

## Senior Gazan doctor died at Shin Bet facility, six days after detention

Hagar Shezaf, Josh Breiner and Jack Khoury

A senior doctor from Gaza died while under Shin Bet interrogation, six days after initially being detained. His death, which occurred in November, has prompted a probe by the Justice Ministry department that inves-

tigates complaints against Shin Bet interrogators.

Dr. Iyad Rantisi, 53, directed a women's hospital that is part of Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahia, in the northern Gaza Strip. He was arrested November

11 and was declared dead six days later at Shikma Prison, the site of a Shin Bet interrogation facility. According to the Shin Bet, he was interrogated on suspicion of involvement in holding Israeli hostages in Gaza.

The Justice Ministry said the department had concluded its investigation into the circumstances of Rantisi's death and is reviewing its findings.

After Rantisi died, the Ashkelon Magistrate's

Court issued a six-month gag order prohibiting publication of all details of the case, including the existence of the gag order. The court order expired in May.

The manager of the Kamal Adwan hospital, Dr.

Husam Abu Safia, told Haaretz that neither he nor Rantisi's family received any information about his fate. According to him, Rantisi was detained at an army checkpoint while attempting to cross from north to south Gaza, following the Israeli military's orders for the civilian population to evacuate

at the beginning of the war. He said that Rantisi was detained by the military and never heard from since, and that the fact that his whereabouts are unknown made them worried that he died in custody and his body is being held in Israel.

Rantisi is the second Gazan physician known to have

died in Israeli custody during the war in Gaza. The first was Dr. Adnan al-Bursh, 53, a surgeon who led the orthopedic department at Gaza City's Al-Shifa Hospital. The father of six died April 19 at Ofer Prison, in the West Bank. He was arrested in Khan Yunis

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PM dissolves Gaza war cabinet after Gantz quits **News Page 2**

## Netanyahu won't admit he failed, and is pushing Israel into more war

Amos Harel

The highly tense relationships between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the leadership of the Israel Defense Forces and Shin Bet security agency will soon be facing another bump in the road: the confrontation in which Defense Minister Yoav Gallant will once again adopt a professional position, this time focusing on the goals of the war. Gallant and the generals are seeking an early end to operations in Rafah, shifting to an approach involving limited raids in the Gaza Strip and having the army concentrate on preparing for the possibility of an all-out war with Hezbollah in the north.

Netanyahu, according to all the signs, is reluctant to leave Gaza and does not share the urgency and importance that Gallant and IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi attach to seeking a hostage deal with Hamas. Based on the tone expressed by the prime minister's associates since the weekend, a stormy confrontation is expected.

Paradoxically, there's a similarity of sorts between Hamas' internal tensions and the differences of opinion in Israel. After more than eight months, it can also be assumed that Hamas' surviving brigade commanders also desperately need a break. A considerable number of their people have been killed and the damage caused in Gaza

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Anti-government protesters in Jerusalem, Monday, as part of a "week of resistance" to Netanyahu's coalition and in demand of a hostage deal.

Olivier Fitoussi

## U.S. envoy: War with Hezbollah could draw Iranian attack

Amir Tibon

U.S. special envoy Amos Hochstein will arrive in Beirut on Tuesday after a day-long visit to Israel as part of his efforts to prevent the situation from deteriorating into all-out war

between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Hochstein met in Israel with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Isaac Herzog, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, Knesset opposition leader Yair Lapid and former minister Benny

Gantz. In his meetings, he warned of the possibility that war with Hezbollah could lead to a wide-scale Iranian attack on Israel of a kind that would be difficult for Israel's defense systems to repel, in concert with possible wide-scale fire by Hez-

bollah from Lebanon.

Hochstein's visit coincides with the Muslim holiday Eid al-Adha, one of the most important in the Muslim world. Due to the holiday, no air-raid sirens sounded in northern Israel from Monday morning to evening.

The U.S. envoy hopes to take advantage of the pause in the exchange of fire between Hezbollah and Israel to try to develop a framework for a future cease-fire agreement between the two

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## High Court to hear petitions against Ben-Gvir's police law

Josh Breiner

The High Court of Justice will hear several petitions Tuesday against National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, including one that challenges a law subordinating the police to the minister.

The amendment to the Police Ordinance law that was passed at Ben-Gvir's request, subordinates the police commissioner to the minister and gives the latter the power to intervene in the police's policy on investigations. The petition will be heard by an expanded panel of nine justices.

Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara has largely sided with the petitioners, arguing that the provision enabling the minister to intervene in investigations should be overturned, while the rest of the law should either be overturned or interpreted in a way that would prevent Ben-Gvir from intervening in police decisions. The court has already issued an injunction barring Ben-Gvir from intervening in police work, but over the last two weeks, the state prosecution wrote in a brief to the court, that he has continued intervening in operational decisions by senior police officers and is thereby violating the law.

The petitioners – who include the Movement for Quality Government in Israel, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee and other groups – argued that the amendment is unconstitutional. The state prosecution agreed, saying in its brief that the amendment "creates an unbalanced system of government that enables politicization of the use of the police force."

The provision allowing ministerial intervention in

investigations should be overturned "in light of the severe harm it does to the law enforcement system's independence," it continued. As for the other provisions, it said, "they are unconstitutional and should be overturned unless the court interprets them in a



Ben-Gvir Jonathan Zindel / Flash90

## PM's son, in his father's service

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way that ensures the protection of human rights and prevents the politicization of the police's work."

Ben-Gvir's view is that the independence of the police and the other security services is what truly endangers democracy, whereas subordinating the police to the national security minister and allowing the minister to set policy are "the lifeblood of democracy." He has argued in the past that "ministers have political motives, but these do not undermine their right and their duty to their voters to implement the policies on the basis of which they were elected."

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## 'A big, beautiful Iron Dome over our country':

## Trump's fantasy to bring Israel's missile defense system to U.S.

Ben Samuels

WASHINGTON – Since Donald Trump's emergence as a national political figure during the 2016 election, one of his signature promises has centered on the construction of a border wall between the United States and Mexico.

Immigration and border security remain at the top of the former president's agenda in his third run for office, but he has tweaked his messaging in recent months to link the issue to Israel's ongoing war in Gaza.

This has largely focused on two points: Deporting pro-Palestinian protesters currently in the United States on student visas; and bringing Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system to America.

The former point has caused deep concern among those who believe the deportations could have dramatic implications for freedom of speech. The latter, though, largely seems like a colossal waste of money meant to virtue signal toward both his "America First" anti-immigration base and the pro-Israel establishment megadonors whose money might help push him to victory over U.S. President Joe



Trump Nicholas Kamm / AFP

Biden in November.

"It's all going to be made in the United States. We're going to have a big, beautiful Iron Dome over our country," Trump said on Saturday at the Detroit conference of Turning Point Action – a far-right group the Anti-Defamation League says has been linked to a variety of extremists but which has become a key power player in the modern Republican Party landscape.

He delivered a similar message to Senate Republicans during a significant meeting in Washington last week, though Trump has been fine-tuning his pitch for a U.S. Iron Dome system since last October.

"I will immediately be-

gin the process of building a state-of-the-art Missile Defense shield in America. Americans deserve an Iron Dome as well," Trump wrote in a Newsweek op-ed published less than two weeks after the October 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel. He also vowed to "restore the Trump Travel Ban on entry by people from terror-plagued countries, territories, and places."

While campaigning in Iowa on the third anniversary of the January 6 insurrection, he again vowed to "build a giant dome over our country to protect us from a hostile source," centering its benefits as being produced in America while lauding the optics of such a missile defense system.

"When I watch our guys operate those things, it's unbelievable. 'Missile coming in, missile coming in.' These geniuses sit down – most of them are from MIT – but they sit down and 'bing bing boom, it's gone,' he said, imitating the sound of a missile interceptor. "I think we could use that. Isn't that better than giving other countries billions of dollars?" he asked.

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To show public it beat Hamas  
IDF plans to showcase Gaza successes

Peace, from the river to the sea  
A conscientious objector's vision for Israelis, Palestinians



Rami Shilush

haaretz.com

## As an Arab Israeli on hajj, my identity confused Gaza's supporters

Deiaa Haj Yahia

MECCA, Saudi Arabia – When you enter the Great Mosque, it's like you're entering a gate to another world. Inside, a huge tsunami – actually worshippers dressed in white – circles the Kaaba, the black stone structure at the center of the mosque.

One worshipper, about 60, throws his hands up, sheds a tear and asks for deliverance for Gaza and Palestine. His ID shows that he's from Algeria.

"It's the least I can do," he says. When he hears where I'm from, he takes two steps back and falls silent for a minute or two. I try to explain the situation, but he finds it hard to accept he's facing an Arab with Israeli citizenship. "I can't understand how you can live with them," he says.

My encounter with the Algerian sets the tone for the rest of the day. The war in Gaza has turned Palestinians into the talk of the town in Mecca; you can hear supporters of the Palestinian struggle in the streets, markets and cafés.

"We feel that the world is taking more interest in us and understands our pain," says Issam from Hebron in the West Bank, a tour guide for West Bankers who seek to make the pilgrimage to Mecca.



Muslims circling the Kaaba in Mecca, this month.

Ayman El Sahli / Reuters

"When we're in the market or in a mosque or somewhere, and people notice the Palestinian flag on our jacket, they immediately come give us a hug; some shed a few tears. We feel there's more support today, and also more awareness of what's going on."

Issam isn't wrong. In many conversations in Mecca, Israel is portrayed as an occupying, illegitimate entity standing in the way of the Palestinians' freedom.

But coming to grips with the term "Arab citizen of Israel" is another thing.

"To me, Israel is an occupying country and will remain that way until Palestinians are free to set up their own country," says Mohammed Abdul Arahman, an Indonesian on his second hajj.

Unlike an Algerian who has never heard of Muslim Arabs living in Israel, the Indonesian understands the situation, more or less. "I know 1948 Arabs," he says.

"I know they face trouble in Israel. In our schools, this issue is discussed, so many people are familiar with the complexities."

## 'A thorn in the Zionist regime's throat'

At sunset, Mecca is filled with warm colors and glimmering lights. The temperature is high, the markets are bustling and the sound

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# PM dissolves Gaza war cabinet after Gantz quits

Jonathan Lis

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu informed his ministers on Monday that he is dissolving the war cabinet following the resignations of Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot from the government over their disagreements on the handling of the war in Gaza.

Sensitive decisions will now be handled by a smaller consultation forum, while some issues previously discussed by the war cabinet will be transferred to the wider security cabinet.

A source familiar with the move stated that Netanyahu's announcement is merely declarative and aims to exclude far-right ministers Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, who face harsh criticism from the international community due to their extreme statements.

"In practice, there is no substantial change in the decision-making process, but Netanyahu's announcement to dissolve the war cabinet allows Ben-Gvir to step back and not insist on being part of

the limited decision-making forum," the source said.

The limited consultation forum is expected to include the remaining members and officials of the war cabinet following Gantz and Eisenkot's departure: Defense Minister Yoav Gallant; Strategic Affairs Minister and Netanyahu confidant Ron Dermer; National Security Advisor head Tzachi Hanegbi; and Shas leader Aryeh Deri, who was removed from his ministerial position due to criminal convictions and has so far served as an observer in the war cabinet.

"The war cabinet was a creation of the coalition agreements with the National Unity Party to ensure its ministers had influence over decision-making and to exclude the extreme ministers," said a political source. "Throughout the months of the war, Netanyahu repeatedly held security consultations in other limited forums, which included the defense minister and other relevant parties. This will continue now as well," he added.

## DOCTOR

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in December.

As Haaretz has reported, no Israeli authority has provided an explanation of the circumstances of Bursh's death. His widow, Yasmin al-Bursh, has asked the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court to appoint an investigator to examine the circumstances of his death.

The Israeli military is investigating 36 deaths at its Sde Teiman detention facility, two deaths at the Anatot detention center and the deaths of two people who died en route to a detention center. These figures do not include Palestinians from Gaza who died in prisons operated by the Israel Prison Service.

The Justice Ministry unit that examines complaints against Shin Bet agents does not have the authority to conduct a criminal investigation. When a probe raises suspicions of criminal conduct, the case is transferred to the Justice Ministry department that investigates allegations of police misconduct.

According to data pub-

lished by the Israeli outlet Shomrim, the department has opened only two criminal investigations against Shin Bet agents regarding detainees who were interrogated between 2014 and July 2022. The first involved Samer Arbid, who was charged with heading a terror cell that murdered Rina Sherb, a 17-year-old girl, in the West Bank. He was hospitalized in critical condition after an interrogation. Then-Attorney General Avichai Mendelblit closed the case in 2021. The second case, which was closed for lack of evidence, involved a search of the genitals of a Palestinian prisoner in 2015.

In a statement, the Shin Bet confirmed the details of Rantisi's arrest and said he died in the detention center's infirmary November 17, 2023. "The relevant authorities are reviewing the circumstances of his death," the agency added.

The Justice Ministry said in a statement that the unit that investigates complaints against Shin Bet agents opened a probe immediately after Rantisi's death, "during which various measures were taken to clarify its circumstances. The investigation ended recently and its findings are under review."

view on Radio 103FM, his close associate Brig. Gen. (res.) Effi Eitam said the war would last three years: a year in Gaza, which would soon be completed, a year in Lebanon and ultimately a third year "to shape everything related to Iran."

In remarks quoted over the weekend by the Yedioth Ahronoth daily, Halevi chose to stress the positive – that Israel is close to defeating the last Hamas battalions and within a few weeks can reduce operations in Rafah and, as a matter of fact, in the entire Gaza Strip. In the process, a large force, from both the regular army and the reserves, would be freed up for preparations relating to Lebanon – as well as for essential rest and freshening up after such lengthy combat.

One can quibble over the magnitude of the achievement. The operation in Rafah was late in coming, amid constraints. Netanyahu hesitated over it for months in the face of an American veto and serious disagreements among military and political officials. When the order was issued to the army to proceed with it in early May, it was done hastily and right after the previous round of hostage negotiations collapsed. But the Biden administration continued to create difficulties and forced the IDF to carry out a one-division operation instead of using two divisions like had been planned. The operational plans were hastily changed



An Israeli tank in Gaza.

IDF/AFP

## Amid Gaza fighting, the bitter war between PM, generals intensifies

Analysis Anshel Pfeffer

Sunday's exchange of accusations between Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and unnamed sources in the Israel Defense Forces over who gave the order to allow a "humanitarian pause" in the warfare in the Gaza Strip is just the latest twist in an increasingly acrimonious relationship between the premier and the General Staff of the Israel Defense Forces.

In this case, Netanyahu put out a statement denying knowledge of the humanitarian pause, only to have the IDF respond that it had been upon his express orders.

In recent weeks, there have been a string of issues which have widened the divide. Senior officers have briefed the media that Israel risks losing the "tactical gains" from the past months of fighting on the ground in Gaza, because Netanyahu has refused to allow the formation of an "alternative to Hamas" which can take control of the Strip. Instead, Hamas is returning to areas already cleared by the IDF.

The Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Herzl Halevi, has been speaking publicly about how the IDF needs to draft young Haredi men to fill its depleted ranks, angering Netanyahu, who has to keep the yeshiva students out of the army if he wants to keep the Haredi parties in his coalition.

In private meetings, Halevi has spoken of the

need to prioritize a deal with Hamas for the release of the hostages still held in Gaza, remarks which were quickly leaked. That would be another threat to the Netanyahu coalition, as its far-right parties are threatening to bolt the government if such a deal with Hamas goes ahead.

The previous weekend, as Netanyahu rushed to have his photograph taken with the hostages rescued in the operation in Nuseirat, the IDF spokesperson, Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari, Halevi's close advisor, said to journalists on the record that as successful as the operation had been, it would still take a deal with Hamas to rescue most of the remaining 120 hostages alive.

None of these statements were welcome to Netanyahu and on Friday he lost his temper after Halevi, reported in Yedioth Ahronoth, advocated ending the war in Gaza so the IDF could focus on the escalation with Hezbollah up north.

As soon as Shabbat was over, Netanyahu put out a statement, ostensibly reacting to the deaths of eight soldiers killed by the explosion of an armored personnel carrier in Rafah, but in reality responding to Halevi, in which he emphasized that "there is no alternative to victory." The next morning in the cabinet meeting, he fumed that "to reach the objective of destroying Hamas capabilities,

I've made decisions which the military did not always agree with. We are a state which has an army, not an army which has a state."

For a more unvarnished view of Netanyahu's thoughts, all you needed to do was to go online and read the chorus of his digital supporters, accusing Halevi and other generals both serving and retired, – especially Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, and the two centrist members of the war cabinet who had resigned a week earlier, Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot, all former senior generals – of defeatism and far worse.

