



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

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News Excerpts

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Ynet News

West Urges Israel Not to Respond to Iran's Attack

Following the Iranian attack on Israel, the Foreign Ministry received urgent requests for calls with Foreign Minister Israel Katz. Two of the requests, from British Foreign Secretary David Cameron and French Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné, were particularly pressing. According to ministry sources familiar with the details, the two top diplomats, whose countries were actively involved in mitigating the attack, sought to speak urgently with their Israeli counterpart due to concerns about an immediate Israeli response and escalation. [Read More "United States Urges Israel to "Be Careful and Strategic" Regarding Response to Iran Attack" \(Axios\)](#)

Times of Israel

US, UK and Jordan Intercept Iranian Drones Headed to Israel

The US, Britain, Jordan and France all helped to intercept the massive barrage of drones Iran fired at Israel overnight Saturday, according to officials. While the US, Britain and France are military allies of Israel, the move was a dramatic show of support from Amman, which has heavily criticized Israel's prosecution of its war in Gaza against Hamas. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said the Iranian attack, the Islamic Republic's first direct assault on Israel, comprised some 170 drones, 30 cruise missiles, and 120 ballistic missiles. The US and Israel had been bracing for an attack for days after Iran said it would retaliate for a suspected Israeli strike this month on what Tehran claims was a consular building in Syria that killed 12 people, including two senior Iranian generals in the Revolutionary Guard's elite Quds Force. [Dig Deeper "Iran's Attack Exposes Close Cooperation Between Israel and Jordan" \(Ynet News\)](#)

Jerusalem Post

Gantz: Iran Will Pay the Price in 'Correct Manner and Time'

After Iran's missile and drone attack against Israel. Minister-without-portfolio and member of Israel's war cabinet, MK Benny Gantz, insinuated in a video statement that Israel would not respond immediately with an attack against Iran. "Facing Iran, we will build a regional coalition and may Iran pay the price, in a manner and time that is correct for us," Gantz said. Gantz called the results a "strategic achievement" that Israel must "leverage" for its national security. "This event is not over – the strategic alliance and alignment of regional cooperation must be strengthened, specifically now," Gantz added. Far-right National Security Minister MK Itamar Ben-Gvir called Gantz's comments "hollow western slogans by those who remain deep in the conception. In order to create deterrence in the Middle East, the boss must go nuts," Ben-Gvir wrote on X. [Read More "War Cabinet Said to Favor Hitting Back at Iran but Divided over When and How" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Reuters

Iranian Notice of Attack Dampened Escalation Risks

Turkish, Jordanian and Iraqi officials said Iran gave wide notice days before Saturday's drone and missile attack on Israel allowing mass casualties and rampant escalation to be averted, but a US official denied this. Most of the hundreds of drones and missiles launched by Iran in a retaliatory strike were downed before reaching Israeli territory, though a young girl was critically injured and the region remains braced for further escalation. Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian said Iran had given neighboring countries and Israel's ally the US 72 hours' notice it would launch the strikes, a move that would have enabled them to largely thwart the attack. Turkey's Foreign Ministry said it had spoken to both Washington and Tehran before the attack, adding it had conveyed messages as an intermediary to be sure reactions were proportionate.

Associated Press

House Speaker Johnson Says He Will Push for Aid to Israel

House Speaker Mike Johnson said he will try to advance wartime aid for Israel this week as he attempts the difficult task of winning House approval for a national security package that also includes funding for Ukraine and allies in Asia. Johnson is already under immense political pressure from his fellow GOP lawmakers as he tries to stretch between the Republican Party's divided support for helping Kyiv defend itself from Moscow's invasion. The Republican speaker has sat for two months on a \$95 billion supplemental package that would send support to the US allies, as well as provide humanitarian aid for civilians in Ukraine and Gaza and funding to replenish US weapons provided to Taiwan. The attack by Iran on Israel further ratcheted up the pressure on Johnson but also gave him an opportunity to underscore the urgency of approving the funding.

