



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

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News Excerpts

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Jerusalem Post

Gantz Set to Leave Gov't as Ultimatum Deadline Approaches

The deadline set by Minister-without-Portfolio Benny Gantz for his National Unity Party to leave the government if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu does not make the changes Gantz laid out in May will be reached on Saturday. Gantz said on May 18 that his party would leave if Netanyahu did not adopt six objectives: Returning the hostages; demolishing Hamas and demilitarizing the Gaza Strip; providing a governing alternative in the Strip: returning residents of the North to their homes by September 1 and rehabilitating the western Negev; promoting normalization with Saudi Arabia; and adopting an outline for standardized national service in which all Israelis serve the country.

Israel Hayom

US Draft Calls for Hamas, Israel to Implement Biden Plan

The United States has been circulating a revised version of its draft resolution to the United Nations Security Council members that could force Israel and Hamas to abide by the Biden administration's three-phased ceasefire plan, which Israel has agreed to in principle. In contrast to the previous draft, the new version contains a change that is unfavorable from Israel's perspective – it includes a call for both parties to fully implement the terms of the deal without delay and without conditions. US Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield said the US circulated a draft resolution to the 14 other council members to back the proposal. "Numerous leaders and governments, including in the region, have endorsed this plan and we call on the Security Council to join them in calling for implementation of this deal without delay and without further conditions," she said in a statement.

Ha'aretz

IDF Soldier Killed After Terrorists Breach Gaza Buffer Zone

A group of terrorists entered the Israeli-controlled buffer zone near the Israel-Gaza border and opened fire on nearby Israeli forces, killing Warrant Officer Zeed Mazarib. In the incident, which took place near the Kerem Shalom border crossing, IDF soldiers returned fire at the assailants. Three of the terrorists were killed by tank fire and an Air Force aircraft, and one is believed to have escaped back into Gaza. According to a preliminary investigation, the terrorists managed to enter the Israeli-controlled buffer zone from the west and were shot before they could cross the demarcation fence, beyond which Israeli towns are located. Equipment found in their possession indicates that they were prepared to raid a military base or an Israeli border town.

[Read More "IDF: Terrorists Who Breached Gaza Buffer Zone Emerged From Tunnel Near Israeli Border \(Ha'aretz\) "Over Half of Israelis Do Not Trust IDF Probe Over Who to Blame for October 7" \(I24 News\) "Depleted Hamas Switches to Insurgent Tactics in Gaza, Posing Steep Challenge" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Associated Press

Israeli Strike Kills at Least 33 People at a Gaza School

An Israeli strike on a school sheltering displaced Palestinians in central Gaza killed at least 33 people, including 12 women and children, according to local health officials. The Israeli military said that Hamas militants were operating from within the school. It was the latest instance of mass casualties among Palestinians trying to find refuge as Israel expands its offensive. Troops repeatedly have swept back into parts of the Gaza Strip they have previously invaded, underscoring the resilience of the militant group despite Israel's nearly eight-month onslaught. Witnesses and hospital officials said the strike hit the al-Sardi School, run by the UN agency for Palestinian refugees known by the acronym UNRWA. The school was filled with Palestinians who had fled Israeli operations and bombardment in northern Gaza, they said. The school was in Nuseirat, one of several built-up refugee camps in Gaza dating to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation, when hundreds of thousands of Palestinians fled or were driven from their homes in what became the new state of Israel.

Al-Monitor

Palestinians Say Israel Troops Kill Three in West Bank

The Palestinian health ministry said Israeli forces killed three Palestinians in a raid in Jenin in the occupied West Bank, while the army said troops had "eliminated militants". Israel's army said it had conducted "counterterrorism activity" around Jenin. The Al-Quds Brigades, the armed wing of Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad, said that its fighters were engaged in "violent clashes" near the Jenin refugee camp. Jenin has long been a stronghold for Palestinian militant groups, and the Israeli army routinely carries out raids in the city and adjacent camp. The West Bank, which Israel has occupied since 1967, has experienced a surge in violence for more than a year, especially since the Israel-Hamas war erupted on October 7. At least 530 Palestinians have been killed in the territory by Israeli troops or settlers since the Gaza war broke out. Attacks by Palestinians have killed at least 14 Israelis over the same period.

