



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

Netanyahu, Blinken Discuss Gaza's Governance, Deal

The governance of Gaza the day after the war and the potential for a hostage deal were among the topics raised during Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's meeting with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken in Jerusalem. The United States and Israel have been at odds over day-after plans for Gaza, although they both agreed that Hamas would not be allowed to rule the enclave of some 2.2 million Palestinians. The US wants to see a reformed Palestinian Authority govern Gaza as part of a pathway to a two-state resolution to the conflict. Netanyahu's government has also opposed the creation of a Palestinian state in Gaza or the West Bank. Israel has already begun discussions about new options for a hostage deal, while the US has assumed it would be resuming talks toward the three-phase deal that was first put on the table.

Times of Israel

Israel: 237 Aid Trucks Entered North Gaza in Past 9 Days

The Israeli military body in charge of aid distribution in the Palestinian territories said that more than 230 aid trucks have entered the northern Gaza Strip over the past nine days amid pressure from the US to ramp up humanitarian assistance in the war-torn territory. The UN, meanwhile, urged Israel to consider implementing a humanitarian pause in its renewed offensive against Hamas in northern Gaza. The Biden administration warned Israel on October 13 that it had 30 days to take significant steps to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, and in particular in the north, or risk the continued supply of some offensive weapons. Since that date, 237 trucks carrying "food, water, medical supplies and shelter equipment from Jordan and the international community" have entered northern Gaza, the IDF's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories said.

Al-Monitor

Israeli Assault Sends Terrified Palestinians Fleeing Gaza

Trapped for days as Israeli forces unleashed a sweeping assault, then rounded up and searched by troops who told them to leave, thousands of war-weary Palestinians have fled north Gaza. Verified online videos showed dozens of displaced Gazans funneling into a checkpoint manned by soldiers in Jabalia, the focus of the massive Israeli military operation. Walking past an Israeli tank on a rubble-strewn dirt road, they were checked before being allowed through in a single file. Paramedic Nevin al-Dawasah said she was trapped for 16 days in a shelter for displaced people in the Jabalia refugee camp. Eventually, an Israeli army drone equipped with loudspeakers was "telling us that the Israel Defense Forces were asking us to evacuate." The Gaza Civil Defense Agency said last week that at least 400 people have been killed in the ongoing Israeli assault, which began on October 6.

Far-Right Lawmaker Threatens to Block PA from High Court

The Knesset's Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee is expected to approve a bill proposed by its chairman, Simcha Rothman's that would deny the Palestinian Authority's (PA) right of standing in the Israeli Supreme Court. The PA would be unable to appeal to the Supreme Court or file lawsuits in Israeli courts, according to the proposed legislation that would be an amendment to one of Israel's basic laws, has support from members of the far-right and religious coalition and from some members of the opposition as well. Rothman was also promoting legislation to begin prosecuting Hamas Nukhba members who participated in the Hamas atrocities on October 7 last year, while the government delayed such prosecution to avoid complicating negotiations on a hostage release deal. The committee chair wants to establish a special court that will deal with extraordinary crimes such as genocide which the massacre would be considered.

Jerusalem Post

Netanyahu: Assassination Attempt Can't Be Ignored

Iran and Hezbollah's assassination attempt cannot be disregarded, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US Secretary of State Blinken when the two men met in Jerusalem. "This is an issue of dramatic significance that cannot be ignored," Netanyahu said during their meeting which lasted for two and half hours. There were no joint statements or press conferences before or after the meeting. It was Blinken's 11th trip to the region since the start of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7, 2023. He arrived at a time of heightened military cooperation and tensions between the two governments, with the US pushing for diplomacy while Israel has relied heavily on fighting its enemies militarily. The US, which helped defend Israel against the last two Iranian attacks, is expected to do so again should Iran respond to any Israeli retaliatory strike.

Reuters

Israel Confirms Death of Heir to Slain Hezbollah Leader

Israel confirmed it had killed Hashem Safieddine, the heir apparent to late Hezbollah leader Nasrallah who was killed in an Israeli attack targeting the Iran-backed Lebanese militant group. The military said Safieddine was killed in a strike carried out three weeks ago in Beirut's southern suburbs, its first confirmation of his death. Earlier this month, Israel said he had probably been eliminated.. "We have reached Nasrallah, his replacement and most of Hezbollah's senior leadership. We will reach anyone who threatens the security of the civilians of the State of Israel," said Israeli army chief Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi. Israel has been carrying out an escalating offensive in Lebanon after a year of border clashes with Hezbollah, the most formidably armed of Iran's proxy forces across the Middle East. The group has been acting in support of Hamas militants fighting Israel in Gaza but is reeling from a spate of killings of its senior commanders in Israeli airstrikes in recent weeks.

