



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

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News Excerpts

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Times of Israel

Israel Intensifies Gaza Operations; Soldier Killed in Action

The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) intensified its operations against Hamas terrorists in the central and northern Gaza Strip, as the war reached its 200th day. Israeli strikes intensified in what residents said was some of the heaviest shelling in weeks, particularly hitting the north from where the Israeli army had previously drawn down its troops. Strikes by air and shelling from tanks on the ground were also reported in central and southern areas, in what residents said were almost non-stop bombardments. Dozens more airstrikes were carried out across Gaza, targeting buildings used by Hamas, observation posts, rocket launch sites, and other infrastructure and operatives, according to the IDF. Meanwhile, Lt. Col. Avichay Adraee, the IDF's Arabic-language spokesman, urged residents of four zones in northern Gaza's Beit Lahiya to move to shelter in two designated areas near the town. Amid the operation, Sgt. First Class (res.) Salm Alkreshat, a tracker in the Gaza Division's Northern Brigade, was killed.

Al-Monitor

Satterfield to Step Down as US Envoy for Gaza Aid

The Biden administration's point person for Gaza humanitarian aid, David Satterfield, will leave his post at the end of the week but stay on as senior advisor. Satterfield will be replaced by Lise Grande, the president of the Washington-based United States Institute of Peace. Prior to joining USIP, Grande headed the United Nations' humanitarian operations in Yemen and served as deputy head of the UN's political mission in Iraq during the campaign against the Islamic State. Satterfield is a former US ambassador to Turkey and director of the Baker Institute for Public Policy at Rice University. He was appointed US Special Envoy for Middle East Humanitarian Issues a week after Israel launched its counteroffensive in the Gaza Strip in response to Hamas' unprecedented attack on Oct. 7.

Associated Press

Tent Compound Rises as Israel Prepares for Rafah Offensive

Satellite photos analyzed by The Associated Press appear to show a new compound of tents being built near Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip as the Israeli military signals that it plans an offensive on the city of Rafah. Khan Younis has been targeted by Israeli military operations over recent weeks. Israel has said it plans to evacuate civilians from Rafah during an anticipated offensive on the southern city, where hundreds of thousands of people have taken refuge during the war, now in its seventh month. A Palestinian health official said the tent camp was being set up to house displaced people who are currently sheltering in a hospital and is not related to any impending military operation. Its presence underscores the struggle to find shelter in Gaza, where some 80% of people have fled their homes.

Associated Press

UN Calls for Investigation into Graves Uncovered in Gaza

The United Nations called for “a clear, transparent and credible investigation” of mass graves uncovered at two major hospitals in war-torn Gaza that were raided by Israeli troops. Credible investigators must have access to the sites, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters and added that more journalists need to be able to work safely in Gaza to report on the facts. UN human rights chief Volker Türk said he was “horrified” by the destruction of the Shifa Medical Center in Gaza City and Nasser Hospital in the southern city of Khan Younis as well as the reported discovery of mass graves in and around the facilities after the Israelis left. He called for independent and transparent investigations into the deaths, saying that “given the prevailing climate of impunity, this should include international investigators.” [Read More “Report Says Israel Hasn’t Proved Alleged Widespread UNRWA Staff Links to Hamas” \(Axios\)](#)

Jerusalem Post

Hamas’s Armed Wing Calls for Escalation Across All Fronts

The spokesperson for Hamas' armed al-Qassam Brigades, Abu Ubaida, called for an escalation across all fronts in a televised speech marking 200 days since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in the Gaza Strip on Oct. 7. Israel says it is seeking to eradicate Hamas, which controls the enclave. In a video aired by Al Jazeera TV, Abu Ubaida praised Iran's attack on Israel on April 13, saying the direct strikes with explosive drones and missiles "set new rules, drew important equations, and confused the enemy and those behind it." He also called for an escalation in the West Bank and Jordan calling it "one of the most important Arab fronts." "We call on the Jordanian people to step up their actions and raise their voices," Abu Ubaida said. He said Hamas was sticking to its demands at the ongoing ceasefire talks - that Israel ends its military offensive, pulls out forces from Gaza, allows the displaced to return to northern Gaza, and lifts the blockade.

