



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

## **Israel and Middle East News Update**

***Monday, June 9***

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

### **Headlines:**

- **Gaza aid group says Hamas threats to staff kept distribution hubs closed on Saturday**
- **IDF, Shin Bet: Body of Mohammed Sinwar recovered from Gaza, taken to Israel**
- **Head of Gaza militia cited denying Israel support, demanding Hamas cede power**
- **Jerusalem synagogue fire: suspected arson and vandalism**
- **Hamas documents reportedly show deep ties, coordination between Qatar, terror group**
- **IDF takes Greta Thunberg's 'Madleen,' to Ashdod port, flotilla passengers to watch Oct. 7 footage**
- **Iran says it obtained sensitive Israeli nuclear documents**

### **Commentary:**

- **Israel Hayom: Enough of the Refugee Charade**
    - By Nadav Haetzni
  - **Yediot Ahronot: Nothing is Happening in the Hostage Deal Negotiations**
    - By Ronen Bergman
-

**Times of Israel**

## **Gaza aid group says Hamas threats to staff kept distribution hubs closed on Saturday**

The Gaza Humanitarian Foundation said that it was unable to open its aid distribution centers in the Gaza Strip on Saturday due to threats from Hamas, in the latest disruption to the aid group's operations as it struggles to get off the ground. The statement did not provide further information on the terror group's threats, but a GHF spokesperson said they were directed at the foundation's drivers and at local Palestinian staff helping operate the distribution sites.

**i24 News**

## **IDF, Shin Bet: Body of Mohammed Sinwar recovered from Gaza, taken to Israel**

During excavations carried out recently in the area of the European Hospital in Khan Yunis, several bodies were found – i24NEWS learned on Sunday that one belonged to late Hamas leader Mohammed Sinwar, which now being held in Israel. This was later confirmed in a joint army-Shin Bet security agency statement. On Saturday night, the Israel Defense Forces published documentation from the underground space located under the European Hospital in Khan Yunis. The tunnels include a command and control complex from which the fighting was conducted by senior Hamas commanders. During the scans, several additional bodies of terrorists were found.

**Times of Israel**

## **Head of Gaza militia cited denying Israel support, demanding Hamas cede power**

The head of an anti-Hamas militia in Gaza was quoted on Sunday giving comments to an Israeli media outlet and a US nonprofit on his group's operations in the enclave, in which he denied ties to Israel. Defense sources confirmed on Thursday that Israel has been arming a criminal gang in the Strip as part of an effort to strengthen opposition to Hamas in the enclave. The group in question is led by Yasser Abu Shabab, a member of a large clan in southern Gaza. It has been linked in the past to smuggling operations with Egyptian jihadist groups.

**i24 News**

### **Jerusalem synagogue fire: suspected arson and vandalism**

Police and fire officials are investigating a suspected arson attack and act of vandalism at a synagogue in Jerusalem's Sanhedria neighborhood that is frequented by former Sephardic Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef. The fire broke out early Sunday morning at the synagogue located at 22 Yam Suf Street. According to a statement from the Jerusalem District of Israel Fire and Rescue Services, initial findings from the scene indicate with "very high probability" that the blaze was the result of deliberate arson.

**Times of Israel**

### **Hamas documents reportedly show deep ties, coordination between Qatar, terror group**

The head of Hamas in Gaza, Khalil al-Hayya, said in a pre-recorded speech on Thursday the group had not rejected the latest U.S. proposal for a ceasefire with Israel but demanded changes that would secure the end of the war in the enclave. The group was ready to engage in a new round of ceasefire talks, and communication with mediating countries was ongoing, he added. The latest U.S. proposal was came via President Donald Trump's special envoy, Steve Witkoff.

**Jerusalem Post**

## **IDF takes Greta Thunberg's 'Madleen.' to Ashdod port, flotilla passengers to watch Oct. 7 footage**

The IDF had boarded the Gaza Freedom Flotilla, Madleen, the ship's operators said on Telegram early Monday morning at around 3 a.m., with everyone on board reportedly arrested, and the military's naval unit, Shayetet 13, taking the ship to the Port of Ashdod. The IDF had previously estimated that the flotilla would arrive in Israeli territory an hour earlier.