7 East Jerusalem Men Arrested in Iran Spy Plot

Seven East Jerusalem Palestinians have been arrested on suspicion of spying for Iran and plotting attacks in Israel on the Islamic Republic's behalf, the Israel Police and Shin Bet said, marking the fifth such case to be revealed in just over a month and the second in as many days. The suspects, all men aged 19 to 23 from the Beit Safafa neighborhood without previous criminal or security-related records, were pursuing the assassination of an Israeli nuclear scientist as well as the mayor of a large city in central Israel, the authorities said in a statement. Six of the suspects are Israeli citizens, and the other is a permanent resident. The leader of the ring, a 23-year-old named Rami Alian, was recruited by an Iranian agent, and Alian then recruited the other six members, authorities said. They are expected to be indicted by the Jerusalem District Attorney's Office on charges of serious security violations, the statement said. [Read More "Israel Considers Its Response to the Surge in Iran Spies" \(Ynet News\)](#)

Associated Press

France Defends Restrictions on Israeli Firms Supplying Middle East Wars

France's government defended its decision to bar Israeli companies supplying the wars in the Middle East from exhibiting at an upcoming trade fair outside Paris. Organizers of the Nov. 4-7 naval defense exhibition, called Euronaval, posted on the event's website that Israeli firms can take part in the show and "may have an exhibition stand, provided that their products are not used in military operations in Gaza and Lebanon." The organizers attributed the restrictions to French government decisions taken earlier this month. Addressing parliament, French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said the policy doesn't amount to a boycott of Israeli firms. But he also said it would be "incoherent" for France to allow the promotion of weapons used in the wars when Paris is also pushing for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza and Lebanon. "Therefore, we have indicated to the Israeli authorities, with whom we communicate very regularly, that the participation in the form of stands by companies should respect this balance," Barrot said. "Also, companies whose equipment is not used in offensive actions in Gaza and Lebanon will naturally be able to have stands at the exhibition," he said. [Read More "Ireland Eyes Revival of Bill to Ban Trade with Israeli Settlements" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

The Reasons for Ending the War in Gaza

By Giora Eiland

- It needs to be clear now to the Israeli decision-makers that the correct course would be to strike a deal to have all the hostages return quickly in exchange for ending the war. True, we might try to improve the terms of the deal, particularly as it pertains to the number of terrorists who need to be freed in exchange for every living hostage, but we should not insist on petty issues, especially not on the Philadelphia Corridor. Beyond the desperate need to save the hostages at the last opportunity that still exists, there are at least four other reasons why that would be the right move.
- The first is our casualties. Thirteen months ago, the entire Israeli public wept for days over every Israeli soldier who was killed. We appear to have lost that. Our hearts have become inured against the death of soldiers, the best of our sons. We have completely stopped being moved by the seriously wounded soldiers, but these are young men who have lost their limbs or sight and whose lives have been ruined. Second, the terrible burden that is being borne by the soldiers—the conscripts too, but mainly the reservists—who find themselves facing financial and familial difficulty. The burden borne by the combat soldiers will remain high in any event, but we should ease it as much as we can. Third, the economic cost. Every day of fighting costs roughly half a billion shekels! Yes, the primary effort is currently in Lebanon, but every shekel we waste today will be sorely missed tomorrow.
- Fourth, everyone around the world is desperate to end the war in Gaza. There is greater understanding around the world as to why Israel is fighting in Lebanon, and even directly against Iran, but no one understands anymore what we hope to achieve in Gaza. If we continue to fight in Gaza for another six or 12 months, that won't change the reality there. Only two things will happen: All of the hostages will die and more soldiers will be killed.
- The reality in the Gaza Strip won't change as long as huge quantities of aid continue to flow in, as long as Hamas is the party that distributes it to the population and as long as Hamas enriches itself by doing that and uses that money to recruit new fighters. Hamas will always have hundreds of terrorists who will continue to fight, even if it does not have an effective chain of command. In any agreement with Hamas, Israel should only demand the hostages' freedom.
- However, Israel should insist in its dealings with the other actors—and specifically the United States, Egypt and Qatar—on one more thing: Israel will allow for the Gaza Strip's reconstruction only if that is done while the Strip simultaneously goes through a process of demilitarization. Gaza is completely destroyed. Hamas won't be able to rebuild its military strength unless a massive reconstruction project is launched there, and we should not allow that without a mechanism that will systematically destroy what remains of its military infrastructure. I believe that the residents of Gaza might come to sober up, even to the point of revolting against Hamas, but that won't happen as long as the war is ongoing and as long as IDF troops are on the ground in Gaza.

