



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

Monday, December 11

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News Excerpts

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The Media Line

IDF Advances in Gaza as Hamas Fighters Surrender

As [Israel's military](#) campaign in the Gaza Strip continues to gain ground from Hamas, dozens of Hamas fighters have surrendered to Israeli forces in recent days. Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), in a video statement, called on those still in combat to lay down their arms, stating, "It will take more time, the war is still in full force, but this is the beginning of the end of Hamas." Netanyahu emphasized, "I say to the terrorists of Hamas: It's over. Don't die for Yahya Sinwar. Surrender — now." Netanyahu's appeal aligns with reports indicating that IDF ground forces have made significant progress in taking control of the city of Khan Younis in southern Gaza. This includes a complete encirclement of the home of Sinwar, Hamas' top leader in the Gaza Strip. Residents of Khan Younis reported Israeli tanks entering the city center from the east after intense close-quarters fighting.

I24 News

Over 500 IDF Soldiers Wounded in Gaza Ground Operation

The IDF announced that 559 of its troops were wounded since the launching of the ground operation against Hamas in Gaza. Some 300 of these were airlifted by helicopter out of the Palestinian enclave, the IDF said. This is the first official casualty toll the Israeli military provided, though it has been regularly updating its death toll in Gaza, currently at 97. Of those wounded 127 were in life-threatening condition, 213 were moderately wounded and 217 were lightly wounded. The army announced the deaths of five more soldiers, including Sgt. Maor Cohen Eisenkot, the nephew of War Cabinet Minister Gadi Eisenkot. The news comes just two days after Eisenkot lost his son, Master Sgt. (res.) Gal Meir Eisenkot. [Dig Deeper "IDF Reports 1,593 Wounded Since October 7, but Hospital Data Is Much Higher" \(Ha'aretz\)](#)

Times of Israel

Qatar Says Talks for Fresh Gaza Pause Ongoing

Mediation efforts to secure a new Gaza ceasefire and free more hostages held by Hamas are continuing, Qatar's prime minister said, while blaming Israeli strikes for hampering chances for a successful outcome. Qatar was a key intermediary in securing a weeklong truce late last month that saw 80 Israeli hostages freed from Gazan captivity in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, along with 25 others in separate deals, alongside a break in fighting and increased humanitarian aid to Gaza. Qatar has also long been a key funder of Hamas and hosts some of its leaders. Doha and others in the international community have continued to push for a renewed pause in fighting or a permanent ceasefire, and the release of the estimated 138 remaining hostages. [Dig Deeper "Battles Rage Across Gaza as Israel Indicates It's Willing to Fight for Months or More to Beat Hamas" \(Associated Press\)](#)

UN General Assembly to Demand Immediate Ceasefire

The 193-member United Nations General Assembly is likely to vote this week on a draft resolution demanding an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in the conflict between [Israel](#) and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, diplomats said. The move comes after the United States vetoed a UN Security Council resolution that demanded an immediate humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza. Among the other 15 members of the Security Council, 13, including France and Switzerland, supported the proposal. Britain abstained. In mid-October, a Russian-drafted UN Security Council resolution, that would have called for a humanitarian ceasefire in the war in Gaza, failed to pass after it did not achieve the minimum nine votes needed in the 15-member body. In late October, the General Assembly adopted a resolution urging an "immediate, lasting and sustainable humanitarian ceasefire" in the Gaza Strip. 120 countries voted in favor of the resolution, 14 voted against, and 45 abstained. Unlike resolutions passed by the Security Council, resolutions approved in the General Assembly are non-binding.

Reuters

Blinken: Israel Should Do More to Protect Gaza Civilians

US Secretary of State Anthony Blinken urged Israel to do more to protect Palestinian civilians in its war with Hamas, as Israeli tanks fought their way into the main city of the southern Gaza Strip. Blinken said Israel needs to put "a premium" on protecting Gaza civilians and making sure humanitarian assistance can reach those who need it. Among the steps that Blinken said the United States is "not seeing sufficiently" are "deconfliction times, places and routes" that would allow humanitarian operations to deliver aid and help civilians to get out of harm's way. Israel vowed to annihilate Hamas after militants burst across the border on Oct. 7 and went on a rampage through Israeli towns, gunning down families in their homes, killing 1,200 people and seizing 240 hostages. Health authorities in Hamas-run Gaza said that about 18,000 Palestinians have since been killed in the war, while 49,500 have been injured. Thousands more are missing and presumed dead. The Biden administration has also used emergency authority to allow the sale of about 14,000 tank shells to Israel without congressional review, the Pentagon said.

