

## Bring them home



Iair Horn, age 45,  
kidnapped from  
Kibbutz Nir Oz



13  
Reason to  
smile

Some Israel-  
positive results seen  
in balloting abroad

19  
Plan  
needed

IDF gains in  
Gaza will be lost  
without one

Israel's first  
famous face

MAGAZINE

## ELECTRICITY OFFICIAL:

### 'Nasrallah can take out power grid with one phone call'

• Jerusalem Post Staff  
and YANIR YAGNA/Maariv

Shaul Goldstein, the CEO of Noga, the Israel Independent System Operator Ltd. that oversees the running of the power grid, said on Thursday that Israel's electricity supply cannot be assured in the event of war with Hezbollah.

Speaking at the National Security Research Institute conference in Sderot, Goldstein said, "After 72 hours without electricity in Israel, living here will be impossible. We are not in a good position and are unprepared for a real war."

He added that Hezbollah could easily take down Israel's power grid.

"If Nasrallah wants to take down Israel's power grid, he only needs to make a phone call to the person in charge of Beirut's power system, which looks exactly like Israel's. He doesn't even need a drone; he can call a second-year electrical engineering student and ask where the most critical points in Israel are – everything is on the internet. I won't say it here, but anyone who goes on the internet can find it," Goldstein said.

"Israel is an energy island, and we need to supply ourselves – this is also our advantage; we are trained to work in isolation. When I took the position and began researching what the real threat to the electricity sector is, I asked: Let's say a missile hits the electricity sector, and there's a power outage for one hour, three hours, 24 hours, 48 hours, 72 hours, and beyond. What happens to Israel in such a situation? The bottom line is that after 72 hours, it is impossible to live in Israel," Goldstein warned in his opening remarks.

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PEOPLE PROTEST near the home of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem last night, while thousands more protested at his private residence in Caesarea. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

## Protesters rally at Netanyahu's homes to demand elections now

• Jerusalem Post Staff

Thousands demonstrated Thursday in Tel Aviv, in front of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Caesarea home, and in front of his residence in Jerusalem, demanding elections.

"You are the head – you are guilty, resign now!" demonstrators chanted.

In Jerusalem, some 1,500 people, and in Caesarea, 10,000 rallied, according to Israel Democracy HQ.

"In light of the negligence and helplessness of Netanyahu's government, we are continuing and intensifying the pressure with a just and basic demand – returning the mandate to the public. The disregard for citizens and their suffering must stop. The people of Israel are no longer willing to pay the price for Netanyahu's corruption and failure. Our future is at risk, and this is a moment of truth for responsibility and mutual solidarity. It is time to leave our homes and join the fight, calling for elections

now before it is too late," the organization said in a statement.

Shai Kedar, a reservist from Kibbutz Sde Nehemia, said, "Hundreds of thousands of dunams have been burned in recent weeks in the North. Houses, courtyards, forests,

and agricultural land are going up in flames, and our hearts burn with them," Shabat Ha'poel reported.

Kedar continued, "And where is the prime minister? On his watch, the terrible failure of October 7 happened, as did a disgraceful

conscription law that harms us – reserve soldiers – and, more importantly, the security of the State of Israel.

"On his watch, money meant for the Gaza periphery and the North is diverted – to

See HOMES, Page 10

## Thousands of hospital doctors demand to halt use of water cannons at protests

• By JUDY SIEGEL-ITZKOVICH

After the significant eye injury this week suffered at a demonstration by a physician from a police water cannon while she was treating someone, the chairman of the State Doctors' Organization in the Israel Medical Association Dr. Zeev Feldman called on Israel Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai to call a halt to the use of the potentially harmful equipment at demonstrations.

He said that it was not certain whether the doctor's eye would return to normal – a situation that is threatening to her professional career.

"There must be a renewed examination of the procedures for the use of water can-

nons. Our job as doctors and policemen, is to maintain the public's peace, safety, and health," he wrote. "The use of such equipment can cause serious injury and even death. There have been reports of fatal incidents abroad, and this could easily occur in Israel."

He noted that the Israel Ophthalmology Society and Public Health Physicians Organization have already demanded that water cannons no longer be used to quell demonstrations.

A copy of the letter was also forwarded to the State Ombudsman and the State Attorney. The State Doctors Organization represents over 8,000 physicians in government hospitals.

## Can Hamas be defeated without control of Philadelphi?

ANALYSIS

• By TOVAH LAZAROFF

Could Hamas's survival in the Gaza Strip depend, in the end, on the fate of a small, 14-kilometer buffer zone running along the enclave's border with Egypt, known as the Philadelphi Corridor?

On the surface, it looks like

a small, dusty road that runs alongside a concrete barrier, topped by a wire fence, stretching from the Israeli border at Kerem Shalom to the Mediterranean Sea.

It ends in a scenic spot by the sea, which, absent a

parked tank and a shoreline of bombed-out homes, could almost be taken for an idyllic vacation spot.

Scores of illegal underground tunnels beneath the

See HAMAS, Page 10



THIS PICTURE shows the Egyptian-Gaza border, on the Palestinian side in Gaza, to the left, as seen from the inside of an IDF jeep. (IDF)

## After Rafah, what's next in Gaza?

ANALYSIS

• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

Starting on the evening of May 6, the IDF has been operating in Rafah for six weeks now. Its first goal was to secure the Philadelphi Corridor along the border with Egypt. This was accomplished within three weeks. Now, the IDF is fanning out into Rafah city, its environs, and its neighborhoods, and when this operation is finished, there will be a large question mark regarding what will come next.

IDF chief spokesman R.-Adm. Daniel Hagari hinted at the existing challenges in an interview he gave to Channel 13 News on Wednesday. "To say that we are going to make Hamas disappear is to throw sand in people's eyes. If we don't provide an alterna-

tive, we will only have Hamas in the end," he said.

The Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Herzi Halevi, said something similar last month: "We are now operating once again in Jabalya. As long as there is no diplomatic process to develop a governing body in the enclave that isn't Hamas, we'll have to launch campaigns again and again in other places to dismantle Hamas's infrastructure. It will be a Sisyphean task." Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and former war cabinet minister Benny Gantz have both called for a day-after strategy for Gaza.

The battle of Rafah will end, perhaps even by the end of the month, which will pave the way for this monstrous question demanding a viable

See GAZA, Page 10

## WH vexed by Netanyahu's accusations

Washington trying to avert  
second front in Lebanon

• By HANNAH SARISOHN  
in New York  
and TOVAH LAZAROFF

The White House publicly and privately aired its frustrations with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's attacks against the Biden Administration on Thursday, while Israel and Hezbollah threaten each other with war. Since Netanyahu released an English-language video on Tuesday accusing the United States of withholding specific weapons, the Biden administration has discredited every word the prime minister said.

The video came as a surprise to the White House, National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby told reporters on Thursday.

The administration has made its concerns over the content of the video clear "at various levels, through various vehicles," he said.

The Netanyahu video "was vexing and disappointing, as much as it was, incorrect, so difficult to know exactly what was on his mind," Kirby said as he defended the Biden administration's record of arms delivery to Israel.

The idea that the US had stopped helping Israel with their self-defense needs is just not accurate, Kirby said.

He recalled how the US forces came to Israel's defense in April when Iran launched an unprecedented attack of hundreds of drones and missiles against Jerusalem.

"There's no other country that's done more, or will continue to do more, than the United States to help Israel defend itself," Kirby said. Netanyahu's words were upsetting, he said, "Given the amount of support that we have, and will continue to provide."

On Tuesday, the Pentagon said the United States had

## ISRAEL AT WAR



What should new  
security doctrine  
be for Gaza border  
towns? Page 3

Pew study looks at  
divisions, unity  
in Israeli society  
during war, Page 6

delivered defense materials to Israel even after Biden paused one shipment of 2,000 and 500-pound bombs.

Officials across the administration maintain no other shipment or delivery of defense articles to Israel has been paused.

Netanyahu responded on Thursday, posting a message on X shortly after Kirby's comments became public.

"I am happy to endure personal attacks, as long as Israel receives the weapons shipment it so needs in this existential war," Netanyahu wrote.

On Wednesday, just one day after he made the initial accusation, his office posted a message on X that explaining that US Ambassador to Israel Jack Lew had said that the weapons in question would be delivered to Israel.

Netanyahu alerted the public to a weapons crisis and then announced its resolution, in advance of Defense Minister Yoav Gallant's trip to Washington early next

See LEBANON, Page 10

SHABBAT	BEGINS	ENDS
Jerusalem	7:07 p.m.	8:30 p.m.
Tel Aviv	7:28 p.m.	8:33 p.m.
Haifa	7:21 p.m.	8:35 p.m.
Beersheba	7:28 p.m.	8:30 p.m.
Eilat	7:13 p.m.	8:24 p.m.





# 'Likud politicians acting to thwart gov't appointment of northern 'czar'

• By ELIAV BREUER

Former Likud MK Osnat Mark is acting to thwart the recent appointment of Diaspora Affairs Ministry Director General Avi Cohen Scali to lead a directorate within the Prime Minister's Office responsible for the rehabilitation of the North, according to a report by KAN News on Wednesday evening.

KAN News alleged that Mark, widely known as a confidante of Sarah Netanyahu, the prime minister's wife, wants the position for herself. KAN added on Thursday morning that Likud MK Ketzi Shitrit was also acting to thwart the appointment, reportedly because she wanted it for her son, Moshe Shitrit, a former deputy mayor of Beit Shemesh.

KAN added that one of the arguments against Cohen Scali, also a resident of Beit Shemesh, is that he supported incumbent mayor Aliza Bloch rather than a candidate preferred by the Likud. Bloch lost the recent election.

Channel 12 and other Hebrew media outlets later reported the same news.

The report was not confirmed. Shitrit denied the accusations, and her son told KAN he would not accept the position even if offered.

The prime minister's office did not respond to repeated queries on the issue.

The report came weeks after a



A FIREFIGHTER takes cover in Kiryat Shmona yesterday as sirens warn of incoming rockets launched from southern Lebanon. (Jalaa Marey/AFP via Getty Images)

Channel 13 investigation found that Transportation Minister Miri Regev had given preferential treatment to mayors who supported her in the Likud primary election. The Israel Police opened an investigation into Regev. KAN's report also came after National Unity leaders MK Benny Gantz and MK Gadi Eisenkot accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

of prioritizing political considerations over national security.

Cohen Scali's appointment was made public on Tuesday, and the report that Likud politicians were acting to thwart it drew broad condemnation. The denunciations came from within the government, including Development of the Negev and Galilee and National Resilience Minister Yitzhak Wasser-

lauf and Aliyah and Integration Minister Ofir Sofer; from the opposition, including Gantz and Yair Golan, the newly elected leader of the Labor party; and a forum of mayors from cities and towns in the North.

In a letter to Netanyahu, the forum of northern mayors wrote, "Our residents have been removed from their homes for over eight months, do not sleep

at night, and are losing their minds out of concern."

"Business owners, tourist attractions, and farmers have already collapsed, and the government is playing games! The role of the director to implement the plan for [rehabilitation of] the North is significant. We demand that Mr. Cohen Scali remain in his position," the mayors wrote.



IDF TROOPS operating in Rafah yesterday. (IDF)

## LEBANON ROCKET FIRE CONTINUES

# IDF kills Hamas, Hezbollah commanders

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB and Jerusalem Post Staff

The IDF killed one senior Hezbollah and one senior Hamas commander on Thursday in different air strikes in the North and the South.

The Hezbollah commander was Faisal Ibrahim, who ran operational activities in the Jouaiya district of southern Lebanon.

He was killed in an IDF airstrike on a vehicle in the town of Deir Kifa in southern Lebanon.

Ibrahim was responsible for planning and executing terror attacks against Israel and in recent months promoted Hezbollah's consolidation in southern Lebanon while trying to improve the organization's ground combat activities, according to the IDF.

Concurrently, IAF fighter jets attacked Hezbollah's air defense system in the Rihan area of Lebanon, systems which have regularly posed a threat to IDF aircraft operating in Lebanese skies.

Hezbollah kept up its rocket attacks on northern Israel with reports of around 20 rockets and some 10 rocket sirens.

At press time, the IDF had not confirmed the operations.

Ahmed Hassan Salameh Alsauwarka was the Hamas commander killed in a joint operation by the IDF and Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) with the Air Force taking the lead.

According to the IDF, Alsauwarka was a squad commander in the Nukhba Forces who participated in the massacres in southern Israel on October 7. Moreover, Alsauwarka was a Hamas sniper who led sniper activity in the Beit Hanun region of northern Gaza, taking part in multiple attacks on IDF soldiers.

Following an extensive search and tracking him over time to find the right moment to strike, the IDF eliminated him in Beit Hanun, while avoiding harming Palestinian civilians.

Meanwhile, IDF troops continued to operate in the central Gaza Strip, with IDF aerial and artillery forces destroying a Hamas mortar position. In addition, two terrorists who posed a threat to IDF troops in the area were targeted using an Iron Sting precision missile.

In Rafah, troops continued precise, intelligence-based operational activity in the Rafah area. Over the past 24 hours, the troops eliminated several terrorists in close-quarter encounters and destroyed more Hamas rocket launchers.

The IDF announced that two soldiers were seriously wounded in fighting in the southern Gaza Strip and that they were evacuated for medical treatment.

Despite all of these reports, there was no sign of any additional large battles in Rafah, leaving open the possibility that most of Hamas's forces there escaped before the IDF invasion.

To date, only around 550 of a 4,000 to 8,000-strong Hamas force have been reported as killed by the IDF.

## Hostage families ask court for probe whether PM's criminal trials affected war decisions

• By ELIAV BREUER

agreement accordingly.

A group of family members of hostages and parents of soldiers and reservists petitioned the High Court of Justice on Thursday to demand that the Attorney General's Office check whether Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's war-time decisions were affected by his ongoing criminal trial.

The petitioners, represented by Adv. Dafna Holtz Lechner wrote that they had sent a letter on May 8 in which they inquired about whether the prime minister's conflict of interest agreement, which he signed in 2020, applied to his decision-making regarding the war. The petitioners said that they had not received an answer and demanded that the High Court direct the attorney to answer immediately.

The May 8 letter to the attorney-general was based on a High Court ruling days before. The ruling turned down a petition similar to the current one but noted that if the Attorney-General, Gali Baharav-Miara, believed that there was a conflict of interest between the prime minister running the war and his criminal trial, she would need to update the

petitioners argued, for example, that Netanyahu had requested several delays in his criminal trial due to his being busy running the war. This showed that the prime minister had an incentive to prolong the war as a means to delay his trial.

Further, the petitioners said in a statement that they had also argued that they were the citizens most affected by decisions regarding the war and that decisions by the prime minister could impact them immensely regarding either the length and scope of reserve duty, the danger to soldiers, the well being of the hostages or all the above.

Holtz Lechner said in the statement, "We have heard politicians and security officials saying every day that in issues that are fateful for the State of Israel and its citizens, Netanyahu has acted based on personal considerations and not on the national interest. If this is indeed the case, the attorney-general must act with utmost urgency to respond to the request by those who paid and continue to pay the price of the failure [on October 7] and the ongoing war."

PIKUACH NEFESH

קונגרס הרבנים למען השלום  
The Rabbinical Congress for Peace

פיקוח נפש

ב"ה

## Do we have the courage to admit that we were wrong?

By Rabbi Avrohom S. Lewin

Exec. Director of The Rabbinical Congress for Peace

In the true spirit of Israeli tradition, as the fire rages around us, as our enemies attack on every front, as our finest soldiers fall or are wounded in battle, and antisemitism runs rampant through the world, we continue to loudly and fervently engage in divisiveness, protests, and baseless hatred - to our great shame and disgrace. And above all, we continue to ask the same question, on every street corner and in every newsroom, "Who is to blame?" All the while, we hold our axes high, enthusiastically waiting to sever the heads of the guilty parties, as the crowd cheers on.

We, the Israeli members of the Rabbinical Congress for Peace, warned about the potential for disaster long before October 7th, in newspaper ads and through every possible platform. We warned about "the terrible situation that has developed in the past year, the painful division and incitement among Jews, happening in a brutal and disproportionate manner beyond anything had appeared before, reflecting the words of the Mishnah (*Avot* 3:2): "A man would devour his fellow alive."

"Like the woman in the judgment of Solomon, who enthusiastically cried, 'Cut him in two,' so our Jewish brothers rush out enthusiastically to destroy, tear down and annihilate those who think slightly differently than them - all the while ignoring the warnings of security experts that such blatant polarization and anarchy severely harm Israel's security and strengthen and encourage our enemies, G-d forbid.

"In the meantime, our enemies rub their hands together in glee. Everything that they have been unable to do for decades, we do to ourselves, while they wait quietly for the right moment to carry out their murderous intentions - G-d forbid that it should ever happen.

"A cry bursts forth from the depths of our hearts. It pierces the heavens: 'Master of the World! If we do not come to our senses and extinguish this burning enmity that consumes us, there will be nothing left to save!'"

We must take stock of what has happened to us and how it happened. But asking "Who is to blame" will neither help nor change our current situation.

The proper question to ask right now is: "What is to blame?!"

What did we do wrong, that led to the greatest disaster for the Jewish people since the Holocaust?!

What is the "underlying concept" that brought us to such terrible ruin!

How did we turn from being a nation that defeated massive armies on all fronts in six days, to one that collapses before a terrorist organization in six hours?

Why is the entire world against us even after our enemies brutally abuse us, at the same time as we provide them with food, water, and electricity?

How did we reach a situation where our enemies do with us as they please, holding hostage large areas in the north and south, while our hands are helplessly tied?

These questions need to be asked honestly and candidly, in every newsroom and in every public and governmental committee. If they are not being asked, it is because we lack the courage to admit the answer, loud and clear, to ourselves and to the whole world.

**The Torah of Israel declared, warned, and pleaded with us:** The *halacha* in the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* 329) (Jewish Code of Law) unequivocally determines - **Oslo is a disaster. The Disengagement is a disaster. Agreeing to two states is a disaster!** In the words of the *Shulchan Aruch*- "doing so makes it easy for our enemies to conquer the land."

The conduct of the Israeli government and the security establishment over the past decades is the reason for the terrible situation we are in today. Frighteningly, the negotiations, withdrawals, and concessions to our enemies, which continue even today, may lead to far more severe danger, may it never happen!

**The first step - the very least we should do to correct the situation and engage in true soul-searching - is to declare now, clearly:**

**The conduct of Israel since Oslo has been a tragic and terrible mistake. From now on, there will be no more negotiations, no concessions, or further withdrawals. We will never agree to the "two state solution."** The Israeli security forces alone will control all Israeli territories with a strong hand, to ensure the safety of the people of Israel in their land!

**The time has come to heed what the Torah of Israel - the Torah of Life - has to tell us. The time has come to unite around the eternal truth of the Jewish people. Only when we finally attain true unity - one nation, in one land - will we receive the blessing of "Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance."**





# A new security doctrine for Gaza border towns?

## Officials discuss dividing responsibility for security between residents and the IDF

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) think tank, based out of Tel Aviv University, held a conference in Sderot on Thursday to debate what doctrine should govern the country's Gaza border towns after the war.

While most experts agree that a significant part of the casualties that day were due to IDF strategic, tactical, and intelligence failures, the question of how the communities should be rebuilt, and what responsibility residents will have for self-defense, is a critical issue.

Maj.-Gen. (ret.) Gershon HaCohen said security doctrine should be completely rethought. He said that too many residents believed they were "bringing Tel Aviv with them... or living in a place like Denmark," while ignoring how close they lived to a danger zone governed by a terrorist group.

Instead, he said that the

very architecture of close border towns should focus more on security in the face of a potential invasion, and only then on aesthetics. Likewise, building materials should focus on withstanding attacks.

He added that it would be ill-advised to have people over the age of 70 living in such areas, given their vulnerabilities and the difficulty of evacuating them.

Rather, he said, the towns must be thought of in the way that founding prime minister David Ben-Gurion thought of them: the first line of Israel's national defense, a security zone of sorts, including maintenance of training.

Maj.-Gen. (ret.) Yaakov



AN IDF soldier walks past a Merkava tank as armored vehicles wait to be unloaded outside Kibbutz Be'eri in February. (Susana Vera/Reuters)

Banjo disagreed, saying that invasion was only one of many threats these towns

He said that only the IDF had the capacity and technology to provide defense against most border threats.

He also pointed out that in this new era, when groups located far away, like the Houthis in Yemen – attack Israel from afar, any part of the country is vulnerable in an unprecedented way; so the focus should be on threats at that higher level.

Maj.-Gen. (ret.) Mickey Edelstein, who is leading the military probe of the battle of Be'eri, agreed and said it was unrealistic to put too much emphasis on neighborhood defense. He pointed out that many residents on the Gaza border took the train daily to jobs in the Tel Aviv area, so at most hours they would

not even be home to defend against an invasion.

Instead, he suggested the IDF should express its power more robustly to improve its deterrence, and avoid any sort of attack.

His point was that if Israel's deterrence and the IDF's border readiness had remained at a higher level, Hamas would not have attacked.

Former MK and INSS security expert Ofer Shelach pointed out that there are always limits on how aggressive the IDF can be when it comes to initiating preemptive attacks on its adversaries – due to its need for global legitimacy.

Shelach pointed out that Israel's current global legitimacy stands at a new low, limiting its ability to launch preemptive strikes to maintain deterrence.

Brig.-Gen. (ret.) Gil Shvartzman said that anyone living in a border town, whether in the North or the South, should have been on notice that they were living in a danger zone since rockets had been fired in 1999.

He said that a patriotic Israelis living in these border areas should be ready to defend themselves and have proper safes in their homes to protect their weapons from being seized by potential enemy invaders.

He added that towns that had their weapons protected held off Hamas somewhat better than those that did not.

## Why pick on us? Cyprus bemused by Hezbollah's threats

• By YIANNIS KOURTOGLOU and MARINOS MELETIOU

NICOSIA (Reuters) – Cyprus reacted with incredulity on Thursday to warnings from Lebanon's Hezbollah that the island could be dragged into conflict if tensions with Israel blow up into a fully-fledged war.

The EU member state closest to the Middle East, Cyprus was caught off guard by comments from Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah late on Wednesday that the island could be a target if it permitted Israel to use its military facilities in the event of an attack on Lebanon.

"The Republic of Cyprus is in no way involved in war conflict," Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides responded, describing Nasrallah's comments as "not pleasant."

The EU also weighed in. "Any threats against our member state are threats against the EU," a spokesperson said.

Cyprus has always viewed itself as above the politics of its neighbors and offered sanctuary to tens of thousands of Lebanese fleeing civil war in the 1970s and 80s.

It has lobbied its EU partners to offer Lebanon financial assistance, and recently set up a maritime corridor to dispatch humanitarian aid to famine-threatened Palestinians in Gaza.

"Cyprus is a credible enabler of stability, and an acknowledged regional hub for humanitarian operations, based on excellent relations with all the countries in the region," said government spokesperson Konstantinos Letymbiotis.

But it also comes against the backdrop of improved ties with Israel, and the more visible involvement of British sovereign bases on the island in military operations in Syria and more recently, Yemen. The Israeli air force is also known to conduct exercises in Cyprus's airspace, and in recent years the two countries have conducted joint military drills.

Cypriots in the divided capital Nicosia said people had enough to deal with from the lingering complications of Turkey's invasion of northern Cyprus in 1974 after a brief Greek-inspired coup.

"Last night when I heard about the news, yes, I was worried," said Filios Christodoulou, 84.

Others were unfazed.

"We have nothing to do with this war," said Stella Patatini, 62. "On the contrary, we are helping peace in the region and assistance to the Palestinians so I feel safe in Cyprus."

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# Is the 2025 budget the next social tinderbox?

## ANALYSIS

• By EVE YOUNG

A 5% across-the-board budget cut for government ministries was the main proposal in a series of budget cuts laid out at a Finance Ministry meeting on the 2025 budget held Wednesday, Globes said sources from the ministry told them.

Other proposed cuts included pay cuts for senior managers in the public sector, postponed raises in the civil service, abolishing unnecessary ministries, and a NIS 2 to 4 billion cut in funds allocated to coalition parties – all amounting to NIS 3.5 billion, according to Globes.

While the total amount of cuts that the ministry makes in order to reduce Israel's deficit is critical to the country's economic recovery; given Israel's political and social climate, the composition of the cuts that are made is also critical.

Flat budget cuts across the board for all ministries will likely have significant repercussions for all parts of Israel's society, which could cause widespread frustration if the public does not think that serious cuts to coalition funds, and funds for unnecessary ministries that prop the coalition up are being prioritized over cuts that hurt the entire public.

The recent controversy over the "rabbi's bill" and the haredi draft law have highlighted deep discon-



A MILITARY Hummer vehicle drives along the Israel-Gaza border, as seen from Israel yesterday. (Amir Cohen/Reuters)

tentment in Israel's society when it comes to the treatment of different sectors of society differently and the equal sharing of national burdens.

The rabbi's bill aims to give the

government control over appointments of municipal and neighborhood rabbis, instead of the current system where the cities appoint their rabbis.

As pointed out in *The Jerusalem Post's* editorial on Wednesday, this bill is widely viewed as an attempt by the coalition's haredi parties to appoint its members to positions

and gain influence over issues of religion and state.

Highlighting the sense that this bill is seen as a coalition jobs-grab, Yesh Atid MK Yaron Levi summed up the inequality many felt this bill strengthened. "If the prime minister can approve 1,000 new rabbis, and not 1,000 psychologists, then this place is a piece of trash," he said.

Public protest of the unequal sharing of the security burden has also been coming to a head recently as the haredi draft law is advanced with no real solution in sight.

The IDF says that they need more manpower, the ultra-Orthodox leadership has not made concessions that would allow for a bill that satisfies this need, and the public fury over this inequality grows with every day that the law is not amended and that more IDF soldiers are killed in the Israel-Hamas war and in Israel's northern conflict with Hezbollah.

The 2025 budget may become just another instance of the government's failing balancing act between coalition pressures and demands by the public to meet the needs of the majority of Israelis.

This wouldn't be entirely new. The current government has already been criticized for how sectoral its allocation of funds has been and for failing to address this and cut coalition funds when the war necessitated a rethinking of the 2024 budget.

"We found in this budget, that to a much larger extent than in previous coalition agreements, coalition resources were very sectoral," former Bank of Israel Governor Karnit Flug told *The Jerusalem Post* last month.

"The fact that they didn't cut coalition expenditures [after the outbreak of the war] that are very sectoral and are not based on professional work substantially undermines the trust in the government. This will make it much harder to come to the public and say 'look, there is an additional burden that you will have to incur,'" explained Flug.

The Israel-Hamas war has brought the issue of the unequal burden on Israel's different sectors, long kicked down the road, to a head. Given this and the precarious situation of the coalition, Israel's budget could potentially be the next crisis that could topple it, or bring the widespread public protest to new boiling points.

Public trust in the government has been stretched and challenged possibly beyond repair since the outbreak of the war, and also in the year prior during the advancement of the judicial overhaul.

The budget is another opportunity for the government to try to show the public it is prioritizing the needs of the many; or for it to show that coalition demands are the top of its list of priorities.

## IN SHADOW OF NETANYAHU-BIDEN RIFT:

# Gallant travels to DC

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant will meet in Washington with top American foreign policy and defense officials from Sunday to Tuesday, amid a new crisis that erupted between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Joe Biden.

In the balance are the future of the war and post-war Gaza policy, the status of weapons sales in a range of areas, Iran policy, and related regional issues.

Due to Netanyahu's testy relations with Biden and the absence of a fully empowered Israeli foreign minister, Gallant has often been a critical interlocutor between the countries.

Earlier this week, Netanyahu attacked the Biden administration for delaying weapons sales, and then, on Wednesday, one of his spokespeople said he had restored American weapons sales.

Netanyahu was referring to Biden's May statement that the US was holding up a shipment of bombs to prevent Jerusalem from using them in an attack on Rafah.

However, sources close to Gallant, as well as in the IDF and the defense establishment, have blamed Netanyahu for aggravating the weapons crisis rather than navigating it cleverly and quietly, especially since the IDF is so close to taking over Rafah without having significantly upset the US with its conduct of the battle.

Due to the crisis, there are still questions about exactly who Gallant will meet.

During his most recent Washington trip on March 25-26, he met with US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and multiple times with US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

Some meetings were planned in advance, but others were added after a similar crisis between Netanyahu and Biden in March, when each side canceled various meetings. Gallant ended up bridging some of the gaps at the time.

Some speculated that Netanyahu went after Biden earlier in the week in order to declare that he had solved the weapons crisis on Wednesday, before Gallant was set

to arrive in the US, so that the prime minister could take credit.

Instead, a mix of US and Israeli sources seemed unclear about whether Netanyahu's latest attack on Biden had led the US to pause the approval process for Israel to purchase F-15EX aircraft.

Israel had already delayed that process twice: the first time because of many rounds of elections and the second time more recently, due to disputes between Gallant and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich. Smotrich sought additional oversight, and the defense establishment viewed his intervention as an attempt to politicize national security.

Israel and the US have wrestled over whether the IDF should invade Rafah and, if so, how to conduct the invasion, considering the number of Palestinian civilians killed, the general humanitarian situation in Gaza, Netanyahu's refusal to propose a day-after solution for running Gaza, and whether US weapons support should be conditional on Israel following certain American policy recommendations.

## REPORTED LEAKS FROM IDF OCT. 7 PROBE:

# Friendly fire incidents, hesitation to fight, slow analysis of situations

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

IDF probes on October 7 will only be released to the public from mid-July but on Wednesday, Channel 12 reported leaks of some of the key findings and notably, the IDF did not deny the report.

Although the IDF also did not confirm it, the military has been aggressive in its denials of other leaks about failures related to October 7, so the complete silence in the face of this latest report is telling.

According to the report, the probe will find numerous cases of friendly fire errors leading to deaths, groups of IDF soldiers who were too hesitant to confront Hamas invaders (while others rushed to fight without being formally summoned), more senior commanders ordering some groups of soldiers to remain in a reserve second-line capacity – when they should have headed to the front, and not knowing how to handle complex battlefield questions involving a hostage situation in Be'eri.

One of the consequences of the findings to date – some of which are final, while others are interim – could be a freezing of the promotion of Brig-Gen.

Barak Hiram to the post of commander of the Gaza Division.

He has been one of the war's most controversial commanders since he allegedly gave orders to fire on homes that included both Hamas terrorists and hostages, possibly killing a dozen hostages.

Even this narrative is debated, as his attack order may have been focused on saving his soldiers who were under fire. It is also unclear whether there was any other way to secure the hostages' release without attacking their Hamas captors.

In the battles that ensued after October 7, Hiram was highly successful, and his command skills were viewed as significant in ousting Hamas from Be'eri at a time when other nearby commanders had been killed or had fled.

Some hostage families would raise an outcry if he were given command of the Gaza Division, while many military personnel would object if he were not, given his overall success rate and record.

On June 5, the IDF said it would release reports during July and August.

Aspects will be presented by key officers to IDF Chief of Staff Lt-Gen. Herzi Halevi in early July and will be available

to the public late summer after they are integrated with other issues.

It will examine everything relating to the Gaza concept and the security establishment's outlook on it back to 2018.

The IDF has said it expects probes to look even further back in time, as part of a state inquiry and State Comptroller report. If the military itself went back beyond 2018 though, it would mean delaying the publication, which would be increasingly problematic with the passage of time.

The probe of the invasion and the battle for Be'eri could be the first, led by Maj-Gen. Mickey Edelstein. Some 40 other probes are expected to follow.

A probe focusing on the events of October 6, including specific warnings and operational moves made or not made during that period, will likely be publicized in early August.

