

VOA NEWS

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I'm VOA's Jeff Caster with this worldwide news update.

Under the cease-fire deal in Gaza, Hamas Friday announced the names of four female Israeli soldiers held hostage for 15 months, whom the militant group is set to release Saturday in exchange for Palestinian prisoners in a second swap under the deal. Associated Press correspondent Sam Mendic explains the next steps in this phase of the cease-fire agreement.

"Also on Saturday, we are expecting to see more freedom of movement for Palestinians inside of Gaza. They are supposed to be able to go more to their homes in the north as Israeli troops withdraw from that part of the enclave. But there is still a lot of uncertainty surrounding this first phase of the cease-fire. It is very fragile. Families of the hostages have no idea if they're loved ones, if they're even going to come out in this first phase, if they're alive or dead. And people who are trying to find their homes in Gaza and return home have no idea if their houses are still standing."

That was AP correspondent Sam Mendic reporting.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Friday suggested Israel might not withdraw all its forces from Lebanon by a deadline set in its cease-fire deal with Hezbollah. Under the agreement reached in November, Israel is supposed to complete its withdrawal from the country by Sunday.

Netanyahu said in a statement the cease-fire "is based on the understanding that the withdrawal process could possibly continue beyond the 60 days."

At U.N. headquarters in New York Friday, Deputy Spokesperson for Secretary-General António Guterres Farhan Haq urged both Israel and Lebanon to abide by their cease-fire agreement.

"We urge Israel and Lebanon to fulfill their commitments to the cessation of hostilities understanding and to avoid further action that could raise tensions and further delay the return of residents on both sides to their towns and villages."

In a statement Friday, U.S. National Security Council spokesperson Brian Hughes said U.S. President Donald Trump's administration believes a short, temporary cease-fire extension is urgently needed in Lebanon.

This is VOA News.

U.S. President Donald Trump went on tour of U.S. areas hit by natural disasters Friday.

Earlier Friday, he was in North Carolina and toured areas still recovering from Hurricane Helene, where he was very critical of what he said was a slow response by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, or FEMA.

He said the agency should be overhauled...