



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM  
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## **Israel and Middle East News Update**

*Wednesday, January 22*

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### **Headlines:**

- **IDF chief announces he will resign in March over October 7 failures**
- **IDF launches major counterterror raid in West Bank's Jenin, expected to last days**
- **More than 2,400 aid trucks enter Gaza under truce, UN says no big looting issues**
- **IDF tells Gazan residents they can return north – if Hamas abides by ceasefire agreement**
- **Qatar PM hopes Palestinian Authority will return to Gaza when war ends**
- **Saudi FM travels to Lebanon Thursday, presses Beirut for 'real reform'**
- **US green card holder, a Moroccan national, wounds 4 in Tel Aviv terror stabbing spree**
- **Trump's pick for Pentagon Mideast policy chief signals Iran strategy shift**
- **On day one, Trump rolls back Biden sanctions regime targeting violent Israeli settlers**

### **Commentary:**

- **Jerusalem Post: In the midst of the ceasefire, Israel can change the situation in the West Bank**
    - By Jerusalem Post Editorial Staff
  - **Yedioth Ahronoth: Biden, Darling of the Right**
    - By Ben Dror Yemini
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## **i24 News**

### **IDF chief announces he will resign in March over October 7 failures**

Lieutenant General Herzi Halevi, chief of staff of the Israel Defense Forces, announced on Tuesday that he would resign. "I informed the Minister of Defense today (Tuesday) that, by virtue of my recognition of my responsibility for the IDF's failure on October 7th and at a time when the IDF has made significant achievements and is in the process of implementing an agreement to release hostages, I will request to end my duties on March 6th, 2025," Halevi said in a statement.

## **Times of Israel**

### **IDF launches major counterterror raid in West Bank's Jenin, expected to last days**

The Israel Defense Forces launched a major counterterrorism operation in the northern West Bank city of Jenin on Tuesday afternoon, which military sources said was expected to last several days. The operation began with a series of drone strikes on infrastructure used by terror groups in Jenin, a military source said.

## **Reuters**

## **More than 2,400 aid trucks enter Gaza under truce,**

### **UN says no big looting issues**

Nearly 900 humanitarian aid trucks entered the Gaza Strip on Tuesday, the third day of a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militants Hamas, as a senior U.N. official said so far there had been no apparent law-and-order issues. The latest arrivals bring the three-day total to more than 2,400 trucks entering the enclave. Throughout the 15-month war, the U.N. has described its humanitarian operation as opportunistic - facing problems with Israel's military operation, access restrictions by Israel into and throughout Gaza and more recently looting by armed gangs.

i24 News

## **IDF tells Gazan residents they can return north – if**

### **Hamas abides by ceasefire agreement**

"If Hamas abides by the agreement - from next week, the residents of the Gaza Strip will be able to return north," IDF Arabic spokesperson Avichay Adraee said in a statement. To clarify "misunderstandings," he warned them not to approach IDF troops, to avoid moving to northern Gaza, avoid approaching the Philadelphi Corridor, and to avoid sea activities such as fishing, swimming, and diving. He stressed that approaching Israeli territory and the buffer zone would put their lives at risk. If Hamas abides by the agreement, Adraee said, residents of northern Gaza will be able to return starting next week.

Reuters

## **Qatar PM hopes Palestinian Authority will return to**

### **Gaza when war ends**

**Qatar's Prime Minister said in Davos on Tuesday he hoped the Palestinian Authority would return to play a governing role in Gaza once the war with Israel comes to an end. Speaking at the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Switzerland, two days after the ceasefire Qatar helped broker came into effect in Gaza, Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani cautioned that Gazans -- and not any other country -- should dictate the way the enclave will be governed.**

**Al-Monitor**

## **Saudi FM travels to Lebanon Thursday, presses**

### **Beirut for 'real reform'**

**Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud will travel to Lebanon Thursday to meet with the country's leadership as Riyadh considers potential for greater involvement in Beirut. "In order for us to raise our engagement, I plan to visit Lebanon this week, and I think based on what I hear there and what we see, that will inform the kingdom's approach," Prince Faisal told the World Economic Forum in Davos on Tuesday. "But I have to say what I've seen so far — and the conversations that we've been hearing — happening in Lebanon all allow me to be very much optimistic," he said.**

**Times of Israel**

## **US green card holder, a Moroccan national, wounds**

### **4 in Tel Aviv terror stabbing spree**

**Four people were wounded Tuesday evening by a terrorist who went on a stabbing spree in a trendy Tel Aviv neighborhood, emergency services and Israel Police said, before he was shot dead. The assailant who carried out the stabbing was Moroccan national Abdelaziz Kaddi, a US green card holder, according to an ID found on his body. He was shot dead at the scene. Kaddi was flagged by**

security when he arrived in the country a few days ago but was nonetheless granted entry, a decision the Shin Bet said late Tuesday it was investigating.