Despite the IDF probe, most defense officials are calling for a state inquiry to probe the decisions and actions of the government. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has opposed any state inquiry, fearing its political consequences for his coalition.

# Protests, political action in France after alleged rape of 12-year-old Jewish girl

President Emmanuel Macron calls on schools to hold discussions on hate and antisemitism

• By PHILISSA CRAMER/JTA

A shocking incident in which two teenage boys have been charged with the rape of a 12-year-old Jewish girl in a suburb of Paris has sparked a reckoning across France, with Jewish groups taking to the streets to protest rising antisemitism and President Emmanuel Macron pushing to address antisemitism in schools.

Macron reportedly condemned the "scourge of antisemitism" and tasked his education minister, Nicole Belloubet, with enacting education about antisemitism in French schools during a government meeting on Wednesday, a source told the Agency

France-Presse news agency.

"The horror has no limits. Rape, antisemitism: Everything is abominable in this crime committed in Courbevoie against a 12-year-old girl," Belloubet tweeted on Wednesday. She added, "Justice, School, Republic: a single response against barbarism."

Two 13-year-old boys were indicted on Tuesday on multiple charges including rape as well as targeting the victim's religious affiliation in the incident, which took place on Saturday night. A third boy, aged 12, was charged with offenses related to witnessing the alleged crime.

*Le Monde* called the police report, which included testimony from the girl and

from investigating officers, "unbearable" in its details.

Two of the teenagers accused of participating admitted to being motivated by the victim's Jewish identity, according to the report, with one saying he had been angry that she had hidden her religion from him and another said he had resented her comments about Palestine. (The reports did not specify details about the comments.) One of the boys called her a "dirty Jew," according to multiple reports about the incident.

The incident has drawn recrimination from people across France and beyond who say it reflects deep problems in French society. "We have the impression that French

society has resigned itself to antisemitism," Yonathan Arfi, president of CRIF, an umbrella organization of French Jewish institutions, said on TV Thursday.

In recent years, French Jews have been victims of several high-profile acts of antisemitism, and communal leaders have lamented feeling increasingly unsafe in the country, which has Europe's largest Jewish population. CRIF, like its counterparts in other countries, reported a spike in reported antisemitic incidents following Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel and amid the subsequent Israel-Hamas war.

Haim Korsia, France's chief rabbi, tweeted that he was "horrified" by the alleged rape. "Justice must firmly sanction the perpetrators of this despicable act," Korsia wrote.

The incident comes as French politics are in turmoil after Macron, a centrist, called for elections following a strong showing by far-right parties in European Union elections earlier this month. The dynamic has resulted in an unprecedented embrace by the traditional conservative party of a far-right party, National Rally, that was founded by a convicted Holocaust denier, leading some French Jews to express fears.

This week, National Rally withdrew its support for a local candidate who said in a now-deleted 2018 tweet that

"gas did justice for the victims of the Holocaust."

And Marine Le Pen, the leader of National Rally, joined politicians from across the political spectrum in denouncing the rape – and pointing fingers about the cause.

"The antisemitic attack and the rape of a 12-year-old child in Hauts-de-Seine revolt us," Le Pen tweeted. "The explosion of antisemitic acts, up 300% compared to the first three months of 2023, must alert all French people: the stigmatization of Jews for months by the far-Left through the instrumentalization of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a real threat to civil peace. Everyone should be fully aware of this on June 30 and July 7," when elections are scheduled.

Jean-Luc Mélenchon, who heads the far-Left party France Unbowed, also denounced the alleged attack, saying he hoped it would not become a "media spectacle" during the election season. His party has been accused of stoking antisemitism in its aggressive opposition to the Israel-Hamas war.

"Horrified by this rape in Courbevoie and everything it highlights regarding the conditioning of criminal male behavior from a young age, and antisemitic racism," Mélenchon tweeted.

Leading members of Macron's party also targeted



A PROTESTER holds a placard which reads: "Twelve-years-old and already a victim of antisemitic hate" as a crowd gathers to condemn the alleged antisemitic gang rape of a young Jewish girl, at the Paris City Hall Square on Wednesday. (Alain Jocard/AFP via Getty Images)

Mélenchon in their public comments.

"Faced with such a tragedy... of course, I imagine that all the major politicians condemn it, including Jean-Luc Mélenchon," Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, who has Jewish ancestry, said at a press conference on Thursday, according to Politico. "But what I also want to say is that since October 7, we've seen a form of unbridled antisemitism develop and break free. And I think that political leaders and political parties have a responsibility to put up barriers, to

prevent a certain amount of rhetoric from becoming commonplace."

Macron on Wednesday asked schools to hold a "discussion hour" on racism and antisemitism this week, following the rape. He asked Education Minister Nicole Belloubet "to organize a discussion in all schools on the fight against antisemitism and racism, to prevent hate speech with serious consequences from infiltrating schools," Macron's office said.

Reuters contributed to this report.



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# Shots fired at Montreal eatery on boycott list

• By MICHAEL STARR

Shots were fired at an Israeli cuisine restaurant Tuesday night, according to the eatery and local Canadian politicians, the latest shooting against a Jewish-owned institution in Montreal in the wake of the October 7 massacre.

No casualties were reported. Falafel Yoni said on social media that they had closed for the day due to the holes in the storefront windows.

"Thanks so much for the overwhelming amount of support we've received," said Falafel Yoni. "We'll be back to business as usual tomorrow."

Montreal Mayor Valerie Plante said that she was shocked by new acts of violence against the Montreal Jewish community, but had full confidence that the Montreal Police would locate and arrest the perpetrators.

"Antisemitism and violence, whether expressed in images, words, or gestures, do not represent us and have no place in Montreal," said Plante.

Canadian Justice Minister and Attorney-General Arif Virani said Wednesday that stricter penalties for violent acts of hate had been tabled to combat the violence and hatred that "Jewish people in Canada are being bombarded with."

Friends of Simon Wiesenthal called for decisive measures against antisemitism in the country, which they said could no longer be tolerated.

Mount Royal Member of Parliament Anthony Housefather called on the Montreal municipality to support the police in efforts to protect the local Jewish community. Housefather and Outremont MP Rachel Bendayan noted that the eatery was listed on a list of businesses to boycott.

Alliance4Palestine Quebec, Montreal-Nord for Palestine, and Flipinos for Palestinian Liberation Montreal posted a list of Montreal restaurants to boycott on Instagram on June 4.

Falafel Yoni was the third business on the list, because the owner allegedly traveled to "occupied Palestine as he wanted to bring 'Israeli' cuisine back to Montreal," and a co-owner sent a video featuring the IDF to a coworker.

"Here's the extended list of restaurants that support/acknowledge the Zionist state. If a business made it to this list, we highly recommend you think twice before purchasing their products," said Alliance4Palestine. "boycotts are a non-violent way to encourage social and economic pressures."

Falafel Yoni noted on Wednesday that they were also being bombarded by "politically motivated" Google reviews from people who hadn't been to the restaurant, including on the day that the eatery wasn't open because of the holes in the windows. Falafel Yoni called to report such reviews, and to leave one's own if they had visited the restaurant.

"American style gentrified culturally appropriated Arabic food that is so full of fillers you cannot even taste the falafel. It has nothing to do with a real falafel sandwich," said a reviewer two weeks ago. "Falafel sandwiches should be basic. But it's perhaps what they usually do, whenever they culturally appropriate food. Just make it into a Big Mac version of that food."

One reviewer was alleged by Falafel Yoni to have been in Edinburgh when they left a review for the eatery.

Israeli Special Envoy for Combating Antisemitism Michal Cotler-Wunsh posted on X that the boycott showed "anti-Zionism equals antisemitism."

The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs said that it was in contact with the owners and was working with the Montreal Police in their investigation, but noted that two days prior they had been involved in a rally to call on municipal officials to take action against antisemitism.

CJJA Quebec and Federation Combined Jewish Appeal had

gathered with members of the local Jewish community in front of Montreal City Hall to tell Plante to arrest those calling for the murder of Jews, fire anti-racism commissioner Bochra Manai, and direct the police to dismantle anti-Israel protest encampments.

The Belz School at the Young Israel of Montreal synagogue was the target of a shooting on May 29. Abdirazak Mahdi Ahmed, 20, was arrested on May 22 for shooting at the Yeshiva Gedola school on November 12. On November 9, bullets hit the doors of the same school and the nearby United Talmud Torahs of Montreal.

# NYPD seeks suspect involved in intimidation of 'Zionists' on subway

• By MICHAEL STARR

New York Police Department detectives are seeking an individual in connection to a viral incident in which anti-Israel protesters intimidated passengers on a subway car, NYPD transit chief Michael Kemper said on Wednesday.

Police released a photo of a suspect and asked for public assistance in identifying him. StopAntisemitism and other NGOs identified the man as Anas (Ahmad) Saleh.

The June 10 incident coincided with anti-Israel protests across the city. The suspect shouted, "Raise your hands if you're a Zionist.

This is your chance to get out."

After getting no response, one of the men shouted, "Okay, no Zionists here. We're good."

The incident was widely criticized by US politicians, including New York Governor Kathy Hochul, who said last Thursday that her office was in consultation with New York City Mayor Eric Adams and state lawmakers about imposing a mask ban on subways. Many participants in the incident wore masks.

Nerdeen Kiswani, the leader of Within Our Lifetime, the primary protesting organization that day, defended



ANAS (AHMAD) SALEH (NYPD)

the man for ordering Zionists to leave the subway car. "We don't want Zionists in Palestine, NYC, our schools, on the train, any-

where. This is free speech; it is saying we don't want racists here," Kiswani wrote on social media. "Zionists are not a protected class. It's not enough to say racists because Israel is beyond racist. Zionism is settler colonialism and is actively genociding Palestinians. Like Joe Biden said, anyone can be a Zionist. Has nothing to do with race/religion."

Kiswani attacked the police for focusing on the incidents rather than on the alleged beating of protesters by pro-Israel activists and threats of rape.

X account Luis Documents published a video on Tuesday of a masked teen-

ager with an Israeli flag telling them, "I'm going to rape your mom."

"Do you condemn Zionist pro-Israel counterprotesters threatening rape towards pro-Palestinian activists and their mothers?" demanded Kiswani. "Are you going to put their faces on wanted posters?"

City Council Member Shana Hanif condemned the "violent behavior and racist language."

"I'm appalled to see young people hurl rape threats and racist insults against pro-Palestinian protesters, many of whom are Muslim, Palestinian, and Jewish," Hanif said on X on Tuesday.

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## How did Israelis become united and divided?

*Pew study: People are closer on religion and politics but more divided on military and politics issues*

• Jerusalem Post Staff

Israeli society has become more united religiously and politically but more divided on military and policy issues since the start of the war, according to a Pew Research Center study released on Thursday.

The study found that 18% of Israelis now believe there are strong conflicts between religious and non-religious people in the country – a 29% decrease from last year, when they were asked the same question.

Additionally, as reflected by the study, the political Left and Right have unified during the war. According to the study, 24% of Israelis perceived strong conflicts between the Left and the Right, down 32% from last year.

Conversely, the study showed that Israeli public opinion has become more

polarized, resulting in further division between Arab Israelis and Jewish Israelis due to their different views on institutions such as the IDF and policy issues.

While Jewish Israelis trust the national government to do what is right for Israel more than in 2017 (61%, up from 53%), Arab Israelis have less trust at 23%, down from 44%.

Furthermore, Israeli Jews think the military has a positive influence on the way things are going in Israel, while only 34% of Israeli Arabs agree. “This gap has grown significantly since we last asked the question in 2007, when 77% of Israeli Jews and 57% of Israeli Arabs said the military’s influence was positive,” the study showed.

There also remains a great divide over whether the building of Jewish settlements in the West Bank helps

or hurts Israel’s security; 40% of the population said the settlements are helpful, and 35% believe they are harmful.

In addition, the study found that 50% of Israelis have become more pessimistic about how their political system works, with only 35% of Israelis claiming to be optimistic.

In 2019, Arabs and Jews were almost equally pessimistic about the political system. However, the study showed that now, 69% of Arabs are pessimistic, up from the previous 57%. In contrast, 44% of Jews have become less pessimistic about the political system, down from the previous 55%.

Israelis have become more divided on the prospect of Arabs and Jews living together peacefully, with equal numbers saying they are optimistic (37%) or pessimistic (37%) about sharing the land.



PEOPLE PROTEST against the government over its inability to negotiate a comprehensive hostage deal on Tuesday night, near the Knesset in Jerusalem. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

## Menorah lessons on long-term investing



### YOUR INVESTMENTS

• By AARON KATSMAN

*Our country is now taking so steady a course as to show by what road it will pass to destruction, to wit: By consolidation of power first, and then corruption, its necessary consequence.*

–Thomas Jefferson

At the beginning of this week’s Torah portion Beha’alotcha, we read that Aaron the high priest was charged with the daily lighting of the menorah. Rashi, explaining the connection between the end of last week’s portion dealing with the princes bringing their offerings to this week’s beginning, says: “When Aaron saw the inauguration of the princes, he felt bad about it, for neither he nor his tribe was with them in the inauguration. The Holy One Blessed is He, said to him, ‘By your life! Your role is greater than theirs, for you kindle and prepare the lamps,’” (Rashi on Bamidbar 8:2).

The Ramban asks the question of why God didn’t console him by saying that he gets to offer the twice-daily offering of the incense and/or he gets to enter the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur. He suggests “that the consolation offered to Aaron was not the fact that the high priest would kindle the menorah daily during the duration of the Temple service.

Rather, the consolation was that the menorah would be kindled in all generations as a result of the heroism of Aaron’s

descendants, the Hashmonaim priests. In other words, the consolation alludes to the Hanukkah Menorah which will continue to be lit, even after the suspension of the Temple service.

Rabbi Yissocher Frand writes, “This is saying that there are times in life when we do things in a non-dramatic fashion without a lot of fanfare, but those little things can last for generations, for centuries, even for millennia. Other times, we do things with great fanfare and great pomp and circumstance, but those things are forgotten shortly and have no lasting importance. The sacrifices of the princes were offered with great pomp and circumstance, but they were a one-time affair, and they were only for the Mishkan. The Mishkan was eventually put away and the whole dedication ceremony had no permanent impact. Aaron’s kindling of the menorah was not only for now, not only for later but for eternity.”

In a little more than a month, we read about the revelation of who will replace Moses as leader of the nation. As I have written previously, the leading candidates to inherit the leadership position would either be one of the sons of Moses, or Pinchas.

One of the sons, because often leadership is passed from father to son, and Pinchas, as it says, “turned back my wrath from upon the children of Isra-

el when he zealously avenged me among them, so I did not consume the children of Israel in my vengeance. Therefore say: Behold! I give him my covenant of peace,” (Bamidbar, 25:11-12).

Such a bold and heroic action would certainly put him in the running for leadership, and the nation would get behind him as they were saved from death by his zealotness.

As a surprise, Yehoshua, the servant of Moses, was chosen. I once heard Rabbi Shalom Gold z”l being asked what quality Yehoshua possessed that merited his being chosen to lead. He answered that if you look at the juxtaposition of verses, immediately after his being chosen, we have the section that deals with the daily offering in the Temple, the tamid. One lamb was offered in the morning and the second was offered in the afternoon. He said that it was the day-in, day-out commitment that was important for leadership, not a one-time heroic event.

Far too often, I get a phone call from a client asking for a “hot” stock tip. Much research has shown that the key to portfolio growth is asset allocation, or how you break up your portfolio into various assets, and not stock picking. Data shows that over 90% of all portfolio returns come from asset allocation. This means that stock picking has little impact on your investment returns.

Living within your means, saving, and investing are the time-tested methods to achieve financial security. Slow and steady portfolio growth over

the long haul makes all the difference. Trying to find the one stock to put all your money into to try and hit a grand slam and become a millionaire isn’t a well-thought-out financial plan.

I’ve written numerous times about a friend who, during the go-go days of high-tech in the late ‘90s, decided that he was going to put all his hard-earned money into Nokia stock and become a millionaire. Well, he made it to almost \$800,000, the bubble burst, and 22 years later, it’s still 90% lower.

I may sound like a broken record but those who keep their eyes focused on the long term end up doing well financially. Define your goals and needs and then invest with an allocation that will help you achieve those goals. Don’t get caught up in trying to time the stock market; buy good-quality assets and hold them instead.

*The information contained in this article reflects the opinion of the author and is not necessarily the opinion of Portfolio Resources Group, Inc. or its affiliates.*

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## Will bitcoin become a long-term investment channel?



### TECH TALK

• By ARIEL SHAPIRA

Investment trends in Israel have evolved significantly in recent years.

Traditionally, Israelis have focused on real estate, both domestically and internationally, and stock markets.

However, the expansion of available investment funds in Israel has led individuals to explore a broader range of investment opportunities.

The rise in interest rates has simplified the process of investing money and has yielded favorable returns.

Before this shift, cryptocurrencies like Bitcoin attracted considerable attention.

Bitcoin’s value soared from around \$40,000 to the \$70,000 range, making it increasingly appealing to investors.

Governments worldwide are starting to recognize various digital currencies, incorporating them into traditional investment channels.

However, regulatory frameworks are still catching up with new technologies, leading to instances of fraud that have affected some investors.

Bitcoin was founded in 2008 by an individual or group known as Satoshi Nakamoto and was first

used in 2009.

Unlike traditional currencies issued by governments, Bitcoin is not controlled by any central authority, such as a central bank.

Instead, transactions are verified by network nodes through cryptography and recorded on the blockchain.

One of Bitcoin’s key features is its limited supply; there will only ever be 21 million bitcoins in existence.

This scarcity is designed to prevent inflation and maintain the currency’s value over time.

Government attitudes toward Bitcoin vary significantly around the world.

Some countries have embraced Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, recognizing their potential for innovation and economic growth.

In Israel, the attitude toward Bitcoin and cryptocurrencies has been somewhat mixed, with both regulatory initiatives and a growing interest in the technology.

A leading Israeli tech company in this space is Bits of Gold, which has been active since 2013, operating under the compliance and approval of the Finance Ministry and the Capital Market Authority, Insurance, and Savings.

Their platform is known for its simplicity and security, offering a reliable option

for those interested in digital currency investments.

One challenge when purchasing crypto is transferring it to your bank account; Israeli banks sometimes block such transfers, especially if the funds originated from digital currencies. However, transfers from supervised bodies like Bits of Gold are more comfortable and organized.

Bits of Gold addresses this issue by managing the tax on the interest you earn, sparing you from dealing directly with tax authorities.

Additionally, transactions can be conducted in US dollars, eliminating the need for currency conversion fees from shekels to dollars.

The company offers customer support in both English and Hebrew to answer any relevant questions about managing and selling your currencies, which is particularly important for new customers.

Investing in crypto represents a novel form of investment.

It is important to note that the associated risks may be greater than those of other investment avenues.

However, given the trajectory of technology, regulation, and the potential for growth, it could serve as a viable investment option.

*This article is not intended as investment advice or a recommendation.*

## How to disprove a wrongful tax evasion accusation

### YOUR TAXES

• By LEON HARRIS

What do you do if the Israeli Tax Authority (ITA) throws the book at you and accuses you of artificial tax evasion? One taxpayer threw the book right back and won in the Israeli District Court (Shalam Packaging(1998) Ltd vs Netanya Assessing Officer, Civil Appeal 38077-02-21 of April 25, 2024).

Israel has a general

anti-avoidance rule (GAAR) in Section 86 of the Income Tax Ordinance, which allows the ITA to disregard artificial or fictitious acts and acts where one of the aims is to improperly reduce the tax liability. Depending on the severity, this can be criminal or civil. Countries like the UK and Canada have similar GAAR rules, but the Israeli version tends to be upheld more often in court. Not this time – so

what happened?

### MAIN FACTS

A privately owned packaging company acquired the shares of another packaging company that used different packaging techniques from Kibbutz Yakum in stages between 2008 and 2013. In that period, the subsidiary made losses of around NIS 54 million. At the beginning of 2014, the parent company moved its activity to the subsidiary company and notified the ITA that this was a tax-deferred reorganization (under ITO Section 104A). The parent company then acted as a holding company, holding the subsidiary company concerned and other separate subsidiaries. The subsidiary company also then moved its operations from Yakum to Caesarea near where the parent company and other subsidiaries were located.

In June 2014, the subsidiary company’s factory in Caesarea

was burned down in a fire. In February 2015, its insurance company paid NIS 155m., resulting in a capital gain.

The taxpayer sought to offset its past business losses against the capital gain, leaving only a small balance of tax to pay. The ITA thought differently.

### THE ITA’S CLAIMS

The ITA found all this too convenient and claimed two main things.

First, the ITA claimed the subsidiary company had really sold its activity to the parent company – not the opposite – when it physically moved its operation from Yakum to Caesarea, thereby forfeiting past losses and triggering a \$30m. capital gain.

Second, if the first claim didn’t succeed, the ITA’s alternative claim was that the parent company had effectively forgiven a loan of NIS 50m. to the subsidiary company as the loan wouldn’t be repaid. Debt

forgiveness is taxable in Israel for the forgiven party (the subsidiary). The loan in question took the form of a perpetual loan note which the parent company took over from the old shareholder of the subsidiary.

Either way, the ITA invoked the general anti-avoidance rule in Section 86 against alleged artificial or fictitious acts by the taxpayer. And for good measure, the ITA sought to impose an extra 15% deficiency fine. The ITA threw quite a big book against the taxpayer – the subsidiary company.

### THE COURT JUDGMENT

The Court dug deep into the facts and ruled that the taxpayer did NOT act in an artificial or fictitious manner or in a way intended to improperly reduce its tax liability.

The consolidation of activity in Caesarea was done for fundamental commercial reasons

to help turn around the subsidiary from losses to profits.

The court was impressed by the testimony of the principal shareholder/entrepreneur, Emanuel Shalam, who cited an Arab proverb: “Thread by thread, you make a hat.”

What he meant was buying more from fewer suppliers to get better terms; and selling more to the same customers to save on delivery costs, pallets, and sales personnel. By making savings on purchases, logistics, and sales “I gave an answer to my competitors”. Also, “We saved as it was by my home, I moved to be within 4 minutes from the plant. This business works 24/7”.

The shareholder/entrepreneur explained why he moved the parent company’s activity into the subsidiary company – to consolidate packaging activities, install a separate management team, and be able to sell the company in the future without affecting

other subsidiaries.

As for the perpetual loan note, it was not forgiven, it was an integral agreed part of the acquisition of shares of the subsidiary. The seller, Kibbutz Yakum, insisted on leaving in place funding for employment as the subsidiary’s employees included members of that Kibbutz.

The Court did claim that subsidiary company losses may be picked up by the parent company, citing the Ben Ari case of 2008 (7387/06). Comment: That may be a stretch.

It remains to be seen whether the ITA will appeal the case.

To sum up: Businesses should always have a commercial rationale for their acts.

*As always, consult experienced tax advisers in each country at an early stage in specific cases.*

**leon@hcat.co**

*The writer is a certified public accountant and tax specialist at Harris Consulting & Tax.*

### RHINE ROBERTA (BOBBIE)

Beloved sister of DVORA WAYSMAN, passed away peacefully in Australia at age 99, on June 18th, 13th Sivan. Shiva at 5/ 5 Karmon Street, Beit Hakerem:

10 a.m. - 1 p.m. ; 4 - 6 p.m.



CHANGING OUR KNOWLEDGE OF ANCIENT TRADE:

# Oldest deep-sea sunken ship discovered off coast

• Jerusalem Post Staff

The cargo of a ship from approximately 3,300 to 3,400 years ago was found 1.8 kilometers deep on the Mediterranean Sea floor, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) revealed on Thursday.

The cargo, containing hundreds of containers still intact, was found during a standard survey executed by Energean, the natural gas company that operates the Karish, Karish North, Katlan, and Tanin gas rigs off the coast of Israel.

Initially, while conducting a survey along the Mediterranean floor, Energean's team saw "an unusual sight of what seemed to be a large pile of jugs heaped on the seafloor," according to Dr. Karnit Bahartan, Energean's environmental lead.

"The ship seems to have sunk in crisis either due to a storm or to an attempted pirate attack – a well-known occurrence in the Late Bronze Age," said the IAA's Marine Unit head, Jacob Sharvit, referring to the time period in which the ship sank. "This is both the first and the oldest ship found in the Eastern Mediterranean's deep sea,

ninety kilometers from the nearest shore."

"This is a world-class, historical-altering discovery," he continued. "This find reveals to us as never before the ancient mariners' navigational skills – capable of traversing the Mediterranean Sea without a line of sight of any coast."

Energean and the IAA then joined forces to investigate the discovery, using innovative methods to compile data. A special tool was built specifically to extract artifacts without harming the entire assemblage.

"The robot's survey and mapping of the site clarified this to be a sunken ship, ca. 12-14 meters long, which was transporting hundreds of vessels, of which only some are visible above the ocean floor," Sharvit explained. "The muddy bottom conceals a second layer of vessels, and it seems that the wooden beams of the ship are also buried within the mud."

Throughout two days of work, two vessels were extracted by the Energean team from the extremities of the ship so as not to harm the rest of the set.

"The casing type identified in the cargo was designed as



A SNAPSHOT of the moment when the ancient storage containers are raised out of the water in a special crate that was built to carry them back to dry land. (Emil Aladjem/Israel Antiquities Authority)

the most efficient means of transporting relatively cheap and mass-produced products such as oil, wine, and other agricultural products such as fruit," Sharvit continued. "Finding such a great quantity of amphorae on board one single ship is testimony to significant commercial ties between

its country of origin and the ancient Near Eastern lands on the Mediterranean coast."

Only two other shipwrecks carrying cargo from the Late Bronze Age have been discovered in the Mediterranean Sea: the Cape Gelidonya boat and the Uluburun boat, both located off the coast of Turkey.

However, both were found near the shore and were "accessible using normal diving equipment," according to Sharvit.

"Based on these two [findings], the academic assumption until now was that trade in that time was executed by safely flitting from port to port while hugging the coast-



DR. KARNIT BAHARTAN (left) and Jacob Sharvit examine some of the ancient jars that were found, intact, on the Mediterranean sea bed. (Emil Aladjem/Israel Antiquities Authority)

line, which always remained within eye contact. The discovery of this boat now changes our entire understanding of ancient mariner abilities. It is the very first to be found at such a great distance with no line of sight to any landmass."

He concluded, "There is tremendous potential here for

research: the ship is preserved at such a great depth that time has frozen since the moment of the disaster. Because its body and contents have not been disturbed by human hands (divers, fishermen, etc.), nor was it affected by waves and currents, which do impact shipwrecks in shallower waters."

## Summer is here and the sun is hot: Reduce risk of skin cancer

• By JUDY SIEGEL-ITZKOVICH

With the arrival of summer, the danger of skin cancer increases. Every month, an average of 167 Israelis contract this malignancy. Hundreds of health fund clinics representing all four public health insurers are offering free skin examinations by dermatologists and plastic surgeons during National Skin Cancer Awareness Week from Monday, June 24 through Sunday, June 30.

The event is initiated annually by the Israel Cancer Association (ICA) and Clalit, Maccabi, Meuhedet, and Leumit Healthcare Services. Anyone can find a clinic near his/her place of residence. Those who go will also be able to purchase sunscreen products at considerable discounts in the health fund's pharmacy.

Thanks to the national campaign and the increase in public awareness throughout the year, the success rates of early detection in Israel are among the highest in the world. This makes possible better chances for a cure and a dramatic decrease in death from skin cancer.

According to the ICA, 2,000 Israeli women (40%) and men (60%) will be diagnosed with malignant melanoma of the skin this year. According to Health Ministry data, in 2020, 1,675 new patients with melanoma were diagnosed here, but an absolute majority of 91.9% of patients was diagnosed with an early-stage tumor. This year, 192 women and men died from the disease.

In an international comparison, in descending order from the country with the highest to the lowest rate in 2020, Israel ranked 23rd among the 30 countries with the highest incidence rates (number of cases per 100,000 inhabitants) in the world, and last among the 30 countries in mortality rates. That is, in Israel the mortality rates are the lowest in the world.

ICA director-general Moshe Bar Haim said that "besides the security threat, we also continue to fight skin cancer. Along with the dramatic importance of early detection which reduces mortality, it is even more vital to prevent the disease in advance. I urge women and men to reduce exposure.

Being smart in the sun is a lifesaving message for older people as well and not just for children, said Dr. Marina Landau, a dermatologist at the Shamir Medical Center

in Tzrifin and Maccabi Healthcare Services who is the ICA's advisor on skin cancer. She added that correct use of sunscreens reduces the damage of sun exposure, and especially the dangers of developing burns, skin cancer, and preventing premature aging of the skin. It is recommended to use broad-spectrum sunscreens with SPF 30 or higher in the recommended amount and be sure to reapply according to the instructions."

It is also important to remember that exposure to the sun should be avoided as much as possible, even if a sunscreen is used.

Sailors, farmers, surfers, swimmers or those who engage in other water sports or work outdoors are by virtue of their occupation or hobby exposed to the sun for a long time and thus at an increased risk of getting skin cancer. Even those who are exposed to the sun intermittently, for example on weekends or vacations, are at increased risk of getting skin cancer.

In the risk group for getting skin cancer are people with a large number of moles, people with fair skin, hair and eyes, and with freckles, people whose skin burns easily in the sun, or does not tan at all, those in the family who have multiple moles, or those who have had skin cancer, who have suffered from multiple sunburns, especially in childhood, people taking medications that suppress the immune system or suffering from diseases that weaken it and people taking medications that increase the skin's sensitivity to sunlight.

Many celebrities in the world have revealed in recent years the story of their battle with skin cancer. They not only fought melanoma but also used their experiences to educate the public about the importance of early detection and the need for regular medical checkups. Their personal stories serve as a powerful reminder of the critical role of awareness and prevention.

Just recently, American musician and actor Kevin Jonas revealed in a video on Instagram that he was diagnosed with skin cancer and had a cancerous mole removed. Model Khloe Kardashian also revealed that a spot on her face turned out to be melanoma that required surgery. The Australian actor Hugh Jackman, who has been fighting his skin cancer in recent years, has spoken openly in every interview about his illness and calls on everyone to get tested.

To make an appointment for a skin examination, call Callit 2700\*, Maccabi

3555\*, Meuhedet 3833\* and Leumit 1-700-507-507 If you were not able to come, you

can be tested all year for a reasonable fee. For questions and assistance, contact

the ICA's teleinformation staffed 24 hours a day by calling toll-free 1-800-599-

995 or go to the website at <https://www.cancer.org.il/forums/40.aspx>.

## Continuing from Beresheet: the new lifestyle for those 65+

The Beresheet complex, will be launched in January 2025, is a residence located in the heart of Jerusalem mountains. "Our goal is to maintain one's quality of life and improve it with the highest standards. When everything is in your environment, within a quality community, you do more, and have more fun," says owner and CEO Avi Lichak

Liona Mankali, in collaboration with the Beresheet network

The devotion to their mother and the lack of suitable places is what led four brothers from the Lichak family to establish a chain that specializes in medical-rehabilitation care for the elderly about 20 years ago. Despite the network's success, during the Covid crisis, they recognized a new need for a quality community, alongside a place where one can experience support and togetherness. About three years ago, the idea arose to establish the Beresheet community to cultivate new social circles and provide a response to the next generation of retirement residences: people in their sixties. "This generation is in a sort of intermediate stage: too young for traditional sheltered housing, but looking for a place to grow old together," notes Avi Lichak, the CEO and owner of the Beresheet network. "The understanding that these are people with a longer life expectancy and a rich life experience led us to want to establish a new place that would give them, on the one hand, the opportunity to continue their private lives and work, and on the other hand, provide them with a supportive system in the form of a social community, activities, classes, and a high standard of entertainment." Accordingly, the planning and construction work began at Ramat Motza in the Jerusalem mountains, which focused, as mentioned, not only on a spectacular physical structure but also on building a new and fascinating way of life. Although the launch is planned for January 2025, the CEO is happy to share that already in the presale phase over 50% of the apartments have been sold, especially the largest and most luxurious ones.