In fact, all you needed was to read the posts of one person, Yair Netanyahu, the prime minister's online cheerleader-in-chief, comfortably ensconced during wartime with state-funded bodyguards in a luxury apartment in Miami, provided by an anonymous benefactor.

On Saturday, he shared a video on his Instagram account branding Halevi, military intelligence chief Major-General Aharon Haliva and Shin Bet Chief Ronen Bar, as being "deadly failures" appointed by Gantz when he was defense minister in the previous government (in fact, Bar was appointed by then-prime minister Naftali Bennett).

On Sunday, Yair took it up a notch in a post on X (formerly Twitter) in which he responded to the High Court's decision to suspend the State Comptroller's investigation into the IDF and Shin Bet failures at the start of the war. "What

are they trying to hide?" he wrote. "If there wasn't treason, why are they so afraid that outside and independent sources will investigate what happened?"

Netanyahu junior is escalating a campaign launched at the beginning of the war which seeks to place the sole blame for October 7 and all that has happened since on the IDF and Shin Bet chiefs, for not informing Netanyahu of the warning signs on the night before the Hamas attack. As if the prime minister, who had spent years perpetuating Hamas' hold in Gaza, allowing it to receive funding which was used for armaments and tunnel-building, and resisted ordering the assassinations of its chiefs, would have changed his policies that night. Now, those generals are being branded as traitors as well.

This is a risky tactic. Even after the failure of the IDF and the Shin Bet to predict and prepare for Hamas' October 7 attacks,



Netanyahu, left, and Halevi.

Amos Ben-Gershom/GPO

which they have admitted, it has remained the people's army. The IDF is not just where the sons and daughters of most Israelis serve, but with hundreds of thousands of reservists called up, an even wider swathe of the population is now mobilized in its service.

In the past eight months, surveys have consistently shown that even though the image of the security chiefs has taken a battering, they are still more popular than the prime minister. Brand IDF is stronger and more enduring than Brand BB.

And this is exactly why Netanyahu and his mouthpieces have been running a divide-and-rule campaign, simultaneously embracing the field commanders and soldiers on the ground, as salt of the earth heroes who won't accept anything less than total victory, while sliming the defeatist generals.

But it has become harder to stick to this tactic when the very foot-soldiers they are praising are now being called upon by the Netanyahu government to fight on in Gaza and perhaps in a second war (simultaneous or subsequent) against Hezbollah, while the Netanyahu coalition is trying to assuage its ultra-Orthodox partners by passing legislation that will completely exempt tens of thousands of yeshiva students from the military draft.

It's proving impossible to keep extolling the soldiers while imposing upon them longer conscription periods and even more months of reserve duty. But Netanyahu can't avoid it. He has to keep his Haredi partners on board. Which is why his remaining diehard supporters, led by the Dauphin, are resorting to even more drastic measures, with their insinuations of treachery against the generals.

These accusations were already being made already early on in the war: That the generals, in cahoots with the protestors against government's anti-democratic legislative program, and under orders from former prime minister, defense minister and IDF Chief of Staff Ehud Barak – the man most hated and feared by Netanyahu, who was once his soldier, over

half a century ago – somehow allowed the October 7 attacks to take place, so that Netanyahu could be blamed and deposed. It is a classic "stab in the back" conspiracy theory used in history by fascist parties.

There is nothing new about the tension between Netanyahu and the generals. He has always resented any other source of power in Israel that dared to be independent of him. It is why, over the years, he has sought to suborn and corrupt the civil service and the judiciary and, most recently, thanks to his political ally, Itamar Ben-Gvir, he has rendered the Israeli police force powerless and politicized.

**The disagreements are becoming so toxic that the Netanyahu camp is now accusing army generals of a classic 'stab in the back' conspiracy theory favored by fascist parties.**

When he first came to office back in 1996, the members of the IDF's General Staff were older men than him; they had been appointed by Yitzhak Rabin, a former chief of staff they had admired. The resentment between them was mutual, and Netanyahu's decision to found a National Security Council, was an attempt to undermine the joint authority of the IDF General Staff and the Defense Ministry. Now, Netanyahu is older than the generals, but he has not won over their admiration or respect. They still see him as a craven politician, subverting Israel's national interests to his own.

That is why so many of the generals, as soon as they retire from the military, have become bitter political rivals of Netanyahu. The same phenomenon has occurred with every single defense minister to serve in a Netanyahu government: They later became his enemy. The same path is being trodden by his current defense minister, Gallant, whom Netanyahu tried unsuccessfully to fire last year and, with the departure of Gantz and Eisenkot, is now his only open critic in the government.

Despite the central place the IDF occupies in Israeli public life, it has never come even close to carrying out a military coup. But the increasingly explicit disagreements between Netanyahu and the IDF over the course of this war, its origins and how it is to end, is set to become more toxic and dramatic in its implications.

## WAR

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is enormous. But Hamas' leader in the Strip, Yahya Sinwar, simply doesn't care. He's apathetic to the losses – both military and civilian – and doesn't want to stop the war because then the destruction that he has inflicted on the residents of Gaza through his crazy plan to conquer Israeli border communities near Gaza will be on display (a plan that was more successful as a result of the failures of the IDF and Shin Bet).

From Sinwar's perspective, the only way out is a deal that would force a complete and long-standing cease-fire on Israel, and in exchange for the hostages there would be international guarantees regarding his own well-being and that of Hamas' leadership.

On the Israeli side, Netanyahu also has concerns about a halt to the fighting – and he isn't capable of granting Sinwar what he wants, which would constitute an Israeli admission of failure. The dispute between the prime minister and Gallant, Halevi, and Shin Bet director Ronen Bar relates to the quality of the achievements so far and the steps required of the IDF at this time.

At Sunday's cabinet meeting, Netanyahu took a militant line. In a radio inter-

view on Radio 103FM, his close associate Brig. Gen. (res.) Effi Eitam said the war would last three years: a year in Gaza, which would soon be completed, a year in Lebanon and ultimately a third year "to shape everything related to Iran."

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One can quibble over the magnitude of the achievement. The operation in Rafah was late in coming, amid constraints. Netanyahu hesitated over it for months in the face of an American veto and serious disagreements among military and political officials. When the order was issued to the army to proceed with it in early May, it was done hastily and right after the previous round of hostage negotiations collapsed. But the Biden administration continued to create difficulties and forced the IDF to carry out a one-division operation instead of using two divisions like had been planned. The operational plans were hastily changed

and the extent of the benefit derived from the operation was reduced.

Hamas chose to evacuate a considerable portion of its armed fighters from the city. On Monday, IDF officials estimated that so far about 550 terrorists have been killed during the recent fighting in Rafah, with two of Hamas' four battalions in the city now deemed as having low capa-

**It can also be assumed that Hamas' surviving brigade commanders also desperately need a break. But Sinwar doesn't care.**

bilities. Nevertheless, the remaining terrorists have been trailing the Israeli forces using rocket-propelled grenades and explosives charges. After nearly a month and a half, the American ban on IDF troops entering the center of Rafah remains in place. So far, the operation is concentrating on the Philadelphia corridor along the Egyptian border, which was captured in its entirety – and several of Rafah's neighborhoods.

And yet, it's hard to explain to the public what soldiers are being killed for in Rafah and what the aim is

beyond the same "total victory" that the prime minister still insists on talking about without any connection to reality. Security cooperation is creaking and not only with the Americans. Israel's takeover of the Rafah border crossing is angering Egypt and at the moment, it's difficult to find an arrangement that would ensure its transfer to another party without exposing IDF forces to attack in the narrow corridor for many months.

**It's Israel's move**

U.S. President Joe Biden's special envoy Amos Hochstein came to the region on Monday for another tour between Beirut and Jerusalem. Officials in Washington are worried about the recent increase in hostilities between Israel and Hezbollah and are again seeking to prevent the eruption of all-out war. Just prior to Hochstein's arrival, IDF Spokesman Daniel Hagari was dispatched on Sunday to convey messages through the foreign media. Hagari argued that "Hezbollah's increasing aggression is bringing us to the brink of what could be a wider escalation, one that could have devastating consequences for Lebanon and the entire region."

"Hezbollah is jeopardizing the future of Lebanon – so that it can be a shield for Hamas," he said. "Israel will take the neces-

sary measures to protect its civilians – until security along our border with Lebanon is restored."

The Israeli warning also stems from an understanding that Hezbollah is satisfied with the progress of the campaign in northern Israel. Despite its losses (nearly 340 dead among the ranks of Hezbollah alone) and despite the targeted killings of several of its senior members, Hezbollah isn't feeling that it's at a disadvantage. It is dictating how the fighting is being conducted in the north – and it's Israel that is responding. From an American standpoint, Israel – more than Hezbollah – is close to deciding to substantially escalate its firepower. Hochstein's visit is designed to prevent a war, but a considerable amount of the effort will be directed toward us Israelis.

In the meantime, Netanyahu has declared that the war cabinet is being disbanded, which was foreseeable. Following the resignation of Benny Gantz and Gadi Eisenkot of National Unity Party, the prime minister was concerned about demands by far-right ministers Bezalel Smotrich and Itamar Ben-Gvir to join the limited war cabinet instead. Netanyahu announced that the main consultations would from now on be conducted through another limited consultation forum.

In other words, it would include himself, Gallant,

Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, Knesset member Arye Dery and senior members of the defense establishment. But it's not entirely clear where fundamental decisions will be made, such as the disagreement over the future of the campaign. Will it be the broader security cabinet, where Netanyahu apparently has an assured majority?

This is coming against the backdrop of renewed tensions between the prime minister and senior members of the defense establishment. The poison machine on social media has again been working overtime on his behalf, and Netanyahu also fired volleys of his own in statements at the cabinet meeting. ("We're a country with an army and not an army with a country.") He then ignited a fabricated confrontation over his public evasion from the IDF's announcement about the opening of a humanitarian aid route from Kerem Shalom to Rafah, where the army is to refrain from activity during daytime hours.

In practice, the army was acting in accordance with a directive from Netanyahu, who acceded to American pressure (although the army didn't update the prime minister on the details). But it was convenient for Netanyahu to escalate the confrontation and in the process divert attention from the heavy losses over the weekend in Rafah and from the public criticism

of efforts to ensure passage of laws exempting the ultra-Orthodox from the draft.

**A relationship of arms**

On Monday, in the middle of the war, the Defense Ministry released data showing that for the third time in a row, last year saw record-breaking military exports, with Israel selling \$13 billion worth of weaponry (nearly 50 billion shekels). The pace of the exports didn't slow significantly even after the outbreak of the war in October. The Defense Ministry had to make certain adjustments to help address the IDF's own urgent needs, a move that Israel's foreign buyer countries reacted to with understanding.

Israel doesn't release detailed information by country as to where its exports are going, but it does so based on the region of the world. Because the Asia-Pacific region leads the customer list, accounting for 48 percent of the total, India can be assumed to be Israel's No. 1 export customer. Europe was second, accounting for 35 percent, a figure that is continuing to grow against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine and concerns about Russia. North America was third at 9 percent, while Africa represented a negligible 1 percent.

Senior sources in the defense establishment claim there is now stricter enforcement of restrictions on

arms sales to countries with ongoing violations of civil rights, where there is political instability or where there is an ongoing military conflict. Antimissile systems continue to lead the product list (at 36 percent). Their phenomenal success on the night in April when Iran launched its rocket barrage only added to the interest.

On the other hand, senior officials are being repeatedly asked about the disparity between the failings on October 7 in Israeli communities near the Gaza border and the technological and intelligence capabilities about which Israel boasts. And there's also a more critical problem stemming from the war.

The more that the United States is angered over Netanyahu's policies, it reports to delaying and slowing its export of weapons as a way of pressuring Israel. More than a month ago, President Biden delayed a shipment of 3,500 precision bombs to the air force. The disagreement has not yet been resolved. Defense Minister Gallant and his ministry's director general, Maj. Gen. Eyal Zamir, will again be going to the United States next week. It can be assumed that the question of munitions will top the agenda. Anyone imagining the air force hitting Gaza and Beirut at the same time would do well to have a look at the results of the visit.



# By tying Lebanon agreement to Gaza truce, Hezbollah obstructs the deal all sides seek

Zvi Bar'el

U.S. presidential envoy Amos Hochstein, who is scheduled to arrive in Israel on Monday before continuing to Lebanon, can expect a minefield of obstacles.

The most pressing goal of Hochstein, who despite his official title of "Senior Adviser for Energy and Investment" finds himself investing most of his energy in trying to calm the Israel-Lebanon conflict, is to prevent an all-out war that risks sucking the United States into its vortex.

Theoretically, all of the parties – Israel, the Lebanese government, Hezbollah, and also Iran – want to end the fighting, begin talks on permanent arrangements, return the displaced residents of northern Israel and southern Lebanon to their homes and start negotiations on demarcating the final land border between Israel and Lebanon.

There are even a few proposals for a solution on the table: one from France, another from the United States, and a third that combines the two.

All of them require Hezbollah to withdraw its forces to about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) from the Israeli border, together with a cease-fire that will go into effect immediately. In the space vacated by Hezbollah, an international force of about 15,000 soldiers will be deployed.

In the next phase, they are to be joined, after proper preparations, training, and receipt of appropriate equipment, by troops from the Lebanese Army. Final border demarcation negotiations between Israel and Lebanon, with American or French-American mediation, are to

begin at the same time.

These plans have undergone several revisions since February, such as a proposal to implement the conditions specified in UN Security Council Resolution 1701 in a 5-square-kilometer "experimental" area, flexible troop-withdrawal ranges to be implemented according to an agreed schedule, a mixed force from the United Nations and the Lebanese Army and other proposals.

All of these have a single end goal in mind: to implement most of the provisions of Resolution 1701 in parallel to the negotiations between Israel and Lebanon on setting the international border – a move that is considered essential in order to neutralize Hezbollah's justifications for continuing the struggle against Israel: the claims that even after withdrawing its forced from Lebanon in May 2000, Israel still occupies parts of Lebanon.

The main obstacle is the linkage that Hezbollah has created between the war in Gaza and the conflict in Lebanon. The latter is still defined as "measured," despite the unprecedented scope of the reciprocal attacks that have brought the two sides to the brink of an all-out war, since it is still conducted within the framework of the "reaction equation."

The working assumption of Israel, Lebanon and the mediating countries is that as soon as the fighting ends in Gaza, it will also end in Lebanon. This assumption is based on Hezbollah's conduct during the cease-fire in Gaza in November, part of the first hostage deal; on Hezbollah



Lebanese students at a protest to demand a cease-fire in Gaza, in Beirut in April.

Hassan Ammar / AP

leader Hassan Nasrallah's remarks that he tied the continuation of the conflict with Israel to "developments on the ground"; and above all to the assumption that Hezbollah and Iran seek to preserve Lebanese public legitimacy such that it would allow the organization to continue to dictate Lebanese policy and control the country's economic, military and political centers of power without triggering civil unrest or, worse, civil war.

France tried to persuade Hezbollah to separate the fronts, but to no avail. Unlike America, it maintains direct ties with senior Hezbollah officials – for example, through meetings between the French president's spe-

cial envoy, Jean-Yves le Drian, and Mohammed Raad, a Hezbollah member of the Lebanese parliament. Their most recent meeting took place late last month.

Hochstein has held a series of meetings with senior Lebanese officials, including Prime Minister Najib Mikati and parliament speaker Nabih Berri, who is representing Hezbollah at these talks even though he belongs to the other Shi'ite party, Amal. From these meetings, Hochstein quickly concluded that until the shooting stops in Gaza, any plan to end the clashes on the Israeli-Lebanese border will have to wait.

Developments on the ground – the threats and aggressive rhetoric from both

sides, the political and public pressure in Israel to launch an all-out offensive against Lebanon, and not just Hezbollah – now require the U.S. administration to apply massive to leverage a hostage deal into a permanent cease-fire in Gaza that will in turn produce a cease-fire in the north.

European diplomats involved in negotiations on the Lebanon issue say the U.S. view is that Israel has already agreed to a permanent cease-fire in Gaza as part of the hostage deal (a view Israel hasn't fully confirmed), thereby creating a new situation that seemed impossible until a few weeks ago.

"Our efforts now are aimed at getting Israel to agree to an immediate implementation of the cease-fire in order to achieve both goals, freeing the hostages and stopping the clashes with

Lebanon," one diplomat said. "The problem is that the U.S. will have trouble persuading Israel to stop shooting just to prevent a major deterioration in Lebanon as long as there's still no agreement between Israel and Hamas on the plan for the hostages' release, the kind of guarantees Hamas will accept regarding the commitment to stop the fighting completely even after the hostage deal is finished, and the way Gaza will be run at every stage of the cease-fire."