Reuters

Spain Requests to Intervene in S. Africa's Genocide Case

Spain has requested to intervene in South Africa's genocide case against Israel's actions in Gaza at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said. Spain joins a small number of other countries that have said they wish to intervene including Ireland, which along with Spain and Norway officially recognized a Palestinian state last week. Albares said Madrid wanted to support the ICJ in its implementation of measures including an order to Israel to cease its military operation in Rafah in southern Gaza, but gave few details of what its requested intervention would entail. The ICJ is the highest UN legal body, established in 1945 to deal with disputes between states. The ICJ judges' order to Israel last month to immediately halt its military assault on Rafah was a landmark emergency ruling following South Africa's decision to bring a case against Israel accusing it of genocide.

US Warns Israel “Limited War” with Lebanon Could Draw Iran to Intervene

The Biden administration has cautioned Israel in recent weeks against the notion of "a limited war" in Lebanon and warned it could push Iran to intervene, according to two US officials and one Israeli official. The exchange of fire between Israel and Hezbollah which has been ongoing since Oct. 7 dramatically escalated in the last two weeks, prompting some people inside the IDF and the Israeli Cabinet to call for significantly expanding the fighting against Hezbollah. US and Israeli officials said there is growing concern in the IDF and the Israeli Ministry of Defense that the situation in Lebanon is reaching a turning point. The US and France have been trying to find a diplomatic solution to reduce tensions at the border but haven't made progress yet. Preventing an all-out war between Israel and Hezbollah that could lead to wide-ranging destruction in Lebanon and Israel has been a key objective for the Biden administration in its efforts to prevent the fighting in Gaza from expanding into a much wider regional conflict. But the Biden administration believes it will be impossible to restore calm to the Israeli-Lebanese border without a ceasefire in Gaza. One scenario the administration raised with Israel is that Lebanon could be flooded with militants from pro-Iranian militias in Syria, Iraq and even Yemen who would want to join the fighting.

Israel National News

Netanyahu’s Address to Congress to Take Place on July 24

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will address a joint session of Congress on July 24, House Speaker Mike Johnson and Senate Republican Leader Mitch McConnell announced. “The bipartisan, bicameral meeting symbolizes the US and Israel's enduring relationship and will offer Prime Minister Netanyahu the opportunity to share the Israeli government's vision for defending their democracy, combatting terror, and establishing just and lasting peace in the region,” they said in a statement announcing the speech. Netanyahu said in a statement, "I am very moved to have the privilege of representing Israel before both Houses of Congress and to present the truth about our just war against those who seek to destroy us to the representatives of the American people and the entire world.” House Speaker Johnson (sent Netanyahu a formal invitation to speak during a joint meeting of Congress, and the invitation featured the signatures of all four Congressional leaders: Johnson, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, Senate Minority Leader McConnell and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries.