According to Lichak, many people over the age of 60 suffer from empty nest syndrome, after the last of their children leave home and they find themselves in a large house with unnecessary square meterage. The possibility of upgrading the landscape and the atmosphere - with a breathtaking view of the Jerusalem mountains - living next to good friends and enjoying an active and lively social life - is beckoning and is very desirable. "Our vision is to enable an independent and private life, together with a supportive community environment," he emphasizes. Indeed, the new center places special emphasis on active and high-quality community life, alongside privacy and personal security. Many different types of apartments have been designed for the comfort of future tenants, with wide showcases and a panoramic view of the Jerusalem mountains, which gives a feeling of space and closeness to nature, modern furniture, and especially pleasant accommodation options for family members, (including grandchildren), cafes, restaurants, banquet halls, and all in attractive areas filled with green spaces, and even a wide community garden that invites everyone to grow fruits, vegetables, and herbs with much pleasure and satisfaction. "Additional emphasis in the design is given to the public spaces and bringing nature inside, as much as possible," adds Lichak. "Even the apartments themselves benefit from an abundance of natural sunlight, and allow you to enjoy fresh air, during all seasons of the year."

**How did you manage, even before the place was launched, to form such an extensive community?**

"We know everyone personally, understand their needs and desires and recognize the growing need to belong to a good and supportive community. Already at the presale stage, we took these insights one step further and turned the tenants who had

already signed up into an active community from the very beginning. Accordingly, that's why we launched the 'Beresheet Campus' and started to have regular and intimate meetings, we invested in workshops, in interesting lectures with the best lecturers, and we all meet at least once a week for joint activities. We already have organized trips, once a month, and we put values and concepts of life on the agenda, like the Green Zone, regarding the creation of a living space that includes a thriving community, health, and connection to nature - to improve one's quality of life."

**Sounds like it's something that can suit everyone.**

"Definitely. It doesn't depend on age. The idea is to upgrade your quality of life and make life better with the help of eating right, sleeping well, a variety of activities, and having lots of friends around. When all of these exist, then the energies are better, the mind is calmer and more peaceful, and people tend to get sick a lot less. We try to identify the needs and provide support even before our tenants express them out loud. For example, we provide dedicated workshops that talk about new beginnings in life, about moving to a different kind of residence, and even about how to pack up a big house and move stress-free. In this process, we also include the other members of the family, who are part of the complex and the entire project, and give them the right to decide and influence many decisions. Among other things, we have a wide range of people who have already signed up, among them secular, religious, and English-speaking people who have come to live in the country, and we make sure that they enjoy their time and bring them all together while encouraging the creation of connections and social involvement. In the end, everyone has the desire to know who is going to be their neighbor, and I believe with all my heart that this residence will succeed thanks to its residents. We will be in the background to serve them to the best of our ability, and give them the experience and quality of life they deserve."

**And what about the price?**

"I can honestly say that, unlike today's market prices, our prices are very fair. We do not take advantage of the situation in any way, or deliberately raise prices in line with market trends, precisely out of the recognition and appreciation of the high-quality public that comes to us. We try to maintain presale prices and provide advice according to the financial situation of each future tenant, to their complete satisfaction."

**The idea is to upgrade your quality of life and make life better**

**BERESHEET CAMPUS**

**Tuesday, June 30th**  
**Rabbi Dr. Benjamin Lau**  
**10:00-11:15**  
First Aliya - Haggai and Zechariah  
**11:45-13:00**  
Second Aliya - Ezra and Nehemiah  
**Take notice: The lecture is in Hebrew**  
**Join us and enjoy!**  
**Register at \*2349**

Now is the time to join and open the house together - enjoy the Beresheet Campus, get to know the tenants who have already registered, and win the final opportunity for the last remaining penthouses.

**BERESHEET**  
The new senior living community in the Jerusalem Hills

**\*2349**



A Beresheet penthouse



# Undecided voters await Biden-Trump debate

• By HELEN COSTER  
and ALEXANDRA ULMER

Gina Gannon, a retiree in the battleground state of Georgia, voted for Republican Donald Trump in 2016 before ditching him for Democrat Joe Biden in 2020 – and is now looking to next week's debate to help her decide which one to back this year.

Gannon, 65, flipped to Biden, she said, because she felt Trump's presidency was too chaotic. But she is now leaning toward Trump again, unhappy about illegal immigration at the US-Mexico border and inflation under Biden's administration.

Biden could sway her, however, if he presents a strong proposal to secure the border and shows a steady hand despite his age, she said.

Trump, 78, is "always a wild card," Gannon said. Yet for the 81-year-old Biden "there's certainly the age concern and how he will be able to handle himself."

About 20% of voters say they have not picked a candidate in this year's presidential race, are leaning toward third-party options or might not vote at all in the November 5 election, according to the most recent Reuters/Ipsos poll.

Reuters interviewed 15 such voters ahead of the June 27 debate in Atlanta to learn what they hope to see when Biden and Trump square off and how the candidates – now essentially tied in national opinion polls with fewer than five months until Election Day – can earn their support.

The group of undecided voters includes seven men and eight women from a mix of Democrat-leaning, Republican-leaning and battleground states. They vary by age, party affiliation and race.

Of the 15 voters, nine were previous Biden voters who had partially or fully soured on him, with one now leaning toward Trump. Three of the 15 voters had soured on Trump but were not considering Biden as an alternative.

Mental fitness, especially Biden's, is a key issue for these undecided voters,



DONALD TRUMP and Joe Biden participate in their second 2020 presidential campaign debate at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee on October 22, 2020. (Jonathan Ernst/Reuters)

who will be watching the first debate to see how well the two oldest candidates ever to run for US president can think on their feet.

Biden's stewardship of the economy, and especially his handling of inflation, is also a hot topic.

Increases in consumer prices have slowed considerably from a peak in June 2022, but voters still regularly complain of sticker shock at the grocery store.

Pennsylvania resident Rich Liebig, 35, voted for Biden in 2020 but is now undecided, chiefly because he feels Biden is too old. Liebig also is put off by Trump's legal problems and what he called the "hullabaloo" around the Republican former president.

Liebig, who was laid off from his job in marketing recently, said he will watch the debate for signs from Biden on the economy.

"What is his agenda, if he gets a

second term, to address inflation?" Liebig said, adding that he also wants to see strength from the president. "Biden has got to show that he can take on Trump again."

Several voters who supported Biden in 2020 said he needs to address immigration during the debate. Biden took office in 2021 vowing to reverse many of Trump's restrictive border policies, but he has struggled with record numbers of migrants

caught illegally crossing the US-Mexico border on his watch.

Biden has shifted rightward on the issue and earlier this month instituted a broad asylum ban to reduce illegal crossings. Trump, who made a headline stance on immigration a centerpiece of his 2017-21 administration, has vowed a wide-ranging crackdown if reelected.

The border "needs to be under control," said Ashley Altum, a mental

health case manager in South Carolina who voted for Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016 and Biden in 2020, and thinks both Biden and Trump are too old to be running.

Altum said she would never consider voting for Trump but might have backed a different Republican candidate. Now, she may abstain from voting at all in the presidential election.

Trump's felony conviction in May is a factor for voters like Sharon Johnson Bynum, a former Biden supporter who is unhappy with the Democratic president but believes the conviction disqualifies Trump.

Bynum, a 59-year-old telecommunication program manager in North Carolina, voted for Clinton in 2016 and Biden in 2020 because she felt Trump was unfit for the role. A registered independent, she said she has voted for Republican presidential candidates in the past.

This year, as she decides whether to vote for Biden or a third party candidate, Bynum said she will watch the debate to see if Biden is "mentally and physically able to do the role."

"My biggest concern right now is these trials and the outcome of these trials for the Republican candidate," Bynum said, referring to Trump's three remaining criminal cases. "And the age and capacity of the Democratic candidate."

Tom Reich, a 39-year-old Republican in Maryland, did not vote for president in 2016 or 2020 and is open this year to voting for independent candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who has not qualified for the debate.

Reich said he will be looking to see if either of the main party candidates shows signs of mental decline as they square off: "Anything that either says that is way out in left field, doesn't make sense and is not the kind of thing I'd want to see from someone running the country," he said.

"Anything scary in either direction would sway me toward the other," Reich said. "I think that is more likely than either candidate swaying me toward them."

(Reuters)

## N. Korea-Russia pact calls for military aid if invaded

• By JACK KIM and JU-MIN PARK

SEOUL (Reuters) – North Korea and Russia have agreed to provide immediate military assistance if either faces armed aggression, according to the full text of a landmark pact released on Thursday by Pyongyang after a visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

South Korea responded by convening an emergency meeting of its national security council and said it would now consider sending arms to Ukraine, which it had previously ruled out.

Hours after Putin departed for Vietnam, North Korea's state media published the "Treaty on Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," which in effect revives a defunct mutual defense agreement from the 1960s.

The agreement, which Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un signed on Wednesday and also included cooperation on nuclear energy, space exploration, food and energy security, is one of the highest-profile moves in Asia by Moscow in years. Putin visited China last month, soon after his inauguration for a fifth term as president.

"In case any one of the two sides is put in a state of war by an armed invasion from an individual state or several states, the other side shall provide military and other assistance with all means in its possession without delay in accordance with Article 51 of the UN Charter and the laws of the DPRK and the Russian Federation," Article 4 of the agreement says, using the initials of North Korea's official name.

Article 51 of the UN Charter provides for the right of a member country to take individual or collective self-defense actions.

Kim echoed Putin's statement explicitly linking their deepening ties to fighting the "hegemonic and imperialist" policies of the West and the United States in particular, including its support for Ukraine.

Washington and Seoul have

been increasingly alarmed by deepening military cooperation between Russia and the North, and have accused them of violating international laws by trading in arms for Russia to use against Ukraine. Ukrainian officials have said they have found North Korean missile debris inside their country. Russia and North Korea deny any arms trade.

Following a meeting of its national security council, South Korea said it would further strengthen security cooperation with the US and Japan. Seoul would add 243 new items to a list of goods banned from export to Russia bringing the total to 1,402, and would also review its position on arming Ukraine, the national security advisor, Chang Ho-jin, told a news conference.

Artyom Lukin, of Russia's Far Eastern Federal University, said the pact with North Korea would be "Moscow's first defense alliance outside the post-Soviet space."

"It remains to be seen how far and how deep Russia and North Korea will go in their alliance relationship this time," Lukin said. "Will North Korean troops appear in Ukraine? Will Russia provide military assistance to the North in possible North-South clashes over the disputed border in the Yellow Sea? Nothing is off the table now."

Cho Han-bum, of the Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul, said the agreement was a big win for Russia, laying a legal framework for North Korea's support in the Ukraine war.

The wording leaves room for Moscow to avoid helping North Korea in border clashes or other future skirmishes if it chooses, he said.

ON HIS first visit to Pyongyang since 2000, Putin thanked Kim for the support for Russian policy. Kim reaffirmed "unconditional" and unwavering support for "all of Russia's policies" including Putin's war with Ukraine.

Russia and North Korea face increasing international isola-

tion, and the US and its Asian allies are increasingly concerned about how much Russia will support North Korea, the only country to have tested a nuclear weapon this century.

The agreement said neither side would sign any treaty with a third country that infringes on the interests of the other and would not let its territory be used by any country to harm the other's security and sovereignty, KCNA said.

The two countries will take joint actions aimed at "strengthening defense capabilities to prevent war and ensure regional and international peace and security," it said.

South Korea regretted the agreement included a pledge of "military technology cooperation" which it said would violate UN Security Council resolutions on North Korea's weapons programs.

Russia, which has veto power at the Security Council, supported sanctions against North Korea enacted after Pyongyang tested a nuclear weapon in 2006, but has lately said sanctions should be changed. It vetoed the annual extension of inspectors enforcing the sanctions this year.

The White House did not immediately comment on the agreement's reported content.

Japan expressed "grave concerns" about Putin's vow not to rule out cooperation with Pyongyang on military technology.

The reaction from China, the North's main political and economic benefactor, has been muted. A spokesperson for China's foreign ministry declined comment, calling it a bilateral matter between Russia and North Korea.

Ukrainian presidential aide Mykhailo Podolyak said Russia, a UN Security Council permanent member, had allowed "the most brazen nullification" of all sanctions imposed on North Korea to stop its weapons development.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said the pact showed authoritarian powers were aligning.

## VISIT TO VIETNAM

# Putin seeks new 'security architecture'

• By KHANH VU  
and PHUONG NGUYEN

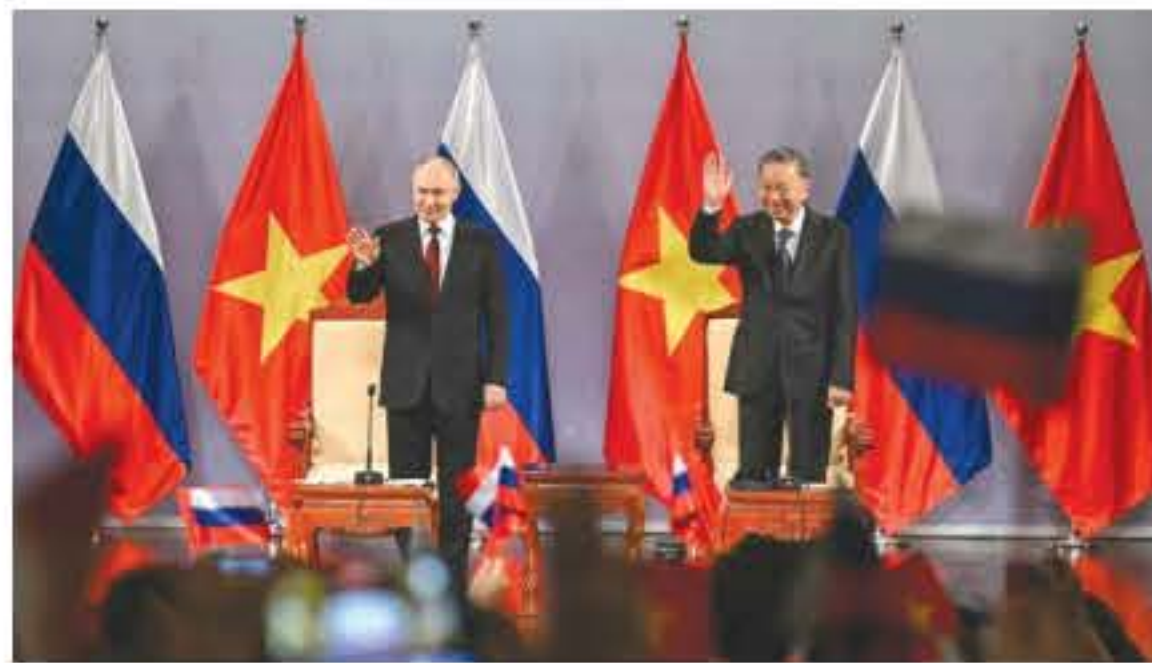
HANOI (Reuters) – Russian President Vladimir Putin said he wanted to build a "reliable security architecture" in the Asia-Pacific region during a state visit to Vietnam on Thursday, part of a two-nation trip to Asia seen as a show of defiance to the West.

A day after signing a mutual defense agreement with North Korea, Putin received a 21-gun salute at a military ceremony in Vietnam, was embraced by two of its Communist leaders and lavishly praised by one of them.

Putin's visit has drawn criticism from the United States and its allies, who treat the Russian leader as a pariah and have protested that he should not be given a stage on which to defend Russia's war in Ukraine.

Russia and Vietnam signed agreements on issues including energy, underlining Moscow's pivot to Asia after the West imposed sanctions on Moscow over the conflict in Ukraine.

"We are firmly committed to deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership with Viet-



RUSSIA'S PRESIDENT Vladimir Putin and Vietnam's President To Lam wave during an event attended by the Vietnam Friendship Association and generations of Vietnamese alumni who studied in Russia, at the Hanoi Opera House in Hanoi yesterday. (Manan Vatsyayana/Pool via Reuters)

nam, which remains among the priorities of Russia's foreign policy," Putin was quoted as saying by Russian media.

"We are ready to continue active joint work on a wide range of topics, including economic, scientific and technical ties, defense, security and humanitarian contacts."

He was quoted by Russia's TASS news agency as saying the two countries shared an interest in "developing a reliable security architecture" in the

region based on not using force and peacefully settling disputes with no room for "closed military-political blocs."

The 11 pacts signed in Hanoi were not on the same level as the landmark agreement reached in North Korea.

But Putin's warm welcome was an achievement for the Russian leader, who has an outstanding International Criminal Court arrest warrant against him over alleged war crimes in Ukraine, charges he denies.

Russia and Vietnam are not members of the ICC.

"Putin's triumphal reception in Hanoi will mark a counter-point to Russia's recent setbacks," said Carlyle Thayer, emeritus professor at the Australian Defence Force Academy, listing the recent Ukraine conference in Switzerland and new European Union sanctions on Russia.

"Putin and the Russian propaganda machine will play on the theme that Western attempts to isolate Russia are not working," Thayer added.

The military ceremony put on to greet Putin was the kind reserved for the highest heads of state and rolled out when US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping visited Vietnam last year.

The Vietnamese president congratulated Putin on his recent reelection and praised Russia's achievements, including "domestic political stability," as the two met in Hanoi.

"Once again, congratulations to our comrade for receiving overwhelming support during the recent presidential election, underlining the confidence of the Russian people," Lam said.

## Rights group accuses Vietnam of misleading US on human trafficking

• By SIMON LEWIS

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – Vietnam instructed its officials to withhold information from Washington to paint the country's efforts to tackle human trafficking in a better light, a campaign group said on Thursday, as Vietnam seeks an upgrade in a key US report.

The rights group, Project88, based its accusation on official Vietnamese documents that it claimed it had obtained. Reuters reviewed translations of the documents provided by the group but was unable to independently confirm their authenticity.

Project88, which focuses on human rights in Vietnam, accused the Southeast Asian

country of providing misleading information and attempting to cover up trafficking cases involving officials when communicating with US officials over the State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) report.

Vietnam's Foreign Ministry and embassy in Washington did not respond to Reuters' emails seeking comment regarding the claims. The government has, in the past, said it takes human trafficking seriously and punishes traffickers.

The annual TIP report is the US government's key mechanism for holding countries around the world accountable for failures to prevent trafficking, forced labor, and other exploitation, and details areas

where each country needs to take action.

Failures to act on issues raised in the report can lead to sanctions, like being cut off from US assistance.

The US State Department placed Vietnam in its bottom tier on the 2022 edition of the report, but upgraded it last year, crediting the government with initiating more trafficking investigations and prosecutions, cooperating with international law enforcement, and implementing protections for overseas workers.

Vietnam remains on a "watch list" for countries that must show improvement on specific US recommendations to avoid falling back to the bottom tier.

In response to last year's TIP

report, Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Pham Thu Hang said that Vietnam had implemented a five-year human trafficking prevention and control program that began in 2021, improved statistics, and stepped up investigations, according to comments cited by *Nhan Dan*, the official newspaper of the country's Communist Party.

US officials preparing this year's edition of the TIP report, which is expected to be published this month, must decide whether Vietnam is continuing to make significant efforts to comply with the report's standards.

The State Department did not respond to a request for comment.



# UK Conservatives' campaign chief quits in betting scandal

• By MUVIJAM

LONDON (Reuters) – The campaign chief for British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's Conservatives stepped aside two weeks before the general election, the party said on Thursday, after reports he and his candidate wife were being investigated for betting on the election date.

The rapidly escalating gambling scandal is the latest misfortune to unfold for Sunak, who is forecast to lose power on July 4 after a campaign characterized by gaffes that followed his surprise announcement of an early vote.

The Conservative Party confirmed that campaign director Tony Lee had taken a leave of

absence. The statement followed news reports that the Gambling Commission was looking into allegations of improper betting by Lee and his wife, Laura Saunders, a candidate for parliament in Bristol.

British bookmakers allow bets on politics, and the timing of an election is a popular bet. But placing bets with insider knowledge is a crime.

"We have been contacted by the Gambling Commission about a small number of individuals. As the Gambling Commission is an independent body, it wouldn't be proper to comment further until any process is concluded," a Conservative spokesperson said.

The scandal has already

engulfed another Conservative parliamentary candidate, Craig Williams, a close aide to Sunak, who apologized last week for placing a bet on when the election would happen.

London police said on Wednesday that they had arrested a police officer working in a special protection unit over alleged bets made on the timing of the election. The BBC reported the officer worked as one of Sunak's bodyguards.

A spokesperson for the Gambling Commission said it was investigating "the possibility of offenses concerning the date of the election" but could not provide further details at this stage.

"We are not confirming or

denying the identity of any individuals involved in this investigation," the spokesperson added.

Senior Conservative minister Michael Gove told LBC Radio it was "beyond bad to use insider information like that to secure an advantage."

Polls forecast the Conservatives are set to lose the July 4 election, potentially in a historic wipeout.

Sunak's party was already far behind in the polls when he announced the election. He has failed to narrow the gap after a campaign marred by blunders, including a decision by Sunak to leave early from a ceremony for the anniversary of D-Day.



ENVIRONMENTAL PROTESTERS spray Stonehenge with orange powder paint early yesterday in this screengrab taken from a video. (Just Stop Oil/via Reuters)

## Environmental protesters spray Stonehenge with paint

LONDON (Reuters) – Environmental protesters sprayed paint on Britain's Stonehenge on Wednesday, with orange marks covering some of the stones of the prehistoric megalithic structure on the eve of the summer solstice celebrations.

Two people have been arrested on suspicion of damaging the ancient monument, police said in a statement.

"This is extremely upsetting, and our curators are investigating the extent of the damage," English Heritage, the charity that manages Stonehenge, said on X. Stonehenge remains open, it added.

The monument, one of Britain's most visited tourist spots, also holds spiritual significance and attracts thousands of revelers, spiritualists and tourists during the summer solstice, the longest day of the year in the northern hemisphere.

In video released by environmental group Just Stop Oil, two protesters were seen running towards two of Stonehenge's megaliths and spraying paint as another person attempted to stop them.

Members of the public were able to walk around within the stone circle, located in southern England, until 1977 when it was fenced off due to concerns

over potential damage due to a sharp rise in the number of visitors.

"Just Stop Oil are a disgrace," Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said on X regarding the protest at the UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Just Stop Oil has gained prominence in Britain for disruptive environmental protests, with its activists shutting down major roads, disrupting cultural and sporting events, and even throwing soup at a Van Gogh painting.

The group wants the British government to end the extraction and burning of oil, gas, and coal by 2030.

## BoE holds rates at 5.25% ahead of vote

LONDON (Reuters) – The Bank of England (BoE) kept its main interest rate unchanged at a 16-year-high of 5.25% on Thursday, ahead of a July 4 election but some policymakers said that their decision not to cut rates was now "finely balanced."

The BoE's Monetary Policy Committee voted 7-2 to keep rates on hold, in line with economists' expectations in a Reuters poll. Deputy Governor

Dave Ramsden and external MPC member Swati Dhingra remained the only policymakers to support a cut to 5%.

BoE Governor Andrew Bailey said in a statement alongside the decision that it was "good news" that the latest data had shown inflation was back at its 2% target, but that it was too soon to cut rates.

"We need to be sure that inflation will stay low and that's why we've decided to hold rates

at 5.25% for now," he said.

Bailey's statement differed from last month when he said that he was "optimistic" that data was moving in the right direction for a rate cut.

The sterling fell against the US dollar after the announcement and British government bond yields dropped as investors saw a greater chance of an early rate cut. Markets priced in an 88% chance of a first quarter-point cut by September's meeting,

up from 74% before Thursday's decision.

The BoE vote follows a long-trailed decision by the European Central Bank earlier this month to start to cut rates, while financial markets do not expect the US Federal Reserve to lower theirs until late this year.

A Reuters poll of economists published last week showed that most expected a rate cut on August 1 after the BoE's next rate decision.

## Millions worldwide swelter in extreme heat as summer arrives

• By GLORIA DICKIE

LONDON (Reuters) – Dangerous heat waves are scorching cities on four continents as the Northern Hemisphere marks the first day of summer, a sign that climate change may again bring about record-breaking heat that could surpass last summer as the warmest in 2,000 years.

Countries around the Mediterranean have endured another week of blistering high temperatures that have contributed to forest fires from Portugal to Greece and along the northern coast of Africa in Algeria, according to the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Earth Observatory.

In Serbia, meteorologists forecast temperatures of around 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) this week as winds from North Africa propelled a hot front across the Balkans. Health authorities declared a red weather alert and advised people not to venture outdoors.

Belgrade's emergency service said its doctors intervened 109 times overnight to treat people with heart and chronic health conditions.

In neighboring Montenegro, where health authorities also warned people to stay in the shade until late afternoon, tens of thousands of tourists sought refreshment on the beaches along its Adriatic coast.

This year, Europe has been contending with a spate of dead and missing tourists amid



CHILDREN ARE seen through a waterfall at the Yards Park splash pool amid a heat wave in Washington DC on Wednesday. (Craig Hudson/Reuters)

dangerous heat. A 55-year-old American was found dead on the Greek island of Mathraki, police said on Monday – the third such tourist death in a week.

Parts of the US Northeast and Midwest are also wilting under a heat dome, with more than 86 million people under a heat alert on Thursday, according to the National Weather Service.

A heat dome occurs when a strong, high-pressure system traps hot air over a region, preventing cool air from getting in and causing ground temperatures to remain high.

Under its heat emergency plan, New York City said it would open its cooling centers for the first time this year.

Meteorological authorities also issued an excessive heat warning for parts of Arizona, including Phoenix, on Thursday, with temperatures expected to reach 45.5 C (114 F).

In Saudi Arabia, nearly two million Muslim pilgrims are finishing the haj at the Grand Mosque in Mecca this week. But hundreds have died during the journey, amid temperatures above 51 C (124 F), according to reports from

foreign authorities.

Egyptian medical and security sources told Reuters on Thursday that at least 530 Egyptians died while participating in the haj – up from 307 reported as of yesterday. Another 40 remain missing.

Iran's ISNA news agency said on Thursday that 14 Iranians have died during the haj, with six deaths attributed to the heat.

### COUNTING THE DEAD

India's summer period lasts from March to May, when monsoons slowly begin sweep-

ing across the country and breaking the heat.

However, New Delhi on Wednesday registered its warmest night in at least 55 years, with India's Safdarjung Observatory reporting a temperature of 35.2 C (95.4 F) at 1 a.m.

Temperatures normally drop at night, but scientists say climate change is causing nighttime temperatures to rise. In many parts of the world, nights are warming faster than days, according to a 2020 study by the University of Exeter.

New Delhi has clocked 37 consecutive days with maximum temperatures at or above 40 C (104 F) since May 14, according to weather department data.

An official at the Indian health ministry said on Wednesday that there were more than 40,000 suspected heatstroke cases and at least 110 confirmed deaths between March 1 and June 18, when northwest and eastern India recorded twice the usual number of heat wave days in one of the country's longest such spells.

Gaining accurate death tolls from heat waves, however, is difficult. Most health authorities do not attribute deaths to heat but rather to illnesses exacerbated by high temperatures, such as cardiovascular issues. Authorities therefore undercount heat-related deaths by a significant margin, typically overlooking thousands if not tens of thousands of deaths.

### RECORD WARM TEMPERATURES

The heat waves are occurring against a backdrop of 12 consecutive months that have ranked as the warmest on record in year-on-year comparisons, according to the European Union's climate-change monitoring service.

The World Meteorological Organization says there is an 86% percent chance that one of the next five years will eclipse 2023 to become the warmest on record.

While overall global temperatures have risen by nearly 1.3 C (2.3 F) above pre-industrial levels, climate change is fueling more extreme temperature peaks – making heat waves more common, more intense, and longer-lasting.

On average globally, a heat wave that would have occurred once in 10 years in the pre-industrial climate will now occur 2.8 times over 10 years, and it will be 1.2 C warmer, according to an international team of scientists with the World Weather Attribution (WWA) group.

Scientists say heat waves will continue to intensify if the world continues to unleash climate-warming emissions from the burning of fossil fuels.

If the world hits 2 C (3.6 F) of global warming, heat waves would on average occur 5.6 times in 10 years and be 2.6 C (4.7 F) hotter, according to the WWA.

## Romanian president steps aside, Rutte set to lead NATO

• Reuters

BUCHAREST – Romanian President Klaus Iohannis said on Thursday that he was withdrawing his bid for NATO's leadership, clearing the way for Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte to become the alliance's secretary-general.

Romania will back Rutte and donate one of its two operational Patriot missile systems to Ukraine on condition that allies replace it with a similar air defense one, Bucharest's Supreme Defense Council (CSAT), chaired by Iohannis, said.

It had made the decision to donate the Patriot system "considering the significant deterioration of Ukraine's security situation following constant and massive attacks by Russia on civilians and civilian infrastructure as well as... the regional consequences, including on Romania's security," CSAT said in its statement.

Iohannis had notified NATO about the withdrawal of his candidacy last week, the statement added.

NATO makes decisions by consensus, so any candidate needs the support of all 32 allies. Only Romania had still been officially opposed to Rutte's candidacy.

Rutte, a staunch ally of Kyiv and a critic of Russian President Vladimir Putin, was seen as set for the job since Tuesday, when Hungary and Slovakia dropped their resistance.

NATO's next secretary-general will face the challenge of sustaining allies' support for Ukraine's fight against Russia's invasion while guarding against any escalation that could draw the alliance directly into a war with Moscow.

Iohannis, whose second term as Romanian president ends later this year, has repeatedly said that Eastern European states needed better representation in Euro-Atlantic leadership roles.

European Union and NATO member Romania has raised defense spending to 2.5% of gross domestic product in response to the war in Ukraine.

It signed a \$4 billion deal to get Patriots in 2017, the country's biggest procurement contract to date, with the first shipment delivered in 2020.

## French political camps draw election battle lines on economy

• By LEIGH THOMAS  
and ELIZABETH PINEAU

PARIS (Reuters) – France's far-right National Rally (RN) hit back on Thursday at charges from opponents that its spending plans would crash the economy, while President Emmanuel Macron's centrist alliance said it was the only bulwark against financial mismanagement.

The nationalist, anti-immigrant RN is leading in the polls ahead of a snap parliamentary election on June 30 and July 7, with a newly formed alliance of left-wing and environmentalist parties in second place and Macron's camp trailing far behind.

Macron's shock decision to call the election after his party was trounced by the RN in European elections threw French politics into turmoil

and caused the euro and French stocks to tumble and France's borrowing costs to rise.

RN leader Jordan Bardella, who could be prime minister if the party wins an absolute majority, sought to assuage fears about its high-spending plans during an appearance before the Medef, France's leading employers' group.

"I've understood that I need to reassure people," he said, pledging that if in government he would launch an audit of public finances in order to gauge his margin for maneuver before deciding on how far and how fast to go with reforms.

Bardella said a pledge to lower the retirement age from 64 to 60, after Macron faced down months of street protests to raise it to that age, would apply to people who began work aged under 20.

His government would introduce a revised 2024 budget over the summer, he said, and measures would include cutting production taxes on companies.

Bardella said the European Union should reduce its spending and France should cut its contribution to the bloc. He also talked about addressing fiscal loopholes that allowed highly profitable companies to avoid tax.