**Reuters**

## **Iran says it obtained sensitive Israeli nuclear documents**

Iranian intelligence agencies have obtained a large trove of sensitive Israeli documents, some related to the nuclear plans and facilities of Tehran's arch enemy, Iran's state media reported on Saturday. There was no immediate official comment from Israel and it was not clear whether the report was linked to a reported, opens new tab hacking of an Israeli nuclear research centre last year that Tehran is choosing to divulge now amid heightened tensions over its nuclear programme.

**Commentary:**

**Israel Hayom**

## **Enough of the Refugee Charade**

**By Nadav Haetzni**

- For several months now, the IDF has maintained control over the most entrenched terrorist strongholds in the West Bank: the refugee camps of Jenin, Tulkarm, and Nur Shams.
- Israeli flags fly over houses and even mosques; soldiers patrol the streets, and unlike in the past, they no longer flee from every stone or firebomb. There is no sign of the “Kata’ib,” the armed brigades that until recently marched openly in the streets and used the camps as terror bases.
- A significant portion of the residents of these camps – tens of thousands of people— are no longer there. Many homes have been destroyed, roads have been opened where narrow alleys once were, and our ability to uproot terrorism has been undeniably proven.
- But beyond that, a phenomenon has emerged that could signal a historic shift: most of the camp’s residents don’t want to return. They are demanding that the Palestinian Authority provide them with apartments in the surrounding areas and cancel the fictitious refugee status – a status preserved deliberately to use them as agents of the “Nakba” narrative, which will end only with the destruction of the State of Israel. They are no longer satisfied being second-class citizens. They are tired of playing the refugee role.
- This situation is encouraging in and of itself, but its true importance lies in the historical opportunity it presents—dismantling the refugee camps and, with them, the Palestinian refugee narrative.
- Until recently, the Jenin refugee camp was a traumatic place for us. Twenty-three soldiers fell there during Operation Defensive Shield in 2002; then there was the blood libel film by Mohammad Bakri. Today, however, the camp no longer poses a threat – as long as the IDF remains present. Most residents have dispersed to homes and apartments they own in the vicinity; others reside in student dormitories of the nearby American University.
- They don’t want to return to the camp and are demanding solutions from the Palestinian Authority. The same applies to the Tulkarm and Nur Shams camps – almost no one wants to go back. Again, some of the displaced residents have homes nearby; others have taken over vacant buildings and even the “Center for the Blind” in Tulkarm. They, too, are demanding the PA provide housing and do not want to return to the camp.
- Off the record, they say the Kata’ib went too far, and it’s evident that the city has begun to adjust to the regular presence of IDF soldiers after many years of absence.

- Anyone looking for signs of longing for the refugee camps or calls to return to them will be disappointed. Various reports show relief over the residents' new situations, much to the dismay of the "Nakba" agents.
- Many residents had benefited from the false status of "refugee," which provided economic aid from UNRWA and others. That's why they didn't physically leave the camps, but they did purchase homes and property elsewhere.
- And those who lack housing are demanding it from the PA – but definitely have no desire to return to the refugee trap that harmed them, too. As a result, there is a major opportunity right now to do what should have been done since 1967 – to abolish the very existence of the camps, along with the accompanying refugee industry. As part of this, we must completely neutralize and expel any UNRWA presence, including its employees and the rest of the UN functionaries, all of whom attempt to perpetuate the events of 1948 in order to undermine the existence of Israel.
- In Gaza, as is known, only a few buildings remain standing in the camps, and most of that population will require a general solution, preferably abroad. But the real challenge and opportunity lie in the West Bank and even in Jerusalem, where we have allowed the continued pretense of a refugee camp – Shuafat– just five minutes from Israel's national police headquarters.
- It is time to cancel any special status for these neighborhoods known as camps. No more UNRWA, no more UN schools, no more flour distribution or similar provocations. This is a systematic performance whose number of participants has grown over the years, even though most 1948 refugees have long since passed away. It is an organized charade designed to erode the very legitimacy of the Zionist state between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.
- Especially within small Israel –Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Be'eri, Ashkelon. This is the main tool for perpetuating the "right of return" myth, and with it, the fuel for the antisemitic campaign that is sweeping the world.
- For some reason, we cooperate with this false campaign when we acknowledge the very existence of refugees. Go tell refugees in Africa, or anywhere else in the world, that there is a monstrous, international mechanism that has existed for three generations and will continue forever, that attends to the needs of those who have never been refugees.
- This is a unique formula that was concocted especially for us - for the struggle against Israel and the Jews.