Israel National News

Cabinet Ends Discussion on Entry of PA Workers Into Israel

A discussion in the Israeli Cabinet, which dealt with a proposal to allow the entry of Palestinian workers from Judea and Samaria/West Bank into Israel, ended without agreements being reached on the issue. Prime Minister Netanyahu decided not to hold a vote after the discussion, since many ministers expressed strong opposition to the move and there was a concern that he would not have a majority to pass the decision. The Socio-Economic Cabinet, headed by Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, unanimously voted against the defense establishment's proposal to increase the number of Palestinian Arab workers who are allowed to enter Israel under restrictions. [Read More "PA Calls for Sanctions to Be Imposed on Israel" \(Israel National\)](#)

Hezbollah and Iranian Militia Targets in Syria Struck

Syria's army said its air defense shot down Israeli missiles fired at the surroundings of the capital Damascus from the Golan Heights. Other missiles not intercepted caused some damage, the army said in a statement. The Israeli army declined to comment. Syrian opposition outlets reported that Israel has carried out two rounds of airstrikes on targets in the rural parts of Damascus. Syrian media outlets reported that the Damascus airport was attacked, as well as targets in the town of Sayyidah Zaynab and in Quneitra. The Syrian Center for Human Rights, a London-based opposition war monitor, also claimed that the attacks were aimed at sites in those areas, which house command nodes and weapons depots belonging to Hezbollah forces and Iranian-backed militias. It was further reported that the strikes targeted air defense force sites, and there was no immediate information on casualties. [Read More "6 IDF Soldiers Hurt in Hezbollah Drone Attack; IAF Responds with Widespread Strikes" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Associated Press

Egyptians Vote for President, with El-Sissi Certain to Win

Egyptians began voting in a presidential election in which President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi faces no serious challenger and is certain to win another term, keeping him in power until 2030. The election has been overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. Almost all Egyptians' attention has been on the war on their country's eastern borders and the suffering of Palestinian civilians in the coastal enclave. The three-day vote is also taking place amid a staggering economic crisis in Egypt, a country of 105 million people in which nearly a third live in poverty, according to official figures. The crisis stems from mismanagement of the economy but also from the repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic and the ongoing Russian war in Ukraine, which rattled the global economy. El-Sissi voted at a polling center in the Cairo suburb of Heliopolis as soon as the polls opened. Ahead of the vote, the interior ministry, which oversees police forces, deployed thousands of troops across the country to secure the election. More than 67 million people are eligible to vote, and authorities are hoping for a high turnout to give the election legitimacy. El-Sissi was reelected in 2018 for a second, four-year term. He faced only one challenger, a little-known politician who joined the race at the last minute to spare the government the embarrassment of a one-candidate election after several hopefuls were forced out or arrested. In 2019, constitutional amendments, passed in a general referendum, added two years to el-Sissi's second term and allowed him to run for a third, six-year term.