Al-Monitor

UN Chief: Middle East, World Cannot 'Afford More War'

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned the international community against deeper descent into conflict, addressing the Security Council during a meeting over Iran's weekend attack on Israel. "Neither the region nor the world can afford more war," Guterres said. "The Middle East is on the brink," he told the Security Council. "The people of the region are confronting a real danger of a devastating full-scale conflict. Now is the time to defuse and de-escalate," he added, calling for "maximum restraint." According to the Israeli army, 12 people were injured in the attack. Iran said its attack came in response to a deadly April 1 air strike on Tehran's consulate building in the Syrian capital Damascus that was widely blamed on Israel. That attack killed seven Iranian Revolutionary Guards, including two senior generals, and prompted Iranian threats of retaliation. The unprecedented exchange, marking a major escalation between the two countries, has sparked renewed fears of a broader conflict, including the potential for an Israel counterstrike.

Mossad: Hamas Rejects Hostage Release Proposal

Iranian Hamas has rejected a hostage release deal proposed by the US, Qatar and Egypt, according to a statement released by the Mossad. The proposal included releasing hostages and increasing the amount of humanitarian aid entering Gaza. "By rejecting the deal, in which Israel showed flexibility, [Hamas leader Yahya] Sinwar has proved he doesn't want a humanitarian deal and to return the hostages, and [he] is continuing to take advantage of the tensions with Iran in order to combine the [battle] arenas and escalate the region," the Mossad said in a statement. Hamas announced it has given its response to the proposal, adding that it had demanded a permanent cease-fire, more humanitarian aid and the return of all Gazans to their homes. The proposal included the release of 40 Israeli hostages. [Read More "Hamas Spurns Latest Hostage Deal Proposal, Demands Permanent Ceasefire" \(Times of Israel\)](#) ["US Unveils Sanctions on Hamas Spokesperson Abu Ubaida" \(Al-Monitor\)](#) ["Iran's Attack on Israel Stirs Admiration Among Gaza Palestinians"](#) ["Dozens of Palestinians Killed in Gaza as Hamas Official Vows to 'Break' Israel" \(Reuters\)](#)

Times of Israel

Settlers Riot in West Bank Towns After Teen's Murder

Settlers rampaged through a number of Palestinian West Bank villages, vandalizing property and causing injuries and a fatality, as the body of a [missing Israeli teen](#) was found nearby. An Israeli journalist said he was brutally beaten by the rioters and had his equipment destroyed. As Israeli forces searched for 14-year-old Benjamin Achimeir on Friday, Jewish settlers entered the village of al-Mughayyir, northeast of Ramallah, and set houses and cars ablaze. One person was killed in that rampage, Palestinian medics said, though it was unclear whether he was shot by settlers or Israeli security forces who arrived on the scene amid clashes between the settlers and residents. Palestinian health officials said 25 others were wounded. Israeli troops delayed the ambulance carrying the slain 26-year-old's body for several hours, witnesses said. Security forces found the body of Jerusalem resident Achimeir, saying he had been murdered in a terror attack. Dozens of settlers then returned to the al-Mughayyir's outskirts, burning two homes and several cars. The Palestinian Health Ministry said three people from the village were injured, one critically. In the nearby village of Douma, settlers set fire to several homes, according to Wafa, the official Palestinian news agency. The Palestinian Red Crescent said six people were injured by gunfire but did not say who fired. [Read More "Anger Among Israeli Bedouins After Girl Wounded in Iranian Attack" \(Al-Monitor\)](#)