Macron's camp portrays both the RN and the new left-wing bloc, the Popular Front, as profligate and irresponsible, with unfunded spending promises threatening to increase the national debt to unsustainable levels. France has been reprimanded by the EU for its debt being too high.

"The budgetary margin for maneuver is zero," said Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire at

the Medef event after Bardella spoke, describing the policy proposals from the RN and the Popular Front as "crazy."

He said investors cared most about stability, and only the ruling Together alliance could provide that, reiterating a pledge to return the budget deficit to below 3% of GDP.

The left-wing bloc was also setting out its economic stall at the Medef, with Eric Coquerel of the hard-left France Unbowed party saying extra spending would be funded by economic growth and higher tax revenues from the wealthy.

"I think that overall our budget deficit won't be worse than what the current government foresees," he said. The Popular Front also wants to lower the retirement age.

"None of them have reassured me," said Sophie de Monton, head of a smaller employ-

ers' group, Mouvement Ethic.

Earlier, Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said that if the Macron alliance remained in power after July 7 it would lower power bills, soften inheritance tax and link pensions to inflation to ease the strain on household finances.

"Let's not take a leap into the unknown, from a great height without a parachute," he said at a news conference, pushing the message that only the Together alliance could protect France's democracy and economy from extremists on both flanks.

"There will be no tax hikes, no matter what," he said.

Attal unveiled a campaign clip that did not feature Macron, reflecting the president's unpopularity.

Macron's term runs until 2027 and he cannot be forced out. France has had three peri-

ods of "cohabitation" – where the government is of a different political stripe from the president – in its post-war history.

Markets have been steadier this week after the gap between French and German borrowing costs reached 80 basis points last week, its widest in seven years.

Investors are nervous, however, at the prospect of a high-spending RN-led government or of political gridlock should no party gets an absolute majority and the balance of power makes it hard for any legislation to pass.

French blue chip stocks are up 1.8% this week after last week's 6.2% tumble and the difference between French and German 10-year borrowing costs is 72 basis points, slightly lower after Thursday's French government bond auction.



# MASH star Donald Sutherland dies at age 88

• By WILL DUNHAM  
and PATRICIA REANEY

Donald Sutherland, one of Canada's most versatile and gifted actors who charmed and enthralled audiences in films such as *M\*A\*S\*H*, *Klute*, *Ordinary People* and the *Hunger Games* films, has died at the age of 88.

The Canadian actor, whose lengthy career spanned from the 1960s into the 2020s, died on Thursday, his son, actor Kiefer Sutherland, said on social media.

The tall actor with the deep voice, piercing blue eyes, and mischievous smile managed to switch effortlessly from character roles to romantic leads opposite the likes of Jane Fonda and Julie Christie. He also played his share of oddballs and villains during his long-time career.

One of the biggest stars in Hollywood in the 1970s, he remained in demand for film and TV projects into his 80s.

For instance, he played a rascally army surgeon in *M\*A\*S\*H* (1970), a quirky tank commander in *Kelly's Heroes* (1970), a small-town detective in *Klute* (1971), a stoned and libidinous professor in *Animal House* (1978), a local official facing an alien presence in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (1978) and a despairing father in *Ordinary People* (1980). Sutherland won a new generation of fans over with his glorious portrayal of a despotic president in *The Hunger Games* (2012) and its sequels.

"I wish I could say thank you to all of the characters that I've played; thank them for using their lives to inform my life," Sutherland said in his speech while accepting an honorary Academy Award for lifetime

achievement in 2017.

Sutherland was born on July 17, 1935, in Canada's New Brunswick province, and was raised in Nova Scotia. He performed in school productions in college, moved to Britain to hone his craft, and then moved to the United States, where his first big break came as a member of a top-notch ensemble cast in the war film, *The Dirty Dozen* (1967).

He rocketed to fame three years later, playing nonconformist surgeon Hawkeye Pierce in director Robert Altman's Korean War satire *M\*A\*S\*H* (1970). The film – later spun off into a TV series – depicted high jinks at a mobile army surgical hospital, tapping into the anti-war sentiment among many Americans during the Vietnam War era.

Also in 1970, Sutherland starred alongside Telly Savalas



DONALD SUTHERLAND  
(Fabrizio Bensch/Reuters)

and Clint Eastwood in Kelly's Heroes as Sgt. Oddball on a mission to steal gold from the Nazis.

The following year, he was

paired with Fonda, one of Hollywood's luminaries, in *Klute*, and then in 1973 played a grieving father in *Don't Look Now*, which included a sizzling sex scene with Christie. *Klute* sparked a romance with Fonda, with whom he was active in the Anti-Vietnam War Movement.

His 1978 films could not have been more different. In the uproarious comedy, *Animal House*, Sutherland played a professor who sleeps with the girlfriend of a fraternity member. *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* was a successful sci-fi remake of a classic 1956 original, telling the story of alien pods that take over human beings. Sutherland's performance in *Ordinary People*, Hollywood superstar Robert Redford's directorial debut, helped the 1980 film win four Academy Awards, including Best Picture. Sutherland starred alongside

Mary Tyler Moore and Timothy Hutton in this exploration of the splintering of a Midwestern family.

In the 1990s, he appeared in films including *JFK* (1991), *Backdraft* (1991), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1992), *Outbreak* (1995), *A Time to Kill* (1996), and *Instinct* (1999).

Further, he won an Emmy Award for his performance in the 1995 HBO TV movie *Citizen X*.

In the 2000s, he appeared in the acclaimed *Cold Mountain* (2003), and in *Pride and Prejudice* (2005).

In *The Hunger Games* film in the 2010s about a dystopian future in which teenagers are sent into a deadly competition for the purpose of mass entertainment, he reveled in playing the villainous president Coriolanus Snow.

"The reality was [that] he had

a country to run. At least he was running it, which is more than you can say for some people," Sutherland told *The Los Angeles Times* in 2017.

"It was funny at the beginning with 'The Hunger Games' to walk through an airport and suddenly you feel this tug and you look down and it's some young person – always a girl, never a boy," Sutherland said. "And her mother is standing there and they say, 'Could you take a photograph with my daughter?' And we'd be standing beside each other and I'd be looking at the camera and the girl would say, 'Could you look mean?'"

Sutherland was considered among the best actors to never receive an Academy Award nomination for any of his roles. He was married three times and had five children, including Kiefer. (Reuters)

## LEBANON

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week and a month before his own expected address to a joint session of Congress.

The back-and-forth between Netanyahu and the Biden administration over arms shipments, came as the White House worked to prevent Israel from launching an all-out war with Hezbollah.

The White House for the first time on Thursday addressed the IDF's announcement this week that it had approved operational plans for an offensive against Hezbollah in Lebanon, repeating its cautious tone against Israel opening a second front of hostilities.

US special envoy "Amos Hochstein has been in the region several days, shuttling back and forth between Tel Aviv and Beirut to have these exact conversations," Kirby said, indicating the White House is taking both Israel and Hezbollah's rhetoric seriously.

US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said, "We have seen a dramatic increase in strikes by Hezbollah across the border targeting Israeli villages, civilians infrastructure."

"So we have been pursuing a diplomatic resolution to try to make clear that there should be no further escalation and that's what we'll continue to pursue," Miller said.

The issues of Lebanon, as well as other security topics such as Iran, Gaza, and a pending hostage deal, were expected to be part of discussions held Thursday between Israeli and US officials.

Kirby confirmed that National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and US Security of State Antony Blink were meeting with Israeli Minister of Strategic Affairs Ron Dermer and Israeli National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi.

Miller and Kirby said that efforts were ongoing to close a deal that would see the return of the remaining 120 hostages held in Gaza, which would include a pause to the war.

"We continue to actively pursue a ceasefire in Gaza primarily to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people" and "to secure the return of hostages."

Such a pause to the war, which the US hopes would turn into a percent ceasefire, would make "it much easier to achieve a ceasefire and diplomatic resolution along the Israel Lebanon," Miller stated.

## HOMES

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settlements! They talk about settlements in Gaza and southern Lebanon but do nothing so we can return to Kiryat Shmona, Metulla, or Misgav Ami!

Thursday morning, families of hostages and women's rights activists blocked the northbound lanes of Ayalon Highway under the LaGuardia interchange in Tel Aviv.

"120 hostages are still held by Hamas in Gaza, yet the most urgent issues on the agenda are political deals, draft exemptions, and rabbi appointments. Government of Israel, the Cabinet – wake up!" the protesters cried.

"There are hostages in Gaza who see on the news the people fighting for them while the government abandons them time and again for petty politics. The prime minister, who yesterday called on his ministers to get a grip, has himself not got a grip for 258 days. A deal – now!"

Protesters included relatives of hostages Ofer Calderon and Gadi Moses, including Yifat Calderon and Shay Moses.

On Thursday afternoon, police arrested a man for cutting the lock on Netanyahu's front gate in Caesarea using a disc and replacing it with another lock. The 71-year-old suspect from Kiryat Tivon was located in his car and taken in for questioning after he drove away from the scene.

According to the police, this was done in preparation for the protests at the prime minister's Caesarea home at 7 p.m., which Israel Democracy HQ planned.

Additional demonstrators blocked other locations in Israel, including Ma'agan Michael and Elikim Kibbutzim, as well as near the Orot Rabin power plant in Hadera, according to Walla. At this location mother of hostage Matan Zangauker, Einav Zangauker, blocked the road.

"Netanyahu, you have lost. You cannot escape the blame; it will follow you to your grave. You chose your political survival over your people; over the hostages, the displaced, the reservists, the bereaved families...You lost. This failure is recorded in the history books. I will not let you bury Matan and the other hostages in the name of your political survival. We, the people, will prevail and bring the hostages and security back to the country," Zangauker declared.

## GAZA

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answer. If the IDF chooses to withdraw from the urban areas of Rafah, Israel will be left in control of two corridors in Gaza – Netzarim and Philadelphia. These were both seen as strategic and important areas to control when Israel managed Gaza from 1967 to 2005. So Jerusalem is replicating some of the methods it has used in the past; there is no reason to reinvent the wheel in Gaza.

But Israel doesn't want to govern the cities of Gaza the way it did in the 1970s and 1980s. It also doesn't want to end the war and leave completely. Some have suggested that it conduct a policy similar to the one in the northern West Bank, using raids to keep the terrorists in check.

Israel has apparently abandoned the policies that its leaders floated at the outset of the war, such as "Hamas is ISIS" and "Hamas will be no more." These talking points would have called for replacing Hamas. It has also abandoned the idea of "bubbles" in Gaza, where local authorities would be given control. Further, it is unclear if Israel is even interested in a force in Gaza that would be backed by Arab states.

This leaves many questions as to what comes next. If there is no ceasefire and the IDF continues to control parts of Gaza,



## ALIYAH MARKET

Nefesh B'Nefesh, in cooperation with the Aliyah and Integration Ministry, The Jewish Agency for Israel, Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael, and JNF-USA, in partnership with the Jerusalem Municipality's Absorption Authority, hosted its first two-day Shuk Olim at its Aliyah Campus in Jerusalem in support of 45 olim-owned businesses, Thursday through Friday afternoon. (Text: Yael Katsman; Photo: Courtesy)

or even if there is a ceasefire and the IDF maintains some control, what will happen? It does not seem that Hamas will be defeated.

The security cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has defined the destruction of Hamas's military and governing capabilities as one of the goals of the war. The Prime Minister's Office reiterated this on Wednesday. Still, the terms "military and governing capabilities" are quite broad. Because of that, there are many junctures along the way, and in the future, Israel will be able to claim "mission accomplished." But that won't necessarily mean that Hamas has been defeated.

And, once Rafah is figured out, questions will loom about central Gaza. Israel has never fully operated in El-Bureij, Nuseirat, Deir el-Balah, or Maghazi, as Hamas's control there was deep, and it continues to be a threat.

For instance, the raid into the Nuseirat refugee camp to free four hostages this month illustrated how the area is teeming with terrorists. It has always been a major recruiting ground for Hamas. Indeed, as has already been exposed, many men from Nuseirat played a role in the October 7 massacre. Therefore, these areas in central Gaza, known as the "central camps" because they grew out of refugee camps established in the 1950s, clearly represent Hamas's home turf.

There are also concerns that Hamas members left Rafah and went back to Khan Yunis, the hometown of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar. Additionally, some of them may have relocated to the humanitarian area of Al-Mawasi. Rocket fire from Gaza has increased slightly in the last few weeks, illustrating that terrorists continue to possess 107mm rockets as well as mortars and other weapons, such as the Yasin 105 rocket and RPGs. It will be hard to declare victory in Gaza as long as rocket or mortar fire continues to be directed toward Israel's border communities.

If the IDF chooses to reenter northern Gaza, going into areas it has already operated in, like Beit Hanun, Shati, Zeitun, or Shejaia, this will raise ques-

tions regarding Hamas's ability to rebuild its networks quickly.

If the IDF goes back into Khan Yunis, this will raise similar doubts. All of this will point to how this war may be conducted in the future. Will it continue to use the sandpaper doctrine of slowly grinding down Hamas with each pass the IDF makes over these areas? If so, is there an objective, or merely diminishing returns in terms of what is found each time this happens again? •

## POWER

Continued from Page 1

"People do not understand how much our lives here depend on electricity," he added.

"You check all our infrastructures – optical fibers and ports – and I won't get into sensitive issues, but we are not in a good state," Goldstein said. "We are not ready for a real war. We live in a fantasy world, in my opinion."

He then added that Israel has invested a lot in protection in a joint effort with the electric company.

In conclusion, Goldstein said, "If the war is postponed by a year, five, 10 – our situation will be better."

Meir Spiegler, CEO of Bituch Leumi, Israel's national social security agency, called Shaul Goldstein's statements regarding the "fragility" of the power grid "irresponsible" and "disconnected from reality."

He added that it "creates panic among the public" and that "it would be better if he focused on managing Noga, which has regressed since he took office."

The Energy Ministry said in response that the State of Israel's energy is "robust and ready to deal with all possible scenarios."

"Since the beginning of the war, the ministry has been tirelessly working to ensure the energy supply for all citizens of the country, preparing meticulously for extreme scenarios and possible supply disruptions. These efforts are being carried out in close cooperation with security agencies to manage electricity demand, energy redundancy, and fuel reserves," the ministry's state-

ment read.

"There are several scenarios, including the 'blackout' scenario in which over 60% of households may be left without electricity for up to 72 hours, which is an extreme scenario with low probability. However, the ministry continuously works to reduce the likelihood of this scenario and to prepare for a swift recovery from a blackout, should it occur," the statement continued.

The Energy Ministry called on Israeli citizens to prepare for any situation according to Home Front Command directives, including carrying batteries, water, and portable chargers.

Energy and Infrastructure Minister Eli Cohen commented, "The State of Israel will not be left alone. We are preparing for every scenario, holding discussions, assessing the situation, and spending billions of shekels to ensure a regular supply of energy to all Israeli citizens."

He continued, "In recent months, we have increased our inventory and purchased a lot of equipment to have backups. The State of Israel can generate electricity from a large variety of sources. We have gas rigs, we have huge reserves of coal, and we also generate electricity from renewable energy. Many actions, which cannot be specified, have been taken to ensure a regular energy supply. The chance of a power outage for many days is very low."

He then added, "I need to make it clear to our enemies: If there is a power outage lasting for hours [in Israel], there will be a power outage in Lebanon for months." •

## HAMAS

Continued from Page 1

corridor have allowed smugglers to bring civilian goods, light arms, and sophisticated weapons into Gaza, earning it the nickname of Hamas's "oxygen pipeline."

"Once this infrastructure is shut down, they [Hamas] lose their oxygen pipe and they lose their ability to supply themselves with critical materials," said Kobi Michael, a strate-

gic affairs expert and senior researcher at the Institute for National Security Studies.

The Gaza Strip itself is only 41 kilometers long and is sandwiched between Israel and Egypt. Until recently, Israel has maintained a military maritime and aerial blockade of Gaza so that land passages have been the only entry points for goods.

The weakest security point has been at the Rafah Crossing, between Gaza and Egypt, as well as the 14-kilometer stretch alongside that border.

There are those who argue that Israel's pullout from Gaza in 2005, known as the Disengagement, failed simply because the IDF withdrew from the Philadelphi Corridor and/or left without a good security plan.

"It was a mistake to withdraw without a complete and comprehensive solution," said Shalom Ben-Hanan, who formerly held leadership positions in the Israel Security Agency at a rank equivalent to major general.

The question of the Philadelphi Corridor and its role in the IDF's campaign to defeat Hamas has returned to the headlines in the last weeks, as the IDF recaptured the strategic buffer zone after seizing control of the Rafah Crossing last month.

The IDF brought reporters to the Philadelphi Corridor this week to underscore its vital role. Pundits worry that unless Israel has a security plan in place to prevent smuggling, any IDF departure from the Philadelphi Corridor would inevitably allow Hamas to rearm and return to power in Gaza.

Before the Disengagement, the corridor was controlled by the IDF so that it could better protect its side of the Egyptian border and prevent the smuggling of arms, weapons, explosives, and civilian merchandise to Sinai from countries such as Libya and Sudan, Ben-Hanan said.

When the IDF left Gaza in 2005, it handed the territory to the Palestinian Authority. Two years later, Hamas seized control of the enclave in a bloody coup, and it has held it since, gaining military prowess despite stiff Israeli restrictions on the flow of goods.

For a decade after the IDF withdrew in 2005, Ben-Hanan explained, Bedouins ran an unofficial smuggling industry grounded in the hundreds of tunnels they had dug under the corridor.

"Everything that you can imagine was smuggled through these tunnels" into the Gaza Strip, said Ben-Hanan, who is a fellow at the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) at Reichman University.

In 2015 or 2016, Ben-Hanan said, Egypt began to crack down on the smuggling tunnels due to the strong connection between Hamas and ISIS in Sinai.

The Egyptian army on its side of the border "killed smugglers" and "arrested them," destroyed hundreds of homes, and "even transferred" part of the population out of that territory, he said.

"They flooded and destroyed many tunnels," he added.

Egypt's actions reduced the problem but did not elimi-

nate it, Ben-Hanan said, adding that dozens of tunnels had remained through which arms and funds were funneled to Hamas that allowed it to wage war against Israel, including through the launching of sophisticated rockets.

"If we succeed in preventing the smuggling, which is essential for Hamas, it will be very difficult for them [Hamas] to build their power again," Ben-Hanan said. He underscored that the terror group has not been defeated.

To close the border hermetically, Israel must continue controlling the corridor for some time, he said, until a solution is found to stop the weapons smuggling.

"From a security point of view, a military point of view, we cannot allow Hamas to go back to power in Gaza. This is for sure," he said.

"If Israel withdraws now or in three months, it will affect us very badly; it will be a big problem. It will be another factor in the renewal of Hamas forces. We can withdraw from the Philadelphi Corridor only when we can find and rebuild a solution that will prevent 100% of armed smuggling into the Gaza Strip," he said.

FORMER NATIONAL Security Adviser Maj.-Gen. (res.) Yaakov Amidror said that one of the critical differences between the West Bank and Gaza has been the IDF's ability to control the borders of that territory.

"From history, we learned that the only way to deal with a terrorist organization is if you have the ability to separate them from the outside and not let them be provided by weapons systems," Amidror said.

If this happens, "you have a chance to fight and to win, and if you don't, the chances are very low or, from the history lessons, impossible," he explained.

Israel's challenge, he said, is to balance that reality with the international legal reality of occupation.

The fact that Israel controls only two of Gaza's borders and Egypt controls the third, Amidror said, means that the enclave cannot be considered occupied under international law.

The IDF can control the border briefly, now that it is at war with Hamas, but it cannot retain that complete control once that war is over, said Amidror.

"According to international law, if a state is controlling all the passages and the borders of the area, it is practically the occupier of the area and has many obligations to provide the population with food and water" and civilian services, such as health care and education, he said.

This is not the same as the humanitarian aid Israel has provided amid battle, Amidror explained.

"If, after battle, we will be on all the borders around Gaza," then the enclave will be our responsibility, he said.

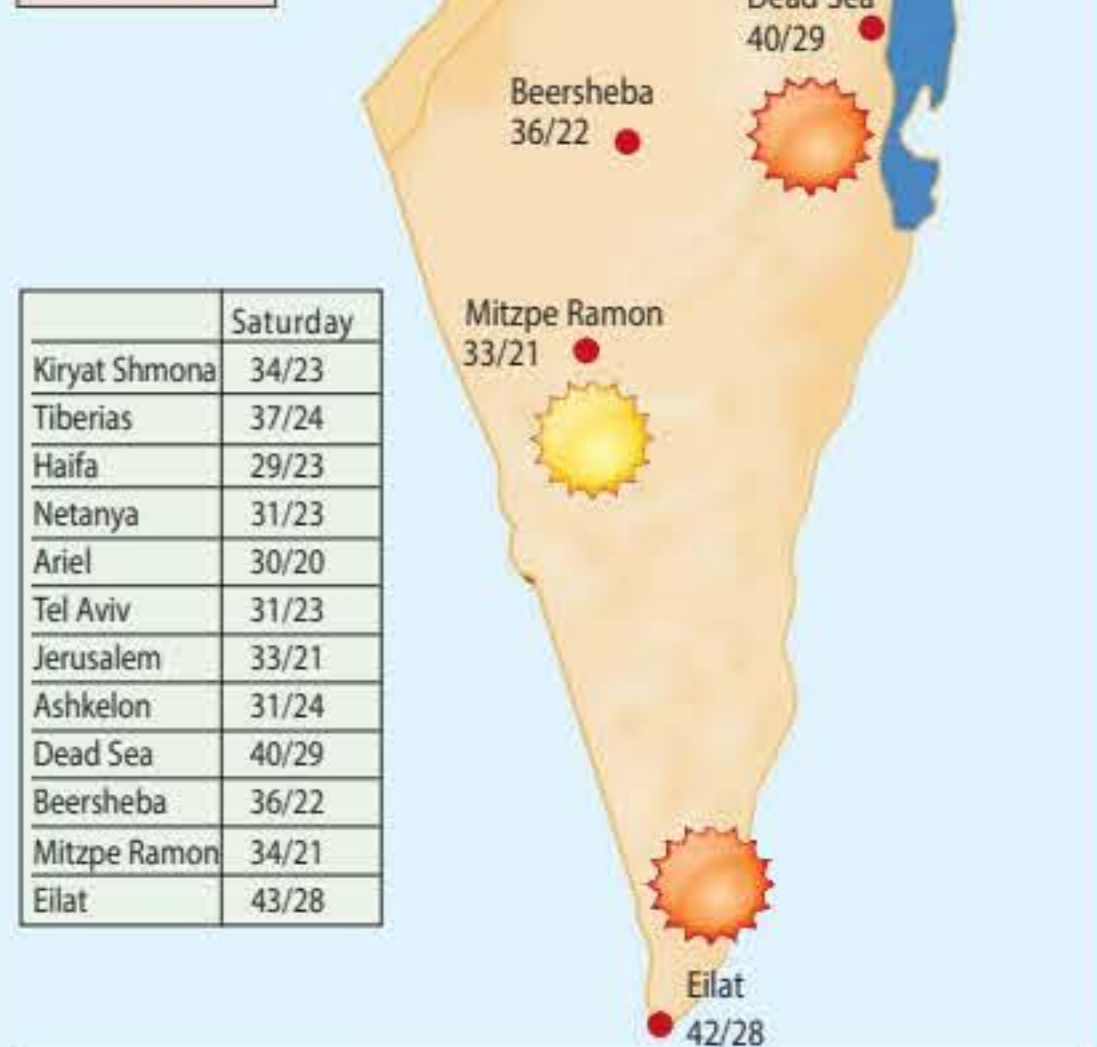
From a purely military point of view, the corridor should be controlled by the IDF, he said.

Once the war is over, "we will have to find an arrangement by which we are not controlling the corridor" while at "the same time, the Palestinians cannot dig tunnels under it," he said. •



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## Weather



### North America Weather Today



## England held to 1-1 Euro draw by Denmark

Serbia snatches tie vs Slovenia with 95th-minute tally • France aims to continue superiority over Dutch



FRANKFURT (Reuters) – England missed the chance to book its place in the knockout stage of Euro 2024 after it was held to a 1-1 draw against Denmark in Group C on Thursday night.

England took the lead in the 18th minute after the rapidly advancing Kyle Walker caught Danish defender Victor Kristiansen ambling towards the ball and the full-back's low deflected cross into the box fell to captain Harry Kane who slotted it in.

However, Gareth Southgate's side failed to press home the advantage, and a sloppy throw-in 16 minutes later came to Morten Hjulmand, who had time to smash the ball low and in off the post from long range.

Euro 2020 runner-up England had been touted as the tournament favorite yet struggled to fashion decent chances



ENGLAND'S HARRY KANE scores a goal in the 18th minute of last night's 1-1 draw with Denmark in their Euro 2024 Group C clash in Frankfurt. (Lee Smith/Reuters)

throughout the match. It remains on top of Group C on four points, while Denmark is second on two after Slovenia's 1-1 draw with Serbia earlier.

In that match, Serbia substitute Luka Jovic headed a last-gasp equalizer off a corner in the 95th minute to cancel out Zan Karnicnik's opener and salvage a draw with Slovenia in Munich.

Slovenia remains unbeaten and still firmly in contention to progress to the knockout stage of the tournament. For

Serbia, the point also bolstered its hopes.

Spain and Italy faced each other in Thursday's late match.

In weekend action, France captain Kylian Mbappe should be available for their second European Championship group game against the Netherlands after breaking his nose in their opening 1-0 win over Austria, manager Didier Deschamps said on Thursday.

Mbappe will need a protective mask when he does return to action.

In the Euro qualifying phase, the two nations were also drawn in the same group, with the French coming out on top in both meetings, in which Mbappe scored four goals.

The Dutch are, in fact, his favorite opponent, having netted five times in six games against them, and the first of his 47 international goals also came against the Netherlands back in 2017.

Mbappe has never scored at a Euro finals tournament, and in 2021, Mbappe's penalty was saved in the shootout with Switzerland which saw France exit in the last-16.

Ronald Koeman's side also won its opening game, but had to come from behind to defeat Poland 2-1 and was guilty of missing an array of chances. It will need to be more clinical in front of goal when it gets the opportunity against France.

The Dutch will try to ignore recent history and instead look to the spirit of 1988, when the Netherlands won the Euros in West Germany, the country's only major title.

**On TV: 2024 European Championship Group Stage:** Friday: Slovakia vs Ukraine (live on Sport 1 at 4 p.m.); Poland vs Austria (live on Sport 1 at 7 p.m.); Netherlands vs France (live on Channel 11 and Sport 1 at 10 p.m.). Saturday: Georgia vs Czech Republic (live on Sport 1 at 4 p.m.); Turkey vs Portugal (live on Channel 11 and Sport 1 at 7 p.m.); Belgium vs Romania (live on Sport 1 at 10 p.m.). Sunday: Switzerland vs Germany (live on Channel 11 and Sport 1 at 10 p.m.); Scotland vs Hungary (live on Sport 2 at 10 p.m.).

## Gorbenko, Israeli swimmers continue to rack up medals

• By YANIV TUCHMAN and  
Jerusalem Post Staff

The Israeli national anthem was played on Wednesday evening for the third time at the European Championships in Belgrade, after a gold medal-winning performance in the pool by Israeli swimmer Anastasia Gorbenko, who competed as well with the Israeli women's 4x200 freestyle relay team.

After sharing the gold medals in the 4x200m relay and the 4x100 medley, Gorbenko went

it alone in the 400m individual medley, outswimming all her fellow competitors and taking first place with a time of 4:36.05 minutes.

The 20-year-old Gorbenko led at the start of the race, lost the lead, then recovered and left the breaststroke competitors in the dust with a huge gap of over four seconds, a Walla report described her performance. She maintained her advantage until the last touch of the wall and was eventually 2.91 seconds ahead of 15-year-old Vivian Jack-

el of Hungary and 4.19 seconds ahead of her older compatriot, 35-year-old Susanna Jakubus.

This is already the fifth medal in Gorbenko's career at the continental championship and Israel's 19th in total. The Walla report describes the victories as giving more hope for the Israeli team at the Paris Olympics which will start in a little over a month.

Without Gorbenko, the relay team in the 4x100m reached the finals of the event earlier in evening. Leah Polonsky and Ayala Spitz swam first, with

Daria Golovati bringing Israel to fourth place, and Andi Murec came close to gold.

The team, overall, came in fourth place with a time of 3:41.13 minutes – a new Israeli record and nearly beat Poland who finished third. Hungary took the gold (3:36.77) and Denmark the silver.

While winning a silver medal in Qatar last February, Gorbenko was booed by spectators of the competition. Gorbenko simply said in response that she is "here with the flag for my country."



ISRAEL'S ANASTASIA GORBENKO celebrates on the podium after winning the 400m individual medley European gold medal in Belgrade. (Novak Djurjovic/Reuters)

## Katash reflects on Mac TA's chaotic campaign

• By JOSHUA HALICKMAN

Maccabi Tel Aviv ended a turbulent season in the best possible way this week as it wrapped up the franchise's 57th championship after defeating Hapoel Tel Aviv 2-1 in what will go down as back-to-back titles for the yellow-and-blue over its city rival.

In what was a heated series, both on and off the court, that unfortunately saw a tremendous amount of fan violence in the shadow of the war against Hamas, Maccabi's coach, Oded Katash, was able to steer his ship to the promised land.

As the campaign came to an end and Maccabi hoisted the championship plate in front of its home crowd, Katash spent some time following the game to take a look back at the entire year and the challenges that he will need to deal with in the upcoming days, weeks and months.

The country's winningest franchise began the 2023/24 campaign way back in August, when the majority of the prior year's roster of players returned to the country to start training camp with an air of optimism that this would be a historic and unforgettable year.

With a returning core of star veterans, including Wade Baldwin and Lorenzo Brown as well as budding forwards Bonzie Colson and Roman Sorokin, to go along with newcomers Jasiel Rivero and Amir Blatt, Maccabi was set to be the talk of the town and challenge for the Euroleague crown.

Maccabi looked superb in its opening Euroleague game against Partizan Belgrade at Yad Eliyahu on Thursday, October 5 as hopes were very high that the club would once again reach the top of the continental basketball world.

However, that was before October 7 occurred, and Hamas's attack on the Jewish State set off a chain of effects that turned the former reality upside down.

The yellow-and-blue had to pivot quickly as the import players and their families were flown out of the country, and after a very short break Belgrade became the club's new temporary home.

"It was a difficult year, regardless of basketball," Katash began. "We are citizens of the country and it has been quite an experience that we are going through. This one season felt like three or four years and in addition to what happened with my good friend and coach Lior Lubin who passed away, it was intense and very complex. Every day there was something that happened and perhaps my character is sometimes a disadvantage in these situations, but maybe it was an advantage."

In addition to his own mental make-up, Katash referenced his players' strengths.

"If we didn't have continuity in the roster from last year, we wouldn't have been able to survive this entire situation. We had a tough



ODED KATASH had to navigate a complex Maccabi Tel Aviv season. (Yehuda Halickman)

schedule but we were able to do it with the character of the players and building upon what we had started last season."

The prevailing thought was that Maccabi would fall apart without its home crowd to cheer it on and a successful Euroleague campaign was at that point too lofty an expectation. But that was not the case as the players and staff pulled it together and ended up in seventh place with an impressive 20-14 record, earning it a place in the Play-In. After easily disposing of Baskonia, Panathinaikos was up next for Maccabi as it took the eventual Euroleague champs to five games before falling in Athens.

Locally, the yellow-and-blue won game after game in the domestic league throughout the winter months but ended up falling in the State Cup final to Hapoel Jerusalem in a game that took place just days after the club's continental campaign came to an end.

