



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on January 26, 2024

U.S., Israeli Intelligence Chiefs to Discuss Gaza Hostage Deal

CIA Director William Burns and his Israeli counterpart will meet with Qatari officials in coming days for talks regarding a second potential Gaza hostage deal, three sources acquainted with the matter told Reuters on January 25.

Burns and the head of Israel's Mossad intelligence service, David Barnea, will meet with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Europe this weekend, one official briefed on the meeting revealed to Reuters.

Besides, Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel will join the talks, the second source said.

The Biden administration has been attempting to secure the release of the more than 100 remaining hostages taken during [Hamas' October 7 attack](#) on Israel, which sparked the war in Gaza, although there remains a significant gap between the two sides' demands.

The U.S. and Israeli intelligence chiefs have previously met with Qatari and Egyptian officials, helping to facilitate a short-lived truce in November that saw more than 100 hostages freed.

Burns "has been involved in helping us with the hostage deal that was in place and trying to help us pursue another one," White House national security spokesman John Kirby told reporters traveling with Biden aboard Air Force One, referring specific questions to the agency.

The CIA, which has a policy of not divulging the director's travel, refused to provide more details about the meeting, first reported by *The Washington Post*.

U.S. ally Israel has pledged to eliminate Hamas, conducting a series of strikes that has flattened most of Gaza and killed at least 25,700 people, Palestinian health officials reported.

A third source with knowledge of the talks said that Israel has suggested a 60-day pause in the fighting during which more than 100 hostages would be released in tranches, starting with civilian women and children.

The release would be followed by the freeing of civilian men, female soldiers, and the remains of hostages who died after being abducted by Hamas, based on the source.

That plan, nonetheless, is at odds with Hamas' last proposal, raising questions as to whether differences could be addressed.

According to the source, [Hamas last week suggested an end to the war](#) , international guarantees that it would not start anew, and the release of all detainees held by Israel, including those who were involved



AP Images
William Burns



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in its October 7 onslaught.

Israel has consistently opposed a permanent ceasefire, a position supported by Washington. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on January 21 that [Israel dismissed Hamas' conditions for a ceasefire](#).

After the planned weekend talks, Qatar's Al Thani is scheduled to be in Washington next week. On January 29, he is poised to speak at the Atlantic Council, according to the think-tank's website.

Furthermore, the Israeli government dismissed a ruling by the International Court of Justice (ICJ) on January 26 ordering it to prevent the genocide of the Palestinian people. Netanyahu declared that the very allegation that Israel is committing genocide is "not only false, it's outrageous."

The Hague-based court ruled that "the state of Israel shall take all measures to prevent the commission of genocide to Gaza," penalize any members of its military who perpetuate genocidal acts, punish all public calls by officials for genocide, and immediately permit more humanitarian aid into Gaza.

The court ruled that South Africa may pursue its genocide case against Israel, but stopped short of insisting that Israel "immediately suspend its military operations in and against Gaza," as Pretoria had demanded.

While South Africa described the court's decision as a "decisive victory for the international rule of law," Israel's first official comment was derisive.

"Hague schmague," Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir posted on X after the verdict was announced. A member of the "Jewish Power" party, Ben-Gvir sparked international backlash last month when he declared that Israel should "encourage the wilful emigration" of Gaza's population to other countries, a statement that was widely viewed as a call for ethnic cleansing.

In a statement shortly after Ben-Gvir's post, Netanyahu lauded the court's decision not to order a ceasefire, stating that "Like every country, Israel has a basic right to defend itself."

However, "the mere claim that Israel is committing genocide against Palestinians is not only false, it's outrageous, and the willingness of the court to even discuss this is a disgrace that will not be erased for generations," Netanyahu added.

The Israeli leader pledged that he would not allow any of his soldiers or military commanders "to be hauled before the International Criminal Court in the Hague."

The ICJ lacks power to impose its rulings, implying that any eventual judgement in the genocide case will be symbolic.

South Africa accused Israel of genocide in late December, arguing that Israel was violating the UN Genocide Convention by "killing Palestinians in Gaza, causing them serious bodily and mental harm, and inflicting on them conditions of life calculated to bring about their physical destruction."

Additionally, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan welcomed the ICJ's verdict ordering Israel to prevent the genocide of the Palestinian people. Türkiye, Erdoğan said, will work to make sure that Israeli "war crimes" do not go unpunished.

"I find the interim injunction decision taken by the International Court of Justice regarding the inhumane attacks in Gaza valuable and welcome it," Erdogan wrote on X on Friday evening.

The Turkish leader pointed out that the court's decision is "binding on the countries party to the [UN]



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Genocide Convention,” and voiced his hope that “Israel’s attacks against women, children and the elderly will come to an end.” He has publicly called for a ceasefire on various occasions since Israel declared war on Hamas in October.

In a speech last Friday, January 19, the Turkish leader compared Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Adolf Hitler, lambasting Israel’s Western supporters for “idly watching acts of genocide and barbarism committed against the people of Palestine by the ‘modern fuehrer’ Netanyahu.”

“We will continue to follow the process to ensure that war crimes committed against innocent Palestinian civilians do not go unpunished,” Erdoğan said. “As Türkiye, we will continue to work with all our strength and stand by our Palestinian brothers to establish a ceasefire and ensure the path to permanent peace.”



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