Reuters

Israeli Forces Kill Palestinian Man During West Bank Raid

Israeli forces killed a Palestinian man and wounded two people including a child during raids in the Jericho and adjacent refugee camps, Palestinian health authorities said. There was no immediate comment from the Israeli military on the incident, with frequent raids by Israeli forces, as well as rampages by violent Jewish settlers and street attacks by Palestinians on Israelis. The dead man, identified as 44-year-old Shadi Issa Galaita, had been standing outside his house in Jericho city, watching troops as they carried out a raid but had not been involved in the events his uncle, Shafiq Jalayta, said. The Palestinian news agency Wafa said the two wounded, including a child, were hit by bullets during a separate incident in the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp, just outside Jericho, where local residents said youths threw stones at the soldiers and there was a limited exchange of fire. Hundreds of Palestinians have been killed in clashes with Israeli forces since the start of the war in Gaza last October. Most have been armed militants but stone-throwing youths and uninvolved civilians have also been killed.

Palestinian Prime Minister Announces New Reform Package

Newly installed Palestinian Authority (PA) Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa announced a package of reforms aimed at strengthening the PA. Mustafa, appointed by PA President Mahmoud Abbas earlier this year, said his government would introduce measures to improve transparency and fight corruption, overhaul the justice system and security sectors and improve public sector efficiency. In addition, he said the health and education system would be improved, public finances strengthened and economic reforms implemented. The reform pledges largely match promises previously made by his predecessor Mohammed Shtayyeh, who announced his resignation in February as the PA looked to build support for an expanded role amid Israel's war against the Hamas terror group in Gaza. The US and other international partners have pressed the PA to implement sweeping reforms to restore confidence among Palestinians, who have become deeply disillusioned with the body set up under the interim Oslo Peace Accords more than 30 years ago.

Hezbollah Deepens Rocket, Drones Attack on Northern Israel

Hezbollah claimed responsibility for firing rockets and attack drones toward Nahariya and Kiryat Shmona, asserting that the targets were military. The terror group also stated that the attack was in response to Israeli strikes in southern Lebanon, and [the assassination of a Hezbollah commander](#). Along the shores of Acre, sirens blared for the first time since December. Videos captured swimmers scrambling in panic, some fleeing the beach during the alerts. Amidst this chaos, the network "Al-Mayadeen," affiliated with Hezbollah and echoing the organization's rhetoric, claimed after the firing into the northern region that "an Israeli military target had been struck by an attack drone fired from southern Lebanon," adding that "the target was hit." Following the firing on Israel's north, the Israeli Air Force launched a series of strikes against Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon. Sirens warning of rocket fire were also activated in the community of Margaliot in Upper Galilee. [Read More "Hezbollah Drones Downed off Coast of Acre, Nahariya, After IDF Strikes Kill 2 Operatives" "UN Nuclear Chief: Iran 'Weeks, Not Months' from Enough Uranium to Make a Bomb" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Beginning the Healing Process

By Alon Ben David

- He could have acted sooner, but Aharon Haliva made the right decision not to wait any longer. His resignation as the director of the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate wasn't only the self-evident decision to make, it was essential. That decision now needs to show the way for all the other commanders who bear responsibility for the October 7 failure. They cannot continue to wait for the inquiries that are being conducted at a lackadaisical pace. The people who bear the heaviest burden of responsibility for the massacre cannot continue to lead the IDF and the country. "The IDF Military Intelligence Directorate did not perform its mission," wrote Haliva in his letter of resignation, and refrained from using the only word that might possibly describe what happened here: failure.
- October 7 was a complete and decisive failure by the military establishment and by the country as a whole. Haliva bears major responsibility, but it does not end with him. All of the people who are responsible for this failure have lost their authority to continue to serve as commanders and leaders. However, before rushing into appointing Haliva a successor, a profound intelligence failure of this kind obliges us to redefine the IDF Military Intelligence Directorate's job, its methodologies and the skillset that anyone who seeks to command it needs to possess. The IDF Military Intelligence Directorate is currently a shattered organization; its top officers are busy preparing for the inquiries and with their efforts to foist responsibility on others.
- The IDF cannot fight with a dysfunctional Military Intelligence Directorate, and the Military Intelligence Directorate is going to have to be thoroughly revamped and rebuilt. The norm within the IDF to appoint field commanders as the directors of military intelligence needs to be reviewed. Appointing commanders, regardless of how talented they are, with zero experience in intelligence, reflects a lack of understanding if not downright disrespect for the intelligence profession. Field commanders who have to lead troops on the battlefield primarily need to use exclamation points. Alternatively, intelligence work mainly involves using question marks.
- The need to remain skeptical is at the heart of the intelligence profession. Intelligence work is rooted in an ongoing process of verifying and disproving every piece of information and every assessment; it takes a special kind of temperament, one that is different from the temperament needed to lead troops into battle. No one in the IDF would ever consider appointing a brigade commander, no matter how good he was at that job, as a corps' intelligence officer. It is self-evident to everyone that a unit's intelligence officer has to be an intelligence professional. That same rule applies even more so when the job in question is the State of Israel's most senior intelligence official of all. We all bear the scars of what happens when the Military Intelligence Directorate speaks in exclamation points. The rumors that have begun to spread within the IDF about Chief of Staff Halevi's desire to appoint the director of the Operations Division, Brig. Gen. Shlomi Binder, as the next director of the Military Intelligence Directorate have already begun to alarm several commanders.