Katash's charges pulled it all together in their league quarterfinal series against Ness Ziona, which resulted in a sweep that was followed up by another walkover versus Jerusalem, which was without injured star Levi Randolph (now rumored to be coming to Maccabi).

Hapoel Tel Aviv looked to avenge last year's final series loss, but once again the Reds came up short and Maccabi captured another title.

While the yellow-and-blue can bask in championship glory, the celebrations will be short lived as it will need to start rebuilding the roster for the 24/25 season that is right around the corner and there will be plenty of changes coming, from both imports to Israelis.

Baldwin and Brown swiftly declared that they will be leaving the team due to the war, with their announcements coming as they were still on the floor celebrating.

Josh Nebo's contract is up and he will be departing while Bonzie Colson is still undecided as to where he will suit up next season.

Baldwin, Brown and Colson all have contracts for the 24/25 campaign with Maccabi, but the club will not stand in their way should they want to leave.

Katash of course would love for them to all

stay but the reality is that they will be heading to other teams.

"It's sad to lose them and break up the team and it's really sad actually. But what has occurred here this season in the country, it's part of the price that we have to pay. What happened on October 7 is the biggest incident that I've witnessed in my lifetime and we have to take things into proportion."

Rivero should be back, and the same may be true of Antonius Cleveland, however, James Webb will likely be looking for a new home next season.

As for the Israeli contingent, Rafi Menco is a free agent but should return, Josh DiBartolomeo and Jake Cohen are under contract and should be back playing at Yad Eliyahu next season, while Amir Blatt is opting out of his current contract but will most likely re-sign with the team at a higher rate.

The one big question is the league and finals MVP, Sorokin. The big man is rumored to be heading to North America to try out for NBA teams after a stellar season, but there is also talk that Maccabi will make him an offer that he can't refuse and he will stay yellow-and-blue for the foreseeable future.

"Roman won every award this season," Katash said. "I have the privilege of coaching him. He can really do it all and has a huge upside and is one of the most talented players. He's a great person as well and I'm very proud as to how he came into the playoffs. He was playing well in the Euroleague, but then got hurt and it just took time to get him back up to speed. He needs to be a Maccabi Tel Aviv player for the rest of his career."

There are plenty of names that have been linked to Maccabi and while the Euroleague home games will most probably be played once again in Belgrade, the club still remains a very attractive option for some players, explained the bench boss.

"We know we will lose some players but there are plenty of players who see Maccabi as an opportunity. Maccabi is a good place to play and a place where players can advance their careers."

It seems that the yellow-and-blue is doing exactly that, finding players who want to come play for Maccabi that have experienced Israel. Those may include Hapoel Jerusalem's Randolph, Hapoel Holon big man Justin Smith along with Hapoel Tel Aviv's center Jaylen Hoard, to name a few.

The upcoming campaign will be complex and challenging without a doubt, but the most important thing for Maccabi will be to be able to adapt on the fly and adjust as it did this season.

"There are a lot of question marks. In this chaotic reality, it is impossible to know what the day will bring. Things change all the time, we have to adjust ourselves – because we are heading into a difficult year."

## Jewish 'Countdown' host Malika Andrews was Finals' breakout star



SPOTLIGHT  
• By JACOB GURVIS

As millions of basketball fans tuned into the NBA Finals, they saw a Jewish star front and center – though she didn't play for the Boston Celtics or Dallas Mavericks.

Malika Andrews, 29, is the host of ABC's "NBA Countdown" pregame show as well as ESPN's marquee "NBA Today" program. The Oakland native and current denizen of Los Angeles has enjoyed a meteoric rise as a basketball reporter and TV personality since her start at ESPN in 2018.

Andrews, originally hired as a reporter for the network's news website, was tapped as ESPN's sideline reporter during the 2020 playoffs. The games that year were held in unusual circumstances: a quarantined "bubble" that was created in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Andrews was believed to be the youngest reporter to receive the assignment.

In May 2022, Andrews won the Sports Emmy for Outstanding Personality/Emerging On-Air Talent. The following month, she became the first woman to host the NBA Draft, a role she has since reprised annually.

Andrews was born into an interfaith and interracial family:



OVER THE past few years, Malika Andrews has become the face of ESPN's NBA studio coverage. (Kylie Terada/USA Today Sports)

her mother Caren, an art teacher, is white and Jewish; her father Mike, a personal trainer, is Black and not Jewish. Caren told *J. The Jewish News of Northern California* that Malika and her younger sister Kendra, who covers the Golden State Warriors for ESPN, both identify as Jewish.

Andrews, who has opened up about her childhood struggles with mental health and an eating disorder, studied communications at the University of Portland and went on to work at the *Chicago Tribune* and *New York Times* before joining ESPN. Prior to attending college, Andrews also briefly worked in the San Francisco law firm of her Jewish grandfather.

At ESPN, Andrews succeeded fellow Jewish personality Mike "Greeny" Greenberg as host of "NBA Countdown." In response to a Jewish Telegraph-

ic Agency inquiry on Monday, ESPN said Andrews's schedule was too packed amidst the Finals and next week's NBA Draft for an interview.

She has not spoken publicly about her Jewish identity. But in late 2022, in the aftermath of NBA star Kyrie Irving's antisemitism scandal, it came up when she interviewed Rabbi Erez Sherman, the senior rabbi at Sinai Temple in Los Angeles and the host of the "Rabbi on the Sidelines" sports podcast, on "NBA Today."

In the segment, Sherman referenced Andrews's Jewish and Black identities, encouraging her to use her platform to help build bridges between the Jewish and Black communities.

"Wow, you need to tell that story," Sherman told Andrews, who did not respond. "You need to get us together. You need to tell young people in Black communities, in Jewish communities. And by the way, I think it's important, not all Jews look like me."

Ilene Keys, the Andrews's childhood cantor at Temple Sinai in Oakland, said Andrews's tenacity was evident back in 2008 when, as an adolescent, she was preparing for an early appearance in front of a crowd.

"I knew back when we were studying for her bat mitzvah that she was a force to be reckoned with," Keys told *J. "I'd like to think that her connection to the Temple Sinai community helped to shape who she is and gave her the confidence to be the leader that she is today."* (JTA)

## Samsonite sponsors Israel Olympic team

• Jerusalem Post Sports Staff

Rolltime Group, the official and exclusive importer of Samsonite in Israel for 55 years, will sponsor the Israeli delegation to the Paris 2024 Olympics.

The sponsorship includes the supply of high-quality luggage for all Israelis going to the Olympics.

Each member of the delegation will receive a large Samsonite suitcase, from the S'CURE series – a hard suitcase, from the iconic series identified with the brand.

"We are proud to be a part of this journey of the Israeli athletes on the way to success in the world arena," said Rolltime Group CEO Dudu Polterak.





## A century of poetry

*Lauded poet Yehuda Amichai gets a posthumous centenary salute or two*

• By BARRY DAVIS

Yehuda Amichai seems to have been well named. With his surname suffix, *chai* (life), it was possibly odds on that his work would continue to outlive him. While that was an adopted surname – he was born in Germany as Ludwig Pfeuffer – it may apply nonetheless. Amichai, Israel's most popular poet, passed away in 2006 at the age of 82 which means he would now be 100 years old.

To mark his centenary the Hebrew Writers Association in Israel is holding a tribute event on June 27 (8 p.m.) at its base, Beit Hasofer, in Tel Aviv. In fact this will be the last event there for some time as the building is about to undergo extensive renovations. It will also be available via Zoom.

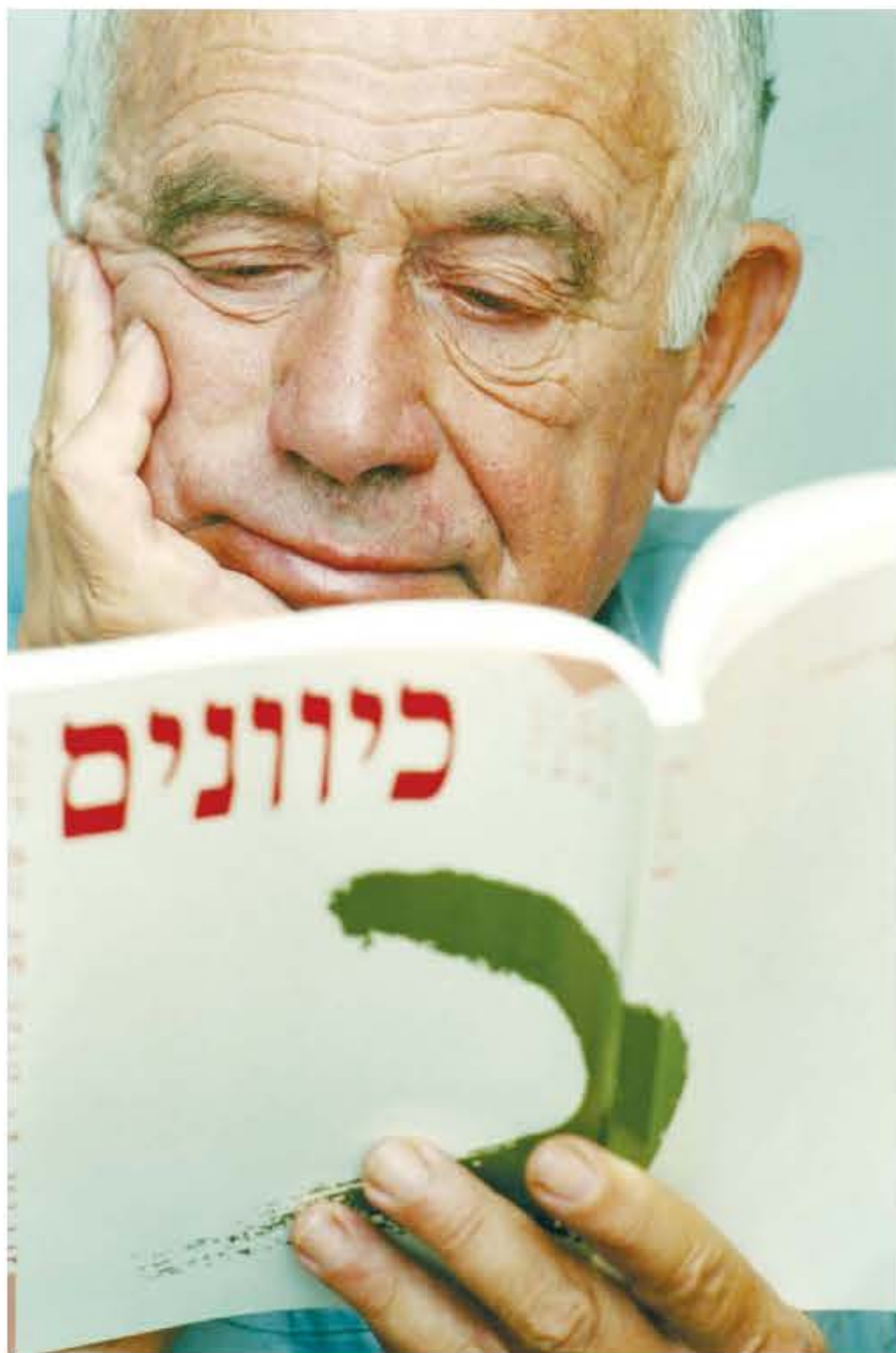
Chair of the association, Zvika Nir, will preside over the proceedings in which a glittering roll call of academic and literary figures will talk about Amichai's oeuvre and his towering contribution to Israeli poetry. The cast for the evening features a cross-generational roster of women and men of letters, academics – including award-winning poet and Bar-Ilan University professor Miron Izakson – poet and author Lea Aini, Bialik Prize laureate writer Haim Be'er, and novelist-poet Yonatan Berg who, fittingly, is the youngest ever recipient of the Yehuda Amichai Prize for poetry, which he was awarded in 2013 when he was just 32 years old.

Nir, an acclaimed writer in his own right, was as good a person as any to ask about why Amichai's writing continues to draw people of all ages, and cultures. I was surprised by his answer. "I think part of that is because he has a lot of poems that are not too complex. Even someone who is not particularly educated in the field, or engaged in critiquing poems or literature, can connect with the poems, without looking for any hidden meanings and layers."

That apparent simplicity, says Nir, was not always appreciated by the literary cognoscenti. "When I was at high school and I told my teacher that I like Amichai he reacted very negatively. He said Amichai wasn't a real poet."

That is a recurring theme throughout history whereby the established upper echelons of the artistic field in question do their damndest to repel anything they deem to be the stuff of whippersnapper boarders. The Impressionist painters of the latter half of the 19th century, for instance, also went through that baptism of fire. "Amichai wasn't initially accepted, and the same happened to fellow German-born poet Natan Zach and, to a degree, to David Avidan," Nir notes, referencing two other poets of Amichai's generation who, eventually, gained public and official recognition.

That, he says, was down to their user friendly approach. "They



YEHUDA AMICHAÏ – Israel's most popular poet.  
(Moshe Shai/Flash90)

spoke to the young people of the day in their own language. If you read the works of the canonical poets you always felt they were somewhere above you."

Amichai's street-level take also served to make him accessible to readers from very different cultures and his poems were translated into a multifarious spread of languages, including Russian, English, Nepali, and Burmese.

I WONDERED whether the fact that Amichai was not born here – even though he learned Hebrew at school in his birthplace, Würzburg, Germany – had any bearing on his use of the language. Nir thinks not. "When I and my friends read Amichai the first time we had absolutely no idea where he came from, or what his previous family name was. It was the same with Natan Zach. He also came from Germany. We only related to him as a new young poet who spoke to us."

I persisted with my line of inquiry. Surely, someone who adopts a language takes a different approach speaking or writing in it, whether in daily use or for creative literary purposes, compared to someone else who was born into it. Nir made few concessions. "I can only say that these poets, like Amichai, were influenced by western poetry. Not the old Israeli

poetry. At that time western poetry was more like everyday speech, less rhyming, less ordered and adhered less to the poetry standards we were used to."

For Nir and his contemporaries, Amichai and his ilk were a breath of fresh air. "At school we read idyll poems by people like [Shaul] Tchernichovsky, and long poems. Then these new poets came along that didn't write idyll or long poems. They wrote relatively short poems, not more than a single page, which spoke to you. That's why I think they appeal to young people to this very day."

Of course the term contemporary has a transient nature to it, by definition constantly adapting to the fashions and trends of the day. "The language Amichai and the others of that time is a little archaic now," Nir posits. "It is not the exact language of today." This only serves to make Amichai's enduring popularity even more impressive.

The backbone of the evolution of popular Israeli music, which began over half a century ago, was poems put to music. Texts by the likes of Zach, Dalia Ravikovitch, Avidan, and Amichai were picked up by young up-and-coming songsmiths such as Mati Caspi, Yehudit Ravitz, and Shlomo Artzi, as well as some of the older crowd like Sasha Argov, and turned into

## Naomi Shemer two decades on

*Celebrations will mark the 20th anniversary of the death of the celebrated songstress*

• By BARRY DAVIS

Naomi Shemer, Israel's "first lady of songwriting" will be honored upon the 20th anniversary of her death with a number of celebrations over the next few weeks.

Shemer, who died in 2004 at the age of 73, wrote some of the most enduringly popular songs of the Great Israeli Songbook, such as "Haderech Aruka Vehee Rabba" (The Long Road), "Od Lo Ahavti Dai" (I Haven't Loved Enough) and "Ani Gitara" (I Am A Guitar). Her songs – she often wrote the lyrics and the music – have been performed by many iconic Israeli singers, including Yehoram Gaon, Yossi Banai, Chava Alberstein, and Arik Einstein. But, perhaps her most famous work is "Yerushalayim Shel Zahav" (Jerusalem of Gold), which was premiered, by Shuli Natan in Jerusalem in 1967 just three weeks before the Six Day War.

The timelessness and broad appeal of much of her oeuvre resonates in the lineup for a June 25 (8:30 p.m.) show at the National Library in Jerusalem which features singer-songwriter 44-year-old Rona Kenan, 42-year-old singer-actor Yuval Medelsohn, 36-year-old singer-actress Avigail Kovari and 48-year-old Mizrahi-leaning singer-songwriter Amir Benayoun.

The musical program will be augmented by the appearance of Shemer's daughter Lali who will regale the audience with intriguing and entertaining tales about her famous mother. "She was a very honest and sincere person," the junior Shemer noted.

That meant her mother sticking to her guns, regardless of the personal and professional costs involved. "She was a feminist although she wasn't a flag-waver. She was an interesting and brave person. I think, maybe, that is why she and her songs are still relevant today, 20 years on." And, let's not forget, Naomi Shemer made it in a male-dominated music industry and – for part of the time – as a single mother with all the complex logistics that entailed.

Part of that is down to the younger Shemer's efforts over the years. "I am busy with her heritage," she explained. "But I don't take it for granted that she is still popular. It is surprising. I am a little sorry she is not around today to see that for herself."

One, of course, can understand Lali's pain at not having her mother around but she left us with a large body of thoroughly enjoyable and moving work to feast on for many more years. It is probably comforting to know that Naomi Shemer succeeded, during her lifetime, in commercial terms and was also showered with official kudos, including the Israel Prize.

Over the years Shemer's works not only continue to gain radio airtime, they also feature prominently in sing-alongs and community singing, which Lali feels is a testament to the user-friendly aspect her mother incorporated in her charts. "These are folk songs which are partly very complex. But, at the end of the day, they are songs that were meant to be sung by everyone and anyone."



NAOMI SHEMER  
(National Library collection)



ARIEL HOROWITZ  
(Yehiel Yanai)

Shemer's son, musician Ariel Horowitz, will also be honoring his mother in a show called *Shemer 24 Sisters*, that will appear around the country, joined by artists Chava Alberstein, Dikla, Hanan Yovel, Danny Robas, and Miki Kam. The name *Shemer 24 Sisters* echoes the pioneering women's group founded by Shemer in the mid-60s.

Horowitz will give a glimpse of the personal stories behind his mother's songs along with the talented singers.

The show debuts on July 21 at Beit Lessin in Tel Aviv.

For tickets and more information: <https://book-week.nli.org.il/> and [il.co.kupat/2207/https://JerusalemPostStaffcontributedtothisreport](https://il.co.kupat/2207/https://JerusalemPostStaffcontributedtothisreport).

pop hits. There will be musical renditions of some of Amichai's poems, on June 27, courtesy of opera singer Shayish Baram accompanied by Avi Binyamin on piano.

"It is wonderful that Amichai lives on," Nir happily observes. "Actually, he didn't leave us that long ago," he adds. That, naturally, is a matter of chronological perspective. Nir, 77 years young, has a very different angle on Amichai's presence on terra firma compared with, say, Berg and his

fellow forty-somethings, not to mention even younger poetry lovers.

Still, Nir does have an official role to play. "As chair of the Hebrew Writers Association in Israel it is my job to make sure we don't forget writers like Amichai," he states. Thankfully, for now at least, there doesn't appear to be much chance of that happening.

There will be another Amichai centennial salute, at the National Library of Israel, in Jerusalem, on June 26 (9 p.m.). This is a

music-based program with such popular artists as Shlomi Shaban, Assaf Amdursky, Alon Eder, Shai Tsabari, and Rona Kenan. The musical entertainment will be completed by a talk by Amichai's daughter, Emanuela Amichai, who will speak about her father's life and work.

For more information about the Hebrew Writers Association event: <https://www.hebrew-writers.org>

For more information about the National Library event: <https://book-week.nli.org.il/>

## It's complicated: Beersheba Fringe Festival puts relationships on stage

• By HAGAY HACOHEEN

The 14th annual International Fringe Festival (IFF) will open next month in the Old City of Beersheba and will offer a wide range of productions for all ages and tastes. *Carmel 2*, a musical production for children aged six to twelve, will depict the exploits of the same-named fantastical feline hero created by author Meira Barnea Goldberg in a hugely popular ongoing series of books for young readers.

The works of adult-oriented writer Alex Epstein were adapted for *Conversations about Love (and other Misunderstandings)*. Performed by Dalia Shimko, Shay Ben Yaakov and Eyal Shechter, this stage production introduces the audience to the tiny polished literary gems Epstein wrote alongside many beloved musical hits. These include Yossi Banai's "A 20-year-old love," a Hebrew version of "La chanson des vieux amants" by Jacques Brel, and Banai's adaptation of "Lady in Brown" by Georges Moustaki.

"The Beersheba Fringe Theater is one of the most amazing ones currently operating in this country," Shechter told the press during a Wednesday online press conference. He noted with sorrow that, despite the excellent train connection between Tel Aviv and the Negev's capital, "the rest of the country doesn't always see that."

The UK's Company Chameleon offered *Of Man and Beast* at the IFF in 2018 and the Polish "Teatr A Part" offered *Bellmer Circus* in 2016. Today, the festival's CEO Efrat Ziv Aspis shared that due to the ongoing war, many former partners of the festival declined an invitation to perform this time around.

"We were international for 14 years," she said, "and 64 past-partners turned us down this year. This amount of rejections is a gut wrenching blow."

BEERSHEBA MAYOR Ruvik Danilovich, who has supported the Fringe Theater since its 2010 foundation, lauded the organizers and pointed out that, "especially



'CONVERSATIONS ABOUT Love and other Misunderstandings.'  
(Shahar Hilla Maroz)

during such a complicated reality, it is important to support and aid the world of culture and be proud of our own artistic productions."

"We focused on offering the audience as much comfort as possible," IFF Artistic Director and Fringe

Theater Beersheba co-founder Yoav Michaeli told the press.

"This is why we decided this year's edition will focus on the theme of life as relationships," he said. "We hope to stress the need for a warm and loving embrace

from those around us – and from our country."

For those seeking an evening of light hearted comedy, the IFF offers the premiere of a Hebrew adaptation of *Un diner d'adieu. A Farewell Dinner*, co-written by Matthieu Delaporte and Alexandre de La Patellière, depicts a middle class couple who decides to change things around by holding a nice meal for old friends – and then saying goodbye to them, forever.

Translated by Dori Parnas – who gifted us with a Hebrew version of a similar French comedy, *God of Carnage* by Yasmina Reza, in which two families nearly murder each other during an attempt to discuss a skirmish between their boys – this production seems very promising.

Those interested in exploring the Old City, and immersing themselves in real-life coming-of-age stories of others who share this land, might enjoy Ido Bornstein's *In the Square*.

This innovative performance fuses an audio-tour in the Old City with gender-related issues as the

women performers respond to the male voices featured in the recordings.

After taking in a show or two, it might be good to relax with a pint of Life and Death IPA or a Florida Weiss, both offered on tap at Beit Habira, a much loved local beer establishment.

Sip a Time Machine porter and reflect: If you could start things all over again, to whom would you throw a farewell dinner?

The 14th edition of the International Fringe Festival will be held in Beersheba from Sunday, July 14, to Thursday, July 18. "Conversations about Love (and other Misunderstandings)" is being performed on Sunday, July 14, at 8:30 p.m. (NIS 60 per ticket). "Carmel 2" will be shown on Thursday, July 18, at 5:30 p.m. (NIS 69 per ticket). "Farewell Dinner" will be offered on Thursday, July 18, at 6 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. (NIS 60 per ticket). "In the Square" will be offered on Thursday, July 18, at 9 p.m. (NIS 60 per ticket). Book by calling (08) 646-6657. Beit Habira is on 29 Hachlutz Street. Call 054-559-1401 for more information.



# FRONTLINES

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PARTIES ON the Right and far Right that are supportive of Israel gained seats in the recent European parliamentary elections, but that could prove to be a mixed blessing. Here, Alternative for Germany (AfD) Party co-leaders Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla react to results in Berlin. (Annegret Hilse/Reuters)

## Reason to smile

*Not just Eurovision: Some Israel-positive results seen in balloting abroad*

### POLITICAL AFFAIRS

By HERB KEINON

Amid a feeling of intense international isolation, various elections are underway or have recently taken place around the world that – believe it or not – are giving Israelis a reason to smile. Well, if not a broad, full-toothed smile – a rare commodity these days – at least a half-grin.

No, this is not about last month's Eurovision contest, where Eden Golan's fifth-place showing was held up by some as proof of European support, not only for Golan and her song "Hurricane," but for Israel and the entire Zionist enterprise itself.

To support this claim, it was even stressed that were the results based only on the vote of the audience, made up of regular people – and not juries composed of members of the artistic world who bend toward following a herd, virtue-signaling mentality when it comes to Israel – then Golan would have come in second place.

Now, however, results are coming in from elections for politicians – not favorite songs – indicating that Israel's position in the world might not be as bad as the impression gleaned from social media posts and rhythmic chants of "intifada revolution" on American college campuses.

Israel was not on the ballot in recent elections for the European Parliament, primary balloting in the US, and voting in South Africa. Still, the results of those elections, where pro-Israel candidates fared or are faring well while anti-Israel candidates are struggling, is cause for some mild satisfaction. Here is a look at those results.

### THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament, the directly elected legislative

body of the European Union representing the citizens of its 27 member states, held elections from June 6 to 9.

The various national parties are arranged in the parliament into seven main groupings based on ideological commonalities: two groups on the hard Left, one on the Center-Left, one on the Center-Right, and two on the hard Right. An eighth group is composed of independents, but in the current situation, it includes parties on the far Right, such as Germany's AfD Party.

The good news for Israel is that two left-wing groupings – made up of the most anti-Israel parties in the parliament – lost significant ground, while the parties on the Right and far Right that are supportive of Israel gained seats. But, since nothing in life is black or white, this is somewhat of a mixed blessing since some of these parties, such as AfD in Germany and Marine Le Pen's National Rally in France, have an antisemitic past and, as is the case with AfD, some say even an antisemitic present.

According to a European Coalition for Israel (ECI) ranking of the groups according to their position and stands on Israel, the two right-wing groupings – the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and Identity and Democracy (ID) – are the best when it comes to Israel, with the ECR scoring 92.30 on a scale of 100, and the ID scoring 87.97. These two groupings gained ground in the European Parliament, with the ECR gaining about 30 seats (the final results are not yet tallied) and the ID – which includes Le Pen's party – picking up about 20 seats.

On the other end of the scale when it comes to the ECI's ranking regarding Israel is The Left (GUE/NGL)

and the Greens/European Free Alliance (Greens/EFA) group, with The Left having a lowly 11.52 point score when it comes to Israel, and the Greens/EFA coming in at 31.59. The Greens/EFA took a drubbing, losing 18 seats from 2019, and The Left saw its power fall from 41 to 36 seats.

The two largest groupings, the center-right European People's Party (EPP) and the center-left Socialists & Democrats (S&D), held their ground and will continue to dominate the parliament. Regarding Israel, the EPP has a 68.20 ranking, and the S&D scores only 37.60 points. Between those two is the sev-

enth grouping called Renew Europe, which consists of European liberal parties, such as Emmanuel Macron's Renaissance Party, which has a 53.31 score on Israel. That grouping was one of the big losers of the elections, losing some 20 seats.

MAKE NO mistake, these elections were not about Israel, though some of the left-wing parties – notably in France and Spain – made the war in Gaza a major campaign issue. Nevertheless, the results – having fewer rabidly anti-Israel members of the European Parliament and more with an understanding of the country's security con-

cerns – will have an impact.

The most significant impact will be on the parliament's ability to vet the EU's governing board – the European Commission – and, most importantly, both its president and its foreign policy czar. Center-right German politician Ursula von der Leyen appears poised to continue as EC president, something not bad for Israel as she is deemed in Jerusalem to be fair overall and friendly toward the Jewish state.

The big change will be in the position of foreign policy czar, with Spanish politician Josep Borrell on his way out. For Israel, this is a positive development, as he has prov-

en to be problematic.

Since October 7, Borrell has accused Israel of using hunger as "a weapon of war"; said that during the recent rescue operation of four hostages, Israel carried out "another massacre of civilians"; and warned that Israel's continuation of its military campaign in Rafah may have an impact on EU-Israel relations.

Borrell is expected to be replaced by Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas, whom diplomatic officials said is much more positively predisposed toward Israel, just as Estonia is much more favorable to Israel inside the EU

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## Tax Confusion: Simplifying Capital Gains for Cross-Border Investors

By Douglas Goldstein, CFP® - open an American brokerage account when you live in Israel

When it comes to investing, understanding capital gains is critical. Many are caught off-guard by the taxes due on their U.S. portfolios. However, this can be avoided with the right knowledge and strategy. Both realized and unrealized capital gains can affect your investment decisions and tax obligations. (While I do not give tax advice, I often work with clients and their accountants in making their investment portfolios as tax efficient as possible.)

### Timing is Everything

The timing of when you sell investments can significantly impact your tax bill. Realized gains, which occur when you sell at a profit, are taxable events. In contrast, unrealized gains, where the value of your investment increases but is not sold, don't immediately affect your tax situation.

**Balancing Gains and Losses**  
One key strategy is tax-loss

harvesting – offsetting realized gains with realized losses. For example, selling an investment at a \$5,000 loss can partially offset a \$15,000 gain, reducing your taxable income to \$10,000. It's a smart move that can help manage your tax liability effectively.

### Understanding Your 1099 Form

Accurately reporting capital gains is crucial. The 1099 form details your investment sales and purchases, but doesn't tell the whole story, especially regarding "non-covered" transactions. Since the 1099 doesn't include cost basis every position, the amount of profit reflected on that document may not be accurate. To avoid overpaying taxes, have your accountant review your December statement *alongside* your 1099 to ensure all profits are properly recorded. Want to discover how to avoid this common tax filing mistake? Scan this QR code and watch the brief video.

### The Importance of Professional Guidance

For those managing U.S. portfolios from Israel, it's vital to work with professionals who understand the complexities of cross-border taxation. Misinterpretation can lead to significant tax ramifications. It's essential to have a team that knows both the U.S. and local tax laws to navigate these challenges successfully.

If you're dealing with U.S. portfolios from Israel and find these topics relevant, feel free to reach out at (02) 624-2788 for tailored advice and support in managing your U.S. investments. Remember, effective planning and a deep understanding of capital gains are key to realizing profits.



Douglas Goldstein, CFP® is the director of Profile Investment Services, Ltd. [www.Profile-Financial.com](http://www.Profile-Financial.com). He is a licensed financial professional both in the U.S. and Israel. Call (02) 624-2788 for help with your U.S. investment accounts. Securities offered through Portfolio Resources Group, Inc. Member FINRA, SIPC, MSRB, FSI. Accounts carried by Pershing LLC, Member NYSE/SIPC, a subsidiary of The Bank of New York Mellon Corporation. The opinions expressed are those of the author and not those of Portfolio Resources Group, Inc. or its affiliates. Neither PRG nor its affiliates give tax or legal advice.



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# THE JERUSALEM POST

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## The IDF probe

KAN News said this week that the IDF had precise information about Hamas's October 7 attack plans.

However, due to the prevailing "conceptzia" within the security establishment and the possible negligence of senior officials, the warning signs were ignored.

The term "conceptzia" was coined by the Agranat Commission, which investigated the failures of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, to describe the erroneous outlook that caused Israel to be lulled into complacency before the war. In general, "conceptzia" is a notion that conveys that one responds to new or additional information based on pre-conceived perceptions.

KAN reported that a document compiled at the IDF's Gaza Division titled "Detailed End-to-End Raid Training" was distributed to military and intelligence officials on September 19, 2023, extensively describing a series of recent exercises conducted by Hamas's elite units in the Gaza Strip. These drills included raiding IDF posts and kibbutzim in southern Israel and kidnapping soldiers and civilians to Gaza.

The document's publication followed widespread criticism of the IDF's failure to anticipate and prevent the October 7 attack, and the military's announcement earlier this month that it would begin presenting its internal probe findings in relation to the massacre and the ongoing Gaza war on a rolling basis during July and August.

