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Gaza Finished people and country

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In Gaza, a dispute over Hamas' return of a specific hostage had led to the Israeli military blocking the return of Palestinian residents to the north of Gaza. The disagreements between Israel and militant groups it has fought for decades highlighted the low levels of trust between the recently warring parties. But last-ditch negotiations involving officials in the Qatari capital Doha, Washington D.C., and elsewhere have managed to keep the ceasefire deals alive, according to President Trump's special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff. "There was a crisis," said Witkoff in comments to reporters in New York Sunday night, "and we managed to overcome it with good dialogue and conversation. This is a sign that we all need to stay positive." He praised Qatar's prime minister as well as the Israeli government for helping resolve the respective disputes.

Over the weekend, Israeli leaders had made the return of displaced Palestinians to northern Gaza contingent on the immediate release of an Israeli female civilian, Arbel Yehud, arguing that the ceasefire agreement had stipulated that civilian women should be returned before,

The resolution came after Qatar announced it had helped broker the compromise, and the Qatari foreign ministry, which had helped mediate the overarching ceasefire agreed two weeks ago, said Hamas would hand over three hostages before Friday. According to a statement from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, three hostages held by Hamas since Oct. 7, 2023, will now be released Thursday — slightly ahead of the previously agreed-upon release day for a further three hostages.

They will include Yehud, a civilian who had become the center of dispute this weekend after Hamas officials had insisted she was in fact an Israeli soldier and so would not be prioritized for release with other civilian women and children. Also slated for release Thursday is Agam Berger, a female soldier. The identity of the third hostage to be released was not made public.