According to the terms of the deal now on the table, the IDF is supposed to withdraw from population centers in the first stage, and later from all of Gaza. The result is that Hezbollah has essentially created a situation in which quiet in Israel's north and perhaps even Lebanon's fate depend on the success

of the hostage deal, which in turn depends on a complete cease-fire in Gaza.

Nor is that the only problem. Even if a cease-fire is achieved in Gaza and Hezbollah complies with the assumption that it will also then stop shooting, there is still no agreed plan for removing its forces from the border region, dismantling its bases near the border and securing its consent to let an international force – with or without the Lebanese army – deploy along the border.

Granted, Lebanon's government has agreed in principle, apparently with Hezbollah's consent, to start talks on demarcating the land border between the two countries shortly after a cease-fire takes effect. But even if the sides manage to agree on where the border should run, the issue of Shebaa Farms and the entire Har Dov area – which won't be included in the talks because they are considered Syrian rather than Lebanese – will remain.

Hezbollah is expected to use this as a pretext for continuing the conflict, and certainly to justify holding onto its arms, in defiance of Resolution 1701. But for now, all sides seem to have abandoned the goal of getting it to disarm as long as it is removed from the border.

At first glance, it seems as if this web of competing pressures shows that Hochstein's current visit is also likely to end without an immediate solution. But as a counterweight, there's the question of whether Israel is really capable of dealing with both fronts simultaneously, tolerating the heavy civilian price an all-out war with Lebanon is expected to exact and ensuring that it ends up achieving a result substantially different from the one a cease-fire in Gaza could produce.

## BEN-GVIR

Continued from page 1

In fact, he continued, "it's actually the independence of the security services and the police, as reflected in their lack of subordination to the elected government, and the latter's inability to restrain their activities that constitute a threat to democracy."

In an unusual move, the prosecution last week submitted a letter to the court that Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai had sent to Baharav-Miara. In it, he detailed a series of incidents in which Ben-Gvir went around him to intervene directly in the decisions of police major generals, who are one rung below the commissioner. Shabtai wrote that in defiance of both his position and that of the security cabinet, Ben-Gvir pushed his candidate to be the next police commissioner, Deputy Commissioner Avshalom Peled, and the Southern District police chief, Amir Cohen, not to allocate officers to guard trucks carrying humanitarian aid from Jordan to the Gaza Strip. In another case, Ben-Gvir intervened in a decision to suspend police officers who had attacked worshippers at Mount Meron, thereby subverting Shabtai's authority.

The prosecution's brief termed such incidents "gross violations of the law and illegal intervention." Ben-Gvir, however, told the court that Shabtai's letter is "false and deceptive." He also attached a letter he had written to Baharav-Miara assailing her decision to submit Shabtai's letter to the court.

"The fact that you saw fit to act as you did with regard to this letter is unacceptable and very worrying," he wrote. "It subverts your authority, contradicts how you are supposed to behave and makes clear that your entire goal is to undermine my ability to function as a minister, out of unacceptable motives, and to influence the court's decision in a manipulative and unacceptable manner."

# Israel is in danger of believing that war with Hezbollah is inevitable

Alon Pinkas

There's the concept of expressing a "contrarian view," whether ad hoc or just for spite and to annoy. There's also the familiar notion of "thinking outside the box." We've all encountered these. But then there's a bigger, broader idea: *ipcha mistabra*.

*Ipcha mistabra* (the "ch" is pronounced like in "humus," not "charm") is an Aramaic term that literally means "the opposite is evident." It contains a fundamental "What if?" approach and offers a contrarian explanation of geopolitical and military developments.

The expression originally appeared in the Babylonian Talmud – the vast body of writing that constitutes the essence of Jewish thought, imparted through a compilation of Jewish laws and theology.

*Ipcha mistabra* as a concept was a central intellectual and reasoning tool in polemics and refutation dialogues, which is what "talmudic" is all about in terms of the dynamic of the discourse and dialectical nature of study.

But unlike expressing a contrarian view on a specific and limited issue, or suggesting a "thinking outside the box" premise or solution, *ipcha mistabra* is not merely about winning a given legal, religious or ethical argument. It is an evidence-based alternative and coherent paradigm that analyzes facts and trends, and reaches different conclusions than the dominant conventional wisdom holds.

The October 1973 Yom Kippur War was a strategic surprise that occurred because Israel was fixated on and convinced by the validity of a concept – *konsepszia*, as it is known in Hebrew – according to which Egypt and Syria were deterred and would not initiate or risk a full-on war with Israel. They were not. Nor was Hamas in October 2023, exactly 50 years after that earlier war began.

In the aftermath of the Yom Kippur War, and as part

of the conclusions of both the military and a state commission of inquiry, Israeli intelligence established an *ipcha mistabra* department (a.k.a. Devil's Advocate unit). Its role is to inform and present to decision-makers intelligence assessments with opposite possibilities.

The CIA calls it "creative thinking," following the 9/11 attacks that were partly attributed to an intelligence "failure of imagination" – meaning rigid adherence to preconceived predispositions. Everything makes sense and seems logical, and patterns seem predictable, so it must be right. That leads to a herd mentality as the prime determinant of organizational thinking, and that always involves the derision, suppression or marginalization of contrarian views: "X is an alarmist – why would Japan attack Pearl Harbor? It doesn't make sense." Or "Y is a scaremonger, why would Egypt and Syria attack Israel?" Or "Z is always in panic mode. What interest or benefit would Iran have in joining an Israeli-Hezbollah war?"

This is exactly where and why *ipcha mistabra* is now relevant: in the Israel-Hezbollah-Iran matrix.

The conventional wisdom about the "inevitability of war" between Israel and Hezbollah, and how that war will transpire exactly, suffers from the same herd mentality and fixated premonitions, exacerbated by potentially flawed assessments on escalation, military capabilities and political objectives.

Here are five preconceived premises that should be critically considered before succumbing to the "inevitability of war" axiom.

First, the very issue of inevitability.

That the situation and circumstances along the Israel-Lebanon border are unacceptable, intolerable and unsustainable is beyond doubt. Had there not been a Gaza war, there would have been a major military operation and likely a full-on

war in Lebanon already. That does not imply inevitability. The decision to initiate a war is Israel's. It is a conscious political decision to escalate the current reality – and with that comes the question of internal and external legitimacy, especially given the scrutiny and harsh criticism Israel is already facing over Gaza.

Second, a war against Hezbollah may be warranted, but it lacks clear political objectives. At the end of that war cycle, we would be exactly where we are now – only with mutual devastation. By definition, such a war would not be decisive. Power relations in Lebanon may not be altered and the Israeli tendency to think every few years that a military operation will change the political reality was proven wrong time and time again – ever since the massive invasion in 1982, a.k.a. the first Lebanon war.

Even in the event of Israel occupying the southern Lebanon "security zone," as it did between 1985 and 2000, Hezbollah's missiles and Iranian support may make this an exercise in futility. Northern Israel, and large swaths of central Israel, would be devastated, as would most of Lebanon. To what end or advantage?

Third, the idea that Israel can design, plan and execute a limited operation that would impel Hezbollah to revisit policy, retreat and thus restore deterrence is dangerously misleading. It wrongly assumes that Israel enjoys "escalation dominance," which it explicitly does not. Yes, you can control the initial escalatory step, but not the entire unfolding of the confrontation.

What if Hezbollah Secretary-General Hassan Nasrallah sees the Gaza war as an opportunity rather than a deterrent? What if he genuinely believes that Israel cannot fight on two fronts with large-scale ground operations? What if he thinks whatever devastation Israel might inflict on Lebanon would increase its isolation and compound its near-pariah status in the world?

Fourth, the assumption that Iran will stay out of

such a war because it has no convincing argument or strategic benefits to join in is questionable. Hezbollah is Iran's main and most powerful regional ally. It can employ other militias in its influence orbit, such as the Houthis in the Red Sea. Or threaten to get involved directly, as it did in April when it launched some 300 rockets and drones at Israel. Predicting that Iran will stay out is tenuous at best.

After deliberately strengthening Hamas, as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did for seven years preceding October 7, and after miserably and tragically failing to anticipate Hamas' intentions and actions, the idea that Israel knows what Iran and Hezbollah are thinking – and is ascribing to them predictable and cost-benefit decision-making – is not just arrogant. It could be very wrong.

Fifth, the reluctance to see the connection between a Gaza cease-fire and Lebanon, and the persistent refusal to entertain U.S. ideas on a regional reconfiguration because they involve a political process with the Palestinians, leads to escalation with Hezbollah. An *ipcha mistabra* analysis would recommend the exact opposite based on geopolitical trends and power relations.

*Ipcha mistabra* is not always the correct or accurate analysis. In fact, falling in love with the contrarian view just for the sake of a different approach is just as dangerous as sticking to existing predispositions. Furthermore, if it then becomes the widely held inference and preference, then a new *ipcha mistabra* is required.

It is a necessary paradigm and tool of analysis that should always be considered and factored into thinking and decision-making processes. The number of times in national security and foreign policy affairs that conventional wisdom has been wrong and caused atrophy or entropy that affected outcomes is enough to merit *ipcha mistabra* – certainly on issues of war and peace.

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# Yair Netanyahu bolsters IDF Oct. 7 'betrayal' conspiracy

Haaretz

Yair Netanyahu, the son of Israel's prime minister, blasted the High Court's decision to halt a probe into the failures of the army and the Shin Bet security service before, during and after Hamas' attack on October 7.

He wrote: "What are they trying to hide? If there was no betrayal, then why are they afraid of external and independent parties investigating what happened?" He stressed, "The 'state' investigative committee, despite the bombastic title, is always chaired by a High Court judge, and is therefore almost always used as a cover-up committee for the Left."

Yair Netanyahu added that it was not clear to him why army officials oppose an investigation. "Up to this day no answer was given as to why the prime minister wasn't informed of the conversation the night before October 7?"

"Why wasn't he briefed on the material discovered



Yair Netanyahu Hadas Parush

as part of the intelligence report 'The Walls of Jericho'? Why did the army and intelligence chiefs keep claiming that Hamas was deterred? Where was the Air Force on October 7th?

Over the weekend, Yair Netanyahu shared a video that calls Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi, Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar and outgoing Military Intelligence head Aharon Haliva "three fatal failures." The video, which Netanyahu posted on his Instagram account, blames Benny Gantz for appointing the three to their positions, and calls him "the conspir-

acy king."

Last month, Yair Netanyahu posted a video in which a masked reservist threatened mass refusal to obey orders if control of the Gaza Strip would be handed over to Hamas or the Palestinian Authority.

Netanyahu left Israel more than a year ago, a number of days after his father announced the firing of Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, which he later retracted. At first, he stayed in Puerto Rico, and moved to Florida from there.

The Daily Mail reported that a pair of armed Shin Bet agents guard him 24 hours a day at the apartment tower where he lives.

In December, Haaretz reported that the state had paid up to that about around one million shekels (\$267,000) on his security in the United States up to that point. The expenses include a vehicle, driver, residence and food for the bodyguards, but not their Shin Bet salaries and flight expenses, meaning the costs are even higher.

## 'Persecution'

## Hebrew U. pres. slams bill to ax faculty for 'anti-Israel' opinions

Nir Hasson and Lior Dattel

The president of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem assailed Monday a bill that would force institutions of higher education to dismiss faculty members who express opinions deemed to be anti-Israel, without due process.

Asher Cohen called the bill, which was proposed by the National Union of Israeli Students and sponsored by Likud lawmaker Ofir Katz, an "abomination" and "a bill that threatens equality and freedom of speech, but also a bill that threatens our daily lives."

The bill would require institutions to use a fast-track process and dismiss without compensation faculty who are deemed to have incited against Israel, supported terrorism or "[spoken] out in ways perceived as negating Israel's existence as a Jewish and democratic state."

"There are already laws against incitement in Israel, so they apply a law only to academia," Cohen said. "There is a persecution of academics here because [academia] includes voices that express all kinds of opinions."

The Association of University Heads in Israel and the Senior Faculty Association said in letters last week that the bill would not only harm the independence of institutions of higher education, but will also help Israel's enemies and the academic boycott movement against Israel by providing them with proof of academic censorship and the restriction of freedom of expression by the Knesset and students.

"Regrettably, the bill is part of the ongoing McCarthyist campaign of incitement and division against Israeli academia," the Association of University Heads said in its letter. "The campaign has culminated in

the advancing of a bill the nature of which is to silence and create a climate of informing and fear on campuses."

The Senior Faculty Association said it saw the bill as "a threat to the independence of Israeli universities and our reputation in Israel and globally."

The National Student Union has also launched an extraordinary campaign directly against university lecturers whom it classifies as "supporters of terrorism." The Association of University Heads said in response, "This is a campaign of persecution and incitement against faculty that is liable to shed their blood. It is unacceptable that a student-financed campaign will encourage division and violence."

The bill emerged in a letter that the National Student Union sent to Kisch and to Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, asking them to support it.

# Maldives reviewing proposed blanket ban on Israelis over issue of Palestinians' exclusion



Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu Rafiq Maqbool / AP

## Rachel Fink

A few weeks after Maldivian government officials announced their intention to ban Israeli passport-holders from entering the country, plans have hit a snag in the form of Palestinian citizens of Israel holding the same passports outlawed by the bill.

Speaking at a press conference last Thursday, Attorney General Ahmed Usham said that a blanket ban on Israeli citizens requires further scrutiny. He emphasized that while the government's stance remains unchanged, there are significant issues to address and that amendments would be required to prevent the total ban on all Israeli citizens, including

Palestinian ones.

According to the Maldivian news outlet the Atoll Times, when Usham was asked about the current bill at the press conference, he answered, "The bill does not offer any solution, the way it is now."

"What I am saying is that it is a matter of great concern for some people that the way the bill has been introduced, it will ban even Palestinians," Usham continued. "There are over millions of Palestinians who hold Israeli passports. So what will happen if we do a blanket ban like that?"

"So, after thinking about it, we'll find the best solution." The bill, which was first proposed in June, marks another fraught mo-

ment in a long-standing history of tensions between the two countries.

Despite a brief period between 1965 and 1974 in which Israel and the Maldives maintained full diplomatic ties, they were cut afterward. There was an attempt to reestablish relations in the mid-1980s, but it was thwarted due to opposition by Maldivian lawmakers.

Since the war in Gaza began, citizens in the Maldives have held widespread protests against Israel. This week, President Mohamed Muizzu announced a nationwide fundraiser campaign titled Maldivians in Solidarity with Palestine. The project, which includes donation boxes located throughout

the capital city of Male, is being run in coordination with Muizzu's office, lawmakers from the ruling People's National Congress and local media.

The president also announced the appointment of a special envoy to assess the needs of the Palestinians and determine how to best allocate the money that has been raised. Funds will be routed through the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, UNRWA, according to the president's office.

Until recently, Maldives was a popular tourist destination for Israelis drawn to its picturesque beaches and luxury resorts. Over the last eight months, however, Israel's foreign ministry has issued two official

warnings urging citizens not to travel to the country, even on a foreign passport.

The first came last December as a response to the rash of pro-Palestinian demonstrations. The second was issued this month as a result of the proposed ban and recommended that any citizens living in the archipelago consider leaving, as it would be difficult to assist them should they find themselves in danger.

The announcement of the ban also prompted Israeli and Diaspora Jews to call for those able to enter the country to boycott it in solidarity with Israelis who would be affected by the new bill.

Axios recently reported an attempt by Democratic Rep. Josh Gottheimer of New Jersey, one of Congress' most vocal supporters of Israel, to craft legislation aimed at stopping the Maldives from following through with the ban. According to the report, Gottheimer is aiming to condition U.S. aid to the Maldives on allowing Israeli passport holders into the country, a source familiar with the matter told Axios. The bill is set to be called the Protecting Allied Travel Here Act and is reportedly supported by both Democratic and Republican lawmakers, the source said.

"Taxpayer dollars shouldn't be sent to a foreign nation that has banned all Israeli citizens from traveling to their country," Gottheimer said in a statement to Axios. "Not only is Israel one of our greatest democratic allies, but the Maldives' unprecedented travel ban is nothing but a blatant act of Jew hatred. They shouldn't get a cent of American dollars until they reverse course."

## ENVOY

Continued from page 1

sides, but he made it clear to everyone he met with in Israel that such an agreement could only be implemented after an official cease-fire is declared in Gaza. As long as the fighting in the Strip continues, it will not be possible to achieve a separate agreement between Israel and Hezbollah, he added. That has been Hezbollah's stance since Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel, and Biden administration officials don't believe that it is expected to change.

Hochstein is hoping that if the Israeli ground operation in Rafah is accom-

plished within two to three weeks, it would also make a lowering of the flames possible between Israel and Hezbollah in the north.

Such a scenario wouldn't bring about an end to the fighting but it would prevent its spread into full war and make possible more significant progress in his efforts to outline a framework for a future agreement between the sides, including the demarcation of the an agreed upon land border between Israel and Lebanon.

