

Israel-Hamas war

Far-right Israeli minister attacks Gaza ceasefire proposal as 'surrender deal'

Bezalel Smotrich and ultranationalists in cabinet criticise renewed push for an agreement



Finance minister Bezael Smotrich said the proposed deal was 'not good' for Israeli interests nor for the remaining hostages held in Gaza © Kobi Wolf/Bloomberg

Neri Zilber in Tel Aviv YESTERDAY

Israel's far-right finance minister has publicly rejected granting any concessions to Hamas in a ceasefire deal as officials expressed optimism that the warring parties were edging closer to an agreement that would pause fighting and secure the release of hostages from Gaza.

Israeli negotiators held talks with mediators in Doha this week, with US National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby saying on Monday that the pair were "getting closer" to a deal before US president-elect Donald Trump takes office in January.

But Bezael Smotrich, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right finance minister, told Kol BaRama radio on Wednesday that the proposal was "not good" for Israeli interests nor for the remaining hostages held in Gaza.

"Hamas is at its lowest point since the beginning of the war. This is not the time to give it a lifeline," Smotrich said. "This is the time to continue pounding and pressuring it so that it returns the hostages — but in its own 'surrender deal', not ours."

Smotrich and other far-right members of Netanyahu's government have consistently

opposed halting the Israeli offensive in Gaza and withdrawing forces from the shattered territory. Opposition by the Israeli far right had a decisive role in scuttling a deal this summer, according to several people familiar with previous rounds of talks.

National security minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has also been a vocal critic of any ceasefire deal and repeatedly threatened to topple Netanyahu's governing coalition if one is reached. The ultranationalist politician's banner image on social media platform X reads: "Against a Reckless Deal!"

The far-right cabinet members made their objections known even as opposition leaders and families of Israelis held by [Hamas](#) warned that the lives of the remaining hostages were at risk. Israeli authorities believe that about half of the approximately 100 hostages held in Gaza are no longer alive.

The latest negotiations revolve around a multiphase deal, including an initial six- to eight-week ceasefire during which some of the remaining hostages in Gaza would be freed in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.

Smotrich told Kol BaRama that he opposed the expected release of "hundreds" of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails, as well as a move to allow displaced Gazans back into the north of the enclave.

He added that no talks should be held with Hamas, and that the group should only be engaged through the "sights and fire of tanks, planes and our heroic fighters".

Officials have cautioned that obstacles would still have to be overcome before any deal was reached. Mediators have previously been hopeful that [Israel](#) and Hamas were edging towards an agreement only for the process to founder over their refusal to compromise on important issues.

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