**AI-Monitor**

## **Trump's pick for Pentagon Mideast policy chief signals Iran strategy shift**

The Trump administration has named Michael P. DiMino, a former CIA counterterrorism officer and advocate of a restrained approach to Iran, as the Pentagon's next policy chief for the Middle East. DiMino was sworn in alongside 31 other top officials at the Pentagon on Monday, the department announced. Until recently, DiMino was a fellow at Defense Priorities, a Koch-funded think tank advocating restraint in engaging the US military in foreign policy. He has also advised members of Congress as well as the Pentagon's Joint Staff and US European Command on the Russian war in Ukraine.

**Times of Israel**

## **On day one, Trump rolls back Biden sanctions regime targeting violent Israeli settlers**

On his first day in office, US President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order rolling back the sanctions regime implemented last year by his predecessor Joe Biden to target violent Israeli settlers in the West Bank. The policy was one of dozens rolled back by Trump hours after being sworn back into office through a stack of executive orders he signed first at a post-inauguration rally in front of thousands of supporters, and then back at the White House.

**Commentary:**

**Jerusalem Post**

# **In the midst of the ceasefire, Israel can change the situation in the West Bank**

By Jerusalem Post Editorial Staff

- **Israelis are still celebrating the ongoing ceasefire with Hamas – and not just because the hostages have returned. Since the ceasefire has been implemented, the country has experienced a degree of quiet not seen since before October 7, 2023, without a rocket siren to be heard.**
- **However, shortly before the ceasefire began, signs of danger began to once again emanate from the West Bank.**
- **On January 6, three Israelis were killed in a terrorist attack in the Kedumim settlement in Samaria. On January 18, just before the ceasefire went into effect, several people were wounded in Tel Aviv's Florentine neighborhood in what was determined to be a Palestinian terrorist attack.**
- **These are not isolated incidents. Tensions are rising in Judea and Samaria once again. Thankfully, Israel isn't exactly unaware of this. On Tuesday, the IDF launched Iron Wall, a new military operation to eliminate Palestinian terrorists in Jenin. This followed a month-long push by Palestinian Authority security forces to crack down on local terrorist groups, despite not having sent troops into the Jenin refugee camp for several years, showing that the PA is taking the issue seriously as well.**
- **Regarding the scope of the operation, Defense Minister Israel Katz said this was a show of force against Palestinian terror to deter Hamas and others from making trouble in the West Bank now that there is a ceasefire both with Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in Gaza.**
- **But Hamas has heard this, too, and shortly after the operation began, they called for general mobilization in the West Bank in response. Couple this with the recent attack on the Palestinian town of Funduk by Jewish extremists, and tensions are certainly high.**
- **What could potentially make this even worse is the release of Palestinian security prisoners as part of the hostage deal. As Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) head Ronen Bar said on Friday, 82% of terrorists released as part of the 2011 Gilad Schalit prisoner swap returned to terrorism. He also noted that the current release of terrorists is expected to increase the motivation to carry out attacks against Israelis in Judea and Samaria.**

- The facts are clear: The West Bank is a powder keg ready to blow with the right conditions, especially now. The time is right for Israel to find a way to stop a potential outburst of violence and chaos from happening.
- The country is in the middle of ceasefires in the North and the South, and Hamas and Hezbollah have had their capabilities decimated over the past year. The Houthis in Yemen, the last Iranian proxy still posing a significant threat to Israeli security, have also announced they would halt hostilities for the duration of the ceasefire in Gaza.
- And to top it all off, US President Donald Trump has returned to the White House. All signs point to his administration being far friendlier to Israel's current policies, especially regarding the settlements.
- One of Trump's first acts in office was to lift sanctions on four Jewish settlers that the Biden administration had levied. If any world leader is going to give Israel the support it needs to bring quiet to Judea and Samaria, it's going to be Trump.
- Let's not be fooled. It's time to look at the situation in the West Bank and do something. Israel is experiencing its calmest moment since before the October 7 massacre. But let's not be fooled: Hamas has a firm hold on the West Bank, as well as Gaza. We cannot allow them to rise to power.
- In addition, we commend the cooperation between the IDF and the PA. Though the authority is corrupt, and its intentions are very different from those of Israel, the security cooperation, taking place in such a public manner, is a positive one. The PA and Israel see eye-to-eye on the elimination of Hamas to prevent it from obtaining political power.
- Many PA leaders have supported the October 7 massacre, but the fact that they align with Israel on a common enemy could result in strengthening the authority. A vigorous PA isn't the best option for Israel, but it's the least worst option of them all.

