

Egypt asks Hamas to ease restrictions on Fatah leaders

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The sources closed to Hamas movement Wednesday said Egypt has asked Hamas leaders to leave the restrictions imposed on the movement of Fatah leaders in Gaza

The sources said that senior Egyptian officials asked Hamas leaders to let Fatah senior leader Zakareya el-Agha to leave Gaza to Egypt and release the governor of Khan Younis Osama el-Farra who is currently in Hamas jails.

El-Agha and el-Farra were named as members of Fatah delegation that would head to Egypt on Sept. 22 for bilateral talks with Egyptian security officials to prepare for a comprehensive dialogue in Cairo next month.

Hamas, which has been ruling the Gaza Strip since mid-June last year, has imposed traveling restrictions on el-Agha and warned him from leaving Gaza. El-Farra has been in a Hamas prison for about two months.

Hamas rounded up senior Fatah leaders in the Gaza Strip, including governors, as well as activists and members following a bombing attack near Gaza beach that killed five Hamas militants two months ago.

Nabil Shaath, senior Fatah leader and head of Fatah delegation to Cairo said that three members of Fatah delegation are from Gaza, adding "this is to show that Fatah is very much interested to succeed the dialogue with Hamas."

Egypt has been holding bilateral talks separately with each Palestinian faction and political group, including rival Fatah and Hamas to examine their views over holding a comprehensive dialogue that ends the current Palestinian split.

Egyptian security officials had already held talks with representatives of eight political groups. They will hold talks with Fatah delegation on Sept. 22, and with Hamas delegation on Oct. 8.

Last year, following weeks of fighting between Fatah and Hamas, the latter took control of the Gaza Strip and routed President Mahmoud Abbas security forces.

Egypt and other Arab countries have been exerting efforts to end the status split between Gaza Strip, which is ruled by Hamas and the West Bank ruled by Abbas and Fatah movement.

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