Increase Vigilance, Respond with Caution

By Ronen Bergman

- **“Keep calm and carry on,” was the slogan used by the British Ministry of Information in the months leading up to World War II, as it became increasingly evident that the Nazi beast was rearing its head and that something needed to be done to boost morale. That sign hangs over the door to our home. I very much believe in it, mainly during difficult times. That slogan reflects better than anything the image of the prime minister who led Britain during that war, Winston Churchill. These four words sum up the most difficult years in the empire’s history, possibly in the history of the entire planet. Words that say that even in the most dire of times we must act responsibly, judiciously be “cool” and act maturely. We must not plunge into the depths of doom or soar with excessive war euphoria.**
- **At the same time, however, the Churchillian doctrine of remaining calm does not mean being lax, conciliatory, appeasing or defeatist. Not at all. To the contrary: that slogan calls on one to carry on resolutely, with one’s head held high to achieve the war’s objectives. It might also have been a good idea to hang that sign up over the entrance to the war cabinet’s meeting room, the IDF’s “pit” and the underground bunker in the Jerusalem Hills. The Israeli prime minister wishes to resemble Churchill, but the harder he tries, the more the similarity eludes his grasp. He is not alone on that count. The war drums that are beating in the war cabinet’s meeting room reflect [the ministers’] unfamiliarity with what Churchill proved during the years of that awful war. Restraint isn’t defeat. To wait isn’t to countenance. Patience isn’t a sign of weakness.**
- **For the time being, that isn’t the prevailing sentiment there. A source who is very well-informed about the marathon talks that were held this past week in a series of secret meeting rooms, both above and below ground, said, “Had they been filmed and uploaded onto YouTube, there would be four million people in Ben Gurion Airport today looking for a way to escape from here.” The Iranian retaliation for the Israeli assassination of a high-ranking general in Damascus got underway last night. If Israel retaliates, it will strike at strategic targets in the heart of Tehran and possibly in other cities as well. This is a binary issue—either zero or one.**
- **That is the approach at present. It is less important how many missiles and/or UAVs successfully penetrate the tightknit Israeli air-defense systems, and it does not really matter how many of them hit—Israel will retaliate and it will retaliate with enormous strength. Israel believes that Iran intends to swarm Israel with several dozen cruise missiles and roughly 150 unmanned aerial vehicles, along with surface-to-surface missiles, which apparently will be aimed at military targets. Israeli officials are worried about the results of an attack of that kind since they are not certain that the air- defense systems will be capable of dealing with it and that all of the bases, including Navy ships, are protected against it. The United States’ assessment is that Israel is the target, not American troops in Iraq and Syria.**

- Iranian sources said Iran would not attack Americans because it wants to take advantage of the split between Biden and Netanyahu over Gaza, not to unite them around an attack. IDF officials may not be worried about an attack on the Wing of Zion, Netanyahu's airborne hotel, but they are worried because they do not want to enter into a full-scale and direct war with Iran and are afraid that a relatively successful attack might prompt the political leadership to order an immediate counterattack.
- A majority within the war cabinet, and not just Netanyahu and Gallant, believes that if the attack originates from Iranian territory, Israel will have to retaliate because, as one source said [presumably before last night's attack], "It is unthinkable that Israel should attack a target in Syria, and Iran should attack Israeli territory in response from Iranian territory, and that Israel should not respond."
- According to several sources, this is the situation at present: The IDF's air-defense systems and the IAF are at peak readiness. All reservists who serve with the air defense systems and the IAF have been called up and are ready. The assessment is that the travel time for a large part of the weapons that Iran will use will allow Israel to intercept them in mid-route. It takes an unmanned aerial vehicle launched from Iran eight hours to reach Israel; it takes a cruise missile three hours to arrive and it takes a surface-to-surface ballistic missile 20 minutes.
- Regarding the former two, the travel time gives Israel enough time to scramble planes to intercept them while en route to Israel and to significantly reduce the number of incoming weapons. The attack plans have already been approved and will be executed within a number of hours at the war cabinet's instructions. Members of the war cabinet want an immediate response, without hesitation and without waiting.
- One person who previously headed several of the security establishment's primary units and branches said, "Reality is far more powerful than what appears to be correct. Even with a zany government like this one." He said, "I believe that once the missiles land, reality will dictate [serious] thinking and a level head." I hope he is right because many of the handful of people who visited the war cabinet's meeting rooms got a completely different impression.
- On the Iranian side of the divide, it seems that preparations for the war of Armageddon are gradually being completed and that Iran has locked itself in publicly in a way that will not allow it to back down. The speech given by Iranian spiritual leader Ali Khamenei in honor of the saint who perished in Damascus ended with Khamenei speaking about revenge.
- At that point, the camera panned to the smiling face of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Aerospace Force (IRGC-AF) Commander Amir Ali Hajizadeh. Iran ordered a ban on air traffic in large parts of its territory in anticipation of a possible preemptive Israeli strike and/or an Israeli retaliatory strike. Iranian air defense systems have been placed on peak alert, and Iranian officials are leery of another incident of mistaken anti-aircraft fire on a civilian aircraft.