Rafah Conquered Him

By Nahum Barnea

- One of the central decision-makers in Israel was asked about the war in the north. He compared the situation there to a broken clock. “We move the minute hand,” he said, “we are unable to move the hour hand.” That’s an interesting image, and it also applies to the situation in the Gaza Strip, eight months since the start of the war. The IDF is learning and improving; Hizbullah is also learning and improving; and so is Hamas. It does not change the chaotic, unbearable and unending situation. The troops in the north are like a coiled spring. Their patience is running out: either send them into Lebanon or send them home—just don’t keep them endlessly waiting with emergency call-up orders.
- In 1967, the waiting period lasted three weeks. At that time, it seemed like an eternity. What do the soldiers think now, after eight months of futile clashing with Nasrallah; what do the evacuees think? Up until last week, Netanyahu made sure to remove from the agenda any proposal for changing the rules of the game vis-à-vis Lebanon. Those who attended meetings with him found it difficult to understand what worried him more—the destruction that the missiles from Lebanon would visit on central Israel, Iran’s response, the American response, or having to divert the troops from Gaza. He hadn’t yet conquered Rafah, but Rafah has conquered him.
- That is why there is no arrangement with Nasrallah and no defeating Nasrallah. This week, after the pictures of the fires in the Galilee illustrated to all Israelis our powerlessness, the rhetoric changed. For now, only the rhetoric. Netanyahu went to Kiryat Shmona, had his picture taken, and flew back. Out of a population of 23,000, 2,500 remain in the city. Netanyahu made do with meeting a local Likud politico. He ignored all else. Yair Golan, the elected chairman of the Labor Party, visited Misgav Am and Kfar Giladi. After his visit, he told me that in the first week of the war, he would have seized control of the ridge line, Hizbullah’s first line of defense. He named all the wadis and all the villages that he would have conquered: they have been etched in his brain ever since he was the commander of the IDF Northern Command.
- When I spoke to army officials, they said that Hizbullah today is not the organization that Golan once knew. Now it would take divisions to seize the mountain ridge. The 769th Brigade of the 91st Division is charged with defending the Galilee panhandle. Since the start of the war, brigade soldiers have killed 40 Hizbullah members. From a military standpoint, that is an achievement, but it didn’t cause Nasrallah to blink. In a certain sense, the IDF is Hizbullah’s personnel department: every successful kill enables the promotion of another, fresher terrorist. Metulla Mayor David Azulai repeatedly asks why the houses in Al Khiam from which anti-tank missiles are fired at Metulla, are not bombed, and why its infrastructure is not destroyed. Ordnance economy, the army replies. Rafah first. Besides, the political leadership has decided not to destroy civilian infrastructure in Lebanon. The definitive answer is that there will only be a solution once the IDF crosses the border into Lebanon. The operation will solve one problem but will give rise to a series of other, no less knotty, problems.

- **Destroy the State of Lebanon, proposes Maj. Gen. (res.) Giora Eiland; starve the residents of Gaza. These terminal ideas make us nostalgic for the country that searched for surgical, creative solutions and avoided total victories like fire.**

Alone

By Alone Ben David

- The pictures from the scorched and smoke-filled north this week only intensified the sense of frustration and the recognition that we are ashes left over from a fire that is still burning. In despair, the human inclination is to seek speedy solutions that will provide an immediate cure: a hostage deal, or alternatively, a war in Lebanon, but the dismal truth is that we don't really have either of these options. Of the 124 hostages in Gaza, 43 have since been declared dead. Of the remaining 81, there is still a not-small number of hostages who come under the definition of "major concern for their fate," in other words, there is reliable information that they are probably not alive—but not solid enough to declare them dead. We are left with just over 60 living hostages, and Hamas has no intention, no interest and no motivation to return all of them.
- The public and media conversation paints a distorted picture, as if there is a hostage deal on the table and that if we were to only make another concession or another effort, we could all rejoice at their return. The reality is that Israel submitted a terrible proposal to Hamas, which the American president revealed: a deal in whose first stage a few living hostages will be returned, in exchange for Israel giving up all the assets it holds: withdrawing all its troops from Gaza, releasing hundreds of murderers, enabling Hamas to return and govern the entire Gaza Strip and be left with no leverage to get back the dozens of remaining hostages.
- The Israeli proposal leaves in Hamas's hands the ability to dictate the continuation of the negotiations during which Hamas will be sure to demand more major concessions in exchange for every hostage it deigns to release. On the one hand, every soul we are able to save from the hell of captivity is a world unto its own; on the other hand, if the Israeli proposal is accepted, it will reduce to almost zero the chance of getting back the dozens of soldiers and young people who will remain in the tunnels. And worst of all: Hamas is in no rush to accept even this inordinate proposal. It sees the pressure that the Americans are putting on Israel and realizes that time is on its side. The US is the most energetic party in the effort to reach a hostage deal, but its behavior in the negotiations foils the chances of a deal time after time.
- The restrictions that it places on Israel and its suspension of weapon shipments only encourage Hamas to be stubborn and to wait. For now, the US makes sure to heap food shipments on Hamas that enable it to maintain a steady cash flow and to continue to pay its people. Israel doesn't even check the shipments that enter Gaza, and a steady supply of cigarettes, cola and other goods enter Gaza that are not basic foodstuffs in the framework of "humanitarian aid." Hamas then sells those goods to the citizenry and continues to earn revenue. In general, the American policy in the eight months of war has emerged as the biggest obstacle to putting an end to the war. It's hard to understand what the Americans want besides wanting quiet. But they are achieving just the opposite with their actions. The Houthis in Yemen closed a major sailing route, changed the world order and affected the global economy.