## Yedioth Ahronoth

### Biden, Darling of the Right

By Ben Dror Yemini

- One of Israel's greatest friends left the White House yesterday. It is still not clear whether Israel is going to miss him. Because despite the fact he describes himself as a Zionist, despite his statements of support, despite the airlift that provided Israel with security oxygen, Joe Biden is mainly a failure story of failure. He continues a long tradition of American leaders who have trouble understanding the Middle East.

- It seems to me, however, that it is the Israeli right-wing that is going to miss him. Because there has never been an American president who allowed the Israeli right to do whatever it wanted. We'll get to that.
- Biden began his term with two bad mistakes; even if they were not the direct cause of the October 7 massacre, they were definitely in the background. The first occurred on February 6, 2021, just a few days after Biden took office, when he removed the Houthis from the list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations. They were placed back on the list a year ago, on January 17, 2024.
- Two weeks later, on February 19, 2021, Biden lifted sanctions on Iran. Biden was a devotee of the idea that good will on one side would be met with good will from the other. That didn't work.
- The Iran nuclear deal was signed in 2015. Trump cancelled it in 2018. Many commentators, including in Israel, argued that the cancellation encouraged Tehran to accelerate its race for nuclear power. That isn't true. The sanctions had dramatic impact. Then-Iranian President Hassan Rouhani admitted at the end of 2019 that renewed sanctions had caused \$200 billion in economic damage to Iran. At the end of 2020, Mohammad Javad Zarif admitted that the damage to Iran stood at \$250 billion by then.
- The immediate result was a 28 % drop in Iran's defense budget. That was a massive achievement. Then, along came Biden and his decision to lift the sanctions, and Iran started to accelerate its nuclear program. Not because of Trump. Because of the massive influx of capital after the sanctions were lifted. It was precisely that capital, a gift that stemmed from Biden's decision, that presumably reached all of Iran's proxies in the region Hizbullah, the Houthis, [pro-Iranian] factions in Iraq and of course the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas in the Gaza Strip.
- Trump's victory has ratcheted up hope, especially on the Israeli right. "The settlers are preparing for the Trump administration," read the headline in Makor Rishon. "Drafting plans to impose sovereignty on the ground."
- But the penny is starting to drop for pro-annexationists. Over the past two weeks, it has been made clear that Trump has no intention of joining the Yesha Council. In actual fact, the right-wing in Israel received a lot from the Biden administration. A whole lot. One need only look at the statistics to understand this.
- Thirty-one outposts were set up in 2023, an all-time record. A frightening, all-time high that passed quietly thanks to the fact the Zionist-Democratic camp was busy scuttling legal initiatives. Then came 2024, the year of the most difficult war Israel has fought in recent decades, and that record



number was not only topped—it was doubled. Sixty new outposts during the year. Not only that, but seven were set up in Area B. That is to say, in territory slated for a Palestinian state in Trump’s vision.

- Precisely when American campuses were filled with thunderous chants, “From the river to the sea,” the Israeli government was the chief contractor responsible for implementing that very plan. The Israeli government is leading us towards the nightmare scenario of “one state.” Bezael Smotrich has something else in mind,. But he is the one who is making the Israel-haters’ dream come true. Where was Biden? Where was the Democratic administration? We didn’t see them, didn’t hear from them.
- Previous administrations, Republican and Democratic alike, tried to stop the momentum of settlement construction. For example, in April 2003 the George Bush administration reached an agreement with Israel, then led by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, “to dismantle outposts established after March, 2001.” In 2005, Limor Livnat admitted that Israel had agreed to the “removal of just 24 outposts.” Yes, an outpost here and an outpost there were removed, but the momentum remained. And the Biden administration took it even further: under its not-so-watchful eye, more outposts were established than under any previous administration.
- Biden was more than that. He was a hard-nosed, threatening president who said, “Don’t,” immediately after October 7. He aimed that dramatic call at Iran, Hizbullah and anyone who planned to get involved with the war. Hizbullah wasn’t impressed. They insisted on getting involved. So did Iran, which carried out two missile attacks at Israel. Same for the Houthis, who were not deterred even by American bombing raids. That “don’t” was also aimed at Israel, mainly against going into Rafah. Did it help? Was Israel deterred?
- Biden, it must be admitted, was weak. He began his term with a distinctly appeasing tenor; that served mainly to strengthen radical elements in the Middle East. And when the thunderous warning came, no one took it seriously. But Biden must also be remembered for the tremendous scope of defense aid.
- Yes, he was wrong. He was an appeaser. But he truly loves Israel. We all owe him a debt of gratitude— the Israeli right most of all.
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