The N12 news site reported on Wednesday that according to "interim findings," the military had already determined that on that fateful day, IDF commanders had erred by deciding to wait for more forces and intelligence, rather than engage with the terrorists and enter targeted communities as quickly as possible.

As *The Jerusalem Post's* military correspondent, Yonah Jeremy Bob, reported, the IDF probe is aimed at reaching operational conclusions for the military but will not examine the policies of the political leadership, thereby avoiding a direct confrontation with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ministers, who have insisted that a broader investigation would harm the war effort and should therefore wait until after it ends.

Although this is the IDF's investigation into its own failings, its recommendations could have far-reaching implications for the future of the military, particularly with regard to responsibility the intelligence failure. Although we are jumping the gun, we trust that the investigators will have the necessary authority to ensure that the political and military leadership heed their recommendations.

The overall probe of the IDF's "conceptzia" related to Gaza and Hamas in recent years is set to be presented by key officers to IDF's Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Herzi Halevi, in early July but it will only made public later in the summer.

The army indicated that the probe would look back as far as 2018, but no earlier than that at this stage, because this would entail a significant delay in the publication of the results to the public. According to our reporter, the first probe headed by Maj.-Gen. Mickey Edelstein should be ready for publication by mid-July and might be about the battle at Kibbutz Be'eri. It will be followed by about 40 other probes regarding battles in the South by September.

The findings could have direct implications for Lt.-Gen. (res.) Gadi Eisenkot, who was head of the IDF from 2015-2019, for Lt.-Gen. (res.) Aviv Kohavi, who was IDF chief from 2019-January 2023, as well as for all current security heads, including Halevi, Shin Bet director Ronen Bar, and IDF intelligence chief Maj.-Gen. Aharon Haliva. The latter has already taken responsibility for the October 7 intelligence failure and has announced his resignation. He is due to be replaced by Brig.-Gen. Shlomi Binder by the end of the summer.

Halevi has stated that an external investigation would be launched only after the internal IDF probes are completed. Although State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman also began to investigate the failures of the army and the government, the chief of staff asked that this be put on hold to allow commanders to concentrate on the war that is still raging.

Attorney-General Gali Baharav-Miara recently sent a letter to the prime minister asking him to stop blocking the establishment of a state commission of inquiry into the government's handling of the war, explaining that such an investigation would be the best defense against genocide accusations that Israel is facing at the International Court of Justice, along with the arrest warrants sought by the International Criminal Court's prosecutor against Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.

She may be right: What is ultimately required is a state commission of inquiry similar to the one held after the Yom Kippur War, which would be taken more seriously by the Israeli public and the international community than an internal IDF investigation. The time for this will come but we should first give the military a chance to put its house in order. The sooner, the better.

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# CHANGE Vote Labour



AFTER THE poor showing under Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, has Labour undergone fundamental reform under Keir Starmer? The July 4 election will show what the UK public think. (Phil Noble/Reuters)

## Labour's second chance

As UK elections near, Keir Starmer hopes to recapture the Jewish vote

### DIASPORA AFFAIRS

By MICHAEL STARR

Polls indicate that the United Kingdom is set for significant wins for the Labour Party on July 4. The party, in the minds of many Jews in Britain and around the world tainted for a long time with pervasive antisemitism under former head Jeremy Corbyn's leadership, has undergone fundamental reform under Sir Keir Starmer, Jewish Labour Movement national chair Mike Katz told *The Jerusalem Post* on Monday. Under Starmer's leadership, Katz said that UK Jews are willing to give the Labour party another chance.

"Since the very first day of Keir's leadership, he promised to tackle antisemitism," said Katz. "He's been doing this work. He's completely transformed the Labour Party, both in terms of tackling antisemitism and carrying out the recommendations that our equalities watchdog, the Equality and Human Rights Commission, said that they needed to do after it found the party guilty of breaking Equalities law under Corbyn."

The Jewish Labour Movement, a Jewish Zionist socialist Labour Party-affiliate, has been providing training to the party, from the Labour shadow cabinet to its members of parliament, regular members, and activists. JLM has also been involved in candidate selection, nomination, and support for those who reject Corbynite values. Katz credits the movement's cooperation with Starmer with helping to "change the culture of the party."

"I know there is a fear of some Jewish readers that Starmer could win and then within a month, he'd be replaced by somebody of a similar political outlook to Corbyn. That really is not the case," said Katz. "There is change from top to bottom, much for the better. That's reflected in his position in the polls."

Corbyn was expelled from the parliamentary party over an antisemitism row last month, and Katz said that the former leader continues to be a "marginalized figure."

"Jeremy Corbyn is so far out of the picture that he's now running as an independent in this election in his constituency," Katz said. "He's been thrown out of the party; he hasn't sat as a Labour MP for a long period of time."

SOME HAVE debated if Corbyn himself was antisemitic, ignored the antisemitism, or as Katz suggested, wasn't competent enough to control the party and subjugate antisemitic elements.

"If he wasn't able to control his party, how could he solve all the problems that the country faced?" Katz remarked. "And that was the problem that Labour had under Corbyn. Now they see it has a strong leader who controls his party, who has shifted his party back to the political center, made it electorally respectable, and is tackling antisemitism and not showing tolerance to it, [which] is exactly very much part of that whole package."

One of the indications that the party had changed was JLM's increased participation in the campaign. While the group had been affiliated with Labour for more than a century, it had gone on a campaign strike in 2019 in response to Corbyn's leadership.

"We basically only campaigned for a couple of MPs who were either our members or Jewish, or there was a very good reason to campaign for them," said Katz. "Otherwise, we didn't do anything. For the whole Jewish community, that election was a really, really difficult time because they were basically faced with the choice between Jeremy Corbyn and Boris Johnson, and they didn't really want to endorse either person."

The difference in way that JLM was treated under Corbyn and Starmer's tenures has been significant, according to Katz, allowing them to return to campaigning and promotion for Jewish and non-Jewish candidates and MPs as part of the "journey back to respectability and back to basically giving Jewish people a real choice in this election."

The movement was working "to get a load of new Jewish candidates elected," said Katz. "It would be great to get them elected, particularly those that are standing in areas that have a strong Jewish community, and particularly in bits of North London, where there's a strong Jewish community. There are Jewish candidates running, and we hope they're going to be successful."

The amount of Jewish Labour MPs and candidates in the upcoming election was also indicative of the change in the party, Katz said. Labour had eight Jewish candidates and five MPs seeking office.

YET THE greatest indicator of Starmer's reforms is the reception that it has received from Jewish voters.

"In those heavily Jewish parts of North London, it's looking positive," said Katz. "I think we have lots of people that are willing to give Labour under Starmer another chance. Lots of them feel like it's time for change, and the only thing stopping them from voting for Labour previously was because they didn't feel that they were able to trust Labour."



FORMER LABOUR PARTY LEADER Jeremy Corbyn was expelled from the parliamentary party over an antisemitism row last March. Here, he delivers a speech during a pro-Palestine demonstration outside Downing Street in London in June 2021. (Henry Nicholls/Reuters)

er another chance. Lots of them feel like it's time for change, and the only thing stopping them from voting for Labour previously was because they didn't feel that they were able to trust Labour."

One of the bellwethers for Jewish sentiment was the 2022 Labour victory for control of the Barnet London Borough Council, an area that has a large Jewish population.

Katz said that he believed that many British Jewish values overlapped with Starmer's Labour. Without antisemitism being an issue, voters could act on those values, and have more electoral choice.

"We're not expecting a Jewish person to vote Labour – far from it," said Katz. "No minority community is politically homogenous. We're all going to vote differently, we have different values, and that's going to reflect in the way that we vote."

"But it is absolutely about making Jewish people feel safe. They've got a choice," he said. "They can vote Starmer, they can vote [Prime Minister Rishi] Sunak, they can vote Labour, they can vote Tories. It's about who they think will do the best job, who has the best policies for the country going forward."

"We've had so many conversations around the last general election and in the elections before that, under Corbyn, you get a normal Jewish lady at the door and she's like, 'Well, I've been voting all my life, but I can't support Corbyn,'" Katz said. "It's terrible because I don't like Brexit, and I don't like Boris Johnson, I don't like the Conservatives, but I don't know what I'm going to do because I don't care for Labour as Corbynites."

"That is what's changed: We've given people some hope back," the JLM chairman said.

"There are plenty, and I would argue, there's plenty of overlap between mainstream Jewish values and labor's values when it comes to social justice, when it comes to ensuring growth and wealth creation to make sure we can pay for good public services, and building more houses so that voters, children and grandchildren, have somewhere decent to live that they can afford, investing in the National Health Service, investing in local services."

One issue that may be of vital importance to British Jewish voters is the rise of antisemitism in the country. The Community Security Trust 2023 annual summary recorded a 147% increase in antisemitic incidents compared to the previous year. 2023 was a record-breaking year with 4,104 antisemitic incidents documented by the trust. London has seen regular protest marches against Israel, often featuring heavily charged rhetoric and even support for terrorism.

"There's been a huge spike in antisemitism immediately after October 7 – actually even before the war even started," Katz said. "There's also been a rise in Islamophobia, but a huge spike in antisemitism. It's a problem across society. You get some of that reflected in small pockets in the Labour Party – also more widely on the Left, don't get me wrong – but what's happening in the Labour Party is very much a microcosm of what is happening in wider society, whereas in 2019, it was purely a problem for the Labour Party."

"Keir was very, very clear. He spoke in our conference in January, and he said there are people who are peacefully advocating for Palestinian rights, and that's absolutely a fine and valid thing to do – we also see people who are on the margins who are

using it to be antisemitic, crossing the line by rejecting the right [of Israel] to exist and for Jewish national self-determination instead of just criticism of the government. We recognize that goes on. We see these people. We're not going to tolerate it if it comes up in the Labour Party."

Antisemitism at the protests is the responsibility of those organizing the marches, said Katz, noting that he had seen some stickers, for example, using very antisemitic language.

Concern about antisemitism is not the only strong feeling roused with the war. Many British Jews are worried about Israel and the safety of friends and family in the Jewish state. According to Katz, the Labour Party has a clear policy on Israel, which is not a departure from its allies such as the United States.

Labour and JLM hold aspirations for "an eventual two-state solution working with other governments across the world, to create the conditions for that. But the foreign policy of Labour under Kier and [shadow foreign minister] David Lammy is absolutely squarely in the direction of having a two-state solution, and having a safe Israel as well."

If the Israel-Hamas war would continue into a Labour-led government, Katz said that the return of hostages would be a top priority alongside having a ceasefire to allow aid to come into Gaza. From the beginning of the war, with the October 7 massacre, he said that the party had expressed solidarity and empathy with the victims.

The success of Starmer's reforms will be tested in July, but to Labour's Jewish supporters, the reformed party has more than proven that it has changed for the better – and they believe that fellow Jews should give the party a second chance.



# Hijacked on the high seas

*The campaign of aggression by the Iran-backed Houthis continues unabated*



**BEHIND THE LINES**  
• By JONATHAN SPYER

The Yemeni Ansar Allah movement, better known as the Houthis, attacked a US Navy destroyer and two civilian vessels on Sunday. According to a statement by General Yahya Saree, the Houthis' spokesman, "Triumphing for the oppressed Palestinian people and in retaliation for the American-British oppression against our country, the missile forces and naval forces of the Yemeni Armed Forces carried out two military operations in the Red Sea as follows:

"The first targeted an American destroyer with a number of ballistic missiles. The second targeted the ship Captain Paris with a number of suitable naval missiles. The Unmanned Air Force carried out a third military operation as well, targeting the Happy Condor ship in the Arabian Sea, using a number of drones."

These acts of aggression by the Iran-supported Shi'ite Islamist force, which controls most of the country's coastline and its capital, Sana'a, are the latest in a campaign that commenced last November. The campaign has succeeded in severely disrupting shipping on the Gulf of Aden/Red Sea corridor, a vital global waterway.

As of now, efforts by US and allied forces have succeeded in intercepting many attacks. They have not, however, managed to set a price for this activity at anywhere near the level that would be required to induce the Houthis to desist from it. As a result, the attacks are continuing, and severe damage is being inflicted on global trade, with no end in sight.

According to an April US Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) document, container shipping in the Red Sea has declined by approximately 90% since December 2023. Given the apparent inability of the Western navies patrolling the area to protect commercial shipping

adequately, companies are choosing to divert. This is testimony to the Houthis' current success. It adds enormous costs to the maritime transport of goods, generating a knock-on effect on the global economy.

The DIA report notes that the necessity of using an alternative route – namely, sailing around the Cape of Good Hope, i.e., around Africa – adds "about 11,000 nautical miles, one to two weeks of transit time, and approximately \$1 million in fuel costs for each voyage."

The report also notes that "shipping via the Red Sea typically accounts for approximately 10-15% of international maritime trade." The DIA document goes on to observe that "insurance premiums for Red Sea transits have risen to "0.7-1.0% of a ship's total value, compared to less than 0.1% prior to December 2023."

An Axios report that quotes the DIA document notes that the US Navy has so far spent \$1 billion in munitions as it contends with the Houthis' campaign of aggression in the Red Sea.

The southern port of Eilat, meanwhile, has been effectively closed since November. The ports of Ashdod and Haifa continue to ensure the flow of international trade to Israel. But the closure of Eilat's port has had a severe effect on the city's economy. The city has also, of course, been targeted by the Houthis' ballistic missiles as part of the same campaign.

Regarding Ashdod and Haifa, it is worth noting that another Iranian ally, Hezbollah, possesses advanced anti-ship missiles supplied by the Iranians. If the Israel-Lebanon front descends into open conflict, as seems likely, this will probably have a maritime component as well as a land one, with implications for trade for Israel's Mediterranean ports.



SAILORS FROM the Dwight D. Eisenhower Carrier Strike Group assist distressed mariners rescued on June 15 from the Liberian-flagged, Greek-owned bulk carrier M/V Tutor that was attacked by Houthis, in the Red Sea. (US Naval Forces Central Command/US 5th Fleet/Reuters)

THE GULF of Aden/Red Sea arena shares an additional component with the Israel/Lebanon front: it is the pro-Iranian side, in both cases, that has taken the initiative, with the Iran-associated element initiating the current round of conflict.

The US and its allies in the Red Sea, and Israel vis a vis Lebanon, are seeking to defend against the aggression. Given their greater conventional capacities, the US and Israel have scored considerable tactical successes. But, in both cases, these have not translated into anything resembling strategic achievement. Rather, the strategic initiative remains in the hands of the pro-Iranian element. In the Lebanon/Israel context,

Hezbollah has succeeded in imposing an emptying out of Israel's border communities.

In the Red Sea area, the Houthis have essentially hijacked a key artery of global maritime trade and show no signs of relinquishing control of it. Clifford May, president of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, noted in a recent interview that the key and problematic dynamic is one in which the US is following a defensive strategy. This has high costs and has not persuaded the adversary to desist. It also projects an image of weakness and lack of will.

What lies behind this problematic stance? Global media coverage continues to focus on Israel's fight

with Hamas, treating the Gaza war as a single-front conflict. From this point of view, the Red Sea front and the other arenas are side-shows, which will (as the Houthis and Hezbollah make clear) fall silent when the Gaza war ends.

This perspective has been accepted by the West. As a result, an effort is underway simply to contain the aggression on these other fronts.

To accept this framing of the conflict, however, is to concede the advantage to the pro-Iran camp. The current conflict is the debut of the alliance that Tehran has been busy assembling in the region since the early 1980s, and with renewed vigor over the last decade. It is current-

ly engaged, in a partial but very consequential way, on three fronts in addition to Gaza: the Red Sea, Lebanon, and Syria/Iraq.

The Lebanon front involves a confrontation with Israel. The Red Sea and Syria/Iraq, meanwhile, involve an Iranian client (the Houthis, Iraq's Shi'ite militias) targeting Israel, but also hitting Western targets.

At present, therefore, the issue being tested is not only Israel's ability to respond effectively to Hamas's October 7 assault. Rather, the broader test is whether Iran's carefully built alliance of heavily supported Islamist militias can impose its will on the region and the West at a time and place of its choosing, or whether the

West and its allies can successfully push back against such attempts.

At the moment, as exemplified in the Gulf of Aden and the Red Sea, the verdict is that the Iranians can activate their proxies at minimal or no cost to themselves, achieve a severe disruption with implications for the global economy, force the US to spend a billion dollars on ordnance, and incur no major cost, either to themselves or to their proxies.

The implications of Tehran coming out of the present round of hostilities with this conclusion are extremely grave. In Western capitals, however, there appears to be no particular sense of urgency to persuade them otherwise.

## Who is panicking?



**MIDDLE ISRAEL**  
• By AMOTZ ASA-EL

It was a groundswell. What began in the spring of 1965, when 40 anti-war students burned a draft card at UC Berkeley and was soon followed by two people torching themselves to death, became in the fall of 1969 mass rallies that sent millions to the streets, including 200,000 in San Francisco and 500,000 in Washington, DC. More than 200,000 Americans

Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, and as police storm protesters with growing violence, the question arises: Is there any analogy between the American past and the Israeli present? The answer is that in terms of the war at stake, there is no analogy at all – in fact, there is contrast; but in terms of the protests' energy, dynamic, and steadily approaching bottom line, there sure is.

*The budding mutiny within Likud joins the gathering groundswell that will bring the Netanyahu era to its end*

had by then been charged with either dodging or sabotaging the draft. By 1970, students had attacked some 200 military recruitment offices on campuses. By the spring of 1972, riots at Columbia, Harvard, and Princeton universities spread countrywide. By 1975, America quit Vietnam.

It was a massive, grassroots movement the likes of which the world had never seen, and the American government's response was as impulsive and misguided as the war it did not know how to win.

What began with congressional investigations into American POWs' alleged collaboration with North Vietnam proceeded to police brutality, underscored by the Kent State University shootings in which four students were killed, and a rally in Los Angeles that ended with three killed.

Now, as wartime protests rock

THE MOST obvious difference between America's Vietnam-era protests and Israel's current protests is that our protests are not against the war. Our war is not against a distant nation that did nothing to us, as Americans rightly felt about Vietnam. Our war is with immediate neighbors who attacked us, viciously.

The Israeli protesters' dilemma is, therefore, not about the protests' morality but about their effect. Demanding a government's removal while it is leading a war of defense might damage the war effort itself, fear many who identify with the protests but are reluctant to protest while fighting rages in both the South and the North.

That's a fair concern, but it's technical. Morally, as Bar-Ilan University philosopher Avi Sagi noted in his essay "Wartime Protest: The Burn-

ing Question" (Hartman Institute, 2024, Hebrew), war does not suspend democracy. Moreover, "in time of war, it is the citizens' duty to stand on guard and verify that the state meets its moral and civic obligations," wrote Sagi, a co-author of the IDF's code of ethics.

The drama thus lies not in the dilemma the demonstrators face but in the violence they meet – physically, rhetorically, and politically.

Physically, police this week beat, clubbed, tackled, and water-sprayed demonstrators outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's house in Jerusalem. One demonstrator, Dr. Tal Weissbach, a senior gynecologist at Tel Hashomer Hospital, was severely injured in her left eye, which she might have lost.

The rhetorical response is equally appalling.

Likud lawmaker Nissim Vaturi said the demonstrators are "an arm of Hamas." The prime minister's son accused the IDF's General Staff – the warriors who spend their days and nights braving enemy fire while he sunbathes in Miami – with seeking Israel's defeat. Shortly afterward, the prime minister's mouthpiece, Channel 14 commentator Yaakov Bardugo, accused Lt.-Gen. Herzi Halevi of seeking Hamas's survival in power.

Never mind the pattern common to these burps – brazen lies coming from well-placed Likudniks out to shift blame – they represent panic; the same panic with which the Nixon administration responded as the Vietnam protests spun out of its control.

And the panic, then as now, is well justified, a message conveyed this week by Likud lawmakers who, faced with their own coalition's political violence, finally threw the book at Netanyahu.



LIKUD MKs Tally Gotliv and Moshe Saada at the Knesset Constitution Committee on June 18 revealed cracks in the coalition. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

FACED WITH the coalition's plot to let Shas create hundreds of jobs for its cronies as city and neighborhood rabbis by transferring their appointments from the municipalities to the government – a scandal any day, but an abomination in a time of war – appalled Likud lawmakers and mayors, who rebelled.

"Don't be partners to this disgraceful law!" Dimona Mayor Benny Bitton exhorted the lawmakers. "You should all be ashamed of yourselves," Ashkelon Mayor Tomer Glam admonished the legislators. He asked them how they could dedicate time and money to such a scheme when his war-scarred city, which has lost 30 people in the current war, begs for rehabilitation. "Why?" he asked.

The coalition's answer to Mayor Glam – "We don't care about you

and your sorry city, we care about Shas" – followed, as Likud replaced the Law Committee members who threatened to derail the legislation.

But the protest movement, like America's last century, assumed a life of its own. Likud's two rebellious lawmakers were soon joined by five more, and by the following morning Netanyahu canceled the legislation.

Netanyahu thinks there was one crack in his dam that he quickly found and patched. He is wrong. What he faces is the beginning of a long-overdue mutiny, fed by the same energy of the protests in the streets: the conviction that this war is tied by the umbilical cord to his corrupt establishment and the era it has produced.

America's Vietnam trauma had many reasons, but a major cause was a deformed draft system that

avored the privileged and abused the rest. Netanyahu's draft system is worse, the crux of the horse-thieves' alliance that is his political skeleton's spine. This is what Likud's renegades now understand, what their leader will never concede, and what will ultimately bring him down.

Likud's renegades now effectively say what the protesters in the streets say: Israel needs a new beginning. And thanks to them, Israel will get its new beginning – the fresh start the Jewish state so obviously needs, its people so loudly demand, and its leaders so rightly dread.

[www.MiddleIsrael.net](http://www.MiddleIsrael.net)

The writer, a Hartman Institute fellow, is the author of the bestselling *Mitzad Ha'ivelet Ha'yehudi* (The Jewish March of Folly, *Yediot Sefarim*, 2019), a revisionist history of the Jewish people's political leadership.



# Losing the North

*International Fellowship of Christians and Jews' soup kitchen serves those still living under fire*

## DOMESTIC AFFAIRS

• By EVE YOUNG

While Kiryat Shmona has been evacuated for many months due to its proximity to Israel's northern border, not all of the city's more than 20,000 residents have left. Some 3,000 people have remained behind – and they make up the strongest and the weakest members of the city's population, Yael Eckstein, president of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews (IFCJ) explained to *The Jerusalem Post*.

Israel's North has been under near-constant attack since the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war on October 7. Cities up to two kilometers from the border are evacuated, with residents spread throughout the country in hotels and apartments. In recent weeks, the number of drone and rocket attacks have been increasing, and huge fires have broken out as a result of impacts.

In spite of this, not everyone who is eligible to leave their home is willing or able to do so.

"You have two different groups of people who have remained," said Eckstein. "One is the leaders, the strongest, the bravest, who are able to actually stay there in order to contribute."

These are people "whose families were all evacuated, and they're there driving [and living] under rocket attack, under drone attack, in order to make sure those who have remained are safe and in order to protect the infrastructure," she explained.

The other group that has remained behind in the city are those who are not able to leave, the IFCJ head explained. Many of these people are elderly and struggle with financial difficulties, or without the support of their family. These are the people who say "I'd rather die in my home than live as a refugee" – and they don't evacuate," Eckstein said.

Among those who have stayed because they could not leave are families with young children, many of whom also did not evacuate because of financial difficulties.

Although these families are offered government help in evacuating, for many who still have to pay mortgages and other expenses and whose employment has been hurt by the war, evacuating is not necessarily feasible.

MANY OF these families have moved into public bomb shelters. Eckstein described visiting a shelter, and meeting a family with three children. She spoke with one of the children and asked her what the hardest thing was for her about the situation.

"She said, 'I refuse to shower; I was in the shower when an alarm sounded and I had

to run out and I didn't have time to put on my towel, and I didn't know what to do. It was the worst feeling I've ever had in my life. And I heard the boom very close by and I'm never showering. I'm not showering until this is over."

Eckstein described meeting with another child living in a public shelter. The nine-year-old boy "looked a little bit, you know, punky. He had an earring and he had a mohawk" haircut, she said, adding that this led her to believe that he would put on a brave face for her.

But when Eckstein placed her hand on his back and asked him how he was doing, he surprised her. "He broke down crying like a little baby," she remembered.

"He said, 'I'm scared I'm going to die here. Every single day, there are more and more rockets; every day, there are more and more drones, they could just come over that mountain and come and get us like they did on October 7 around Gaza. I'm just scared I'm gonna die.'"

This feeling of fear and the inability to do even the most basic daily tasks was not felt only by the children Eckstein met.

A mother living in the shelter with her three children also described this existential fear. "She said to me, 'every day, every morning, we do a sort of raffle for all the families living in the shelter [to determine] who's going to go out and buy the pita – because by going out and buying the pita, we're risking our lives.'"

The fellowship's leader recounted being shocked that one of the things the families asked her organization to provide them with, in the emergency kits they supplied, was water.

"Now, I have toured the war zone of Ukraine. I have gone around all the different parts of Ethiopia. I've seen that look of [needing] water during a war and during a crisis and in third world countries. But I was standing here in Kiryat Shmona, two hours away from Tel Aviv, and what they're asking me for is water."

THE IFCJ supports Beit Batya, a soup kitchen in Kiryat Shmona, along with 20 others as far south as Eilat. During the war, all of them have remained operational and they have increased funding to the Kiryat Shmona soup kitchen to enable it to provide more meals.

The soup kitchen's chef is part of the first group of people who have stayed in the city described by Eckstein. While his family has evacuated to Tiberias, "he hasn't missed a day of cooking hundreds of



IFCJ PRESIDENT Yael Eckstein (center) visits a shelter in Kiryat Shmona. 'I think it's a very incorrect assumption to feel or think that we, in the rest of Israel, are not connected to what's happening there.' (Guy Yechieli)

meals and having them distributed to people around the town," she said.

While he used to arrive at the soup kitchen at around four or five in the morning to begin preparing meals, he now arrives at 1 a.m. because he has less volunteers than during peacetime, and works through the night, Eckstein said. He does this "to make sure that the meals are ready for when the elderly are waking up and expecting them."

Many of the peacetime volunteers who have left the city have been replaced by members of the *kitot konenut* (emergency security teams) and other residents who have remained to contribute, she said.

"It's kind of [a situation where] everyone who's remained in the town, who's in a position to be able to help, has taken on every single role."

The soup kitchen's operations have been significantly impacted by the situation. The lack of volunteers meant that the IFCJ had to supply it with a refrigerated truck to be able to deliver the food with less volunteers, and the kitchen recently took a direct hit from a rocket.

Miraculously, "within less than 24 hours, we were back in business making meals, which is simply mind blowing," said Eckstein. The rocket did not detonate, and so did not destroy the building, she said.

"So it did the damage to the structure, but if it would have exploded, it would have blown apart the entire building."

ECKSTEIN SAYS that nothing she heard about the city in the lead up to her visit prepared her for the suffering of its residents that she encountered. "It was heartbreaking

and terrifying."

She described bringing a meal to the one of the people the kitchen serves – a Holocaust survivor who told her that "at her age" she refuses to leave her home.

Eckstein only had one meal with her, and the truck with the other meals followed a few minutes behind, but as soon as people saw her with the food, many elderly residents came out to ask her if she had their delivery.

"It was like a ghost town," she said, but "suddenly you [see] over a dozen elderly people coming out" to ask about food "because this is the food they are waiting for in order to eat that day," she said, emphasizing how vital it is to the residents who have not been able to leave the town.

"People always ask me, 'where's the government? Where's the government?'" Eckstein said.

"Our answer is always: We trust the government is doing as much as they can. We don't look and say, 'Where's the government?' We look and say, 'How can we save lives?' If there is a situation on the ground where people need us, we will not give in to the bureaucracy or [waiting for round] tables or waiting and pointing fingers – we will be there in an instant in order to help."

Helping the residents of Kiryat Shmona is not only about providing for them, Eckstein said. "I think it's a very incorrect assumption: to feel or think that we, in the rest of Israel, are not connected to what's happening there," the IFCJ leader said.

"If Kiryat Shmona is a ghost town, if there is absolutely no one there, then we don't have Kiryat Shmona."



THE IFCJ operates a soup kitchen in Kiryat Shmona, as well as providing families with emergency kits. (Guy Yechieli)



EVACUATING FROM the North has not been feasible for many families, who rely on charitable help to get by. (Beit Batya)

## SMILE

Continued from Page 13

than Spain.

On ECI's rankings of the European parties on Israel, Kallas' Estonian Reform Party has a 67.35 score, including 70.43 since October 7, while Borrell's Spanish Socialist Workers Party scored 37.07 points overall, and 42.39 since October 7, significantly less favorable toward Israel than Kallas' party.

Daniel Shadmy, the spokesman for ELNET, a non-profit organization devoted to building Israeli-European relations, said that the main topics in these elections were immigration and security, which "connects very much to the issue of Israel's war since October 7. The growing Right and far-right wing parties in the European elections have a direct line to what is happening here and the threats of terrorism," he said.

Shadmy predicted that "all in all, the relations between the EU and Israel are not expected to change dramat-

ically; they will remain the same or be better. Whether we like it or not, the turn to the Right by Europe is something that so far is positive for Israel, because they are talking about similar threats that we are facing and have been more supportive of Israel over the last eight months."

## US PRIMARY ELECTIONS

Given the attention the media has shined on anti-Israel demonstrations on American campuses and on threats by progressives to punish US President Joe Biden in November for his support for Israel, one could imagine that progressive, anti-Israel candidates are cleaning up in congressional primary races across the US.

One would be mistaken.

In several races over the last few months for Democratic congressional seats, some of which have seen the war in Gaza feature prominently in their campaign, pro-Israel candidates are coming out on top.

The biggest test of all will come on Tuesday in New

York, where an anti-Israel member of the progressive "Squad," Jamaal Bowman, is facing George Latimer in the Democratic primary, with the winner sure to go on to victory in the November elections in New York's deep blue 16th congressional district.

In a district with large Jewish and black populations, Bowman defeated Eliot Engel in 2020, one of the staunchest supporters of Israel in the House at the time. Within no time, Bowman turned into one of Israel's staunchest opponents.

Bowman has accused Israel of committing genocide in Gaza, called Hamas's claims of sexual violence "propaganda" and a "lie," given a platform to virulent anti-Israel voices such as Norman Finkelstein, and referred to AIPAC – whose United Democracy Project PAC has spent millions to support Latimer – as a "racist organization that has full control of Congress as they fund everyone."

Even the hard-left J Street has rescinded its endorse-

ment for Bowman, and polls show Latimer is going into Tuesday's race with a strong 17% lead. If he wins, it will be the latest victory of moderates over progressive anti-Israel candidates and reflect a trend toward the middle – and away from the far-left – in some Democratic districts.

In Oregon, Maxine Dexter last month defeated Sushila Jayapal, the progressive sister of a congresswoman from Washington who is among Israel's fiercest congressional opponents. During the campaign, Jayapal supported withholding weapons from Israel and voted on a local county board against a resolution supporting Israel after October 7.

In a New Jersey primary two weeks ago, Bill Pascrell, a strong pro-Israel congressman, easily defeated Syrian-born Mohamed Khairullah, who claimed that by supporting Israel, Pascrell had turned his back on the Muslim constituents in his district.

Pascrell's home base is Paterson, New Jersey, where he once served as mayor, and

which has a large Palestinian population.