- Therefore, even more than the UNRWA law that was recently passed even that was partial and has not been implemented as necessary—broad, comprehensive steps should be taken immediately: No more refugee camps, an end to the intentional promulgation of the Palestinian refugee myth.

**Yediot Ahronot**

## **Nothing is Happening in the Hostage Deal**

### **Negotiations**

**By Ronen Bergman**

- Quite a few political and military officials have promised us recently that Hamas is buckling under Israeli pressure, “has lost operational control of the Gaza Strip,” and that a hostage deal is on the verge of being signed.
- Those reports set in motion a modern-day Solomon’s Dilemma: who will decide which of the hostages should be released first and which should remain in the tunnels. But nothing could be further from the truth.
- The truth is that nothing is happening in the hostage deal negotiations because nothing has happened. In other words, it isn’t that the parties were close and, at the last moment, the talks reached an impasse, as per several headlines. Israel and the entire region are stuck in a tragic time loop that continually returns things to the starting point. So what is the origin of all the reports about an impending deal? For the most part, their origin is within the Israeli establishment; less frequently, they have come from the Americans, who have fed the media false information, coupled with heartfelt wishes and a desire to produce dramatic headlines.
- In the past week, ever since Hamas rejected the latest proposal that was put forward by the American envoy, Steve Witkoff, all we have seen is an effort to create an atmosphere. “The new king is an attempt to produce delegations that will go to Doha for talks. That is pure window-dressing; a way of buying time,” said one official who is knowledgeable about the negotiations. “No one has budged a millimeter, and this is how the Americans are trying to show that things aren’t completely dead. That’s good for Hamas, and it’s also convenient for Netanyahu.”
- After Israel rejected a previous iteration that Hamas approved, the mediators proposed an iteration that Israel accepted. Predictably, Hamas rejected the proposal. The prime minister’s spokespersons were rejoiced

when the United States sided with Israel. Just like the Biden administration did when it saw that there wasn't any chance for a deal, and decided in the two months before the elections not to clash with Netanyahu.

- A similar correlation exists between the threats that have been aired in Israel about a possible strike in Iran, a strike that the US very much does not want to see happen now, while it is negotiating with Tehran, and America siding with Israel. The United States, which is opposed to a strike of that kind, the very threat of which has infused its negotiations with Iran with poison, has sided with the person who will decide whether to strike or not.
- The purpose of negotiations shouldn't be to determine which party is intransigent, which party is right and which party received more brownie points from the United States. The purpose is to free hostages, and not to play make-believe. Hamas is an awful terrorist organization. It kidnapped Israelis into the Gaza Strip, and it is to blame for everything that happens to them. But this is the reality on the ground. The question is whether the State of Israel is doing everything it can to cause that horrific terrorist organization to release them. And the problem is that Israel's political and military establishments are preoccupied with optics and have been acting in this performance for more than 600 days.
- "If we had a shekel for every time that political or security officials fed the media with a line about how 'these are critical hours,' and that 'Hamas is on the verge of losing control,' we could buy food for a lot of hungry Gazan civilians," said sardonically one official who is informed about the developments. "Ah, actually, Israel is already spending hundreds of millions to help shoulder the costs of the Southern Command's humanitarian [aid] program disguised as foreign contractors," he added just as sardonically.
- The bottom line is that no Hamas interest would be served by accepting the Witkoff outline. "From their point of view, there aren't enough guarantees about the war's end," said a knowledgeable source. "The Americans, for the time being, haven't delivered to them sufficiently firm sentences, and they hear Bibi and Smotrich saying that the war isn't going to end."
- Hamas's leadership agreed to a deal in stages in January, a deal that was supposed to lead to a second stage of negotiations in which, as agreed, Israel would end the war and would withdraw from Gaza in exchange for all the hostages. But that never happened. Israel did not enter into the new stage of negotiations, and then it violated the ceasefire. Then Hamas