Hochstein was also in Israel in March and in December. Both visits were also aimed at preventing a significant escalation in the fighting in the north and at examining the possibility of achieving an agreement

that would restore quiet to the Israeli-Lebanese border. The senior Israelis who met with him on his previous visits heard similar assessments from him about the link between the war in Gaza and a possible end of the fighting in the north, but according to one of the Israelis, this time, Hochstein appears "more worried" about the possibility of a deterioration of the confrontation of the two sides into a full-scale war of a kind that would bring about huge destruction on both sides of the border.

The Wall Street Journal reported Monday that France "is working a diplomatic track to try to lower the temperature on the border" at the same time that United States works on the

issue. A senior French official told the newspaper that a cease-fire in Gaza is necessary to create what the paper described as "a favorable climate" for negotiations.

At the beginning of the war, Hochstein tried to examine the possibility of advancing a separate agreement between the parties, but he came to the conclusion that it was not possible.

At Hochstein's latest meeting with Netanyahu, he was joined by Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer and Israeli National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi, who have become members of the smaller decision-making forum that replaced the war cabinet following the resignation from the government of Benny Gantz

and Gadi Eisenkot. The smaller forum is aimed at preventing the involvement of National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir in decisions relating to the war in Lebanon.

The leader of the opposition in the Knesset, Yair Lapid, issued a statement after meeting with Hochstein. "Residents of the north need to return to their homes," he wrote.

"The international community cannot ignore an entire part of the country that has been under attack for the past eight months. Israel needs to distance Hezbollah from the border either through a diplomatic arrangement or through military action. The abandonment of the north must stop," he wrote.

## HAJJ

Continued from page 1

of the muezzin calling worshippers to prayer is heard above the tumult. Among the masses of people, some are in traditional garb, others in modern clothes.

Iranians, Malaysians, Palestinians, Muslims from Africa, Asia and Europe – they all come to the holy city as part of the hajj – all healthy Muslims are obliged to make the pilgrimage at least once in their lives. The high point is touching the Kaaba, the holy of holies.

The hajj provides a rare opportunity to make contact with Muslims from all over the world. Many of the Iranians, for example, are willing to talk with Arab Israelis despite the tensions between the two countries.

"The vast majority of the Iranian people don't hate the Jewish people, just the Zionist regime in Israel," says Hassan, a pilgrim from Iran. Regarding Arab citizens of Israel, he seems to be even better versed than the Indonesian Abdul Arahman. "You're a thorn in the Zionist regime's throat," he says.

Hassan says that when he was a student in Britain, he had an Arab Israeli friend. "He told me of the hardships he faced in everyday life, of the challenges of being a citizen of a country that has strained relations with the rest of the Arab world," Hassan says. "It made me realize that the conflict is much

more complex than what we see on the news."

Near the exit of the Great Mosque, also known as the Masjid al-Haram, four Turkish men in their 50s are standing. The phones of these four Central Asians boast Palestinian flags despite the Saudi ban on political symbols during the hajj.

"This is the flag of freedom," says one of them, Ismail Hashayev. He says Israel is a terrorist state whose land belongs to Palestine.

"I will devote a prayer to ask God to help the Palestinian people and liberate Al-Aqsa," he says. "Palestine is in our heart and will always remain there." But Hashayev too doesn't realize that there are Arab Muslims living in Israel; he seems to confuse them with West Bank Palestinians.

"Israeli Arabs – at least among the people who know them – are considered traitors in the eyes of some Muslim Arabs," says Bakr Abu Bakr of Tunisia.

"But we have to realize that they're also victims of the conflict, though many of them are collaborators and serve in the military. I've seen Arabic-speaking Israeli Arabs who live in Israel and support Israel, and that's very sad to say about them, even though they're Palestinians."

### A visa for '1948 Muslims'

Around 4,500 Arab Israelis make the pilgrimage to Mecca every year, the quota set by Saudi Arabia. They



Muslim pilgrims in Mecca.

Deiaa Haj Yahia

arrive via Jordan after a long, expensive and bureaucratic process during which they must hand in their Israeli passport to the Waqf Muslim trust. To enter Saudi Arabia, they receive a temporary Jordanian passport.

Still, the Saudi authorities and security forces can identify them by a certain phrase on their visa: "1948 Muslim."

The cooperation with Jordan that allows these pilgrims to enter Saudi Arabia pays the Hashemite kingdom a handsome dividend. Along with tax, a visa and temporary passport cost around 7,000 shekels (\$1,870), just part of the hefty sum Arab Israelis pay for the journey to Mecca. Packages for the trip range between 18,000 and 58,000 shekels.

Arab Israelis are reminded of their complicated situation immediately at Medina Airport when they present the vaccination document required of all pilgrims. "This writing is not wel-

come here," says the burly security man, pointing to the Hebrew. "But I understand the situation."

And conversations with locals reveal that, despite the talk of a Saudi normalization with Israel, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's position remains unpopular, especially during the war in Gaza. It's not easy to talk about this with Saudis because everybody is suspected of being a government agent, but a few people aren't worried.

"I don't understand why we need to come closer with Israel; it will only harm our position in the Muslim world. I fear that a normalization will hurt our beliefs and bring changes that we're not ready for," says Ghanem Abed Arahman, a resident of Medina.

"It doesn't matter what the government says, I will always support the Palestinian people. You need to distinguish between politics and the opinions of the people, but

I can't say that out loud."

"It will be hard to swallow a normalization," agrees Mohammed Mouawad of Mecca. "We see what the Israelis are doing to the Palestinian people. They're an occupying people, and occupations have to end. After there's peace, maybe we can think about normalizing relations. But we believe that Prince Mohammed bin Salman won't normalize relations during a war."

Hearing such voices, it's easy to understand why some pilgrims from Israel prefer to remain anonymous. Most introduce themselves as Palestinians and don't get into deep conversations about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"You're in a country where you don't have your own embassy or any clear contact if anything happens," says Bassam from Nazareth in the north. "It's very sensitive here, especially our situation, the Arabs from Israel."

So they focus on the hajj. Early every morning, they travel to Mecca by bus from the Medina hotels. Before this, they too don white, after a cleansing ritual that includes the shaving of all the body hair.

The heat is extraordinary – 47 degrees Celsius (117 Fahrenheit) – but no one is complaining. The pilgrims are brimming with faith and ready to tackle any obstacle.

On the bus to Mecca, some passengers sing songs for the Prophet Mohammed. Others read aloud from the Quran. Though they seem weary by the end of the ride, most are still smiling.

## FANTASY

Continued from page 1

(It is unclear when Trump would have seen the Iron Dome in operation or whether he was perhaps talking about U.S. soldiers operating a similar missile defense system elsewhere.)

A few weeks later, again in Iowa, Trump lamented that "people don't pick this up as much as they should, but we will have built an Iron Dome over our country because we want to protect ourselves," he said. "They work, and they work really well. You can ask Israel," he added.

A week later, he returned to his theme at a campaign event in New Hampshire: "They've only got 17 seconds to figure this thing out," he said, again imitating the sound of a computer operator and missiles being intercepted. "And we don't have it here!"

Trump said he would "prevent World War III. We've never been so close. You just have to check out the news. And we will build an Iron Dome over our country – a state-of-the-art missile defense shield."

He again doubled down on his vow to build an Iron Dome system while campaigning in Michigan last month. Trump cited Iran's unprecedented missile attack on Israel in April, saying: "You saw how effective it was, with 300 rockets shot with every one of them knocked out. Probably if they didn't have it, they

wouldn't even have Israel right now, if you think about it. All of those would have hit various locations – virtually none of them got through. Amazing. We're going to have a more sophisticated version. We have the technology, we have the genius. We're going to build a great Iron Dome."

In reality, the majority of the interceptions from Iran were made by Israel's Arrow 2 and Arrow 3 missile defense systems, not the Iron Dome, which is designed to intercept short-range missiles. U.S. and coalition forces also downed dozens of drones and several ballistic missiles during the attack.

The complications of adapting the Iron Dome system to other countries gained particular prominence following Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Then, critics charged that Israel was failing in its duty as a Western ally in not providing Ukraine with Iron Dome batteries. The consensus in America, however, was that the Iron Dome in itself would have been a stopgap measure

until the U.S. military could procure or develop a better defense system against the larger, longer-range cruise missiles being sent from Russia.

Iron Dome's specific range and operational capacity would seem to make it even more outside the realm of possibility to meet Trump's envisioned giant dome over the entire United States. Unless he is convinced Mexico or Canada will begin firing short-range missiles at U.S. border communities, Iron Dome as it exists would not meet Trump's standards. Israel itself is working on a new ground-based laser air defense system, known as the Iron Beam, which is substantially cheaper to operate than the Iron Dome.

Beyond all this, the United States has already spent hundreds of billions in missile defense research-and-development, and any upgrades similar to the ones Trump is vowing would need congressional support – something he failed to obtain for his border wall.

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# Yair, in service of his father

For years, Yair Netanyahu has played a key role in the network of poison operated by diehard fans of his father, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He uses his social media accounts to incite, divide, sneer, assail and libel everyone in his father's and his fans' list of targets – leftists in general, journalists, Supreme Court justices, legal advisers, police commissioners, army officers, chiefs of staff, opposition members, political rivals and, finally, cabinet members marked as hostile to Netanyahu and his movement.

Because the younger Netanyahu has no official position and is ostensibly just a private individual expressing his opinions, over time, a kind of consensus has formed that at the very least we must accept his comments, however nauseating they may be, or, at most, view them as another example of the collapse of statesmanlike behavior.

But instead of reining in his son, the elder Netanyahu has exploited the public's forgiving attitude and the mercy it has shown his troublesome offspring to send unfiltered messages through him.

Consequently, this should no longer be viewed as acceptable. The younger Netanyahu's messages should be attributed directly to his father.

This week, without a drop of shame, Yair Netanyahu implied that the October 7 massacre was the result of treason by army officers. Following the Supreme Court's decision to freeze a state comptroller's investigation into the conduct of the Israel Defense Forces and the Shin Bet security service before and after October 7, he tweeted, "If there was no treason, why are they so afraid of having independent, external bodies look into what happened?" But instead of being shocked by the son's behavior, we should attribute the accusation of treason against the army to his father, the prime minister.

Over the weekend, Yair Netanyahu posted a video that termed IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi, Shin Bet Director Ronen Bar and the outgoing director of Military Intelligence, Aharon Haliva, "three deadly failures." In other words, at the height of a war, the prime minister was ridiculing and belittling his chief of staff and his Shin Bet director.

The fact that the elder Netanyahu impotently disavows his son's posts is meaningless. This is part of the poison machine's modus operandi. The pattern is tiresomely familiar. Last month, Yair Netanyahu posted a video in which a masked man who identified himself as an army reservist threatened Defense Minister Yoav Gallant with a mass refusal to obey orders if control of the Gaza Strip were handed over to either Hamas or the Palestinian Authority and even mentioned the possibility of a military coup. The video was later removed. In practice, what this means is that the prime minister was threatening the defense minister.

It's not enough to banish the younger Netanyahu to Miami. We have to put an end to this farce – especially since he is being guarded by the Shin Bet and funded by the taxpayers. If the prime minister wants to accuse army officers and intelligence officers of treason, let him say so. He needs to stop hiding behind his son and speak directly to the public.



## The media whitewashed Ben-Gvir, it must not repeat the error with Feiglin

Look who has suddenly returned to the television studios – not just the pseudo-journalistic ones, but even Channel 12 and the Kan public broadcaster. Moshe Feiglin sits on a panel with Avri Gilad and Yair Cherki, speaks by phone with Arad Nir and is interviewed by Uri Levy and Sharon Wexler for Kan Channel 11.

The man who celebrated the deaths of dozens of Lebanese civilians in the 2020 explosion in the Beirut port and called the disaster "a fantastic fireworks display ... in honor of the festival of love," referring to Tu B'Av, began popping up on our TV screens again after October 7, and especially after his grandson, Yair Levin, died in the war in the Gaza Strip.

Since then, Feiglin has been sheltered by the studios in his capacity as a mourning grandfather, with a chyron reading "Moshe Feiglin says goodbye to his grandson." But he doesn't confine himself to personal eulogies. Instead, he airs his racist, messianic, delusional theories.

Nir fell into awkward silence when Feiglin elaborated on his Gaza vision of occupation, expulsion and resettlement. It's not nice

to interrupt a man in his time of anguish. With Gilad and Cherki, the tone was already a bit more playful. "Starting next time, it's 5 shekels," Gilad said after the millionth repetition of "Oslo" as the original sin that brought the October 7 catastrophe upon us (in Feiglin's view, along with the 2011 deal to free kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit).

He already has a ready answer to the question of what to do with Gaza after the war. His vision has been waiting patiently in some drawer for many years now – 2,000, if you ask him. But it's completely insane. In his view, "be-

unit that spearheaded the October 7 attack. Or "if Gaza doesn't become Jaffa, Jaffa will become Gaza." He already has a ready answer to the question of what to do with Gaza after the war. His vision has been waiting patiently in some drawer for many years now – 2,000, if you ask him. But it's completely insane. In his view, "be-

with a port, an airport and lively beaches (for Jews, of course). It will be "a new Mideast Riviera," he promises, as well as a high-tech hub, with a direct railway line to the Third Temple. It's a wonderful combination of real estate development and a state governed by Jewish law.

At first glance, it's all so delusional that it ought to be no cause for concern. But it's worth recalling the contribution the major television stations made to the accumulation of political power by another insane extremist, Itamar Ben-Gvir. The TV studios gave him an unlimited platform and unlimited attention. This was a powerful engine that drove his movement from the radical fringes to the heart of the mainstream and his position as "the most influential and most threatening minister" in the current government, as former minister Gadi Eisenkot called him in an interview with journalist Dana Weiss.

Feiglin's terrible personal loss cannot serve as an excuse. He isn't supposed to be sitting in television studios. There is nothing legitimate about this. We made this mistake with Ben-Gvir, let's not make it again.

Daniel J. Solomon

# French Jews caught between leftist, rightist antisemites

French President Emmanuel Macron's decision last week to dissolve the parliament and call snap legislative elections in the wake of his party's sound defeat in the race for the European Parliament has aroused shock and even fear across France.

Macron's risky decision follows France's far-right National Rally party's trouncing of Macron's Renaissance party in the European contest. Polls predict a similar thrashing in the National Assembly election, scheduled to take place in two rounds, June 30 and July 7 – just weeks before the Summer Olympics open in Paris.

France's left-wing parties reacted to the "brown menace" by forming the New Popular Front, whose name references the prewar anti-fascist coalition that propelled the country's first Jewish prime minister, Leon Blum, into his post.

But French Jews cannot answer the call of this popular front: In a cruel twist of fate, the alliance includes some of France's rankest antisemites, namely Jean-Luc Mélenchon and his La France Insoumise (France Unbowed) party.

The community finds itself abandoned in a political no-man's-land, with enemies to its left and enemies to its right. French Jews, much like their British counterparts, face a left that for the first

time in over a century features an antisemitic faction. Some say Mélenchon is more of a fellow traveler of antisemites and a confirmed anti-Zionist rather than an antisemite *tout court*, but his long, ignominious rap sheet of antisemitic abuses speaks for itself. They include – only in part: accusing the umbrella group of Jewish institutions in France, known as CRIF, of controlling the country's foreign policy; suggesting that the Jews killed Jesus; alleging that the president of the National Assembly, Yael Braun-Pivet, was "camping in Tel Aviv to encourage a massacre"; insinuating that polemicist Eric Zemmour's far-right politics were the result of his Jewish background and, just this month, asserting that antisemitism in France was only "residual."

The master has proteges in the art of the dog whistle. While on a visit in Tunisia, David Guiraud, a parliamentarian in Mélenchon's party, charged that Israel baked children in ovens while disemboweling their mothers. The leftist party's rhetoric appeals to the antisemitism seen in some quarters of the Arab Muslim immigrant community that constitutes its base of support.

In the race for the European Parliament, Mélenchon's bloc made its opposition to the Gaza "genocide"

a centerpiece of its campaign, despite the body's limited role in determining the foreign relations of the EU or its member states. Partisans of Mélenchon's party repeatedly harassed the Jewish lead candidate of the Socialist Party, Raphaël Glucksmann. Glucksmann has denounced Israel's war in Gaza and urged France to impose sanctions against the Jewish state.

Despite this, he had to be exfiltrated from a May Day parade after activists associated with Mélenchon's party surrounded him and began chanting "Palestine lives" and "Get out of here, Glucksmann." Mélenchon faulted the activists for creating "a media distraction" that allowed Glucksmann to "assume the role of victim." A recent poll shows that 92 percent of French Jews hold Mélenchon's party responsible for contributing to a rise in antisemitism in France. Forty-two percent of respondents also said that "the ideas of the far left" served as a principal cause of this trend; 10 percent said the same for "the ideas of the far right."

