



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

Monday, January 27

Please Forward News Update to Your Friends & Colleagues. [They Can Use this Link to Subscribe.](#)

Headlines:

- **4 female soldiers return to Israel after being freed by Hamas, paraded on Gaza stage**
- **Trump says Jordan, Egypt should take in Palestinians from Gaza; Egypt and Jordan push back**
- **PMO: Hamas will hand over Arbel Yehoud, Agam Berger, and additional male hostage on Thursday**
- **White House says ceasefire agreement between Lebanon, Israel to continue until Feb. 18**
- **22 killed in south Lebanon as IDF fires on suspects trying to break through to villages**
- **Israel may act against Iran in 'upcoming months,' Katz tells US counterpart Hegseth**
- **Yitzhak Amit elected as Supreme Court President**

Commentary:

- **Yedioth Ahronoth: Hamas is on its Feet**
 - **By Avi Issacharoff**
- **Israel Hayom: Deal or Government? The Solution Lies in the Definition of “War”**
 - **By Yehuda Schlesinger**

Times of Israel

4 female soldiers return to Israel after being freed by Hamas, paraded on Gaza stage

Four female soldiers held hostage by Hamas for 477 days — Karina Arielev, Daniella Gilboa, Naama Levy, and Liri Albag — were released by the terror group on Saturday after being paraded through a Gaza City square before being handed over to the Red Cross. Having walked calmly with their captors to the stage, the four smiled and waved to the large crowd that Hamas had assembled in the square. The release marked the second set of hostages to be freed under the current ceasefire-hostage release deal. Israel was later to free 200 Palestinian security prisoners, including dozens serving life sentences for murder and terror.

Reuters

Trump says Jordan, Egypt should take in Palestinians from Gaza; Egypt and Jordan push back

U.S. President Donald Trump said Jordan and Egypt should take in Palestinians from war-ravaged Gaza, a suggestion rejected by Hamas, the Palestinian militant group that runs the enclave, and apparently rebuffed by Jordan and Egypt. Asked if this was a temporary or long-term solution for Gaza, where Israel's military assault has caused a dire humanitarian situation and killed tens of thousands, Trump said on Saturday: "Could be either."

Jerusalem Post

PMO: Hamas will hand over Arbel Yehoud, Agam Berger, and additional male hostage on Thursday

Hamas will hand over Arbel Yehoud, Agam Berger, and an additional male hostage on Thursday, the Prime Minister's Office confirmed shortly after Qatar's Foreign Ministry announced Sunday. Additionally, the Qatari ministry said Hamas will hand over three more hostages on Saturday as per the ceasefire agreement.

Reuters

White House says ceasefire agreement between Lebanon, Israel to continue until Feb. 18

The U.S. said on Sunday that the agreement between Lebanon and Israel would remain in effect until Feb. 18, after Israel said on Friday it would keep troops in the south beyond the Sunday deadline set out in a U.S.-brokered ceasefire that halted last year's war with Hezbollah. "The arrangement between Lebanon and Israel, monitored by the United States, will continue to be in effect until February 18, 2025," the White House said in a statement.

Times of Israel

22 killed in south Lebanon as IDF fires on suspects trying to break through to villages

Hundreds of Lebanese attempted to reach southern villages near the border with Israel by force on Sunday morning, defying warnings by the Israel Defense Forces to stay away, as the ceasefire's original 60-day deadline for Israel to withdraw its forces passed with troops remaining in parts of the country's south. The Lebanese health ministry said 22 people had been killed, including a Lebanese soldier, and some 124 had been wounded by IDF fire in southern Lebanon since the morning.

Jerusalem Post

Israel may act against Iran in 'upcoming months.'

Katz tells US counterpart Hegseth

Defense Minister Israel Katz on Sunday hinted at potential action against Iran in the “upcoming months,” in his initial congratulatory letter to new US Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth. “Iran and its partners continue to threaten... regional and global stability,” wrote Katz. “The upcoming months present us with challenges that require military readiness and opportunities that allow us to further our strategic goals. I am confident that together we can succeed, creating long-term stability and a better future for the region.”

Arutz Sheva

Yitzhak Amit elected as Supreme Court President

The Judicial Selection Committee on Sunday elected Justice Yitzhak Amit as President of the Israeli Supreme Court as was expected. Minister of Justice Yariv Levin and the coalition representatives on the committee - Minister Orit Strock and MK Yitzhak Kroizer - boycotted the vote.

Commentary:

Yedioth Ahronoth

Hamas is on its Feet

By Avi Issacharoff

- Naama, Liri, Karina and Daniella finally returned home yesterday, healthy and whole. These were emotional moments, which made everyone watching the girls' return to Israel cry. “I'll keep you safe,” Yoni, Naama's

father, promised his daughter, after the country and the IDF failed to do that.

