

MIDDLE EAST

ISRAEL EAGERLY AWAITS HOSTAGES’ RETURN



ABDEL KAREEM HANA, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Displaced Palestinians walk amid destroyed buildings in the Shati refugee camp Sunday in Gaza City after Israel and Hamas agreed to a pause in their war and the release of hostages.

All expected to be released Monday in breakthrough ceasefire

SAMY MAGDY, SARAH EL DEEB AND MELANIE LIDMAN
Associated Press

CAIRO — Israel said Sunday that it expected all of the living hostages held in the Gaza Strip to be released Monday in its breakthrough ceasefire deal with Hamas, as Palestinians awaited the release of hundreds of prisoners held in Israel and a surge of aid into the famine-stricken territory.

“In a few hours, we will all be reunited,” Israel’s military chief of staff, Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, said in a statement.

U.S. President Donald Trump was set to leave later in the day to visit Israel and Egypt to celebrate the ceasefire announced last week that offered hope for an end to the two-year war.

“We are expecting all 20 of our living hostages to be released together at one time to the Red Cross and transported among six to eight vehicles,” Israeli government spokesperson Shosh Bedrosian said, noting

that Israel did not expect militants to stage the exchanges in the same public manner as previous rounds.

Bedrosian said the hostages will be driven to a military base to reunite with their families or, if needed, immediately to a hospital.

After the hostages are freed, Israel was ready to release about 2,000 Palestinian detainees and receive the 28 hostages believed to be dead. The military planned a ceremony on their behalf in Gaza, Bedrosian said.

An international task force will start working to locate deceased hostages who are not returned within 72 hours, said Gal Hirsch, Israel’s coordinator for the Hostages and the Missing. Officials have said the search for the bodies of hostages, some of which may be under rubble, could take time.

Timing was not announced for the release of Palestinian prisoners held in Israel who are to be freed. They include 250 people serving life sentences in addition to

1,700 seized from Gaza during the war and held without charge.

Dr. Mounir al-Boursh, head of Gaza’s Health Ministry, said he hoped the bodies of medical personnel who died in Israeli detention centers will be among those handed over.

On Gaza’s borders, preparations were underway to ramp up aid entering the war-battered territory. The Israeli military body in charge of humanitarian aid in Gaza said the amount of aid entering was expected to increase Sunday to around 600 trucks per day, as stipulated in the agreement.

“Much of Gaza is a wasteland,” U.N. humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher told The Associated Press. He said the United Nations has a plan for the next two months to restore basic medical and other services, bring in thousands of tons of food and fuel and remove rubble.

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Hospital charity care can still be costly for some

Patients get stuck with big bills thanks to loopholes in programs meant to help

MICHELLE ANDREWS
KFF Health News

Quinn Cochran-Zipp went to the emergency room three times with severe abdominal pain before doctors figured out she had early-stage cancer in the germ cells of her right ovary. After emergency surgery four years ago, the Greeley, Colorado, lab technician is cancer-free.

The two hospitals that treated Cochran-Zipp at the time determined that she qualified for 100% financial assistance,

since her income as a college student was extremely low. Not having to worry about the roughly \$100,000 in bills she racked up for her care was an enormous relief, she said.

Then she started receiving unexpected bills from doctors who worked at the hospitals but, because they weren’t on staff there, didn’t have to abide by the facilities’ financial assistance policies.

Those bills, which came from specialists in emergency medicine, anesthesiology and radiology who treated her, totaled more than \$5,000. Although it was a fraction of the total cost of her care, to Cochran-Zipp it was an enormous amount.

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JACQUELYN MARTIN, ASSOCIATED PRESS

Even after qualifying for hospital charity care, patients may be billed by doctors who work at but not for the hospital.