More egregious than the left-wing party's bile is the

choice of other left parties, including the Socialists, Greens and Communists, to form another coalition with them, having ran together in the last National Assembly election. Even as these parties have decried Mélenchon's outrages, they plead that only an alliance with him can hold off the far right. This assertion, which has not been borne out by polls, has

party counts among its cadres vociferous antisemites, some belonging to Le Pen's inner circle. Her party's exclusionary nationalism also potentially undermines the status of any religious or ethnic minority. The moderate right, represented by The Republicans, is in the meantime tearing itself apart over whether to run with Le Pen.

What remains is the diminished center, the territory of Macron's ruling Renaissance party and its partners. This too has its pitfalls. Renaissance's neoliberal economic policies displease wide swaths of the French public, including many French Jews. And Macron must own some blame for the rise of extremes, given his imperious style of governance and aloofness from the concerns of ordinary people.

French Jews' choice of Macron's Renaissance party, which will probably win at least a plurality of their votes, might also serve as grist for the antisemitic mill. French Jews will link themselves – for want of options and out of desperation – to a tottering and widely-reviled governing party.

The age-old predicament of the vertical alliance surfaces anew: Driven from much of the political scene, French Jews will cast their ballots for and depend on the protection of ruling elites. This, in turn, will reinforce antisemitic contentions that the community is in bed with

## High Court can't protect Israel

For 57 years, the Israeli occupation enjoyed the protection of a legal flak jacket of near-perfect quality. The gleaming legal armor with which Israeli society covered its unmentionables shielded all our crimes and protected every abomination we committed. For decades, we could plunder the lands of our occupied subjects and settle on them, humiliate them at checkpoints and in the fields, detain thousands without trial, refrain from arresting or trying members of the Jewish gangs that raid them, outlaw all their nonviolent political activity and bomb Gaza from the ground, air and sea every few years, while our "legal Iron Dome" – topped by our crowning glory, the High Court of Justice – saved us from the wicked attempts to try our actions in foreign courts.

But the 58th year, which began last week, is not taking its first steps with the assurance the High Court flak jacket gave its predecessors. Over the past year, many illusions were shattered. We believed the most powerful army in the Middle East fully protected our communities, and this was shown to be a terrible illusion; we were certain the intelligence community knew in real time every time some Gazan peed in the street, only to discover that it apparently knew only that; and we were sure that the prestige of the Israeli justice system obviated interference from international counterparts, only to discover that the gentle judges were at the gates. The argument of leaders of the just and important fight against the government coup, that the High Court is a flak jacket, is correct, but it has a limitation: As the saying goes, you can't fool all of the people all of the time.

When Israel's Supreme Court faces the judgment of history on the question of whether it fulfilled its most important mission, protecting human and civil rights, it will probably cite its extensive courageous rulings defending and protecting democratic values and fundamental rights. This is not mere lip service. The Court genuinely protected LGBTQ rights, acted to prevent religious coercion and fought government corruption.

The justices can rightly be proud of key rulings that barred discrimination against women, banned torture (albeit not completely), and fortified freedom of expression and protest against government interference. The importance of these rulings should not be discounted. They largely shaped the character of Israeli society and gave many within it the opportunity to exercise basic rights that would have been denied if not for the court.

But as they proudly defend themselves in the court of history, rulings they would rather conceal and have forgotten will slip from their robes. Thousands of rulings, too many for the Israeli judicial robe to hold. Rulings that authorized harming of the weakest, who live under Israeli rule but have no rights and no influence on their future; who are not represented by any institution of the to the entity that governs them.

This is how I picture them – generations of Israeli Supreme Court justices presenting their arguments in the court of history, referring to all the rulings they are proud of (and which the court therefore had translated into English), while their words are continually interrupted by the thuds of other rulings that keep slipping out and falling to the floor. Rulings permitting deportation, forced population transfer, land appropriation, home demolitions as collective punishment, extrajudicial executions, blocking development for Palestinians, discrimination in every field and a dual justice system: a civil and modern system for settlers, and a military and draconian system for Palestinians. The justices raise their voices, perspiration beading their

foreheads, but behind them the pile of rulings keep growing, a pile that tells the story of a tyrannical, apartheid regime that their thousands of rulings enabled, even if they occasionally moderated it.

The motions for arrest warrants for the prime minister and defense minister filed by the chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court mark the culmination of a lengthy process of collapse of the reputation long enjoyed by Israel's law enforcement system in the international legal community. From a country that amazed the world in the 1980s after the Sabra and Shatila massacre, when its justice system ousted one of Israel's most powerful defense ministers ever and affected the careers of generals who were found to be indirectly responsible for the massacre, to a country whose law enforcement system turns a blind eye to and even abets the hilltop thugs and those who block and vandalize trucks carrying humanitarian aid.

The requests for arrest warrants signal that the international legal community

The motions for arrest warrants cap the collapse of the international reputation of Israeli institutions of law enforcement.

no longer considers the Attorney General's Office, the Israel Police, the military prosecutor and the Supreme Court as law enforcement institutions that meet international standards, at least in regard to the Palestinians.

And why should we complain? For decades, the policy of near-total immunity for soldiers who harm Palestinians has been in place. There are hardly any investigations of crimes committed by soldiers, and the investigations that do take place are basically a joke. This is a system in which the army and the police abet violent settlers and whitewash their crimes and in which the State Prosecutor's Office aids and abets the processes of annexation and apartheid and offers protection for unbridled methods of combat, in the belief that statements to the media about "strict adherence to international law" are sufficient to protect Israel from legal proceedings.

For decades, the Supreme Court has been distorting international law as it is understood in most of the world. This institution may once have earned remarkable prestige, but today it is mainly known as a court that enables Israel to transfer communities from the South Hebron Hills, expropriate land in the West Bank and legitimize the settlement enterprise that the rest of the world considers illegal. Thus, the police, the prosecution and the High Court of Justice have gone from being Israel's flak jacket to a paragraph in the indictment against Israel. It took time, but the Israeli justice system is no longer able to conceal its real role within the occupation apparatus.

We are currently witnessing a legal avalanche against Israel, with the ICC prosecutor's requests for arrest warrants for its leaders, the provisional measures issued against Israel by the International Court of Justice, courts in various countries not tossing out cases that have to do with Israel's actions on the shopworn grounds that "there are judges in Jerusalem." One major reason for this avalanche is our (independent, professional and often praiseworthy) judiciary's insistence on assisting in the violation of the laws of occupation and war.

Welcome to the 58th year.

Daniel Solomon is a Ph.D. student in French Jewish history at the University of California, Berkeley.

Michael Sfard is an Israeli lawyer who specializes in the laws of war and in human rights law.



# New civilian guard documents police brutality at protests

Magen Ezrachi — civilian shield — puts volunteers on the ground to record abuses at anti-government protests, where police, under Ben-Gvir, has been using force against demonstrators, journalists and even family members of hostages

Linda Dayan

At around 9 P.M. on Saturday night, a small group of about five protesters in blue vests stood under the bridge on Tel Aviv's Begin Road, watching and waiting. Demonstrators often light bonfires on the street in solidarity with the families of hostages, prompting police to force their way through the crowd, pushing attendees and making arrests.

The group was Magen Ezrachi, or "Civilian Shield," an initiative that puts volunteers on the scene to film instances of police brutality at protests, both to deter officers from further violence and to provide documentation of the events in order to file complaints and lawsuits.

The initiative is part of the Hitorerut movement, which was started by Yair Golan — the former Meretz chairman who just swept the Labor Party primaries — and social and political activist Shanna Orlik. Orlik, who was leading the Magen Ezrachi team in a blue vest of her own, told Haaretz that the group was founded after the left's major failure in the most recent election, through which Israel's most right-wing government ever came to power.

"The left can't go around and do the exact same thing and lose elections. We need to win, and to win, we need to understand how other people do it abroad," she said. "We did the research, and we came up with a new model of grassroots organizing."

So far, the organization has forged connections with farmers and agricultural workers in the south and led a campaign in support



Three police officers arresting a female protester in Caesarea on Saturday.

Yair Gil

of a hostage deal, among other post-October 7 activities. But Orlik and others have noticed a worrying trend that needs addressing. "We're now starting this new campaign against the politicization of police," she said. "I personally was hurt directly in the head by a water cannon when I was actually protesting for the hostages, and I was standing on the side. We see that the violence of the police is just insane. The way we see it is that it's not about violence, it's about democracy."

She said they're working with organizations like Al-imut, which collects videos

and reports of police brutality at protests. "We're going to be there with our vests to make sure that the police know we're here, and so the protesters can feel that we have their back. That's really important."

She noted that the police haven't been made aware of their presence, but she hoped the initiative would help remind them that the protesters have rights. Orlik and other members of the organization handed out some 2,000 pamphlets that tell protesters their rights, explain what to do if they are hit by a water cannon or face police violence, and give a list of lawyers to call

if they're arrested.

Since the anti-government protests erupted in January 2023, activists have decried the force used by police there as excessive. They have regularly deployed methods like water cannons and mounted stun grenades. According to the police's guidelines, such crowd control measures can only be used in "grade 3" protests — that is, when "disorder while resisting the police troops violently or acting violently against the public in a way that could cause bodily injury and damage to property."

National Security Min-

ister Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is in charge of the police, has been vocal about his support for quelling the protest movements, and top security officials have said that the police brass have let the minister's directives supersede law enforcement guidelines.

Unlike the previous week, which saw dozens of arrests and water cannons fired at protesters, it seemed at first that this Saturday night on Kaplan Street would be quieter. The police presence was minimal, and although a water cannon was hidden on a blocked-off street nearby, it hadn't been driven toward

the protesters. Most of the Magen Ezrachi volunteers took off their vests and went home — they had work in the morning — and Orlik was joined by Asaf, a young Israeli high-tech worker and Hitorerut activist.

"People aren't aware of how dangerous it is for everyone that the police have become a political organization — this situation in which there are [political] interests behind so-called 'law enforcement.' An organization we're supposed to trust to protect us is actually deciding who it is prepared to protect and who it is not according to the whims of people with a political agenda. It corrupts an organization that we all depend on for our lives and our security. There is nothing more dangerous for democracy — it's no less important than the justice system," he said.

Asaf added that he has witnessed "tons" of police brutality at protests. "You start to see that the violence starts exactly when the police arrive, and particularly [against] people who haven't done anything. They come at them and grab them. You see older people who aren't a threat to anyone, and police choke them and bring them down to the ground when they're just standing on the sidewalk doing nothing. It's unbearable."

When asked if he's apprehensive about putting himself in the thick of it to record violence, he said that he is. "The fact that it scares me is part of the problem. I'm not supposed to be afraid of the law enforcement organization that protects me as a law-abiding citizen. I'm not supposed to be afraid of documenting reality as it is."

By about 11 P.M., the police, who had taken a more

hands-off approach, began to respond to the protest. Some demonstrators had lit a bonfire in the road, and a large group of officers shoved their way through to extinguish it, marking the first conflict of the night. More would follow, including arrests. Protesters chanted "Ben-Gvir is a terrorist" at a row of police, who took pains to protect a journalist from the far-right Channel 14; he was not physically threatened, but had gotten into verbal tiffs with protesters he was filming. At this point, Asaf had

sent our documentation to the media, and you could really see the faces of the police, which is really important for filing complaints."

She added, "I'm sort of in shock. I have to say, it feels like they aren't here to protect us. They're here to hit us, and we saw that they're just protecting the two journalists from Channel 14, as if we [protesters] were going to do something to them, which is insane. It strengthens our feeling that they're not here to keep the peace, they're not here to protect us."

The protest had been approved until 12 A.M., and as the police see it, it becomes an illegal gathering after that time has passed. As the hour approached, protesters hunkered down in preparation for an onslaught. After police warned the demonstrators to clear out, they sent mounted officers to gallop through the crowds, who scattered. Officers dragged a woman out of the street by her arms.

After another demonstrator's arrest, an undercover cop took away Haaretz photographer Itai Ron, who was documenting it. The Union of Journalists in Israel said on Sunday it was planning to sue the police over what it saw as a wrongful arrest.

Orlik hopes that the tools her group is giving protesters — both through the brochures and the documentation of violence — will help them, but she said the group aims to speak directly to police as well. "We come to say 'hey, remember Itamar Ben-Gvir is not going to be here forever,'" she said. "Democracy is going to come back. And when democracy comes back, you don't want to be on the wrong side, we want to be on the same side."

**'You see the violence starts exactly when the police arrive, and particularly [against] people who haven't done anything,' says Asaf, a volunteer.**

gone home, and Orlik was darting through crowds to capture videos and pictures of officers while trying to avoid getting crushed. She said that two or three other Magen Ezrachi volunteers were there sending videos to their group chat, but she was the only one in the group's vest.

"On the one hand, we felt like there wasn't much violence, that the police have more or less let us protest. On the other hand, each time they came in, they did so without [identification] so we didn't know they were police, which isn't legal, and they pushed us, they almost ran us over," said Orlik. "We

Tuesday

18.6

CHANNEL KAN 11 (Y11/H11)

06.00 The Morning News 07.00 This Morning - with Arieh Golan 08.00 Kalman-Lieberman - Live Reshet Bet radio show 09.30 Special news broadcast - with Keren Neubach 12.00 Amazing Hotels: Life Beyond the Lobby (s.4) 13.05 UEFA Euro 2024 - Austria vs. France 15.00 The World Today - World News 16.00 Pocket Games - Economic magazine 16.45 Five O'Clock - with Maya Rachlin 18.05 On the Other Hand - with Guy Zohar 18.20 UEFA Euro 2024 - Ahead of the Match 19.00 UEFA Euro 2024 - Turkey vs. Georgia 20.55 The Evening News 22.00 The Chase - Game Show 22.55 On the Other Hand - with Guy Zohar 23.15 News 23.55 UEFA Euro 2024 - Match Summary 00.35 Kupa Rashit - Israeli comedy series (s.3) 01.00 Midlife Backpackers - Many years after completing their military service, Gal Toren and Pablo Rosenberg go on a post-army trip 01.55 UEFA Euro 2024 - Turkey vs. Georgia

KESHET (Y12/H12)

06.00 News Flash 06.10 Today's Headlines 07.00 News Flash 07.05 The Morning Show - with Nir Raskin 09.30 News Flash 09.35 Special news broadcast - with Nesli Barda & Yoav Limor 11.00 Sports Results 11.20 Dancing with the Stars - Reality (s.3) 13.00 Special news broadcast - with Dean Fisher 15.00 Special news broadcast - with Ofer Hadad 16.55 Five O'Clock - with Rafi Reshet 17.55 Six O'Clock - with Oded Ben-Ami 19.00 Special news broadcast - with Keren Marciano 19.55 The News 21.30 No One Leaves Palo Alto - Israeli drama series 22.50 Guy Pines 23.08 Lotto Drawing 23.11 Guy Pines (cont.) 23.30 Tonight - with Yair Sherki & Avri Glad 00.20 The 12th Floor - Real Estate magazine 01.00 Real Estate Secrets

RESHET (Y13/H13)

06.00 The Morning Show - with Omer Yardeni & Rotem Israel 09.30 News Flash 09.35 Starting the Day - with Eiad & Yarden 10.00 News Flash 10.05 Starting the Day (cont.) 11.00 News Flash 11.05 Starting the Day (cont.) 12.00 News Flash 12.05 Stethoscope - Health magazine 13.00 News Flash 13.10 The Tube - with Guy Lerer 13.45 Vort - Docu-reality (2 eps) 14.00 News Flash 14.05 Vort (cont.) 15.00 News Flash 15.05 Vort (cont.) 16.00 Showtime - Culture & Entertainment 16.55 Talk of the Day - with Lucy Alharish 18.00 Six O'Clock - with Almog Boker 18.55 Israel at War - with Raviv Drucker 19.55 The News 21.30 Details unavailable 22.50 The Tube - with Guy Lerer 23.20 The Day That Was - with Tal Berman 23.50 Real Estate During Wartime

HOT 3 (H3)

07.50 Sisi (s.2) 08.40 The Good Fight 09.30 Summer Love 10.05 Refa'el (s.2) 10.35 Sisi (s.2) 11.25 A Million Little Things (s.2) 12.05 Summer Love 12.40 Refa'el (s.2) 13.10 Northern Exposure (s.6) 18.00 The Good Fight 14.50 Days of Our Lives 15.35 The Young and the Restless 16.10 The Bold and the Beautiful (2 eps) 17.00 Days of Our Lives 17.40 The Young and the Restless 18.15 A Million Little Things (s.2) 19.00 Sisi (s.2) 19.50 Refa'el (s.2) 20.20 Hotel Portofino (s.3) 21.15 A Million Little Things (s.2) 22.00 Refa'el (s.2) 22.30 Northern Exposure (s.6) 23.20 Hotel Portofino (s.3) 00.20 The Good Fight 01.10 Refa'el (s.2) 01.40 Northern Exposure (s.6) 02.30 Hotel Portofino (s.3)