- **That revolt can only happen once the residents realize that Hamas is preventing the Gaza Strip's reconstruction. A war whose purpose is to remove a threat is essential and also justifies the high prices that go hand-in-hand with it. That isn't the situation in Gaza. The real threat has been removed. The hostages' return cannot be delayed if we act intelligently. Hamas won't be able to rebuild its military capabilities. Therefore, we need to strive to end the war in Gaza. We have seven other open fronts (including the Jordanian border). The time has come for us to try to end the war everywhere in which the costs outweigh the benefits. Regrettably, the Israeli government has not acted in keeping with this logic and has not yet even held a meeting to decide between two alternatives: ongoing war in Gaza until "total victory" or willingness to end the war in Gaza in exchange for the release of all the hostages.**

How Israelis Are Lured into Spying for Iran

By Josh Breiner

- The recent capture of cells consisting of Israeli citizens who allegedly worked for Iran, passing intelligence from within Israel, highlights Tehran's ongoing efforts to orchestrate significant operations on Israeli soil. In recent weeks, the Shin Bet and police have announced the capture of five different cells, but it appears this is not the end of the line, and the pursuit of additional cells is expected to continue. Authorities said seven suspects, all East Jerusalem residents, had been arrested a day after the arrest of seven other Israelis was announced. The latest arrests suggest that financial gain, rather than ideological loyalty, is what drives cooperation with Iran.
- The Shin Bet's recent successes stem from uncovering an Iranian network that facilitated these cells, leading to the arrests of citizens allegedly recruited by Tehran's intelligence services. In response to the assassination of senior Hamas figure Ismail Haniyeh in Tehran, Iranian operatives cast a wide net, and the recent arrests indicate that they succeeded in enlisting Israeli citizens for their missions.
- On Monday, it was revealed that another seven Israelis, from Haifa and northern Israel, are suspected of aiding the enemy during wartime, after allegedly gathering sensitive intelligence for Iran. The seven, who emigrated from Azerbaijan, are believed to have conducted between 600 and 700 intelligence-gathering missions over the past two years under the guidance of two Iranian intelligence agents, known as "Elkhan" and "Orkhan." They are also suspected of tracking a senior Israeli official and his son, with the aim of carrying out an assassination. The arrests reveal that many of those recruited by Iran share a common thread – a desire for easy money, often driven by financial difficulties and marginalization within Israeli society.
- The first detainee was a young man from the fringes of the ultra-Orthodox community in Beit Shemesh. His arrest raised concerns within the security services that Iran was targeting ultra-Orthodox individuals. However, further investigation revealed that the primary motive for recruitment was financial gain. The seven detainees in Monday's case immigrated to Israel in recent years and, like previous detainees, had run into legal or financial trouble. They saw recruitment by Iran as a way to escape their difficulties, along with a source of excitement. All of them struggled to integrate into Israeli society.
- Moti Maman from Ashkelon, who was accused of plotting to assassinate senior Israeli officials for payment and who had entered Iran twice, had left Israel to live in Turkey before being recruited by Iran. The investigation indicates that many of the recruits did not fully understand the objectives of their missions. For instance, gathering intelligence on a senior Israeli official raised fears that he might become a target for assassination by Iran. While the cell members may not have known the ultimate goal, they were aware that they were working for a hostile entity during a time of war, which has led the security establishment to treat their actions with great severity.

- **The security services are now calling for harsh punishment for the seven detainees. They face charges of aiding the enemy during wartime, an offense that could, in theory, result in the death penalty. While the chances of this penalty being enforced are slim, there is a strong demand for severe sentences: lengthy imprisonment, possible life sentences, the confiscation of assets, and the revocation of citizenship. These arrests underscore the lengths to which Iran is willing to go – and the money it is willing to spend – to recruit Israeli citizens. Alongside intelligence gathering on sensitive military targets, the Iranians are desperate to score a major success by targeting a senior Israeli official, with current officeholders being the primary targets and former officials secondary. So far, Tehran has failed in its efforts to retaliate for Haniyeh's assassination. However, Iranian efforts are expected to continue, and their persistence may intensify following these recent failures.**
- **There could come a time when the Shin Bet will not be able to thwart an attack. As efforts to target top officials continue to fail, it's likely Iran will aim lower on the Israeli hierarchy. The fact that the recently apprehended cell operated for two years undetected is deeply troubling. It highlights the need for further scrutiny within Israel's security apparatus and raises concerns that additional cells may still be active.**