released Edan Alexander in hope that a breakthrough would be produced.

- But that didn't happen "because what, effectively, was Israel saying to them? Give us some of the hostages and you'll get a few weeks of ceasefire—and then we'll kill you. If you don't give us some of the hostages, we'll kill you then as well," said the official.
- To make sure that no one in Hamas might consider entering into negotiations, Prime Minister Netanyahu raised the stakes even further and said that even exiling Hamas's leadership and disarming its operatives would not lead to a deal, and then added in the "Trump outline," which isn't on the table anymore from the American president's perspective, for a voluntary population transfer out of Gaza. Under those circumstances, why should Hamas hold any negotiations?
- The senior official went on to say, "The entire issue from Hamas's standpoint is guarantees that the war will end. They feel that they haven't gotten that, and that's why everything is stuck. They have said that ever since the war began, while here [in Israel] they've been pumping [information as if] they're bowing. Now, Israel is starting yet another military operation, until the next new proposal and, once again, everything is going to be the same, until we do the only thing that might free the hostages—a comprehensive deal. The chief of staff was quoted as saying that if there wasn't a deal, the IDF would work to 'defeat Hamas.'
- At least he should have the decency to say that the meaning of that is the hostages' death and, probably, a declaration of most of them as hostages whose place of burial is unknown."
- "Lurking behind the fear that Israel will prefer to continue with the war over freeing the hostages is another, equally awful fear that Israel will lose its ability to decide between the two alternatives," said Col. (res.) Doron Hadar, the former commander of the IDF General Staff's negotiating team, one of the people with the most experience in captives and hostages and getting them back home.
- Hadar said, "The public and the media are focused on the question as to whether Israel will either sign a deal that will result in the hostages' release and the war's end, which is unlikely to happen without intense pressure from the United States, or that it will decide to continue the war for an undefined period of time. But there is also the possibility that the mediators will exert enough pressure so that the Witkoff outline, in one iteration or another, is accepted and Hamas releases another group of hostages in exchange for an Israeli promise that is backed up with strong

**American guarantees to force us to bring the war to a close without a deal, because the Americans have become fed up.”**

- **Hadar said, “In both those cases, the result will be identical and tragic: Israel will lose the central card that it has in its hand today, the threat of a full-scale war in Gaza. In that case, Hamas can essentially demand everything in exchange for the hostages who remain behind in the event of a group [of hostages who are released], or for all of the hostages in the event that the war is ended without a deal, and we will have lost our leverage. That could seal the fate of the hostages to many more years of suffering, in the best case.”**
- **Several active and retired senior defense officials agree with Col. (res.) Hadar’s stern warning. One of them said, “The time that is passing without a deal and without developments is likely to result in a reduced sense of pressure on Hamas. Most of the political pressure is currently on Israel.”**
- **The three senior officials I spoke with severely criticized the stance taken by the American administration, which “without doubt delivered the most recent deal but has also fallen into the exact same pitfalls that the Biden administration fell into,” said one of the officials.**
- **Meanwhile, as noted, no movement has been recorded that might get the hostages back home. “Hamas [officials] have been very consistent and it’s become evident that pressure doesn’t work on them. And that’s after we ‘changed the strategic equation with control over the humanitarian aid,’” said one of the officials in reference to the “new spin,” which military and political officials now say confidently will defeat Hamas.**