HOT HBO (H4)

11.00 Departure (s.2) 11.45 Somebody Somewhere 12.10 Dough 12.55 Happily Married 13.40 Gentleman Jack (s.2) 14.40 Departure (s.2) 15.25 Somebody

Somewhere 15.50 Dough 16.40 Happily Married 17.25 Gentleman Jack (s.2) 18.20 Somebody Somewhere 18.50 Dough 19.35 Happily Married (s.2) 20.20 Gentleman Jack (s.2) 21.15 Departure (s.3) 22.00 The Brigade 22.50 House of the Dragon (s.2) 23.50 Wreck 00.40 Looking 01.05 The Brigade 01.55 Wreck

HOT ZONE (H5)

07.15 The Rookie (s.3) 07.55 Chicago P.D. (s.8) 08.40 Chicago Fire (s.10) 09.20 NCIS: Hawaii (s.2) 10.00 Magnum P.I. (s.5) 10.45 9-1-1 (s.3) 11.25 Chicago Med (s.7) 12.10 Chicago P.D. (s.8) 12.50 The Rookie (s.3) 13.35 NCIS (s.20) 14.15 Chicago Fire (s.10) 14.55 NCIS: Hawaii (s.2) 15.40 9-1-1 (s.3) 16.20 Chicago P.D. (s.8) 17.05 Magnum P.I. (s.5) 17.45 The Rookie (s.3) 18.30 Chicago Fire (s.10) 19.10 Chicago Med (s.7) 19.50 NCIS: Hawaii (s.2) 20.35 9-1-1 (s.3) 21.15 Chicago P.D. (s.8) 22.00 S.W.A.T. (s.7) 22.40 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (s.25) 23.20 The Rookie (s.3) 00.05 NCIS: Hawaii (s.2) 00.45 Chicago Med (s.7) 01.30 S.W.A.T. (s.7) 02.10 NCIS (s.20)

HOT CHANNEL 8 (H8)

06.00 Shadow of Truth: Coastal Road 06.45 Leibovitch: Faith, Country, Man 07.50 Sihlat Nefesh - Psychoanalyst Yoram Yovell interviews Ester Rada 08.15 Clint Eastwood: The Last Legend 09.10 Ice Age: A Frozen World 10.00 Elizabeth: My Queen 10.45 The Titan Disaster 11.30 Shadow of Truth: Coastal Road 12.15 Elizabeth: My Queen 14.45 The Titan Disaster 15.35 Shadow of Truth: Coastal Road 16.20 You at Home 17.15 Ice Age: A Frozen World 18.05 Elizabeth: My Queen 18.50 Shadow of Truth: Coastal Road 19.35 The Titan Disaster 20.25 Ice Age: A Frozen World 21.15 A Cure for Fear 22.10 Shadow of Truth: Coastal Road 22.50 Sex Unlimited 23.40 A Cure for Fear 00.35 Shadow of Truth: Coastal Road 01.15 Sex Unlimited 02.05 A Cure for Fear

YES DOCU (Y8)

07.40 The Secret Lives of 5 Year Olds (s.4) 08.20 One Last Besttime Story: Place 09.25 Family Business 10.20 Master of Light 11.45 House of Kardashians 12.35 History of the Sitcom 13.20 Michel Gondry. Do it Yourself! 14.40 Navalny 16.15 The Secret Lives of 5 Year Olds (s.4) 16.50 One Last Besttime Story: Family 18.00 Family Business 18.50 The Hunt for Planet B 20.20 House of Kardashians 21.15 History of the Sitcom 22.00 The Gullspang Miracle 23.50 Secrets of Playboy (2 eps) 01.20 The Gullspang Miracle

HISTORY (Y44/H43)

05.25 Division 8 06.10 Two From the Palmach: Raanaana & Ada 06.30 The Food That Built the World (s.4) 2 eps) 08.00 History's Greatest Mysteries (s.5) 08.40 Pawn Stars 09.20 American Pickers 10.05 Storage Wars 10.30 The Secret of Skinwalker Ranch (s.3) 11.10 The Proof is Out There (s.4) 11.55 The Secret of Skinwalker Ranch (s.3) 12.35 Ancient Aliens 13.20 History's Greatest Mysteries (s.5) 14.00 Pawn Stars Do America (s.2) 15.25 Pawn Stars 16.05 American Pickers 16.50 The Secret of Skinwalker Ranch (s.3) 17.30 Pawn Stars Do America (s.2) 18.55 History's Greatest Mysteries (s.5) 19.35 The Proof is Out There (s.4) 20.20 Ancient Aliens 21.00 Pawn Stars 21.45 Pawn Stars Do America (s.2) 23.05 How Disney Built America 23.45 History's Greatest Mysteries (s.5) 00.30 Ancient Aliens 01.10 The Secret of Skinwalker Ranch (s.3) 01.55 American Pickers

YES TV DRAMA (Y5)

06.00 Shitsel (s.3) 06.50 Funny Woman 07.40 Julia 08.30 Nancy Drew (s.3) 09.10 Belgravia: The Next Chapter 10.00 The Bold and the Beautiful 10.25 The Young and the Restless 11.05 Shitsel (s.3) 12.00 Funny Woman 12.50 Julia 13.40 Belgravia: The Next Chapter 14.30 Shitsel (s.3) 15.25 Nancy Drew (s.3) 16.15 The Bold and the Beautiful 16.40 The Young and the Restless 17.20 Funny Woman 18.10 Julia 19.00 The Traitors 19.55 The Bold and the Beautiful 20.20 The

Young and the Restless 21.00 Hotel Portofino (s.3) 21.55 Mary & George 22.55 Succession (s.3) 00.00 The Great (s.2) 00.55 Succession (s.3) 01.55 Mary & George 02.55 Succession (s.4)

YES TV ACTION (Y6)

06.00 In the Dark (s.3) 06.45 Special Ops: Lioness 07.30 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (s.23, 2 eps) 08.15 FBI: International (s.3) 09.45 FBI (s.6) 10.30 FBI: Most Wanted (s.5) 11.15 Chicago Fire (s.7, 2 eps) 12.45 Special Ops: Lioness 13.25 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (s.23, 2 eps) 14.45 In the Dark (s.3, 2 eps) 16.15 Chicago Fire (s.7, 2 eps) 17.35 FBI: International (s.3) 18.20 FBI (s.6) 19.05 FBI: Most Wanted (s.5) 19.45 Special Ops: Lioness 20.35 Law & Order: Special Victims Unit (s.23, 2 eps) 22.00 My Life is Murder (s.4) 22.45 Allegiance 23.30 House of the Dragon 00.25 From (s.2) 01.15 The Walking Dead (s.11) 01.55 Mr. Inbetween (s.3, 2 eps)

YES TV COMEDY (Y7)

06.35 Home Economic (s.3, 2 eps) 07.25 Night Court (2 eps) 08.25 Baby Daddy (s.5, 2 eps) 09.15 Parks and Recreations (s.4, 2 eps) 10.15 Home Economic (s.3, 2 eps) 10.55 Night Court (2 eps) 11.45 Baby Daddy (s.5, 2 eps) 12.35 Parks and Recreations (s.4, 2 eps) 13.25 Family Guy (s.22) 13.50 Frasier (2 eps) 14.50 How I Met Your Mother (s.4, 2 eps) 15.40 The Nanny (s.6, 2 eps) 16.30 Married with Children (s.8, 2 eps) 17.20 Family Guy (s.22) 17.45 Frasier (2 eps) 18.45 How I Met Your Mother (s.4, 2 eps) 19.35 The Nanny (s.6, 2 eps) 20.25 Married with Children (s.8, 2 eps) 21.15 Frasier (2 eps) 22.05 How I Met Your Mother (s.4, 2 eps) 22.55 The Nanny (s.6, 2 eps) 23.45 Married with Children (s.8, 2 eps) 00.35 Entourage (s.3, 2 eps) 01.35 Home Economic (s.3, 2 eps) 02.25 Night Court (2 eps)

EUROSPORT (Y61/H59)

07.00 Snooker - Masters tournament in London, UK: Final 09.30 Snooker - World Grand Prix in UK: Final 11.00 Snooker - German Masters 12.55 The Minute 13.00 Car Racing - Le Mans 24 Hours in France 14.30 Car Racing - World Endurance Championship 17.30 Car Racing - World Endurance Championship in Spa-Francorchamps, Belgium 18.55 The Minute 19.00 F1M Endurance World Championship 19.30 The Cycling Show 20.00 Triathlon - T100 World Tour 21.00 Teqball - World Series 23.00 2024 World Snooker Championship Final: Kyren Wilson (England) vs. Jak Jones (Wales) 01.00 Cycling - Dauphine Libere

MOVIE CHANNELS

HOT CINEMA 1 (H16)

08.10 Tár (USA, 2022). Drama. Dir: Todd Fields. With Cate Blanchett, Noémie Merlant, Nina Hoss. 10.45 True Grit (USA, 2010). Drama. Dir: Ethan Cohen, Joel Cohen. With Jeff Bridges, Matt Damon, Hailee Steinfeld. 12.35 Lara Croft Tomb Raider: The Cradle of Life (USA/Germany/Japan/UK/Netherlands, 2003). Action. Dir: Jan de Bont. With Angelina Jolie, Gerard Butler. 14.30 Jungle (Australia/Colombia, 2017). Biography action. Dir: Greg McLean. With Daniel Radcliffe, Yasmin Kassim, Luis Jose Lopez. 16.25 The Beach (USA, 2000). Adventure drama. Dir: Danny Boyle. With Leonardo DiCaprio, Tilda Swinton, Virginie Ledoyen. 18.25 From Paris with Love (France, 2010). Action. Dir: Pierre Morel. With John Travolta, Jonathan Rhys Meyers. 20.00 The Untouchables (USA, 1987). Crime drama. Dir: Brian De Palma. With Kevin Costner, Sean Connery, Andy Garcia, Robert De Niro. 22.00 Oppenheimer (UK/USA, 2023). Biography drama. Dir: Christopher Nolan. With Cillian Murphy, Emily Blunt, Matt Damon. 00.55 Transcendence (UK/China/USA, 2014). Drama.

“Oppenheimer,” HOT Cinema 1, 22.00.

Dir: Wally Pfister. With Johnny Depp, Rebecca Hall, Morgan Freeman, Kate Mara.

Universal Studios

HOT CINEMA 2 (H17)

07.20 Criminal (USA/UK, 2016). Crime Action. Dir: Ariel Vromen. With Kevin Kostner, Ryan Reynolds, Gal Gadot. 09.15 12 Strong (USA, 2018). Action drama. Dir: Nicolai Fuglsig. With Chris Hemsworth, Michael Shannon. 11.20 Into the Storm (USA, 2014). Action. Dir: Steven Quale. With Richard Armitage, Sarah Wayne Callies, Matt Walsh. 12.50 Warcraft: The Beginning (China/Canada/Japan/USA, 2016). Action fantasy. Dir: Duncan Jones. With Travis Fimmel, Paula Patton, Ben Foster. 14.55 The Vault Way Down (Spain/France, 2021). Action. Dir: Jaume Balagueró. With Freddie Highmore, Astrid Berges-Frisbey, Sam Riley. 16.50 Black Site (USA, 2022). Action. Dir: Sophia Banks. With Jason Clarke, Michelle Monaghan, Jai Courtney. 18.25 The Last Stand (USA, 2013). Action thriller. Dir: Kim Jee-woon. With Arnold Schwarzenegger, Forest Whitaker, Johnny Knoxville. 20.10 Man of Tai Chi (USA/China/Hong Kong, 2013). Action drama. Dir: Keanu Reeves. With Tiger Hu Chen, Keanu Reeves, Karen Mok. 22.00 Mission: Impossible - Rogue Nation (China/Hong Kong/USA, 2015). Action. Dir: Christopher McQuarrie. With Tom Cruise, Rebecca Ferguson, Jeremy Renner. 00.10 Dangerous Waters (USA, 2023). Thriller. Dir: John Barr. With Odeya Rush, Eric Dane, Saffron Burrows. 01.50 Universal Soldier: Day of Reckoning (USA, 2012). Action. Dir: John Hyams. With Jean-Claude Van Damme, Dolph Lundgren.

HOT CINEMA 3 (H18)

08.00 Keeping Up with the Joneses (USA, 2016). Action comedy. Dir: Greg Mottola. With Gal Gadot, Zach Galifianakis, Isla Fisher. 09.45 Life of Crime (USA, 2013). Crime comedy. Dir: Daniel Schechter. With Jennifer Aniston, Yasin Bey, Isla Fisher. 11.25 Going the Distance (USA, 2010). Comedy. Dir: Nanette Burstein. With Drew Barrymore, Justin Long. 13.05 King of Thieves (USA, 2018). Crime drama. Dir: James Marsh. With Michael Caine, Kellie Shirley, Michael Gambon. 14.55 The Heat (USA, 2013). Comedy. Dir: Paul Feig. With Sandra Bullock, Melissa McCarthy. 16.50 Music and Lyrics (USA, 2007). Comedy. Dir: Marc Lawrence. With Hugh Grant, Drew Barrymore. 18.35 Monster-in-Law (USA/Canada, 2005). Comedy. Dir: Robert Luketic. With Jennifer Lopez, Jane Fonda. 20.15 Love, Rosie (Germany/UK, 2014). Romantic comedy. Dir: Christian Ditter. With Lily Collins, Sam Claflin, Christian Cooke. 22.00 Date Night (USA, 2010). Comedy. Dir: Shawn Levy. With Steve Carell, Tina Fey.

HOT CINEMA 4 (H19)

06.40 The Lost Daughter (USA/UK/Israel/Greece, 2021). Drama. Dir: Maggie Gyllenhaal. With Olivia Colman, Jessie Buckley, Michael Rooker. 08.40 After Ever Happy (USA, 2022). Romantic drama. Dir: Castille Landon. With Josephine Langford, Hero Fiennes Tiffin, Louise Lombard. 10.20 My Happy Ending (UK/Israel/USA, 2023). Comedy drama. Dir: Tal Granit, Sharon Maymon. With Andie MacDowell, Sally Phillips, Miriam Margolyes. 11.45 Coup de Chance (USA/France/UK, 2023). Comedy. Dir: Woody Allen. With Lou de Laage, Niels Schneider, Anna Laik. 13.25 Memoirs of a Geisha (USA, 2005). Drama. Dir: Rob Marshall. With Ziyi Zhang, Suzuka Ohgo. 15.50 Manchester by the Sea (USA, 2016). Drama. Dir: Kenneth Lonergan. With Casey Affleck, Michelle Williams, Kyle Chandler. 18.05 Misconduct (USA, 2016). Thriller. Dir: Shintaro Shimosawa. With Josh Duhamel, Anthony Hopkins, Al Pacino. 19.50 Extremely Loud & Incredibly Close (USA, 2011). Adventure. Dir: Stephen Daldry. With Thomas Horn, Tom Hanks, Sandra Bullock. 22.00 Past Lives (USA/South Korea, 2023). Romantic drama. Dir: Celine Song. With Greta Lee, Teo Yoo, John Magaro. 23.40 All Your Faces (France, 2023). Drama. Dir: Jeanne Herry. With Birane Ba, Leila Bekhti, Anne Benoit. 01.40 We Are Your Friends (UK/France/USA, 2015). Drama. Dir: Max Joseph. With Zac Efron, Emily Ratajkowski.

YES MOVIES DRAMA (Y1)

06.35 BlackBerry (Canada, 2023). Biography comedy. Directed by and starring Matt Johnson. With Jay Baruchel, Glenn Howerton. 08.35 On the Come Up (USA, 2022). Musical comedy drama. Directed by and starring Sanaa Lathan. With Jamila Gray, Noa Dior Rucker. 10.30 The Bookshop (UK/Spain/Germany, 2017). Drama. Dir: Isabel Coixet. With Emily Mortimer, Bill Nighy, Hunter Tremayne. 12.25 Pelé: Birth of a Legend (USA, 2016). Biographical. Dir: Jeff Zimbalist, Michael Zimbalist. With Kevin de Paula, Leonardo Lima Carvalho, Seu Jorge. 14.10 An American Girl: Chrissa Stands Strong (USA, 2009). Family drama. Dir: Martha Coolidge. With Sammi Hanratty, Annabeth Gish, Timothy Bottoms. 15.45 Finding Your Feet (UK, 2017). Comedy drama. Dir: Richard Loncraine. With Imelda Staunton, Celia

Imrie, Timothy Spall. 17.35 Call Jane (USA, 2022). Drama. Dir: Phyllis Nagy. With Elizabeth Banks, Sigourney Weaver, Chris Messina. 19.40 Woman in Gold (UK, 2014). Biography. Dir: Simon Curtis. With Helen Mirren, Ryan Reynolds, Daniel Brühl. 21.30 Serenity (UK/USA, 2019). Drama mystery. Dir: Steven Knight. With Matthew McConaughey, Anne Hathaway, Diane Lane. 23.15 Richard Jewell (USA, 2019). Biography crime. Dir: Clint Eastwood. With Paul Walter Hauser, Sam Rockwell, Brandon Stanley, Kathy Bates. 01.25 Fruitvale Station (USA, 2013). Biographical drama. Dir: Ryan Coogler. With Michael B. Jordan, Melonie Diaz, Octavia Spencer.

