Israel indefinitely delays Palestinian prisoner release as hostages freed



Israel says it is indefinitely delaying the release of more than 600 Palestinian prisoners, in another potentially major setback in the ceasefire process.

came after six Israeli hostages, including four kidnapped during the 7 October 2023 deadly Hamas attack on Israel, were released on Saturday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the release of the Palestinian prisoners was now going to be delayed until the next handover of hostages by Hamas was guaranteed - and without what he called the degrading ceremonies that Hamas has put on each week.There's only one more handover of hostages due in the first phase of the ceasefire, involving four of the hostages who've died in captiv, have yet been made.

Mediators will be working overtime to try to get the deal back on track and avert a possible collapse of the ceasefire.Netanyahu accused Hamas of "repeated violations", including the "cynical use of the hostages for propaganda purposes".His statement came after four hostages who were taken captive during the Nova music festival - Tal Shoham, Omer Shem Tov, Eliya Cohen and Omer Wenkert - were released on Saturday.

The two other released hostages, Avera Mengistu and Hisham al-Sayed, were held in Gaza for years - Mr Mengistu since 2014 and Mr al-Sayed since 2015.ity.Meanwhile outside the Ofer Prison in the occupied West Bank, family and friends waited for the release of Palestinian prisoners.

An 80-year-old mother in Khan Younis, Gaza, told the AFP news agency that she "can't believe" her son would be free after 33 years in prison.By the evening, Hamas accused Israel of violating the agreement by delaying the release.