- The Americans sent an international coalition to the Red Sea, and fought the Houthis, but it had no effect. That is a terrible result—not just for us, but for the entire world. The Iran-Russia-China-North Korea square sees the Americans' weakness; this only encourages them to be more bold. Iran fired 300 missiles at Israel and threatened to accelerate its nuclear program, and what did the Americans do? They helped Israel defend itself and were quick to hold conciliation talks with the Iranians in Oman. The American zeal to avert escalation or crisis at any price is a dangerous weakness. And this projects onto the question of the north. Israel cannot really launch a war in Lebanon that would produce a significant achievement without American backing.
- The IDF is broadcasting readiness to expand the fighting against Hizbullah, but if we are unable to ensure a supply of munitions, such a war will end with few achievements and Israeli society will pay a high price in hits to the home front, to civilian and strategic infrastructure. The situation in the north is indeed intolerable, but Israel's ability, at the moment, to change it, is very limited. The Americans realize that after few more lethal attacks by Hizbullah, Israel will not be able to keep the fighting within its current boundaries. But before we dive into another war, which is likely to be lengthy and painful, we must clarify, to ourselves, what we want to achieve in such a war and what we can achieve, with or without the United States.
- Unlike Gaza, where the objective of destroying Hamas's military capabilities is within reach, Israel will not be able to destroy Hizbullah's military capabilities unless it seizes control of most of Lebanese territory. Therefore, any war there will end with an arrangement—and any arrangement with Hizbullah, as we've learned, is an arrangement that will be violated. The deep mistrust between the American administration and the Israeli government also foils the ability to build a mechanism that could bring about a speedy end to such a war with an arrangement that is satisfactory, at least in the short term. So what can be done? Complete the operation in Rafah and divert the bulk of the IDF's might from the south. We can maintain control over the Gaza Strip with smaller forces, and mainly, intensify our hold of those places that are particularly painful for Hamas: with a permanent IDF presence.
- Every outpost that is built, every gas station or electricity poll that is placed in the corridor that bisects Gaza, stabs Hamas in the eye and makes it clear that the northern Gaza Strip no longer belongs to it. If there is anything that will prompt Hamas to reach a deal, it is the recognition that it has lost a significant amount of territory, territory that had been home to 1.4 million people. Israel must begin to use time to its benefit. It must begin to stockpile munitions ahead of a war in the north and to prepare the troops that left Gaza for a major maneuver in the north. The opportunity will come. While it's true that the significance is that it will not be possible to return the residents during this time, but if there is something that can be learned from the detestable enemy, it is the need for patience. Sinwar is not rushing, he is not seeking swift solutions and he knows how to use the time to increase his gains. The time that passes is indeed painful, but it is not by chance that the word patience [savlanut in Hebrew] comes from the three-letter root that means suffering.