After New York's primaries on Tuesday, the next big challenge for the progressive Squad will be in Missouri. Cori Bush, another strident critic of Israel, is facing an uphill battle in August against pro-Israel St. Louis prosecuting attorney Wesley Bell. If both Bush and Bowman lose, which is likely, then progressive anti-Israel voices in Congress will have taken a significant hit.

## SOUTH AFRICA

Another ray of light for Israel came from the June 1 election results in South Africa, where the African National Congress (ANC) Party fared poorly and was forced for the first time in three decades to form a coalition to govern.

South Africa has turned into one of Israel's most vocal critics on the world scene, initiating action against the Jewish state for allegations of genocide at the International Court of Justice in The Hague and earning the moniker of being Hamas's advocate on

the world stage.

The intensity of Pretoria's anti-Israel positions at every turn will likely be toned down a notch as a result of these elections and the ANC's need to work in the governing coalition with the Democratic Alliance and two other smaller parties that in no way share its anti-Israel positions. The ANC won 157 seats in the 400-seat parliament, while the DA received 87.

The DA opposed South Africa's move against Israel at The Hague, though it was not expected to force the government to withdraw from the case. The party, however, has said that the ANC "deliberately abused and inflamed divisions" around the conflict in Gaza to "distract from its dismal failures in government."

As opposed to ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa – who at a campaign rally chanted, "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free," and has turned South Africa into Hamas' international cheerleader – the DA's position is

that "for peace to be possible, rationality rather than radicalism must win the day on both the Israeli and Palestinian sides of this conflict."

Two other parties in the governing coalition, the Inkatha Freedom Party with 17 seats and the Patriotic Alliance with nine have articulated pro-Israel positions in the past, especially PA leader Gayton McKenzie, who has said his party will not turn its back on Israel because of God's promise in the Bible to bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse it.

And in a presentation of party positions that appeared before the elections in the *South African Jewish Report*, the Inkatha Freedom Party said it "deeply regrets the biased position taken by the South African government, which serves the ANC's interests above the interests of our country and our people. We value the strong partnerships South Africa and Israel have enjoyed for so many years, and don't believe this history should simply be discarded." •



# Silencing freedom of speech

Dozens of reports of antisemitism and Islamophobia hit Michigan universities, especially UM

## CAMPUS AFFAIRS

By KIM KOZLOWSKI

DETROIT — Since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, dozens of complaints about antisemitism and Islamophobia have been filed at Michigan's three largest universities, with the most coming at the University of Michigan.

The state's largest university specifically noted complaints have grown as tensions increased on campus amid the war in Gaza.

"Given increased tensions nationally related to the conflict in the Middle East, UM has seen an increase in reports of alleged racial, religious and/or national origin discrimination," UM spokesperson Colleen Mastony said.

Most of the reports through May alleged antisemitism, especially on UM's Ann Arbor campus, alarming Jewish leaders. Arab American leaders have condemned all discrimination but suggested that antisemitism claims have been "weaponized" in some cases to curb free speech.

The UM complaints drew the attention of the US Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, which this week announced it had entered into an agreement with university officials after a review of 75 Title IX complaints, resolving two of them. A congressional committee has also summoned UM President Santa Ono for a transcribed interview about antisemitism in August.

The reports came during the past school year after pro-Palestinian student activists demonstrated at official events, graduation and set up now-dismantled encampments, demanding that universities divest holdings linked to Israel from endowments at UM, MSU and WSU. But all three universities said they would not because, in some cases, policies protect the endowments from political pressure.

At UM, the Office for the Dean of Students has received 365 campus climate reports of alleged racial, religious and/or national origin discrimination, Mastony said. Of those, 140 reports, or nearly 40%, are related to alleged antisemitism and 28 reports, or 8%, are related to alleged Islamophobia, anti-Arab bias or discrimination based on Palestinian identity.

UM's Equity, Civil Rights & Title IX Office received 56 reports related to incidents of alleged antisemitism and 26 reports tied to incidents of alleged Islamophobia, while the campus police has received 16 reports of alleged antisemitism and six reports of Islamophobia, Mastony said, emphasizing that the reports could be duplicate reports of the same incident filed by more than one person.

The reports include individuals reporting verbal harassment, unauthorized touching or jostling, theft of or vandalism to symbolic items such as flags, posts on social media, tearing down of flyers, and graffiti left on public property by unknown individuals, Mastony said. The complaints report students feeling targeted or unsafe because of signs or chants by campus protesters, who have generally supported Palestinians living in Gaza.

At MSU, 37 complaints were filed since January with MSU's Office of Civil Rights and Title IX Education and Compliance regarding antisemitism/Islamophobia, university spokesman Mark Bullion said. Bullion could not provide a breakdown on how many complaints were filed about alleged antisemitism or Islamophobia, only saying there are multiple reports in each case. "The university has seen an increase in the number of reporting incidents since last year," said Bullion, but didn't provide a number for the prior year when asked.

Wayne State University in Detroit has received three reports of antisemitism and three reports of Islamophobia since Oct. 7, university spokesman Matt Lockwood said. The universities haven't confirmed



PRO-PALESTINIAN PROTESTERS rally to demand the University of Michigan's divestment in Israeli-connected companies and weapons manufacturers as they set up an encampment on The Diag at UM on April 22, in Ann Arbor, Michigan. UM Jewish students have complained that they were harassed by some demonstrators in what they consider to be antisemitic acts. (Robin Buckson/The Detroit News/TNS)

how many complaints were deemed credible.

"There is no room on our campus for Islamophobia, antisemitism or any kind of racism," UM Board of Regents Chair Sarah Hubbard said. "While these reports are troubling, we do make an effort to try and encourage people to report incidences through a variety of methods. I'm hopeful changes to our free speech policy earlier this year, and efforts to hold bad actors accountable on campus will address some of these serious concerns."

In January, UM regents unanimously approved a new statement on free speech that noted that protections would "not extend to speech or conduct that violates the law or University policy, including targeted speech that involves bullying, defamation, destruction of property, harassment, violence, or threats." The American Civil Liberties Union of Michigan has criticized UM's handling of protesters in recent months and called for the university to substantially change or abandon a proposed policy of issuing notices to students disrupting school activities who impede "the exercise of others' speech and activities."

When UM said this week it is reviewing its harassment and discrimination policies and developing new ones as it entered an agreement with the US Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, UM's general counsel said public institutions of higher education could not impede students' rights to free speech. The Education Department contends even speech protected by the First Amendment can create a hostile environment on campus and that colleges and universities must take action in those situations, Timothy Lynch said, which is a significant change in policy and enforcement.

Jewish leaders on UM's campus are demanding more action from the Ono administration, even after the tearing down of the encampment last month.

"The number of reports demonstrates how serious the problem of antisemitism is on this campus, and I hope we start to see the administration take it seriously," said Rabbi Davey Rosen, chief executive officer of Michigan Hillel. "There is an opportunity to really lead. The university talks about being the leaders and best. Now is the time. Jewish students, who care coming back in the fall, need to know that this is taken seriously."

While he has not seen the reports, Dawud Walid, director of the Michigan chapter of the



COMPUTER SCIENCE MAJOR Evan Cohen, president of Wolverine for Israel, speaks during a pro-Israel rally on the Diag at the University of Michigan on April 10 in Ann Arbor. Antisemitism has existed on UM's campus for a long time, but there has been a 'massive, massive uptick' since Oct. 7, Cohen said. (David Guralnick/The Detroit News/TNS)

Council on American-Islamic Relations, said he believes many include valid complaints about antisemitism and Islamophobia, which CAIR-Michigan condemns. He added that the accusation of antisemitism has been "weaponized" and conflated with speech that criticizes the Israeli government, its tactics or other actions.

"That is a form of trying to silence freedom of speech," Walid said. "We take exception with that."

### JEWISH STUDENTS OUTLINE INCIDENTS

The complaints have prompted the US House Committee on Education and the Workforce to call Ono to appear in Washington, D.C., for transcribed testimony scheduled for Aug. 9 to address how UM is responding to antisemitism on campus.

Among the antisemitic incidents cited by the committee is graffiti outside UM Hillel, which supports independent student groups for Jewish students on campus. The committee also noted reports of the harassment of Jewish students outside the UM pro-Palestinian encampment.

Most students are home for the summer, but pro-Palestinian activists have said they plan to continue to pressure their universities to divest from weapons manufacturers and Israeli companies in their endowments in support of Palestinians living in Gaza, where more than an estimated 37,000 Palestinians have been killed. About 130 hostages are still held by Hamas since the militant group launched a surprise attack on Israel on Oct. 7

that killed about 1,200, mostly civilians.

Jewish students at UM said they are continuing to file antisemitism complaints.

UM senior Jack Landstein said he knows Jewish students who have experienced antisemitism and has experienced it himself. Pro-Palestinian students inside the Diag encampment came up behind him with flags and spoke into his ear when he was giving an interview to an Israeli television news station at the end of the school year, he said.

Landstein filed a report with UM after someone screenshot a picture he posted on social media in May while on the Hasbara Fellowships, which trains students in Israel to be effective activists. His picture was reposted with a caption calling him and a friend "settler scum."

"While we were getting pepper sprayed and clobbered by riot cops, these settler scum were in the Occupation celebrating genocide," said the post, which was reviewed by The Detroit News. "We deserve so much better, and they deserve so much worse."

Evan Cohen, a rising UM senior who also was the target of the "settler scum" comment, said antisemitism has existed on UM's campus for a long time, but there has been a "massive, massive uptick." The university has been known for a long time as a safe place for Jewish students, while Ivy League schools haven't always had that reputation, he said.

"It's very difficult for students," said Cohen, president of Wolverine for Israel, a student group.

He said he was walking on

campus with a friend and a rabbi and someone spat on them, which he reported to the university and called it a "form of assault." But he said the university was unable to do anything because he didn't have the individual's name.

"I am firmly against genocide, especially considering that some of my family survived the Holocaust, the genocide in which the term was first coined," said Cohen, adding that the fellowship included observations in Israel of what Hamas did on Oct. 7.

### ARAB AMERICAN STUDENTS WEIGH IN

Arab American students said they have experienced their own discrimination since Oct. 7. Tarana Sharma, who is the social media co-director for UM Palestinian organization, Students Allied for Freedom and Equality, said students are not comfortable speaking to the media about their experiences with Islamophobia.

"Protesters, organizers, and allies have all experienced Islamophobia on numerous occasions, but there can be no meaningful conversations about that without movement from our administration on our demands," Sharma said. "With every decision to remain complicit in the ongoing genocide in Palestine, employ police violence, and threaten students with other repressive tactics, our university endangers Muslim members of the university community every day and allows Islamophobia to exist unchecked throughout the community."

Salma Hamamy, president

of Students Allied for Freedom and Equality, added that there has been numerous Islamophobic incidents happening on UM's campus for decades, but they have increased during the Israel-Hamas war. She said there are numerous instances posted all over social media.

Some social media posts in the UM community have included writing about whether the student activists would "send your terrorists" after them, Hamamy said, and police telling students cleared from the encampment to collect their belongings from a police holding spot only to be ticketed and banned from the Diag.

Students are hesitant to talk about these incidents because that isn't their primary focus, she said, and discrimination reports "feel like a deflection from the primary issue."

"We can't talk about Islamophobia when our families are being killed in Gaza," Hamamy said. "Also, the university has done so much to address antisemitism but not to address Islamophobia."

But it is accusations of antisemitism that have prompted a Republican-led House committee to call Ono to testify. UM's pro-Palestinian activists set up the encampment in April and carried Palestinian flags or wore the black and white keffiyeh scarf at the university's commencement ceremony in May. Police used pepper spray and other tactics when officers cleared the UM encampment of protesters in May, citing fire safety concerns.

The UM protesters then went to the homes of UM regents, leaving a list of demands. Earlier this month, the workplace of UM Regent Jordan Acker was vandalized with spray paint with messages that included "Free Palestine," "Divest Now," "UM Kills," "F--- you Acker" and "Divest or F--- off." Acker called the incident antisemitic since he was singled out as a Jewish regent and no other regents were targeted.

Ono: Situation 'very complicated'

Ono said recently he is proud the university has long been a "hotbed of activism" and supports freedom of expression. This issue on college campuses is different from other issues that students have rallied around, he said during a panel discussion at the Detroit Regional Chamber's Mackinac Policy Conference in late May.

"The tension is between two groups on campus, and this is happening on all the campuses around the globe," Ono said. "There (also) are a lot of bad actions involved. We know that for sure. And so this is very com-

plicated. It's more challenging than previous tense moments on campus."

Ono also said UM plans to focus this year on democracy and civic engagement, but others need to encourage youth to get off social media and talk to one another while government foundations need to "come together to address the root causes of antisemitism and Islamophobia."

"We have to work together as a network, as a society to address these issues," Ono said, "and we will rise to the occasion."

Students at MSU and WSU also have protested, made demands of their universities and put up encampments that have since been taken down.

MSU President Kevin Guskiewicz, who was also on the Mackinac panel, agreed that these protests are different than in years past.

"It's about appreciating viewpoint diversity, modeling (and) good civil discourse," Guskiewicz said. "We are working on an institute around public discourse. That's what we need for a thriving democracy."

At Wayne State, President Kimberly Andrews Espy offered to discuss divestment issues with certain encampment demonstrators but the protesters declined, wanting the discussion to occur in a public forum. The encampment was dismantled as a safety hazard as well as a disruption to campus life, she said.

Aside from the safety and legal issues it posed, "the encampment also created an environment of exclusion — one in which some members of our campus community felt unwelcome and unable to fully participate in campus life," Espy said in a May 30 statement.

One expert who agreed the Oct. 7 war has been a flashpoint for antisemitism said distinctions need to be made about protesters' actions. Demonstrating against the war is not antisemitic, said Menachem Rosensaft, a Cornell University adjunct professor of law who teaches a course on antisemitism and the law of genocide.

"There is nothing antisemitic in criticizing or being opposed to policies or the president of the government of Israel," said Rosensaft, general counsel emeritus of the World Jewish Congress.

But it is antisemitic to question the legitimacy of the state of Israel, urge the destruction or elimination of Israel as a nation or target someone because they are Jewish, Rosensaft said. It is also acceptable to dislike certain Jews, such as Bernie Madoff or Jeffrey Epstein, but it is not legitimate to dislike someone because they are Jewish, Rosensaft added.

To address the complaints, UM increased its public safety presence on campus along with collaborations on campus to address allegations of inappropriate conduct, Mastony said. New resources to assist faculty in managing controversial classroom discussions have also been created, she said.

To address antisemitism, Mastony said UM in December launched the Raoul Wallenberg Institute, which is dedicated to developing strategies to combat the problem and the university is working with faculty experts, along with Jewish organizations on and off campus.

UM also has been working with the Islamophobia Working Group, a coalition of faculty, staff and students, to address Islamophobia and anti-Arab bigotry, to educate the campus, supporting students and student organizations along with initiatives including the sharing of a Resource Guide for Students Impacted by Islamophobia.

"University leadership has hosted many conversations with U-M community members of Jewish, Arab, Muslim, Israeli, Palestinian and other backgrounds to listen to their concerns and ensure they are aware of resources and support," Mastony said. "Leadership has also spoken out repeatedly against discrimination and harassment."

(The Detroit News/TNS)



# More than a bilateral agreement

## Normalization with Saudi Arabia offers something bigger



• By ELIE PODEH

An important factor in every negotiation between states is the incentives put forward by one of the parties to the conflict or by the mediating party.

For example, Israel's willingness to recognize the annexation of Western Sahara by Morocco was an incentive for Morocco to sign a normalization agreement with Israel. Similarly, the supply of F-35 warplanes by the United States was an incentive for the United Arab Emirates to sign a similar agreement with Israel.

Sometimes, there is a mega-incentive, one that cannot or should not be refused. Who, for instance, could have refused when Anwar Sadat proposed his historic visit to Jerusalem?

The idea of normalization with Saudi Arabia has featured prominently in recent headlines, following the Saudis' willingness to pursue this idea in return for the establishment of a Palestinian state – or at the very least, significant progress in that direction. Israel's opposition to such a deal stems from a combination of ideological, political, and security-related factors.

The idea is anathema to those who ideologically believe in the need to liberate all of the biblical Land of Israel and who refuse to acknowledge the existence of a Palestinian national identity. Security-wise, there are fears over the shrinking of Israel's borders. And politically, normalization could lead to the disintegration of the current government and possibly the end of the Netanyahu era. These are all very strong reasons for opposing such a deal.

But for those willing to act in a rational and considered manner, the Saudi proposal is an incentive to something much bigger than just a bilateral agreement with Saudi Arabia. First, it opens up the path to recognition of Israel by other states in the Middle East and in the Muslim world.

Second, it would be a blow to the "axis of resistance" led by Iran, as one of its main goals has been to derail this normalization process.

Third, it would strengthen the integration of Israel into the region's security architecture, as was manifested during the April missile attack by Iran.

The fact that the Israeli, Saudi, Bahraini, Emirati, Egyptian, and Jordanian chiefs of staff met in Bahrain under the umbrella of the US Central Command earlier this month may attest to the possibilities inherent in this new security structure.

Fourth, normalization with Saudi Arabia would reduce antagonism toward Israel, regionally and globally, and would halt the process of Israel's becoming a pariah state.

Fifth, it would reinforce Israel's economic ties with other states in the Middle East, especially with the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

And finally, it would lead to Israel's integration into a new economic architecture that will link the Far East and India with Europe, via sea and land corridors passing through Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel.

In and of itself, normalization with Saudi Arabia would be acceptable to the majority of Israelis. But the demand for the establishment of a Palestinian state may elicit fierce opposition from the Israeli public. These fears are natural and logical, particularly after the October 7 attack. Yet, this disaster has in fact led to three important developments that make the creation of a Palestinian state inevitable, sooner or later.

First, it restored the Palestinian question to its "natural" place at the core of the conflict. Israel's attempts to relegate it to the margins or make it disappear entirely by signing normalization agreements with Arab states on the periphery of the Middle East have failed. Like the idea that Hamas would not attempt a large-scale attack from Gaza, this has proved to be another misjudgment.

Second, the disaster has revived the two-state solution, which before October 7 had become irrelevant in the eyes of many due to the growth of Israeli settlements in Area C in the West Bank. The one-state idea had gained traction in many circles, but the disaster demonstrated that, despite everything, separation is a necessity, while a single state for Israelis and Palestinians is a recipe for violence and destruction. The



IDF CHIEF of Staff Lt.-Gen. Herzi Halevi visits the North. His talks in Bahrain with Saudi, Bahraini, Emirati, Egyptian, and Jordanian chiefs of staff earlier this month, under the umbrella of the US Central Command, may attest to possibilities for a new security structure, says the writer. (IDF/Reuters)

re-emergence of the idea of a Palestinian state has occurred in the international arena at both the state level and among international organizations and institutions, as well as in general public opinion.

Third, actors in the international and Arab arenas have come to understand that they need to be part of the solution, by giving recognition and guarantees to both sides, possibly even including the deployment of troops. Foreign involvement does not mean that Israel hands responsibility for its security to others, but that the solution requires regional and international partners who have an interest in the success and maintenance of any agreement.

A fateful decision is now required, of the kind that David Ben-Gurion made with the Declaration of Independence and that Menachem Begin made when agreeing the peace deal with Egypt. The problem is that Israel currently has a prime minister with a majority in the Knesset but without public legitimacy. No less serious is the fact that Palestinian leadership also suffers from legitimacy deficiency.

Moreover, Palestinian public opinion polls reveal widespread support for Hamas, and little support for the two-state solution. In other words, the Palestinian side will also have to undergo a process of sobering up to the realities of what is possible.

Normalization with Saudi Arabia is a mega-incentive that presents Israel with a dilemma: Should it continue with its ghetto mentality and self-victimization, clinging to the belief that "in every generation, someone rises up to destroy us," or should it forge a new regional partnership and alliance? What happens next is not a historical inevitability; it will be decided by Israeli society and its leaders.

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# Political narcissism and ideological control

## Iran's strategic manipulation

• By CATHERINE PEREZ-SHAKDAM

In examining the ideological framework of the Islamic Republic of Iran, one must grapple with the pervasive political narcissism that fuels its governance and international strategy. The regime's virulent antisemitism, distortions of religious texts, and fervent opposition to Western values are not mere tactics but deeply rooted mechanisms of control. These are tools designed to manipulate its population, exert dominance over proxies, and enforce conformity within the Shia crescent.

Narcissism, in its essence, is characterized by an exaggerated sense of self-importance and an insatiable craving for admiration. This is starkly evident in the Islamic Republic of Iran's self-perception as the ultimate authority on Islamic governance and morality. The regime's grandiose vision of itself as the defender of Islam and the leader of the Shia world is cloaked in a veneer of divine mission, positioning it in direct opposition to the Sunni Muslim world, particularly the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, which stands as the custodian of Islamic tradition.

Iran's sense of divine mission fuels an unyielding ambition to dominate not only the Middle East but to challenge global powers that do not align with its vision. This ideological rivalry with Saudi Arabia is rooted in both geopolitical and religious contestations for supremacy within the Muslim world. The Iranian regime perceives this rivalry as a zero-sum game where any gain by Saudi Arabia or its allies is seen as a direct threat to Iranian hegemony.

Furthermore, Iran's hostility towards the West and Israel is an extension of this narcissistic worldview. The existence of the Jewish state challenges Iran's narrative of Islamic purity and resistance against Western imperialism. By advocating for the eradication of Israel and the downfall of Western democracies, Iran seeks to cement its image as the ultimate defender of Islam, thereby attracting support from disenfranchised Muslim populations globally.

This tactic also serves to deflect attention from internal issues, uniting the populace against a common external foe.

In this context, Iran's narcissistic ideology manifests through gaslighting, denial of accountability, and exploitation of victimhood. The regime's manipulation of religious texts and relentless antisemitism are mechanisms to maintain control over its population, proxies, and the broader Shia crescent. Recognizing and addressing this psychological dimension is essential for developing effective strategies to counter Iran's destabilizing influence. By doing so, we can better understand the pervasive impact of the regime's ideology and devise comprehensive approaches to mitigate its threats.



THEN-IRANIAN PRESIDENT Ebrahim Raisi meets with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in Riyadh, last November. Iran views itself as the defender of Islam in direct opposition to Saudi Arabia, says the writer. (Iran's Presidency/West Asia News Agency/Reuters)

### Violent antisemitism and manipulation

Iran's antisemitism is a strategic tool used to consolidate power. Historical manipulation, such as the portrayal of Jews as eternal enemies of Islam, fuels this hatred. For example, the regime's rhetoric during the annual Quds Day protests perpetuates historical grievances and mobilizes support for its anti-Israel agenda.

Since its inception in 1979, the regime has exploited ad nauseam a narrative of perpetual victimhood, portraying itself and its followers as besieged by Western imperialism and Zionist plots – often resorting to paint voices of the opposition as spies and/or traitors. This narrative has then been leveraged to justify the mullahs' aggressive policies and rally domestic and international support. Such claims bear the hallmark of narcissistic regimes, which thrive on creating and sustaining a sense of external threat to consolidate internal control.

The regime's manipulation of Islamic scriptures exemplifies narcissistic control. Iranian leaders interpret religious texts to legitimize their political and military actions, presenting themselves as the ultimate arbiters of divine will, framing their discourse within a genocidal messianic discourse rooted in the foretold Great War that will usher in Islam as both the reference and source of Justice and Peace.

This abuse of religion creates a cult-like following, where dissent is not only political heresy but also seen as blasphemy – a rhetoric that has found a great echo in our Western capitals as free thinkers and critics have been forced to retreat or face physical violence. This is reminiscent of how narcissists shape narratives to serve their ego, enforcing a reality where they are infallible.

Gaslighting, a form of psychological manipulation, is a frequent tactic of the Iranian regime. By consistently distorting facts and denying realities, they create a pervasive atmosphere of confusion and mistrust. The events of October 7th serve as a stark example: the brutal violence perpetrated by Hamas was reframed by some as an act of liberation. This manipulation shifted blame onto the victims, suggesting that the crimes were "engineered" by Israel to justify subsequent attacks on Gaza.

This grotesque inversion of truth exemplifies the regime's capacity to manipulate perceptions, turning victims into aggressors and perpetrators into martyrs. Such tactics are designed to control the narrative, asserting dominance by bending reality to their will and celebrating the extent of their psychological influence over the masses.

### Narcissistic abuse

At home, the Iranian regime disorients its population, making it difficult for individuals to trust their perceptions and resist oppression. The violence Iranians suffer is both physical and psychological. Citizens endure brutal crackdowns on protests, arbitrary arrests, and torture. Systematic indoctrination begins in schools, where the regime's propaganda is embedded in the curriculum.

Surveillance is omnipresent, with citizens constantly monitored by security forces and encouraged to inform on each other. This pervasive surveillance fosters an environment of paranoia, stifling dissent and eroding trust within the community. The regime's tactics are designed to fragment society, ensuring that any potential resistance is isolated and crushed before it can gain momentum.

Sexual violence is another devastating tool of oppression used by the regime. Reports have documented cases of sexual assault and rape in prisons, often used as a method to break the spirit of dissidents and their families. Such trauma profoundly impacts individuals, leading to severe psychological consequences such as PTSD, depression, and anxiety. Research in psychology has shown that victims of sexual violence often experience difficulties in personal development, struggle with trust issues, and may even replicate the trauma onto others as a maladaptive coping mechanism.

This manipulation extends to its proxies and the broader Shia crescent, presenting the regime's interventions as altruistic support rather than imperialistic endeavors.

Tehran's refusal to accept accountability for its failings, whether in human rights abuses or economic mismanagement, exemplifies its narcissistic defenses too. By deflecting blame onto external enemies, it maintains an unblemished self-image and avoids scrutiny.

The psychological abuse inflicted by the regime mirrors the tactics of individual narcissists: gaslighting, exploiting victimhood, projecting their own malevolence onto others, and manipulating religious doctrines to justify their actions. This system creates a traumatized population, fosters dependency on the regime for a sense of security, and perpetuates cycles of abuse.

Our collective failure to address the psychological dimensions of Iran's strategy may inadvertently empower the regime. Narcissists derive power from their victims' reactions, and by focusing solely on military and economic aspects, we risk reinforcing the regime's manipulative narratives.

Understanding the psychological manipulation at the heart of Iran's ideology is crucial for effectively countering its influence. Recognizing and confronting the regime's narcissistic abuse will support those who suffer under its rule and weaken its hold on power.

In confronting such "othering," it is imperative to exhibit moral fortitude and strength. History teaches us that appeasement and compromise with such regimes only embolden their malice. Turning the proverbial cheek to narcissistic bullies empowers the hateful, the mad, and the furious.

To combat this growing threat, it's essential not only to condemn antisemitism but also to recognize and confront the broader ideological war against democratic values. By standing firm and maintaining a commitment to truth and justice, we can counter the narcissistic tyranny of the Iranian regime and support those who suffer under its yoke.

*The writer is executive director of the Forum for Foreign Relations.*

# Making the Israeli military haredi-friendly

• By MICHAEL SEGAL

The issue of whether haredim should serve in the military is dividing Israel. Secularists complain that haredim are endangering the country by not serving. Haredim counter that by studying Jewish texts they are enhancing the security of Israel. The Netanyahu government could fall over this issue, as a previous one did in 2019.

Israel's history suggests a solution that could be acceptable to both sides: a haredi version of Nahal.

The original agricultural Nahal was founded in 1948 by first prime minister David Ben-Gurion with the vision that farming on the borders enhances the security of Israel. Nahal is an acronym for *Noar Halutzi Lohem*, (Fighting Pioneer Youth). Groups from youth movements asked to stay together for their military service, forming new agricultural communities and defending the borders. The movement was a success, not only in defending the borders but in founding many kibbutzim and moshavim that continue to thrive.

Today we need a new type of Nahal: *Noar Haredi Lohem*, (Fighting Haredi Youth). Groups from yeshivot could apply to stay together to study and defend the borders, with a new dual mission philosophy inspired by that of the original agricultural Nahal. Just as the agricultural Nahal drew on the expertise of agricultural experts, the haredi version of Nahal would bring along experts on Jewish learning. Just as the agricultural Nahal groups were located in areas that needed defending, so would the haredi version of Nahal.

The government's current proposal for solving the issue is to drop the age of exemption for haredi yeshiva students to 21, making military service brief. This satisfies no one. To haredim, the brief military service would still endanger haredi identity, though less so than longer service. To secularists, the exemption at 21 comes across as finagling on an important matter of principle, and the High Court is likely to strike down such a proposal as it did for a related proposal in 2017.

In contrast, a haredi version of Nahal could satisfy everyone. To haredim, it provides a military environment in which it is possible to study and maintain a haredi identity; it essentially creates branches of yeshivot on the borders. To secularists, it results in haredim sharing the burden of military service, and does so by following a dual mission approach inspired by the one that David Ben-Gurion created with agricultural Nahal.

The government's proposal to lower the exemption age is one that decreases service. This is highly inappropriate at a time in which there is a need for increased service. The government should withdraw that proposal; indeed, it may have no alternative if coalition members continue to oppose the proposal as have cabinet ministers Yoav Gallant and Nir Barkat. Instead, it should channel David Ben-Gurion by advancing a proposal that increases service: a haredi version of Nahal.

*The writer is a neurologist and neuroscientist.*



# Without a plan, IDF gains in Gaza will be lost



• By YAAKOV KATZ

In the coming weeks, the war in Gaza will be over. Do not expect anything like George W. Bush's "Mission Accomplished" declaration on the USS *Abraham Lincoln* flight deck in 2003, but the facts on the ground will speak on their own.

While the government could get the IDF to drag out the operation in Rafah for an extra week or two, it won't be able to do that for long. The IDF will withdraw forces and will begin to redeploy along the border, moving from the high-intensity stage of the war to pinpointed strikes, more focused on maintaining the gains made over the last eight and a half months.

This is the exact point for a political plan to be outlined and revealed and it needs to happen soon. For the gains and successes of this war to be fully achieved and last, a political resolution needs to be put on the table. The refusal to do this has been the greatest mistake of this war, since in the absence of a clear plan the only thing the world hears are the comments by the likes of Itamar Ben-Gvir, who call to reoccupy and resettle the Gaza Strip.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has a plan, government sources explain, adding that he does not want to reveal it to not undermine its chances for succeeding. While this might be true, Israelis deserve to know what is happening and where this is all going. While he prepares for his speech before Congress next month, the prime minister might want to first consider speaking to the Israeli people to explain where this is all going.

The reason that now is the time is because Hamas has been weakened and its capabilities have been degraded. While Israel is naturally skeptical of the chances that a new governing entity would be able to confront Hamas and prevent it from rearming, it is exactly for this reason that the government needs to work with its Arab allies and the Americans to ensure that the successes on the battlefield are preserved.

Instead, the government is spreading false promises that it is possible to eliminate and

destroy Hamas or that Israel is just a step away from a "complete victory" as the prime minister likes to claim. What the IDF can do – contrary to what some Likud mouthpieces claimed this week – is degrade Hamas and dismantle its military capabilities. But, it cannot eliminate Hamas, an ideology that is embedded deep in the hearts of the Palestinian people in Gaza.

For Hamas to cease to exist, Israel needs to help facilitate the establishment of an alternative. This does not mean that the alternative will be an Israeli puppet or that the IDF will need to stop operating in Gaza. On the contrary – it will need to retain operational freedom there like it has in the West Bank. What it does mean is that for this war to lead to a new reality, there needs to be a new governing entity, one that can stand up to Hamas, serve the people of Gaza and hopefully be a partner to the international community in the reconstruction of the Strip and the deradicalization that it needs to undergo.

