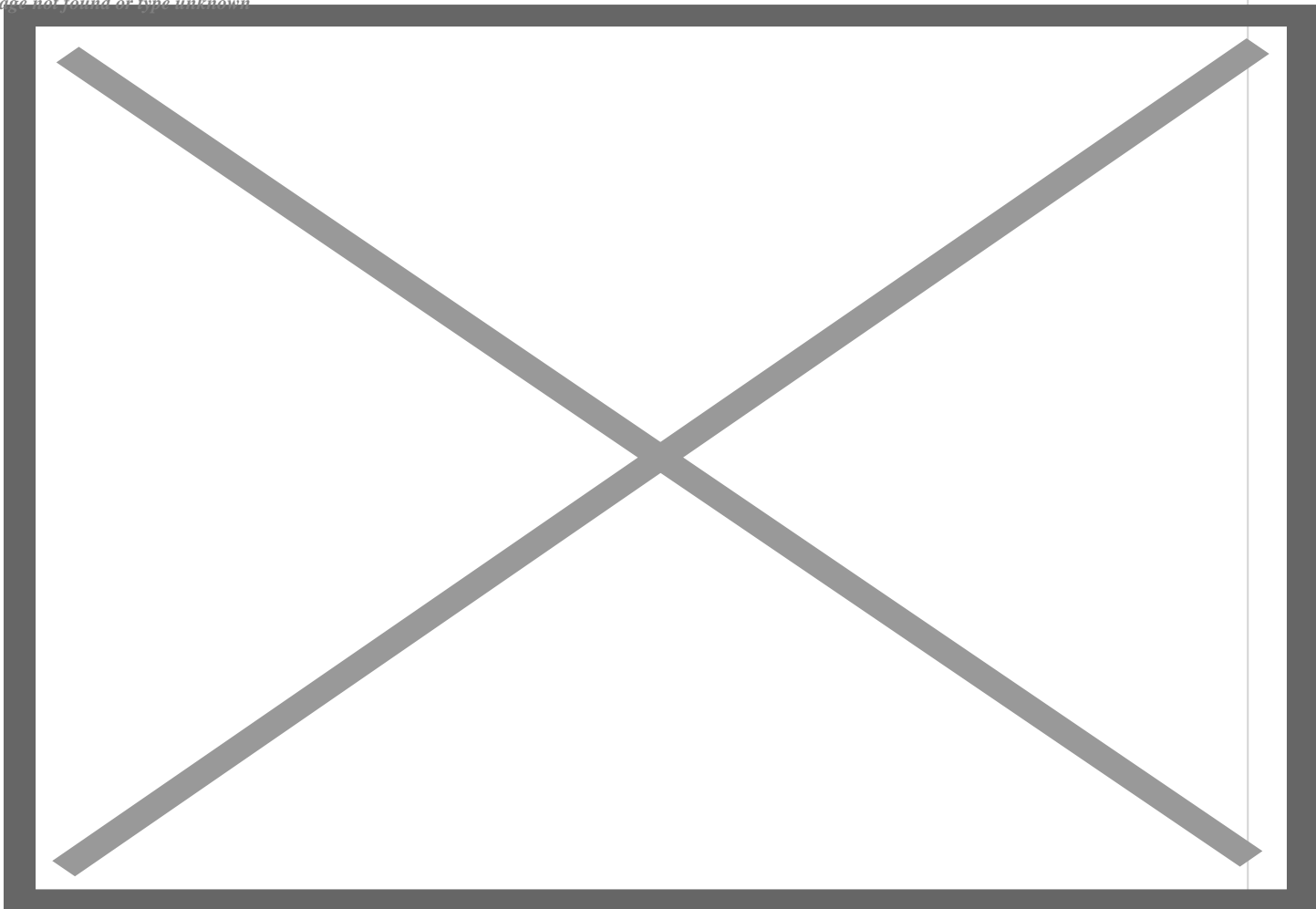


# *Hamas says new Gaza truce talks under way as Israel expands ground assault*

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Smoke rises following Hamas says new Gaza truce talks under way as Israel expands ground assaultIsraeli strikes, in Jabalia, northern Gaza Strip, May 17, 2025 [Mahmoud Issa/Reuters]

Gaza City, May 18 (RHC)-- Israel and Hamas have confirmed a new round of Gaza truce talks is under way in Qatar as the Israeli military expanded its ground offensive on the besieged Palestinian territory, despite growing international calls for a ceasefire.

Israel Defense Minister Israel Katz said in a statement on Saturday that the Hamas delegation in Doha returned to negotiations "on a hostage deal".

Taher al-Nono, the media adviser for the Hamas leadership, confirmed to the Reuters news agency that a new round of indirect talks had begun without any conditions. "The Hamas delegation outlined the position of the group and the necessity to end the war, swap prisoners, the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and allowing humanitarian aid and all the needs of the people of Gaza back into the Strip," he added.

Medical sources told Al Jazeera that at least 54 Palestinians were killed in Israeli air strikes on Saturday, as Israel launched a new offensive in Gaza.

Israel's army said on social media that it was intensifying attacks and exerting "tremendous pressure" on Hamas across Gaza, and wouldn't stop until the captives are returned and the armed group is dismantled. Katz said that Operation Gideon Chariots was being led with "great force."

The ground offensive comes after Israel escalated its air attacks on Gaza, killing hundreds of Palestinians in the past three days. Many of the victims were killed in northern Gaza, including in Beit Lahiya and Jabalia, which have received forced displacement orders by the Israeli army in recent days.

As leaders of the Arab League held a Gaza-focused summit in Iraq's Baghdad and called for international funding to rebuild Gaza, Hamas asked the international community to impose sanctions on Israel.

In a statement on its Telegram channel, the armed group described the situation in Gaza as a "full-blown genocide committed before the eyes of a world that stands helpless, while more than two and a half million people are being slaughtered in the besieged Strip".

The group also reported continued fighting with invading Israeli forces, claiming on Saturday that its fighters killed and wounded two Israeli soldiers using machineguns in the Shujayea neighbourhood of Gaza City in the northern part of the enclave.

United Nations chief Antonio Guterres said he was "alarmed" by Israel's moves to expand its ground operations in Gaza and called for an immediate ceasefire.

UN relief chief Tom Fletcher said a joint plan by the United States and Israel to replace international aid mechanisms in Gaza was a "waste of time" as more than 160,000 pallets of aid are "ready to move" at the border, but blocked by Israel.

Nevertheless, Washington has remained adamant in its full support for Israel, with Trump saying on Friday that Gaza must become a "freedom zone".

Last week, Hamas released Israeli-American soldier Edan Alexander, who, along with families of remaining captives in Gaza, called for the release of all still held in the Palestinian territory.

[ SOURCE: REUTERS and NEWS AGENCIES ]



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