- **Beyond the fact that the Operations Division also failed on October 7 and barely functioned in the hours in which the massacre was being committed, appointing Binder would repeat the same mistake that was made with Haliva's appointment. The IDF Military Intelligence Directorate needs to be given a director who is not tainted by that failure, and someone who is an authority figure and has experience in intelligence. The next director will have to replace the top commanders within the directorate too—which is certain to be a daunting task in its own right—even as the IDF is in the midst of fighting. That will require appointing a director who won't have to begin to learn the profession and the job from scratch. There aren't a lot of candidates that fit that bill, but several nevertheless come to mind. We also need to contemplate whether the current chief of staff is the right person to appoint the next director of military intelligence.**

Gaza and Rafah

By Efraim Ganor

- **More than six months into the war, with no end in sight, there are some who describe the IDF's likely incursion into Rafah as the factor that will provide the victory picture for this war. In fact, the reality is utterly different. Any incursion into Rafah— Hamas's last fortified stronghold and the place where our hostages are concentrated, who were dragged there along with the flow of terrorists who fled there for their last battle of survival—raises serious concerns that the hostages will also be hit during the IDF operation. Anyone who deludes themselves into thinking that Rafah will be the final chord to this war, that it will topple Hamas, apparently does not understand that Netanyahu's announcement that we are but a pace away from victory is a surreal joke that is divorced from reality.**
- **The hundreds of terrorists who survived the IDF's onslaught in the last six months of war deployed throughout the Gaza Strip—from Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanoun in the north to Bani Suheila and Khan Yunis in the south—and seized control of areas that the IDF left. From there they have launched terrorist operations, which have included rocket and mortar fire on the Gaza periphery communities and on Ashkelon. Terrorists who are very familiar with the terrain, with the tunnels and the shafts, are "terrorist weeds" and uprooting them will require massive cooperation by the local population that is not involved in the fighting.**
- **To secure that cooperation, a civilian mechanism must be established that addresses humanitarian problems and handles civilian problems, such as medical care, education, personal security and employment. Without this mechanism, the Gaza Strip will turn into another version of the Vietnam War, in which the Americans became bogged down in a difficult guerilla war that lasted nine years and killed 58,000 soldiers, after which it ultimately packed up and brought its troops home to grant North Vietnam victory. This is this government's biggest mistake since October 7—instead of establishing civilian mechanisms of control, the IDF is operating in the Gaza Strip today the same way as it does in Judea and Samaria. It enters with relatively small numbers of troops as a show of force and to hit terrorists based on intelligence, while it remains vulnerable to attack and has hardly created deterrence and exerted control. This is a certain recipe for entanglement, because over time the terrorists, who know the terrain and who know the IDF very well, will quickly learn the IDF's weak points in the Gaza Strip, and this is liable to cost us a high and painful price in blood.**
- **At this time, as Sinwar and his fellow Hamas leaders see that there are still some in Gaza who await them outside the tunnels, and even though the IDF's tanks, helicopters and jets threaten them, they still believe in their power and in their ability to survive this threat, and that they will return to govern the Gaza Strip. As said, they draw most of their power from their ability to control, an ability that as of today the IDF has not damaged, not even after six months of war. This is a testament to the government's failure, which has not learned anything, even today.**

- **Conquering the Gaza Strip is not enough to topple Hamas. Without presenting a plan with mechanisms for civilian control, without setting objectives for the IDF, without presenting to the world, to Israel's citizens and to Gaza's residents what the State of Israel intends to do and how it intends to act and using Rafah as the source of salvation and redemption—this will be a direct continuation of this government's surreal behavior, which will turn the Gaza Strip into a syndrome with no solution for another hundred years.**