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Notably, Israeli offensive since the October 7, 2023 Hamas retaliation has killed more than 48,000 people in Gaza, according to the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory, figures the UN has deemed reliable. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sent negotiators to Cairo on Thursday, after Hamas handed over the remains of four hostages in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners under the truce. The relevant parties have begun intensive talks to discuss the next phases of the truce agreement, amid ongoing efforts to ensure the implementation of the previously agreed understandings," said Egypt's State Information Service.

The ceasefire's first phase is set to expire on Saturday. Too many civilians died. An internal Israeli army probe into the October 7 attack, released on Thursday, acknowledged the military's "complete failure" to prevent it, according to a military official who briefed reporters about the report's contents on condition of anonymity. "Too many civilians died that day asking themselves in their hearts or out loud, where was the IDF?" the official said, referring to the military. The senior military official said at the same briefing that the military acknowledges it was "overconfident" and had misconceptions about Hamas's military capabilities before the attack. Among those freed in exchange was the longest-serving Palestinian prisoner in an Israeli jail, Nael Barghouti, who spent more than four decades behind bars. He was first arrested in 1978 and sentenced to life imprisonment for the murder of an Israeli officer and attacks on Israeli sites. "We were in hell and we came out of hell. Today is my real day of birth," said one prisoner, Yahya Shraideh. AFP images showed some freed prisoners awaiting treatment or being assessed at the European Hospital in Khan Yunis, southern Gaza, after their release.

Several freed Palestinian prisoners were After the swap, Hamas called on Israel to return to delayed talks on the truce's next phase. "We have cut off the path before the enemy's false justifications, and it has no choice but to start negotiations for the second phase," Hamas said.