- **After 477 days in captivity, when the girls went up to the stage in central Gaza, they were still able to hold up their hands and to show heroism and strength. These were moments when all Israelis, no matter who they were, felt joy, every Israeli even felt pride, and understood the meaning of mutual responsibility.**
- **The event that Hamas arranged, an extraordinary production on a Gaza scale, ahead of the release of the four spotters, also illustrated the difficult price that the State of Israel is paying in this deal. Furthermore, it attested to Hamas's intention to remain in power in Gaza, and its success to that end. Not only as a military organization, but as the sovereign in the Gaza Strip. In all of its actions yesterday, Hamas showed how determined it is to make the most of the hostage deal in order to remain in power, despite having said during the months of the war that it would be prepared to relinquish civilian power.**
- **It began with the carefully-produced video in which the four soldiers were filmed speaking in Arabic, ostensibly thanking the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam operatives for "protecting" them. Each one of them spoke a sentence in Arabic flattering the Hamas operatives who guarded the soldiers, perhaps in order to show the Arab world and the world as a whole that Hamas is "humane." It continued, of course, with the impressive show with dozens of armed men with green headbands, evincing governance and strength.**
- **All of the terrorist organization's actions were meant to prove to the Gaza Strip residents, and to all Palestinians, that despite the catastrophe that the Gaza Strip has suffered, Hamas has survived.**
- **To this must be added, of course, the pictures that are so hard for every Israeli eye, of Palestinian security prisoners being released to the West Bank to a joyful crowd cheering Hamas and its military wing. With every day that passes, Hamas will win more points among the Palestinian public, ironically, among the West Bank residents and less among the Gazans, who keenly understand the price that each one of them paid for these ostentatious spectacles.**
- **It must be stressed: Hamas's success in surviving governmentally in Gaza is not a testament to the IDF's failure, but a testament to the failure of the people who should have translated the military achievements into political achievements—the political leadership. The government deliberately refrained from discussing the issue of the "day after" in Gaza and the option that some other agency would replace, governmentally,**

Hamas in the Gaza Strip. This is how Israel helped the terrorist organization survive governmentally.

- **For the time being, Hamas has continued to walk a very fine line as it keeps its part of the deal. It did not release Arbel Yehud yesterday, but claims that she is alive and will be released next week. This violation of the agreement should come as no surprise. Hamas will continue to violate the agreements that the sides reached in order to prolong the ceasefire for as long as it can.**
- **Israel's response was swift and the IDF stopped the Palestinian population from heading into the northern Gaza Strip beyond the Netzarim Corridor. This decision, which was very painful for Hamas, probably delayed the implementation of Hamas's commitment to release by midnight last night the precise number of the living and dead hostages who are due to be released.**

Israel Hayom

Deal or Government? The Solution Lies in the Definition of "War"

By Yehuda Schlesinger

- **Binyamin Netanyahu's professional career is replete with dramatic decisions. It's doubtful another prime minister in the world has had to make decisions so crucial, they could precipitate the outbreak of regional war or affect the survival of an entire country. The prime minister of Israel makes decisions that affect people's lives every day, and some people still say the decision Netanyahu will have to make in the next few weeks is one of the most significant of his life: whether to see the deal through and end the war at the price of dissolving his government.**
- **Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich knows the media, and he knows politics even better. He knows to choose his words carefully, and it's hard to trip him up. If he doesn't want to say something, he won't say it, and if he wants to express something, he will not be stopped. This week he chose a specific setting—at a faction meeting in the Knesset, in the presence of MKs and journalists, he shackled himself to a sharp and clear message: "If, God forbid, the war is not resumed, I will not quit the government—I will disband it. I'm not playing around."**
- **Smotrich allowed himself to hammer that nail because he knows what most of the political leadership assumes: the war in Gaza will continue. It**

is well known that the finance minister objects to the deal's high prices, and after having been criticized by the right-wing camp, he'll be able to show off his remarks and prove he kept his promise. The fact that the portfolios of Itamar Ben Gvir, who resigned as national security minister, are being kept in Minister Haim Katz's temporary custody also confirms that the intention is to resume the war.

- The war in Gaza will continue, and not just because of the pressure from Smotrich and Ben Gvir. Netanyahu himself believes Hamas must be eradicated for good. The price could be very heavy—derailing the second stage of the deal.
- The working assumption of the political leadership is that in any case, Hamas has no intention of returning all the hostages. The murderous terrorist group will say it doesn't know where they all are, but even if it does, it won't give them back. The hostages are its insurance policy.
- Another working assumption is that Hamas will not start building centers for world peace, but will violate the ceasefire, whether by publicly opening fire or by Israel obtaining intelligence information that the terrorist group is attempting to reestablish itself and rebuild its military capability, which will be aimed at Israel once again.
- And there's a chance that reality will prove both. A deal and war. It can complete the deal and maintain the government's continuity. The key word is "war." What exactly does that mean? Does a five-division incursion into Gaza count as war? What about commando units engaged in Gaza? Is it war when you conduct targeted killings from the air? And might war be like what has been going on in Judea and Samaria for years?
- The solution lies in the amorphous definition of "war." Netanyahu can use it to tell the Americans that he's just dealing with violations by Hamas, and Smotrich can use it to show he kept his word.
- Either way, the babble about Gantz joining the government or Lapid offering a safety net is superfluous. The war will continue, the question is how. This government isn't going anywhere.