Enough With Painting Palestinians with a Broad Brush

By Yossi Beilin

- Yes, there is a difference. Are there "good Palestinians" and "bad Palestinians"? Are all Palestinians the same? Are they all seeking to destroy us, and the only difference between them is a mask behind which Israel's potential murderers are hiding? After all, it is clear that differences between people are a human trait, and that in every society, just like among the Jewish People, there are some like that and some like that. It is not easy to throw out generalizations like "all Jews are the same," or "all girls want the same thing." There is nothing more simplistic than that.
- To say that there is no difference between Hamas and the PLO under Fatah's leadership is the ultimate way of saying that Israel is not prepared to talk to the Palestinian entity that recognized us, whose leader opposes the use of violence and believes in a two-state solution. The "theory" of "no difference" is factually wrong, of course, but historically helps the peace refusers: If they are all "the same," it means that the pragmatic agent willing to compromise will eternally be misleading.
- Netanyahu's refusal to discuss the question of the day after the war and the control of the Gaza Strip with the Americans does not stem from a solution that he is hiding, but from the fact that he objects to the return of the Palestinian Authority (with which more intense security negotiations are being held, even though no one is prepared to admit this) to the Gaza Strip. If no solution is found, Israel will be the one to establish military rule there. He knows that the return of the PA will involve a return to the peace process, after which a Palestinian state will be established in the West Bank and Gaza, and since he has made himself Israel's best defender against the only solution that will guarantee the future of the Jewish state, he is simply not ready to talk about it.
- Netanyahu's government was supposed to find itself at present in the midst of international discussions to establish a body that would temporarily lead Gaza, after Hamas. The composition of the Coalition prevents it from taking the most vital move imaginable. After the war, we will find ourselves in a conflict regarding the return of the PA to Gaza vis-à-vis a US administration that is closest to Israel than ever before.
- The events of October 7, in addition to the intelligence failure, are the result of a mistaken policy that favored Hamas, which was not ready for a political compromise, over the Palestinian cause that wants such a compromise. Whoever refuses to negotiate with the PLO continues to adhere to the old "concept," like the same blind horse that falls into a pit time and time again, and puts us all at risk.

The Best Way for Israel to Destroy Hamas and Save Lives

By Yair Lapid

- Over 10 years ago, when I was Israel's finance minister, I initiated a joint operation between the Treasury and a secret Mossad unit charged with economic warfare against terrorism. The goal was to hamper Hezbollah's revenues. With the help of financial experts, we started to map that organization's sources of income. The government fell unexpectedly, and the following government, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, completely abandoned this issue. In 2016, the Mossad unit was moved to the Defense Ministry and its operations were given a low priority. That was a grave mistake.
- The cost of economic warfare is low and there are no risks to human lives, yet the results can be dramatic. Terror organizations are also economic organizations. Without a regular cash flow, they cannot purchase weapons, train, build tunnels, pay salaries and finance terror attacks. What was true for Hezbollah then is even more true now with regard to Hamas. Anyone wishing to eliminate this organization must act against its sources of revenue. Much of its money lies in banks in Istanbul or in the cryptocurrency market, and it is within reach.
- The government Naftali Bennett and I headed stopped the suitcases of cash coming to Gaza from Qatar, but a lot of money continued to arrive and still does, from Iran, Qatar and Malaysia, from commercial companies in Turkey, Algeria, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, as well as from the Islamic Bank, from taxes collected in the Gaza Strip, from transfers made by the Palestinian Authority to civil servants, from a network of money exchangers, and from a long list of nonprofit organizations posing as charities. According to a document published by the US Treasury after October 7, Hamas' annual revenues are estimated to amount to between \$2.5 billion and \$3 billion. This is apparently an inflated amount, but senior Hamas officials living outside the Gaza Strip, such as Ismail Haniyeh, Moussa Abu Marzouk and Khaled Meshal, are registered billionaires.
- In Gazan terms, Meshal's assets constitute inconceivable wealth. In Israeli terms, these are amounts that a high-tech power, with American and European assistance, can seriously impact. Israel must set up an international coalition that will take action against the income sources of terrorist organizations. These funds serve as a driving force for terror, and we must, and can, stop them. Israel's destructive doctrine of fostering Hamas as a counterweight to the Palestinian Authority did not do much to harm Hamas economically.
- For example, we didn't put pressure on the Americans to aggressively apply the weapon of sanctions (which proved effective against a much larger financial entity – Russia). Even now, companies belonging to the array of Hamas' investment network, which have been subjected to sanctions for some time, continue to be traded on the Turkish stock market, and their bank accounts remain active.

- **We have also not employed our cyber capabilities or mobilized the economic power of Israel's business world. And of course, Israel must put a stop to the transfer of funds from the Palestinian Authority to Hamas in the Gaza Strip. Currently, none of this is happening. There is no coordinator in charge of this issue, and there is no cabinet member (and there's no lack of them) charged with this task. There is no operational plan. Israel must immediately set up an aggressive and effective financial task force to address this matter. We need to collect data, starting with the routes of money transfers to Hamas and ending with the global web of support it enjoys, leading to the choking off of its financial sources. Such a move will harm it more than most of the military operations now taking place, and at a much lower cost in blood.**