- The question isn't only what and how much the Iranians fire, but also how successful Israel's interceptions are, as well the scope of the damage caused. The very act of attacking Israel has symbolic importance. This is the first time Israel has been attacked by a sovereign state since the 1991 Gulf War; now, as then, Israel has good reason to take a deep breath, drink some water and, if need be, stop for a moment. In 1991, Israel acceded to the American request not to retaliate against Iraq so as not to unravel the international coalition. Israel received tremendous compensation for the relatively minor damage that was caused by the missiles from the United States and Germany.
- There had been a disturbing difference between the two cases up until two days ago; back then, the United States asked Israel to sit quietly by while the American troops dealt with the missile launchers. This time, the United States simply asked Israel to sit quietly by. Obviously, that has created additional difficulties. Until two days ago, the United States had not understood the severity of the situation or Israel's unwillingness to countenance an Iranian attack from Iranian soil against targets on Israeli soil. That stemmed both from the poor relationship between Netanyahu and the president and from the slow pace at which some of the intelligence was shared, which stemmed from lower-level relations with Israeli work-level officials.
- According to some reports, Israel did not coordinate the assassination in Damascus with the United States. The IDF Operations Directorate only informed the Americans of the operation as the bombs were landing on the building. The Americans were furious. They are also deeply concerned and feel that Israel has mired them in the very situation that they had hoped to avoid. On the one hand, they do not want to become embroiled in a war with Iran, which—after retaliating powerfully for the attack on American targets and reassuring the ayatollahs—they thought that they had successfully averted. On the other hand, the Americans received very clear signals that made them afraid that any failure by them to stand unequivocally with Israel would be badly misinterpreted by other countries, such as Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.
- The good news, which only underscores just how much moderation and responsibility Israel needs to show, is that the United States had engaged in important diplomacy in the past two days, which appears to have yielded results. A lot of heated diplomacy and bilateral phone calls were placed to the Iranian foreign minister by his counterparts in Germany, the UK, France, Saudi Arabia and Turkey to persuade the Iranians to limit their operation. According to some sources, Iran promised the countries it spoke with—Turkey, for instance—that its attack was a retaliatory strike that was designed to serve as a response, but one that could be countenanced by Israel and would not force Israeli retaliation. Iran, according to reports, decided to scale back the scope of its attack and to aim for targets that are far from [the populous] center [of Israel].
- There is one other issue that needs to be addressed: the absence of a responsible adult who engages with the Israeli public and not only with the enemy, something that has been sorely absent here ever since October 7. Instructions issued to the public are unreasonable (no school for children, but adults are expected to go to work? Can the public leave their homes?). “The Home Front Command is trying to reassure [the public]

now. By morning, chances are good that it will instruct everything to go back to normal, but the IDF Spokesperson's Office has volunteered to make everyone anxious," as one high-ranking official said to me. Who decides in Israel what to do with the public and how anxious to make it? Who approves that? To the best of my knowledge—no one.

War with Iran

By Yoav Limor

- **Israel is in its most difficult strategic situation since the Yom Kippur War, and possibly in its entire history. What began as a war against Hamas in Gaza turned last night into a direct and open war with Iran, one that could possibly lead to a larger regional war. The Iranian attack that began last night in response to the assassination of Hassan Mahdavi, a high-ranking Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps officer, was carried out without precedent from Iranian soil, and not exclusively by means of Iranian proxies (though they also took part in the attack). The Iranians initially launched unmanned aerial vehicles, and still have the option of using three other types of weapons: Shahab missiles armed with warheads of various sizes, which take roughly ten minutes to travel from Iranian territory to Israel; cruise missiles, which take roughly two hours to reach Israel from Iran; and various types of unmanned aerial vehicles, which need to travel six hours and more before impact.**
- **Ballistic missiles are easy to detect because of their trajectory. The amount of time they are airborne provides Israel with several chances to intercept them with the Arrow missile defense system, though the system will be increasingly challenged the larger the number of missiles fired at Israel is. UAVs and cruise missiles are harder to detect because of their low flight profile, but the fact that they travel slowly allows them to be easily intercepted once they are detected. Presumably, American aircraft deployed in the Persian Gulf will be integrated into the effort to intercept them, and other countries that are part of the American axis in the region might help as well.**
- **Israeli-American coordination was synchronized this past weekend in the course of CENTCOM Commander General Michael Kurilla's visit to Israel. Kurilla was still in Israel when the attack began last night. The Americans are also helping Israel detect launches, which gives Israel more time to prepare its interception and defensive efforts. The assessment shared by both countries is that Iran has chosen to attack military targets, and not civilian targets, in an attempt to leave the Iranian population out of the war in the event of Israeli retaliation for the attack. The strong backing that the United States has given Israel is particularly notable when juxtaposed with the recent deterioration in relations between the two countries.**
- **The Biden administration has proved once again—just as it did early on in the war—that when Israel's security is at risk, it is prepared to go very far, including so far as to risk American interests and troops in the region. The Biden administration has done that despite the fact that Israel did not share its plans to assassinate Mahdavi and despite the blunt statements that senior Israeli officials have made in recent weeks about Biden and his aides. That state of affairs makes one question once again the wisdom of the policies enacted by Netanyahu and his government. His deliberate clash with the Biden administration poses a clear and immediate danger to Israel's security.**