YES MOVIES ACTION (Y2)

08.05 Sherlock Holmes (USA/Germany, 2009). Action. Dir: Guy Ritchie. With Robert Downey Jr., Jude Law. 10.15 Corrective Measures (USA, 2022). Action. Dir: Sean Patrick O'Reilly. With Bruce Willis, Michael Rooker. 12.05 Collateral Damage (USA, 2002). Action. Dir: Andrew Davis. With Arnold Schwarzenegger, Francesca Neri, Elias Koteas, John Leguizamo, John Turturro. 13.55 G.I. Joe: The Rise of Cobra (USA/Czech Republic, 2009). Action. Dir: Stephen Sommers. With Channing Tatum, Sienna Miller. 15.50 The Bourne Ultimatum (USA/Germany, 2007). Action. Dir: Paul Greengrass. With Matt Damon, Julia Stiles. 17.50 Gladiator (USA, 2000). Historical epic. Dir: Ridley Scott. With Russell Crowe, Joaquin Phoenix, Connie Nielsen, Oliver Reed. 20.20 Kidnap (USA, 2017). Action. Dir: Luis Prieto. With Halle Berry, Sage Correa, Jason George, Chris McGinn. 22.00 Parker (USA, 2013). Crime. Dir: Taylor Hackford. With Jason Statham, Jennifer Lopez. 23.55 Mid-Century (USA, 2022). Horror. Dir: Sonja O'Hara. With Stephen Lang, Bruce Dern, Shane West. 01.45 Sabotage (USA, 2014). Crime. Dir: David Ayer. With Arnold Schwarzenegger, Sam Worthington, Terrence Howard.

YES MOVIES COMEDY (Y3)

07.55 So Undercover (USA, 2012). Comedy. Dir: Tom Vaughan. With Miley Cyrus, Jeremy Piven, Mike O'Malley. 09.30 My Spy (USA/Canada, 2020) Action. Dir: Peter Segal. With Dave Bautista, Chloe Coleman, Parisa Fitz-Henley. 11.15 Journey 2: The Mysterious Island (USA, 2012). Adventure. Dir: Brad Peyton. With Josh Hutcherson, Dwayne Johnson, Michael Caine. 12.50 Pride and Prejudice and Zombies (USA/UK, 2016). Action. Dir: Burr Steers. With Lily James, Sam Riley. 14.40 Cuban Fury (UK, 2014). Comedy. Dir: James Griffiths. With Ben Radcliffe, Ian McShane. 16.15 Coming 2 America (USA, 2021). Comedy. Dir: Craig Brewer. With Eddie Murphy, Arsenio Hall, Shari Headley. 18.05 Fools Paradise (USA, 2023). Comedy. Directed by and starring Charlie Day. With Ken Jeong, Kate Beckinsale. 19.45 Clear History (USA, 2013). Comedy. Dir: Greg Mottola. With Live Schreiber, Kate Hudson, Jon Hamm, Eva Mendes. 21.30 Evan Almighty (USA, 2007). Comedy. Dir: Tom Shadyac. With Steve Carell, Morgan Freeman, Lauren Graham. 23.05 Ted 2 (USA, 2015). Comedy. Dir: Seth MacFarlane. With Mark Wahlberg, Amanda Seyfried. 01.00 The Brothers Grimsky (USA/UK/Australia, 2016). Action. Dir: Louis Leterrier. With Sacha Baron Cohen, Rebel Wilson, Mark Strong. 02.25 Hot Tub Time Machine (USA, 2010). Comedy. Dir: Steve Pink. With John Cusack, Clark Duke.

**News on the Hour:**  
**CNN** (Y102/H205) | **Sky News** (Y103/H203)  
**BBC** (H204) | **Fox News** (Y105/H202)





The Liwan Culture Club during a tour.



The Nakba Wall in Nazareth.



A cafe in Nazareth during a tour.



Stopping for dessert.

Photos by Gal Mosenson

Rachel Fink

Our visit to the old city of Nazareth in Israel's Lower Galilee region starts with dessert. A well-known Arab delicacy called Layali Lubnan ("Lebanese nights," in English) made of semolina pudding layered with silky whipped cream and fragrant rose and orange blossom water, which is then topped with bright green pistachios crumbs.

The dessert is one of the signature dishes at Rose Boutique Cafe, the first stop on a tour entitled Making Hope: From Vision to Reality. The excursion is part food tour, part history lesson, part concert, and part dialogue; the brainchild of longtime peace activist Maoz Inon.

Warm and welcoming, Inon has a habit of greeting everyone he meets, friend and stranger alike, by pressing his hands together in a prayer pose and bowing his head slightly. He repeats the gesture so often that by the end of the tour several participants adopted it for themselves.

In between bites of my Layali Lubnan, I listen to Inon explain what he means by the phrase "making hope."

"Hope isn't something that happens to us," he tells the group of 30 or so Israelis, mostly retirees, that joined the tour. "Hope is active. It is simple and it is collaborative. We make hope when we join together in the bold act of imagining a better future."

**'As long as we refuse to acknowledge each other's loss, grief, pain as well as each other's dreams and hopes, we will never ever be able to build a shared life here.'**

"And we are going to make this dream a reality by 2030," Inon declares as some participants begin to chuckle, assuming he is being facetious. "Don't worry, I'll tell you exactly how a bit later. But for now, does anyone need to pee before we continue on?" he asks.

"The best advice I was ever given for how to make this tour a success is to treat the participants as if they've all just finished potty training," he says. "There will be another bathroom stop in about five minutes." Now the group is fully laughing.

# In Nazareth, 'city on the precipice of hope,' with peace entrepreneur Maoz Inon

After the murders of his parents by Hamas in southern Israel on October 7, Maoz tells participants about the act of 'making hope,' and tourism as a force for coexistence



Maoz Inon conducting a tour in Nazareth.

Inon has been running this particular tour since 2020, near the end of the COVID-19 pandemic, when air travel was still restricted but citizens were allowed to move around the county. Inon, together with scores of partners he has collected along the way, believes that tourism is one of the most powerful paths to coexistence.

## The personal and the collective

As we begin to walk through the stony alleyways of the Old City of Nazareth, Inon recounts two stories. The first is his personal one, which he tells backwards to forwards, starting on October 7 when Hamas terrorists murdered his parents, Yakov and Bilha, burning down their home with the two of them inside of it. "For a long time," Inon says, "I told people that nothing could have ever prepared me for the death of my parents."

"But I have come to realize that isn't true," he continues as we sip freshly squeezed orange-carrot juice. "Actually, my entire life has been preparing me for this moment. For this journey that I have embarked on."

Inon describes an idyllic childhood spent on two kibbutzim, Nir Am in the north-western Negev and then, at the age of 14, Netiv Ha'asara, just next to the

Israeli border with Gaza. As young newlyweds he and his wife went on backpacking adventures, first throughout the world, and then back in Israel. The couple dreamed of bringing the hostel culture they had encountered during their travels to underserved Palestinian communities with the idea that hospitality could be a conduit through which local populations can preserve their culture and tradition while fostering economic prosperity. In 2005, he and his wife opened the Fauzi Azar Guesthouse, the first of its kind in Nazareth.

"It will be our last stop on the tour," Inon informs the group.

Inon's personal story of tragedy and redemption is interwoven with the second one he tells, the story of Nazareth itself. This time, Inon starts at the very beginning, with the city's most famous resident - Jesus of Nazareth. Here is where, according to the New Testament, Mary was first told she would conceive the son of God through a virgin birth, also known as the Annunciation. It is also where Jesus spent his youth, where he learned carpentry from his father and where he began his public ministry, which would lead to his eventual crucifixion at the hands of the Romans.

Inon then jumps ahead a millennia or so to 1948. Unlike other Palestinian

enclaves where entire communities were wiped out or chased away during the Nakba (the Arabic term for "catastrophe," what Israeli Jews call the War of Independence), Nazareth experienced a surge in growth as 25,000 refugees descended on a population of 17,000 people at the time. In the seven decades that followed, Nazareth has seen it all - expansion, urban sprawl, military rule and, in the last few years, a city overtaken by organized crime and police corruption. As proof, Inon points to the bullet-ridden doors of those businesses who refused to pay the extortion fees demanded of them by mafia bosses.

"But today, Nazareth has become something else, something brand new," he tells the group, which is listening with rapt attention. "A city on the precipice of hope."

## Peace entrepreneurs of Nazareth

Inon brings us to four businesses scattered throughout the Old City, though that descriptor does not do these projects justice. The people we encounter, much like Inon himself, are not so much owners as peace entrepreneurs. They have created their initiatives, many of them while holding down a second or even third job, with the specific intention of reviving

this once-vibrant city.

We meet Souad Abed Zabi, a teacher who opened Basata, an art gallery and studio, to show her students that they are capable of expressing themselves through art and creation rather than violence and destruction.

A few doors down, we speak to Zahi Greib who runs the most famous corner store in the city. When Inon is called away for a second, Greib steps in, recounting the entire history of Pope John Paul II's famous visit to Nazareth in 2000. The charming shop owner is also an expert in arak, the anise-flavored spirit he's been drinking every evening for the last 50 years. He runs workshops where participants can sample from his impressive arak collection and learn the secrets to making the best version (Hint: Start with the highest quality anise, which is found in Syria.)

We drink mint-infused lemonade with Sami Jabil, who co-founded Liwan Culture Cafe as a hub for young Palestinian artists, many of them women. Liwan Cafe regularly hosts concerts, lectures, film screenings, book readings and exhibitions featuring up-and-coming artists, but its walls are lined with giant works painted by the world-famous Palestinian artist A-sim Abu Shakra. "We did this deliberately," Jabil explains. "We realized how many Palestinians didn't know Abu Shakra, despite his notoriety. We wanted to share our culture first of all with ourselves then with the outside world."

Mint tea at Liwan Culture Cafe, a hub for young Palestinian artists.

And then there is Amani Cafe, whose young owner, Amani Tattor, created the Nazareth Coffee Festival, which in 2023 brought over 8,000 people to the tiny town. Tattor is abroad at the moment, so her bright, bubbly sister, Mina, tells us about all that Amani has accomplished in four short years. Amani and Mina represent the younger generation of Nazarenes who have begun to return to the Old City.

The proprietors we met all have one thing in common - with Inon and with each other: They are determined to revitalize the old city of Nazareth by bringing back, not just tourists but residents. "We want them to have a place to talk about and to know and to make their own culture

come alive," Jabil says. "And we want our initiatives to be a model for many future businesses."

"This is how hope is made," Inon adds.

As we walk from shop to shop, Inon seems to know every single person who passes by. The wave to him, pat him on the back, call out greetings in Arabic. "Maoz for mayor!" one man declares, before zipping away on his motorbike. It is clear that the love between Inon and this city is entirely mutual, that their fates are inextricably intertwined.

## The Nakba Wall

As we sit down to rest from the beating midday sun, Inon brings out trays of fluffy laffa stuffed to the brim with roasted spinach and salty labneh cheese seasoned with bright red sumac. We devour our snack leaning against a partition that we soon learn is called the Nakba Wall, a canvas for public murals that commemorate not only the Nakba but other tragedies that have been etched into the collective Palestinian memory.

Over the last several years, the Nakba Wall has become the site of a game of cat and mouse between Israeli authorities and young activists who are determined to create their murals, which are constantly painted over by police forces. After October 7, the activists made a collective decision to let the wall stand empty as a symbol of Israel's erasure of Palestinian identity.

Currently, Inon tells us, the bright blue words painted along the length of the wall say "Nazareth welcomes you" in Arabic, courtesy of the municipality. Someone has spray painted the word "not" so that it now reads "Nazareth does not welcome you," and added the word "blood" in deep red letters.

Inon tells us that for a long time the Nakba Wall was not a part of his tour route. "I did not feel ready to tell someone else's story," he says. "But then I came to understand something. Something that changed my entire way of thinking."

"As long as we refuse to acknowledge each other's narrative, as long as we refuse to acknowledge each other's loss, grief, pain as well as each other's dreams and hopes, we will never ever be able to build a shared life here. We will never be able to create a co-

operative society or a joint future together. We have got to start accepting each other's truths."

Inon shares a story of a tour he gave to the staff of an Israeli hospital. When Inon brought the group to the Nakba Wall, the director of the hospital promptly declared the tour was over. "Half of his employees are Palestinian citizens of Israel. Sixty percent of his patients are as well. But he wasn't willing to hear one word about the Nakba Wall."

But, like every other obstacle Inon has ever encountered, he refused to allow that event to knock him off his path. "I'm not here to convince anyone," Inon recounts. "And I am definitely not here to argue with anyone. I am only here to ask that you open your hearts and your ears to listen."

## 'Come join me in the future'

As promised, Inon brings us to his guest house for the last stop on our tour. On the doorsteps of Fauzi Azar he tells us that two weeks ago, they were forced to shutter, the sixth time this has happened since they opened in 2005.

"War is not good for business," he explains. "Businesses need peace to survive."



A stop during the tour in Nazareth.

Rachel Fink

past," he tells us. "I am not even focused on the present. I am focused solely on the future."

"Come join me in the future," Inon says, opening the gate to a small and lovely courtyard. You can almost hear the laughter and guitar-strumming of the young people who have stayed here, their glasses clinking as plumes of smoke waft into the night air.

Our tour concludes in the sun-soaked common room of Fauzi Azar, named after the father of the man from whom Inon rented the property exactly twenty years ago. As we sit in a semicircle, Inon shares more of his parents' story and lays out his six-year strategy for uniting two peoples who have been at war with each other for more than half a century.

As Inon reiterates his powerful plan for peace, my phone vibrates incessantly in my pocket. Just a few kilometers from where we are standing, Hezbollah is raining down over 200 missiles, its heaviest bombardment on northern Israel since the war began, in retaliation for Israel's targeted killing of a senior Hezbollah commander. The buzzing on my phone are alerts, meant to warn residents of incoming rockets, a somber reminder that not everyone in this region is on board with Inon's radical vision for coexistence.

Then there are the tour participants themselves. Over the last four hours, they cried and laughed and hugged each other, strangers quickly becoming comrades. Still, some of them are skeptical, insisting that nothing will change until the current government is replaced. Inon refuses to get pulled into a conversation about who is the guilty party. "Why do I care who is in power," Inon argues. "I will sit down with anyone who says they want to make peace. An enemy of the past always has the potential to be a partner in the future."

The day ends with a song by Omer Moskovich, whose music has accompanied us throughout the tour. As her soulful voice fills the room, Inon openly weeps. "Some-

**Nazareth has seen it all - expansion, urban sprawl, military rule and, now, a city overrun by organized crime and police corruption.**

## sudoku

© Puzzles by Pappocom

The game board is divided into 81 squares, with nine horizontal rows and nine vertical columns. A few numbers already appear in some of the squares. The aim is to fill in numerals 1 to 9 in each of the empty squares, so that every row and column and every box (a group of nine squares outlined in boldface) contains all of the numerals 1 to 9. None of the numerals may recur in the same row, column or box.

8	5	6	3	9	4	2	7	1
3	7	9	5	2	1	6	4	8
4	1	2	8	7	6	5	3	9
7	6	3	4	5	8	1	9	2
5	4	1	2	6	9	3	8	7
9	2	8	1	3	7	4	6	5
6	9	4	7	1	2	8	5	3
2	8	5	9	4	3	7	1	6
1	3	7	6	8	5	9	2	4

Tips and a computerized version of Sudoku can be found at [www.sudoku.com](http://www.sudoku.com)

2		6		7			9	3
	3	9		6	5	1		8
	7		8		9		4	2
			9					7
7	1			8	3	9		
8	9	3				4		1
3			4	9				5
9	6			5	2	8		
				1	6			9

Difficulty: Easy



GALLERYגלריה

Television Adrian Hennigan

It sounds like one of the answers to The New York Times' Connections game: What links Kafka, Dickens, Orwell and Pinter? Obviously, all four are writers whose names have inspired adjectives (I would also have given you "Byronic" and "Shakespearean" but sent you to the back of the class for "Miller Lite"). And of those, "Kafkaesque" – "having a nightmarishly complex, bizarre or illogical quality," as per Merriam-Webster – is perhaps the most evocative, exotic and expressive of all.

