

Israel, Hamas deny informal Gaza truce

by UPI

GAZA -- Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has denied reports Monday that Israel and Hamas have an informal agreement on truce in Gaza. "There is no agreement and there are no direct or indirect talks," Olmert said, referring to reports of understandings regarding Israel and Hamas backing away from hostile activities in Gaza, Ynetnews reported. An understanding that Israel won't attack Gaza as long as Hamas doesn't fire at Israel was reported by several media outlets. The Israeli army "enjoys complete freedom of action," Olmert said, adding that, to the best of his knowledge, he understood that Egypt has no mandate to secure a Gaza cease-fire agreement between Israel and Hamas, Ynetnews said. "(If) terror stops, if Qassams cease to land in Sderot and Grad rockets in Ashkelon, and the incessant arms smuggling and infiltrations end -- Israel would hold its fire," the prime minister said during a news conference following a meeting with the Czech Republic prime minister. A Hamas spokesman also denied an informal truce was reached. "Hamas' position regarding a tahdiyah (calm) has not changed," said Muhammed Nasr, a senior Hamas official in the Gaza Strip. "Any tahdiyah must be mutual and comprehensive."

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