- **Netanyahu knows perfectly well that Israel's number-one deterrent against its enemies is its close relationship with the United States. The fact that Biden cut short his vacation yesterday and returned to the White House shows that he wants to be very close to the decision-making nexus, should the United States be forced to intervene in the war.**
- **Israel has made it clear in recent days that it will retaliate powerfully for any Iranian attack. It has threatened Iran with attack for years; ultimately, however, it was Iran that attacked it first. The Israeli reaction will likely be determined based on the scope of the Iranian attack and its character, and mainly on the casualties and damage inflicted. If Israel successfully foils most of the attack and prevents loss of life and damage, it will be able to make do with relatively low-key retaliation, one that might prevent a full-scale war from breaking out. Extensive damage to Israeli interests will certainly produce a far more powerful response, which could lead to fighting on other fronts as well—first and foremost so against Hizbullah in the north.**
- **Senior Israeli officials said this weekend that Israel has already begun to prepare its retaliation, though a final decision will only be made after the results of the anticipated Iranian attack become known. Naturally, the eruption of the Iranian front will command most of Israel's diplomatic and security attention, but Israel has good reason to be deeply concerned about the other fronts as well. The murder of the shepherd, Binyamin Ahimeir, whose body was found yesterday morning, could set the West Bank on fire amid concerns about acts of vengeance by Jews. Large numbers of troops are currently deployed to keep Israelis and Palestinians separate, but the situation on the ground appears to be on the verge of spiraling out of control.**
- **The rocket fire on Sderot serves as a reminder that Gaza remains under Hamas's control—partially so, at least—and that the promised victory remains farther away than what the prime minister promised. Moreover, the IDF's focus on other sectors now reduces the chances of a renewed expansion of the fighting in Gaza, effectively giving Hamas breathing room without Israel having received any hostages in return. Further reinforcing that situation is the large number of trucks that will be delivering humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip this coming week (more than 500 every day), which Israel is also giving "for free" and without getting anything in return from Hamas. It is hard to avoid the feeling that the government is less interested in the fate of the hostages.**
- **This was illustrated by the encounter between Einav Zangauker and two Religious Zionist Party MKs, Michal Woldiger and Simcha Rothman. Whereas Woldiger stood and listened to the accusations that were hurled at her by the anguished mother, Rothman opted to hide in his car and stare at his cell phone. That was painful and eye-opening: the realization that some of our publicly-elected officials lack all compassion and heart. Given the developments in the other arenas, the hostages are going to need a whole lot of luck for their fate to be restored to the top of the public agenda. The war in Gaza is liable to turn into a war against Iran within a matter of hours, and possibly into a far broader war that also includes Hizbullah as well as other actors.**

- **That obliges Israel to be smart strategically and to have nerves of steel. It needs to think carefully about every move and operation, to consult and coordinate with its partners, and have the wherewithal to squelch background noise and to focus on the most important issues at hand. Israel went to war in the Gaza Strip six months and a week ago. It is still far from attaining its objectives. Hamas has not yet been defeated and the hostages are still not home. It is also far from attaining its secondary objectives. Hizbullah has not been pushed away from the northern border, Judea and Samaria (West Bank) might erupt in violence and Israel's international legitimacy is at an unprecedented nadir. Instead of attaining all of those objectives, Israel has pushed itself, with its own two hands, closer to a war with Iran and to the possible eruption of a full-scale regional war.**
- **That is precisely what Sinwar wanted to achieve on October 7. Israel needs to use all of its wisdom and strength to deny him that wish. That obliges the public to remain calm, and the government to use its head and not its gut. Its behavior so far in the war does not bode well; we can only hope that it will rise to the occasion of the historic challenge facing it and all of us.**