It's also the word David Schalko would prefer you not to use to describe his new biographical miniseries "Kafka," which is now showing on the ChaiFlicks streaming service in North America and Walter Presents in Britain.

Hopefully someone will also screen it in Israel, given that this is the country where some of Kafka's personal letters and drawings are held (at the National Library of Israel, whose collection almost rivals that of the Bodleian Library in Oxford).

Primarily, though, the series needs to be shown here because Kafka is arguably the preeminent Jewish writer of the 20th century (with apologies to Saul Bellow, Amos Oz, Philip Roth et al.). Indeed, he's the kind of Zionist scribe whose books are probably the subject right now of a boycott by some Western teenager who couldn't even spell "Metamorphosis," let alone read it.

The six-part series hails not from a studio in Kafka's Bohemia (the modern-day Czech Republic), it's the work of Austrians. And for its director, Schalko, its main question is not about who Kafka was, but "what is a life story, and how do you tell it? And what does it mean?" as he puts it.

"And when it comes to Kafka, it all ends with his literature."

The Austrian show is a suitable tribute to the man who died 100 years ago this month and who wrote all of his works, from "The Castle" to "The Trial," in his native German – the series is in German as well. It was also Austria, along with Germany, where Kafka's genius

was belatedly recognized after 1945.

Rather than the verboten Kafkaesque, better adjectives to describe the series "Kafka" are surprising, playful, imaginative and, ultimately, moving. Part of its success comes from Swiss actor Joel Basman, who plays the writer as a quietly spoken, sensitive soul, never overplaying his obvious idiosyncrasies.

But Schalko's effort also rejects the genre's more standard chronology – "This happened, then this happened, then he died, then he became famous" – in favor of focusing on six people (or institutions, in the case of the accident insurance company where Kafka worked) who helped define his life.

Naturally, these include Max Brod, his close friend who famously smuggled the writer's papers out of Prague just as the Nazis were closing in on the city. Brod also, of course, released his friend's unpublished works posthumously against the dying wishes of Kafka himself – a moral dilemma I think it's fair to call Shakespearean, but for which the world is truly grateful. (Artists who owe a clear debt include Albert Camus and indie-goth British band the Cure.)

There's also Kafka's family – specifically, his monstrous father Hermann, who was famously the subject of a 47-page diatribe (it's quoted as being 100 pages in the series) that his son never actually sent. Plus we have some of the loves of Franz's emotionally troubled life, including fiancée Felice Bauer and, most touchingly, his Czech translator Milena Jesenská (an impressive woman who would later be named a member of the Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem for her efforts to save Jews from the Nazis in Prague).

And underlying it all is Kafka's Judaism. In a review of the just-published "The Diaries of Franz Kafka," John Gray writes in British magazine The New Statesman: "It is impossible to understand Kafka's life and afterlife without understanding his identity as a Jew."

That's no easy task, though, given Kafka's fa-



David Kross, left, and Joel Basman as Max Brodman and Franz Kafka in the miniseries "Kafka." ORF/Superfilm/Nicole Albiez/ChaiFlicks

Just don't call this playful new miniseries Kafkaesque

Austrian director David Schalko tells Haaretz how he didn't overlook the importance of Kafka's Jewishness



Stills from the miniseries "Kafka."

mous words on the subject from said diary: "What do I have in common with Jews? I have scarcely anything in common with myself and should stand completely silent in a corner, content that I can breathe."

Speaking to Haaretz last month via Zoom, Schalko echoed the importance of Kafka's Jewishness, saying it was vital for him and co-writer Daniel Kehlmann to

capture that in the series "because it tells us so much" about the man. Schalko himself quotes the "What do I have in common with Jews?" line as proof.

That's also why the episode about his overbearing father – an assimilated Jewish businessman who seemingly despised everyone in the world in equal measure, including other Jews – is literally at the heart of the



ORF/Superfilm/Nicole Albiez/ChaiFlicks

series in episode three. It concludes with the chilling reminder that Kafka's three sisters all died in concentration camps.

'Lifetime connection'

"Kafka" may be the first of Schalko's shows to go global, but this is hardly his first rodeo. It's actually his fifth series, and his sopho-

more effort, "Old Money," especially sounds like one to seek out. He describes it as "a little bit like 'Succession' before 'Succession.'" In it, the dying head of a dynasty declares that whoever finds a new liver to replace his ailing one will inherit his fortune. Intriguingly, the director says half of the family is Jewish and the other half Nazi – ChaiFlicks, what are you waiting for?

It's "Kafka" that's putting Schalko on the map outside of Austria, though, and it's fair to say he's well qualified to make a series about the man-turned-adjective. "Kafka was always very important for me, even as a young man of 16 or 17 when I started to read him," he recounts. "When I read 'Metamorphosis' and 'Amerika,' I was really mesmerized by this writer, so it's a lifetime connection to him."

It was the definitive biography by Reiner Stach that gave Schalko the impetus to turn Kafka's life into a television series. (He always envisaged it as a TV show, he says, once he nailed the idea of telling the writer's story through his associates.)

But the novels themselves are also huge inspirations, with "Metamorphosis," "The Trial" and "The Castle" all looming large. "You cannot divide the life and the work," Schalko says. "We didn't want to make any difference between the reality and the fiction, actually. This was the whole idea of the series."

That approach was also partly born from the fact that Kafka himself did not lead the most, shall we say, remarkable of lives. After all, it was over by age 40 after many years of poor health, and he was a pencil pusher at an insurance company. His fame arrived posthumously.

Schalko notes that "you cannot separate the man from the literature – and that literature was written without compromise. It was not commercial, bestselling literature, but I think there's no other interaction in the 20th century where the author is so equal to his work."

From the outside, one of the show's biggest challenges was choosing which of his associates to tell Kafka's story through, but the director says the choices picked themselves.

"The first one was Max Brod, because he saved his work and he was his closest friend always. We know Kafka because of him, actually, so this was very important for us to put as the first chapter.

"Felice Bauer [in episode two] was very important, because the letters he wrote to her were also literature and it was a kind of virtual relationship they had. Actually, it's a very modern relationship because it was all on a

very literal basis."

As well as episodes on his family, office life and his final love, the Jewish socialist Dora Diamant, the fifth episode featuring a woodland rendezvous with Milena Jesenská is perhaps the most informative about Schalko and fellow writer Kehlmann's approach to the series.

"Nearly all of the dialogue in that episode is from letters between Milena and Kafka," Schalko says. "It was very important for us that nearly no sentence Kafka speaks is something that we made up. It's something that he really wrote somewhere in a diary, in a letter, in prose, whatever."

**'It was very important for us that nearly no sentence Kafka speaks is something that we made up. It's something that he really wrote somewhere,' Schalko says.**

The director adds that this episode is probably the key to understanding Kafka's character. "He is a man who is not able to decide things, and that's what makes everyone crazy around him. He uses literature as escapism, actually."

Even so, that doesn't mean the series thinks that it's solving the great puzzle of who Franz Kafka was, if that's even possible. "Kafka is a mystery. Even after the series and you look at him from these different perspectives, he will stay a mystery," Schalko says.

Having immersed himself in Kafka for so long, I wonder what he himself has learned from that experience. "What I really learned is not to compromise," he says. "That you should keep your literature sacred, in a way, and that there should be one place in life where you don't have to make compromises. That's the reason why Kafka could be so honest to other people – because he knew he had this literature."

"Kafka" is now showing on ChaiFlicks in North America.

Judicial overhaul and Gaza war cast a shadow over Hebrew Book Week

Cultural roundup Avshalom Halutz

The story of the Jewish people has always been interwoven with the stories of one particular book, a book that established our mythology, shaped our history, gave us the basis for our values and beliefs and in many ways guaranteed our survival as a small and dispersed group.

"People of the Book," the way Jews (as well as Christians and Sabians) are described in the Quran, is still one of our favorite "nicknames," as it contributes to an image of highly educated, erudite people who love to read.

Our deep connection to the written word is celebrated this week with the return of the annual – and much beloved – Hebrew Book Week. The events taking place across the country will give Israeli readers what they love most: a good bargain. And some really good new reads.

The largest outdoor book fairs will be open to the public in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem and Haifa between June 18 and 29. Other literary events and smaller book fairs, with daily meet and greets and book launches, will take place in a clutch of smaller cities.

But Hebrew Book Week goes beyond huge fairs. For those seeking a more alternative event, the Literary Collective, which comprises the best independent Israeli publishers such as Persimmon, Catharsis, Ruth Books and Nine Lives, will hold its own book fair in Tel Aviv and Haifa, as well as at the artists' colony of Ein Hod and the town of Pardes Hanan, both south of Haifa. \*

You can also book a seat at the special events at the 24 libraries across Tel Aviv-Jaffa; most of these offerings free of charge. They will include panels with authors, live literary jam sessions and workshops.

Plus, a session on influential Chinese author Eileen Chang (1920-1995) will be



Hamigdalor bookstore.

Meged Gozani

held at Tel Aviv's Cinematheque on June 19. It will include a conversation with the Hebrew translator of Chang's 1944 English-language novella "Red Rose, White Rose."

Erotic thrillers and financial guides

Which books will Israelis be buying this week (and a half)? What were the most popular titles over the past year?

Alas, no list provides definitive data. The large bookstore chains' numbers are incomplete, and smaller independent bookstores can only provide a snapshot of what interests their most loyal customers.

But, checking various sources, it's clear that the political events in Israel, including the attempt to weaken the judiciary and the war in Gaza, influence the kinds of books Israelis want to read. You can see a clear interest in works that were published during World War II, as well as books on women's rights and the human spirit.

The top-20 bestseller list provided by Tzomet Sfarim,

Bookstore chain Steimatzky will only provide the bestselling books from the previous month. At least that roster has more than one good Israeli novel on it.

In June, according to Steimatzky, the fiction works most read by Israelis were Kristin Harmel's "The Paris Daughter" (the foreign-language books on all the lists below were translated into Hebrew), Etgar Keret's latest short-story collection "Auto-correct," Nevo's "Hungry Heart," Alex Michaelides' "The Fury" and Lorna Cook's "The Dressmaker's Secret." The nonfiction list includes "One Day in October," a Hebrew-language book with 40 personal stories from October 7, and Viktor Frankl's classic "Man's Search for Meaning."

Reading into October 7

The October 7 horrors have clearly influenced the books published ahead of this year's Hebrew Book Week. A raft of titles on the terror attack came out, largely emphasizing the acts of heroism in the face of national impotence. These works include journalist Yoav Limor's "Heroes: Alone Against Hamas"; pediatric surgeon Yael Dreznik's English-language "Battles in White" on the medical, nursing and rescue teams on October 7; and "Saturday, October 7th," a compilation of testimonies by writers and artists on that day, edited by Ron Dahan and Maayan Avidan.

Colum McCann on top

Hamigdalor, Sipur Pashut and Bookworm are three intimate bookstores that have become local favorites. The

works on their shelves and in their windows often influence the taste of Tel Avivians. Which books will they be recommending this week? And which books have they sold over the past year?

According to Hamigdalor and Sipur Pashut, Irish writer Colum McCann's much-talked-about novel "Apeirogon," which came out in Hebrew this year, came in first at Hamigdalor and second at Sipur Pashut. The book tells the story of the unusual real-life friendship between bereaved Israeli and Palestinian fathers. Classic Austrian writer Stefan Zweig also appears on both stores' lists but with different translated titles from the 1940s including "The World of Yesterday" and "Burning Secret."

The number-one spot at Sipur Pashut was Motty Fogel's "Not a Memoir," a collection of essays on death, family, writing and revenge that echoes the 2001 terror attack in which his brother's family was murdered in the Jewish settlement of Itamar. Other books that flew off the carefully curated shelves at Sipur Pashut were, in descending order, Rodica Doehnert's "Das Adlon," Emmanuel Carrère's "Yoga" and Sara Mesa's "Un Amor."

At Hamigdalor, the most popular fiction books included Walter Benjamin's "Radio Benjamin," Vivian Gornick's "The Odd Woman and the City: A Memoir" and Heidi Søvareid's "Long-yearbyen." On the nonfiction list you can find graphic designer David Tartakover's sketchbook turned into a book, "Tartakover Tel Aviv," and (Tel Avivian!) auteur Quentin Tarantino's "Cinema Speculation." Among

popular poetry books, stand-outs include Agi Mishol's "Poems, It's Witches" and a collection by Japanese poet Misuzu Kaneko.

Great Hebrew books

What will the staff be recommending this week? Sipur Pashut's tips include Israeli writer Adva Bolle's debut novel "The Southern Room" on a young mother fighting for her independence; Israeli novelist Roy Chen's "Great Uproar," which provides an alarming prophecy of total destruction; Myriam Harry's "La Conquête de Jérusalem" (translated from the French); Aminatta Forna's fourth novel "Happiness" (translated from the English); Thomas Mann's 1943 address to the Library of Congress "The War and the Future" (translated from the English); and Primo Levi's "If This Is a Man" (translated from the Italian).

At Hamigdalor, customers will be recommended Israeli writer Dana Schweppe's queer novel "How to Be a Muse" on a young man who becomes an artist's muse in Tel Aviv, and a collection of essays on humans and the wilderness called "A Wild Treasure: Collected Essays on Wilderness," edited and translated by Mor Kadishzon.

Hamigdalor will also recommend researcher and author Merav Roth's "Wars of Passions," poet Sharon Hass' latest collection, talented Illustrator Einat Tsarfati's unique book on dealing with the chaos of life, and Agi Mishol and Jan Rauchwerger's book of poetry and sketches "Notebooks."

Bookworm really enjoyed Nizan Weisman's "A Farewell Journal," Shachar Ma-

gen's "Land of the Monasteries," Chen's "Great Uproar," Tami Bezalet's "Ho-Mama" and Michel Granek's "Oedipus in Paris: Psychoanalytic Novellas," the latter a translation.

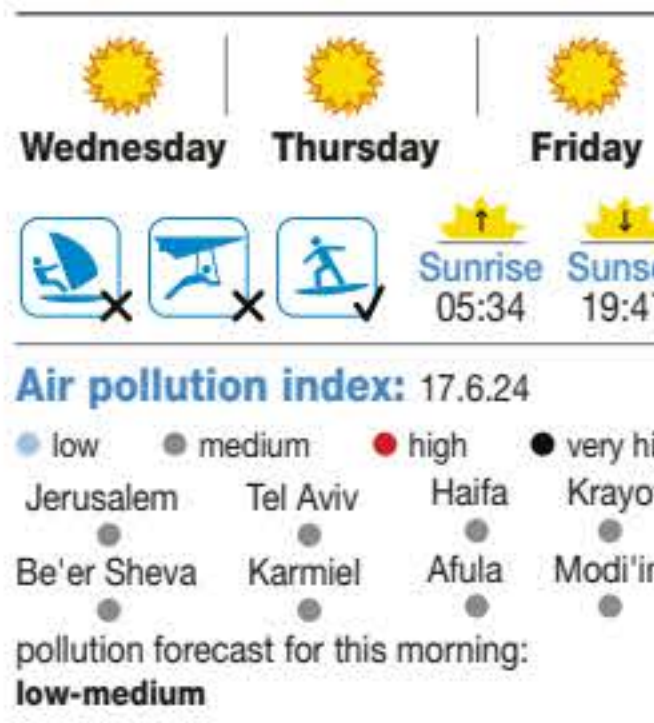
A different digital taste

The interest in Etgar Keret's work means his new short-story collection debuted at number two on this week's bestseller list at Ivrit, a platform of digital Hebrew books. The number-one spot belongs to Neta Hoter's comedy book "Where Are You This Summer" on a 40-something bookseller who goes through a divorce, deals with an odd nagging customer and discovers a dead body.

Weather

Slightly warmer

Tuesday will be clear to partly cloudy and slightly warmer inland and at higher elevations. Temperatures will remain unseasonably high Wednesday and Thursday – and into next week – with muggy conditions along the coast. Friday will be hotter.



Other books on the top-10 list include Shulamit Lapid and Dror Mishani's anthology of suspense stories from across the globe, "The Beginning of All Things." There's also the latest novel by Yaniv Iczkovits, the author of "Nobody Leaves Palo Alto" and "The Slaughterman's Daughter."

There's also Kinneret Rosenbloom's "Infrastructure" on how wealth and the pressure to maintain it take a toll on members of an Israeli family, and Yaara Yarkov's autobiographical debut novel, which takes place in the 1980s. It tells the story of her family, who immigrated to Israel from Iraq. Then her father's winning lottery ticket changed everything – and for the worse.