If this does not happen, there will be a power vacuum that will almost definitely be filled by a hostile entity. How do I know this? Just by watching what has happened with every other vacuum that was created in the Middle East in recent decades. Sadly, moderate elements never fill them.

Israel pulled out of Lebanon in 2000? Hezbollah took over. Israel pulled out of Gaza in 2005? Hamas took over. The Americans toppled Gaddafi in Libya? Anarchy took over. America pulled out of Afghanistan? The Taliban took over.

Despite knowing this, Israel is dragging its feet and instead of working with the Americans to get this plan in place, Netanyahu is picking fights with the administration at possibly one of Israel's most sensitive moments – as it needs to prepare the political day after and as war grows closer with Hezbollah.

When Netanyahu put out a video on Tuesday blasting the Americans for holding up weapon deliveries – which the White House said it has no idea what he is talking about – there was a senior Israeli delegation in Washington preparing for a much-anticipated strategic dialogue on Iran. Upset at Netanyahu for his video, the Americans canceled the summit.

Netanyahu knew that this might happen so why did he put out the video? The answer



SMOKE RISES following Israeli strikes in Rafah. While the government could get the IDF to drag out the operation in Rafah for an extra week or two, it won't be able to do that for long, the writer argues. (Mohammed Salem/Reuters)

is that he was thinking about local politics – shifting the conversation away from his instable coalition – and a belief within his close circle that tension with the Biden administration actually helps him with his constituents.

These voters like to see their prime minister stand up to international pressure. Netanyahu knows this and he also knows that having some tension ahead of his planned Congress speech could be the boost that he needs to finally take back the lead in the polls and pull ahead of Benny Gantz's National Unity Party. The coming US elections and the possibility that Donald Trump will return to the White House might also be a consideration.

Beyond the political maneuvering and the optics, the reality on the ground demands a comprehensive strategy. The coming end of the war in Gaza requires the government to present a plan that prioritizes long-term stability over short-term political gains.

Netanyahu must seize this moment to artic-

ulate a clear vision for the future. The Israeli public, and indeed the world, deserve to hear a plan that goes beyond military tactics and addresses the big question – where do we go from here?

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In two weeks, the term of Israel's two chief rabbis – David Lau and Yitzhak Yosef – will come to an end. Allow me please to be one of the first to wish them good riddance.

The Chief Rabbinate in Israel has long been the opposite of what it was supposed to be. It does not bring people closer to Judaism and instead pushes them away. Evidence is rampant but just look at these two numbers: In 2022, roughly 39,000 couples registered marriages through the Chief Rabbinate. It was nearly the same number in 2011, despite the Jewish population growing 20% in the intervening years.

## European Parliament election results indicate an awakening on the continent

• By DAVID BEN-BASAT

While the European People's Party (EPP) was victorious in the European Parliament election earlier this month, far-Right groups made major gains across the bloc, reflecting a decline in the popularity of Left and Center parties who had, apparently, been unaware of the Islamic revolution taking place in their countries.

Governments of states such as Germany, Spain, Belgium, England, Norway, and Sweden had opened their doors to wolves in sheep's clothing as they welcomed refugees from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Islamic Republic of Iran (IRI), and more. These European countries have been footing the bill for extended Muslim families to create communities and settle in areas where they could feel at home.

However, Muslim immigration to Europe has wrought demographic changes in areas occupied by immigrants who have no intention of integrating into Western society. The dominant language in these areas is Arabic, and the law they are blatantly attempting to spread throughout their host countries is *sharia*. Mosques are built apace as local businesses and politicians court the increasing Muslim population.

Center and Left parties, who believed that winning over the Muslim immigrants would increase their electoral power, were bitterly mistaken. The question was not if, but when, committed citizens would awaken and understand that they were losing their country and its character. Certain imams are now declaring that their intention is a takeover of Europe, which they have been patiently planning.

The polite Europeans, who were both in need of cheap labor and felt sorry for those fleeing war zones in Asia and Africa, thought they had caught two birds with the proverbial single stone. A senior Dutch immigration official told me that until a few years ago, Muslim women were even allowed to have their passport photos taken showing only their eyes. This loophole allowed thousands of passports to be reused, increasing illegal immigration.

Countries that have encouraged waves of immigration are now forced to increase their police force allocation. Cities in Belgium have become global drug distribution centers. Crime rates in Edinburgh and Marseilles are among the highest worldwide. Malmö, where the Eurovision Song Contest was held, is a majority Muslim city where crime and violence are rampant and unhindered. Entire areas have begun to be evacuated of their original residents, whom police have failed to protect.

HAMAS'S OCTOBER 7 massacre in southern Israel sent shock waves throughout Western Europe. The joyous celebrations of the shocking massacre by Muslim immigrants and their calls for the eradication of Israel have been the cause of a change in public opinion in countries that until recently had accepted illegal immigrants, many of them Muslim, with open arms. This year, for the first time since 2015, the number of illegal entries is expected to exceed the million mark. The EP electorate's surge in support for right-wing parties indicates that patience has run out, and immigration laws need changing.

The main loser in the EP was French President Emmanuel Macron, who hastened to dissolve his National Assembly and called for a snap legislative election in the face of growing support for Marine Le Pen's far-Right National Rally party.

German Chancellor Schulz is dealing with the results of former chancellor Angela Merkel's policies, which allowed for a burst dam of legal and illegal immigration to wash over Europe.

Until recently, Sweden attracted the greatest number of refugees and asylum seekers from the Middle East. In the last elections, however the far-Right Sweden Democrats led by Jimmie Åkesson (based on the concept of "democratic nationalism" and social conservatism) became the second largest party in the country. After October 7, the government announced the cancellation of generous welfare payments to non-European immigrants. Last week, Åkesson called for a halt to the construction of new mosques in Sweden, and for the destruction of existing ones – identifying them as the source of antisemitism evidenced in the streets.

In the Netherlands, Geert Wilders's right-wing anti-immigration Freedom Party surprised pollsters and the entire continent by gaining 37 seats in the EP, with votes motivated by the promise of a "war" on political Islam and illegal immigration.



FRENCH PRESIDENT Emmanuel Macron holds a news conference after calling a snap French parliamentary election, in Paris, this week, on the heels of the European Parliament election results. (Stephane Mahe/Reuters)

In Finland, the new government incorporated the far-Right Finns party last week and closed its border with Russia – despite the risk of interstate conflict – because Moscow had sent several dozen African asylum seekers on bicycles to border points.

In Spain, in a blow to the extreme Left and to the PSOE, the party of socialist Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez, the Center-Right Partido Popular won 22 seats in the EP, out of the 61 allocated to the country. This follows last month's request by the Spanish Foreign Affairs Ministry that ministers refrain from using the term "genocide" in connection with the war in Gaza, since official use of such terminology would force the state to open its doors to up to two million Palestinians.

THE DESIRE to emigrate from the Gaza Strip is not new. A September 2023 report by Meir Amit Information Center for Intelligence and Terrorism stated that since Hamas's bloody 2007 takeover of Gaza from the rival Palestinian Authority, some 250,000 young people have left the Strip. Their initial stopover is Turkey, on the way to other destinations, mainly in Europe and Canada. This matter made headlines last September after violent clashes broke out in front of the Gazan travel agency authorized to issue visas to Turkey.

The most prominent reasons for emigration before the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas war were: lack of hope among the young due to high unemployment, scant prospects for university graduates, the collapse of the private sector, the high cost of living, the lack of a social care policy and the low level of services, especially in the mental health sector.

Recently, 18,000 immigration applications to Turkey were received in a single week. Currently, 83,000 people are on the waiting list to leave the Strip through the Rafah crossing.

Last month, CBS News reported that the Biden administration is considering accepting Gazans into the United States. Such immigrants would have to prove that they have family members living in the US as citizens and would have to undergo extensive background checks.

Coordination with Egypt would be required, as this neighboring country would have to host the Gazans while undergoing investigation for candidature to immigrate.

Will Egypt cooperate with the US? We will have to wait and see. The writer is CEO of Radios 100FM, honorary consul of Nauru, vice dean of the consular staff, and vice president of the Ambassadors Club.

## Arye Deri will do anything to help his friends



THE BROAD PERSPECTIVE

• By TAMAR URIEL-BEERI

A common philosopher's joke is about a kid who doesn't like spinach and is happy about it. When asked why this makes him happy, he replies, "Because now I don't have to eat yucky spinach!"

To the average person, this is cute at best, but to philosophy nerds, this is funny because of the situation's subjectivity. There is a vast difference between a disagreement of opinions, such as whether spinach is tasty, and a disagreement of facts, such as whether spinach is healthy for you. The flavor of spinach is a matter of taste and is therefore subjective; the health factors are not.

Boy, oh boy, can Israeli politicians relate to this scenario. For example, if someone – say, the right-wing ultra-Orthodox Shas Party – were to say that the "Rabbi Law" they proposed this week, which was ultimately shot down by the prime minister, is necessary so that Israel has rabbis, it might seem like an objective fact.

However, rabbis exist. They are appointed, just not by Shas. So, this is not an objective statement, because it is false. But is it an opinion?

Let's look at the facts. Shas's controversial "Rabbis Law" would have given the Religious Affairs Ministry, run by Shas, the power to appoint hundreds of rabbis to municipal and neighborhood rabbi posts. This power currently rests with the municipalities themselves, not the ministry.

Ultimately, this would have massively increased the ultra-Orthodox party's control over the country's religious establishment, taking it away from more qualified people on the ground: the mayors and local authority leaders whose understanding of their city's specific character is far deeper than some oversight ministerial committee.

Another issue, of course, is who those rabbis would be. Shas is a singularly religion-focused party attempting to advance its own interests regarding the separation—and lack thereof—of religion and state, religious appointments, and leading religious sentiments among the Jewish majority of the country.

With Shas at the helm and in charge of local rabbinical appointments, they would offer "jobim" — i.e. jobs acquired through unethical connections — to those close to them.

I opened this article with Shas's counterargument: that if they do not take control of these roles, there won't be any local rabbis. They explain that many municipal and local rabbis have either retired or passed away recently and have not been replaced. For that, however, deadlines must be established and enforced, not overall control—and not helping out pals.

Interestingly, this is Shas leader Arye Deri's specialty. He was on trial, convicted, charged, and later admitted to underreporting the value of property sold to his brother Shlomo Deri to avoid land tax. He also admitted to tax evasion, transferring funds to Shlomo from the Green Ocean investment fund, valued at NIS 534,000 of income, the taxes for which were never paid.

Let's forget that he sat in jail for nearly two years at the turn of the century after he was convicted of taking \$155,000 in bribes while serving as the interior minister.

His shtick is helping his friends out and making a profit in the process. Yet another issue is the chief rabbinate, which is largely made up of local rabbinical leaders. By taking charge of appointments, Shas would essentially control the chief rabbinate and, through them, its policies.

It is a good thing that this rabbis bill was shot down. I don't typically give Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu much credit, so this is a special occasion.

Israel is, by definition, a Jewish, democratic state – Jewish first. With appointments of local religious leaders out of the hands of local authorities, the democratic side of that gets smaller and smaller.

The writer is deputy editor-in-chief of The Jerusalem Post.



# The silent majority don't hate Israel

## They just don't care

By ANDREA SAMUELS

Living in Israel can give you a skewed view of what it's really like out there in the big, wide world in terms of antisemitism.

With an abundance of Jew-hatred on social media and the anti-Israel bias of the mainstream media, one could be forgiven for assuming that the whole world is against us.

But actually, this isn't how things are in reality.

While the haters spew their bile, shouting obscenities and stirring up trouble whenever the opportunity presents itself, there are even more who sit quietly – either supporting Israel from the sidelines or not giving much thought to the situation at all.

And why would they? For most, just getting through each day is enough of a struggle. The cost of living, family problems, and health issues – these are just some of the daily challenges that must be dealt with before the outside world even gets a look in.

A war in the Middle East is not going to be a major concern for anyone outside of Israel unless they are connected in some way.

I realized this during a recent trip to my hometown: Manchester, UK.

Before the trip, I was a little apprehensive, not knowing what to expect. With reports of weekly pro-Palestine marches through Manchester City Center, as well as other towns and cities across the region, I was minded to avoid these areas altogether.

Sticking to safe spaces, however, seemed somewhat sad and defeatist, and made me uncomfortable. Although I wouldn't go looking for trouble, I decided that nowhere would be out of bounds for me. Further, if the subject arose, I wouldn't hide my Jewish identity or where I live.

I experienced my first potentially tricky encounter midway through my trip when buying lingerie. I had spent some time with the lovely shop assistant, chatting amicably about our shared concerns and experiences (she was the same age as me). When it came to paying, she helpfully suggested that she would order one of the bras in a different color, to be picked up at a later date.

I politely declined, explaining that I wouldn't be there to collect it as I live abroad.

Then this happened.

"Where do you live?" she asked.

"In Israel," I replied.

She was stunned.

"Why...? Did you move there for work, or your husband's work?" she continued.

"I live there because I'm Jewish," I said, simply.

WITH THAT, she broke into a broad grin and asked me lots of questions. Although perhaps I ought not to have been, I was extremely surprised by her reaction. Her genuine warmth and interest in our lives was palpable, and a big relief.

On its own, such narrow anecdotal evidence cannot be regarded as an indicator of the general feeling among a whole population. Just

because the woman who served me didn't recoil at the mention of Israel, this did not mean that the Great British public would react in the same way.

I was able to gauge a more accurate view of the attitudes of Brits in general toward Jews and Israel the next day when I joined the Northwest Friends of Israel hostage vigil in Manchester City Center. This weekly event began soon after October 7, when over 250 hostages were forcibly kidnapped into Gaza by Hamas and their supporters.

Each week, around two dozen people stand in a busy shopping precinct holding large placards bearing the faces of the hostages while leaflets are handed out to passersby.

When I arrived, I was given a placard with a photo of Oded Lifshitz, 83, and was asked to stand alongside several others holding similar placards.

Some shoppers, clearly eager not to get involved, kept their heads down and passed through without making eye contact with anyone. Others took a leaflet but didn't engage, while a few stopped and chatted, asking questions in a bid to find out more about what's been happening.

At no time, however, did I see any sign of trouble, even from those who were "openly Muslim."

The only whiff of hostility that I witnessed was from a young woman with pink hair and a number of piercings and tattoos who seemed almost indignant to have been approached. She haughtily refused the leaflet with the reassurance that she did know exactly what was happening.

Other than that, the vigil was uneventful, as the organizers assured me was the case 99% of the time.

CONTRARY TO what I, and many others who live in Israel had been led to believe, Jew-hatred and anti-Israel sentiment is not rife on the streets of Manchester, the UK's third-largest city. And I'm reliably informed that it's the same across the country.

People with no obvious connection to Israel are, in the main, either supportive or simply not interested.

Happily, the hostility so often encountered on social media was absent in real life. Apart from when the bi-monthly pro-Palestinian demonstrations are taking place – which have caused significant disruption over the past months – everyone, including Jews, is free to go about their lives peacefully. The threats and intimidation that I'd anxiously anticipated never materialized.

You may think it reprehensible of the majority to remain silent in the aftermath of October 7. However, I do not believe it is reasonable to expect people, who have no connection whatsoever, to take the time and trouble to actively involve themselves in a decades-long conflict on a different continent.

After an initial interest in unfolding events, most people, understandably, simply slip back into their lives, perhaps dipping back in by watching the news or reading an article about it when time permits.

We'd do well to remember this when those with no connection to



A PLACARD with the face of hostage Oded Lifshitz, 83, is held by the writer at the Northwest Friends of Israel vigil in Manchester, on Sunday. (Lev Samuels)

the war in Gaza noisily extol the virtues of the terror group Hamas while criticizing Israel for defending itself.

The fear they have created among the wider Jewish community is borne of a toxic mix of ignorance and antisemitism.

They do not understand the complex nature of the situation and they certainly do not speak for the silent majority.

The writer is a former lawyer from the UK who now lives and works in Israel as a freelance writer for The Jerusalem Post.



EDEN GOLAN represents Israel at the Eurovision Song Contest, in Malmo, Sweden, last month. The silent majority of the world know right from wrong and support our right to defend ourselves, as clearly demonstrated in the Eurovision contest voting, the writer maintains. (Leonhard Foeger/Reuters)

## Reasons to be cheerful

By JONATHAN LIEBERMAN

I sense an air of despondency in Israel right now.

Some might even call it despair. I have heard comments such as "We are losing this war" or "We will never be secure in our beds again."

Someone even asked me last Shabbat whether I thought Israel would still exist in 20 years' time and whether I had considered leaving the country and bolting for the "safety" of my "home" in the UK.

These are comments and questions that would not have been dreamed of 10 months ago.

But people are weary.

They are weary of the war, which, despite the warnings from the army and government early on that it would be a long battle, we can't accept has lasted 50 times longer than the Six Day War and shows no signs of ending any time soon.

They are weary of the constant bickering, bad behavior, and lack of statesmanship from those tasked with leading the country.

They are weary (and in many cases angry) at the terrible press that Israel is receiving on the international stage.

They are weary (and so terribly sad) about the loss of so many hero soldiers and the plight of the hostages in the hell-hole of Hamas captivity.

There is fear, too.

Fear of what the future may hold for us – hence the questions asked of me above.

Fear that rising antisemitism, already growing in recent decades, has been fueled by Israel's response to the October 7 massacres.

We read of attacks on synagogues from Berlin to Paris to Tunisia to New York. For many Jews around the world, the attack feels like a precursor to the pogroms we thought had been consigned to the dustbin of history. This has shattered our belief that a homeland was meant to protect us

from precisely this happening again.

It is hard for many to see the rainbow after the storm.

But see it, we must.

In the 1935 film version of *David Copperfield*, W. C. Fields as Mr. Micawber says with immense optimism, "Remember my motto – *nil desperandum* – never despair."

This needs to be us, right now.

There is much to be optimistic about, much to be thankful for, much to celebrate, albeit in difficult circumstances. Let's list a few, and give thanks for the wonderful land we call home:

The initial response to the attacks of October 7 was nothing short of stupendous.

130% response to call-ups, volunteers in every sector falling over themselves to assist in any way, pick fruit, deliver supplies, help the displaced – let's not forget this incredible sense of community spirit and mutual responsibility.

I firmly believe that the silent majority of the world know right from wrong and support our right to defend ourselves. The noisy and vicious minority are not reflective of the real world. The voting patterns in the Eurovision Song Contest clearly demonstrated this phenomenon.

Polling of US public opinion consistently shows that over 80% of Americans support Israel, despite the noise coming from the university campuses.

The support from many governments around the world, notably Germany, UK, Australia – and – yes, our main supporter the US, should give us confidence in our on-going battle.

Despite the fact that 300 rockets were fired at Israel by Iran in one night, our God and our aerial defenses protected us.

The increased participation of women in the army, including combat roles, demonstrates the bravery, courage, and commitment of our young women to the security of the state. How many countries can say that?

Despite everything, Israel still ranks fifth in the world in the "happiness league," in a poll taken after the start of the war.

Israel's hi-tech sector continues to flourish, with massive investment and progress in cybersecurity and AI. After all we are the "Start-Up Nation." The figures for investment in Israeli industry are staggering – over \$3 billion has been invested by private funds in the past six months – clearly they are confident of our future.

On the streets, there is a massive commitment to our people, both at home where we have lined the streets with our flags in honor and respect of the fallen, and in our unwavering efforts to remember the plight of the hostages.

The rescue of four hostages earlier this month was a massive boost.

But, it was not only the wonderful news itself that gave me cause for celebration, but a small, almost unnoticed, phenomenon that demonstrated an empathy and mutual respect that personifies our nation.

The hostages were rescued on the Holy day of Shabbat, when religious Jews do not use the radio or TV or computers. Some non-Shabbat observant people put up hastily written notices in religious areas with the good news, so that the religious people could also feel the joy and relief.

Before, my religious readers have apologized and picked up their pens to write and castigate me – I am not per se celebrating breaking Shabbat – but the fact that so many people wanted to help their more observant friends to share the moment does demonstrate that we are, in spite of everything, one nation with one heart.

Yes – there is much to be optimistic about in this God-given land we are privileged to call home. So, let's concentrate on the good – and as for the not so good – as we say in Hebrew, *gam zeh ya'avur*, this too will pass.

The writer is a rabbi and physician who lives in Ramat Poleg, Netanya, and is cofounder of Techelet-Inspiring Judaism.

## Informed decisions, smart investments

In an age of uncertainty, AI is key

By DOR ELIGULA

In a period characterized by unexpected market outcomes and economic uncertainty, the investment world is facing many challenges as well as new opportunities. In such a situation, investors are eager for information that can help reduce uncertainty, and artificial intelligence (AI), as it has done in many other fields, is emerging as a central and significant force in the investment world.

The investment world is known for its volatility and uncertainty, and the current period is no exception. Crises such as COVID-19, geopolitical instability and conflict, and rising inflation, can lead investors to be afraid and confused about the future of their investments. At the same time, there are many investors who see periods of uncertainty as an opportunity to increase investment and even explore new sectors and opportunities.

As part of my travels around the world, I'm exposed every day to the concerns and doubts of many investors who feel lost and helpless in the face of the enormous amount of information available and the increasing complexity of the market. Despite constant uncertainty, and perhaps precisely because of it, the need for technological tools based on data and innovation is more essential than ever. At this stage, AI offers a clear answer to challenges arising from external factors such as economic uncertainty, political and structural changes, and changing world attitudes.

That's why, precisely in this challenging period, I believe that AI can serve as a significant tool for investors of all kinds, including professional portfolio managers, advisers, and also retail investors to optimize their work processes. AI-based technologies provide access to broad and in-depth information, while advanced data analysis enables more informed decision-making. The contribution of AI to the investment industry is expressed in several ways:

First and foremost, it enables the fast and accurate processing and analysis of large amounts of information. With the help of advanced algorithms and machine learning, AI can identify trends and potential investment opportunities.

Second, AI helps analyze market perceptions and investor behaviors. Through data analysis and market history, it can identify patterns of behavior and draw conclusions from market segmentation and in-depth information. In addition, AI can "explain" in simple and clear language to any investor or "participant" in the market the analysis of the data, which on the surface may seem complex or complicated – and make the "digestion" of this information much simpler for anyone, even those who do not understand the field.

AI also offers solutions and benefits to other areas characterized by uncertainty. Its ability to analyze big data, identify patterns, and understand trends can be useful in areas such as medicine, security and cyber, weather forecasts and more. In the end, AI is an important and advanced tool that improves the ability to make decisions based on accurate information and to manage processes efficiently and intelligently in a variety of fields and methods of operation.



THE WRITER addresses a Bridgewater conference, earlier this year. (Tzvika Goldstein)

It is important to note that AI technologies are not a substitute for the rich knowledge and experience of human investors and investment managers, but are an additional tool that empowers them and improves the decision-making process, in an informed, data-based way. Specifically for investors, AI can help in a variety of ways.

It makes it possible to identify investment opportunities, to identify specific stocks or funds that are relatively more attractive, taking into account a variety of factors such as independent, unbiased financial data analysis, news, analyst opinions, and more, and to make more informed decisions accordingly. AI can analyze the risk profile and preferences of each investor, and assist him in building an investment portfolio customized to his needs. It is important to use these tools carefully and responsibly while combining them with human knowledge and professional experience.

The capital markets are perhaps the most competitive "boxing ring" in the world. In this arena, it's crucial to equip yourself with the best tools and strategies to ensure victory. Knowledge and insights stand out as essential "winning tools," and AI can significantly improve your odds. Additionally, AI enhances the service quality of customer-facing advisers and relationship managers, further bolstering your chances of success.

I believe that AI will play an important role in the field of investments in the coming years, mainly as a tool for dealing with the unknown, in a fascinating and complex world. As technology continues to develop, AI platforms will become more efficient and accurate, providing investors with essential tools to make more correct, informed decisions based on accurate and reliable information, in a time of uncertainty. Also, its ability to identify trends and behaviors in the market, predict the future, and manage risks can lead to improved investment results, increase performance and profits, and improve the chances of success over time.

The writer is the CBO and co-founder of Bridge-wise, a technological research company that leverages proprietary AI-based analysis and language models to provide comprehensive insights into global stocks in any language.



# Mobilize the public for real war preparedness

*It's time to put Israel's economy and its society on an emergency footing*



**KNOW COMMENT**  
By DAVID M. WEINBERG

A cold, calculated analysis of Israel's strategic situation will reach the conclusion that this country faces a decade of tough warfare on seven different fronts, mainly against Iran and its proxy armies. Enemy armies and militias are entrenched on Israel's borders, with Iran actively arming and seeking to radicalize Palestinians in Judea and Samaria, as well as in Jordan.

Full-scale war with Hezbollah in Lebanon, which is two days or two years away at most, will be an earth-shattering event in particular, bringing inevitable destruction of unprecedented proportions to civil infrastructure in Israel (as well as in Lebanon).

Neither the Israeli military nor home front is sufficiently geared to handle this grim reality. Therefore, the government of Israel must embark on an emergency effort to significantly strengthen the IDF, and to mobilize the public in preparing for long-term struggle in wartime conditions. This requires the enactment of punishing economic decisions and a change of mindset, led by leaders with both grit and vision.

I believe that the Israeli public instinctively understands the dramatic inflexion point where this country now stands and the sacrifices that yet will be required to guarantee the country's very existence – beyond the enormous sacrifices of people and material that already have been made over the past eight months.

And I believe that the Israeli public, young and old across all partisan lines, is yearning – screaming! – for national leadership that will motivate it to participate in an escalating national war effort, despite the severity of the costs involved.

I am not talking about the many magnificent initiatives that have been launched by Israeli civil society organizations over the past year to support soldiers and their families, and to heal and comfort war victims. I am also not talking about barbecues for the troops, weekend retreats for war widows, or loans for devastated small businesses and farmers. Neither am I talking about the selfless activists who have rallied to advocate for Israel's hostages or to back the government's war goals against international pressures.

All these activities, from all sides of the



SOLDIERS UNLOAD an injured person from an ambulance at Ziv Medical Center in Safed, after a drone was fired from Lebanon by Hezbollah. Full-scale war with the terrorist group will be an earth-shattering event in particular, says the writer. (Ayal Margolin/Flash90)

political and social spectrum, are good and important, even heroic. And they certainly should and will continue.

RATHER, I am talking about extreme moves to shift this country onto a true wartime footing, in order to rigorously prepare for the imminent, overwhelming challenges ahead.

I am talking about activating the Defense Ministry's Supreme Emergency Economy Board to ramp-up and reinforce services such as hospitals, electricity grids, water and sewage networks, and food manufacturing and stockpiling. Israel must have at hand sufficient (again, massive) supplies of medicines, food products, and core industrial ingredients to outlast a one-year-long interruption in air and sea imports.

Also in need of colossal emergency augmentation: firefighting and rescue services. Far beyond the widespread forest and brush fires in Israel's North wrought by Hezbollah in recent months, and wildcat arson across Judea and Samaria perpetrated by Palestinian marauders, the Jewish state must be ready for large-scale industrial explosions and fires at key infrastructure sites caused by precision-guided, large-ordnance Hezbollah missile strikes.

Israel also needs trained personnel to clear and dispose of massive amounts of wartime debris. According to disaster specialist Dr. Efraim Laor – the longtime Israeli oracle of emergency preparedness for earthquakes, and for a chemical, biological, or nuclear strike – this could amount to 200 million tons of rubble, which itself could be contaminated, or that threatens to contaminate basic water supplies and interfere with essential sewage treatment.

THEN THERE is the military. The IDF needs to grow by at least three divisions. That is 50,000 soldiers more, with tons of military equipment. A gargantuan increase in the training of front-line troops is necessary, especially armored formations. The Israeli navy needs more than \$5 billion in new ships, submarines, weapons systems, and personnel over the next decade.

Israel's defense industries need to produce 10,000 surveillance and attack drones, 200 Thundermaker self-propelled artillery guns, 100 Namer armored personnel carriers, and 50 Merkava main battle tanks – per year. Israel also needs to self-manufacture 155mm artillery shells, and precision-guided missiles for the air force, in insane numbers. This is espe-

cially true since Jerusalem faces increasing restrictions on the use of US-supplied weaponry, and because there is a global shortage of such ammunition.

This is a very tall order – an almost impossible one – and it will cost hundreds of millions of shekels. Overall, it is estimated that Israel needs a huge build-up, eight times over the current manufacturing capacity of Israeli defense industries.

Besides the budget allocations for all this – and the concomitant cuts in civilian budgets that will be necessary – the Israeli government will need to mobilize the public to manufacture and man the above platforms.

It is time to raid the high schools, university campuses, and senior citizen homes for manpower; to press the entire Israeli public, young and old of all hues and stripes, into industrial and emergency service.

New factories and new rescue/response brigades need to be staffed by every able body. This inevitably will have to include segments of Israeli society that currently are underrepresented in industry and military.

And with political leadership that knows how to scare, inspire, and drive the Israeli public into the emergency super-structure and national crisis footing I am describing, I am certain that the public will respond with alacrity. I sense that Israelis are thirsting for such leadership; they are aching to be called upon for the Herculean efforts necessary.

SOME WILL retort that what I am calling for amounts to a near-complete shutdown of civil life in Israel – of education, culture, and leisure activities – and that this would be a major mistake. It would reinforce the assaults of our enemies who seek to indeed make Israel unlivable.

It would undermine our own self-confidence that despite enemy attacks, and alongside a painful war effort, everyday life in Israel proceeds apace with vigor, joy, simple pleasures (like vacation time), and with great accomplishment in all fields from science to music.

Nevertheless, it is high time for a national reset, for a forbidding awakening that marshals the public for the tough grind ahead. It is time to rally the troops – and that means all Israelis in all sectors and stages of life – for a period of intense national struggle; for sacrifice that goes beyond anything known to Israelis to date.

Maj.-Gen. (res.) Gershon Hachohen, who is the most ideologically rooted military think-

er in Israel today, argues that rekindling an ethos of national struggle in Israel now – and acting decisively on this basis – is both essential and possible.

He recalls that Israel's first prime minister David Ben-Gurion did this before and during Israel's War of Independence in 1948. It entailed throwing Holocaust survivors off the boats from Europe into battle, the drafting of teenagers into work brigades and senior citizens into factories and fields, and even the rationing of basic foodstuffs. It involved subserviating all aspects of the economy to the war effort.

After the Yom Kippur War disaster, Hachohen says, Israeli leadership also knew how to rapidly rebuild the military, aggregating every resource to do so – despite global boycotts, mushrooming debt and economic depression, and without succumbing to too much legal and other government bureaucracy.

Two years ago, the leadership in Kyiv also threw Ukrainians into national war mobilization, mustering a large fighting force within half a year and equipping itself with the newest battle technologies such as UAVs.

IN MAY 1940, prime minister Winston Churchill famously girded the people of the United Kingdom for an arduous path ahead. Before he drafted every single Briton into war service of one type or another, he warned that "We have before us an ordeal of the most grievous kind. We have before us many, many long months of struggle and suffering. I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears, and sweat," he said.

"You ask, what is our policy? I can say: It is to wage war, by sea, land and air, with all our might and with all the strength that God can give us, to wage war against a monstrous tyranny, never surpassed in the dark, lamentable catalog of human crime. That is our policy. You ask, what is our aim? I can answer in one word: It is victory – victory at all costs, victory despite of all terror. Victory, however long and hard the road may be. For without victory, there is no survival."

Israelis hanker for such leadership today. The emergency mobilization of society and economy described above is certainly necessary, and Israelis assuredly will be up to task.

The writer is senior managing fellow at the Jerusalem-based Misgav Institute for National Security & Zionist Strategy. The views expressed here are his own. His diplomatic, defense, political, and Jewish world columns over the past 27 years are at davidmweinberg.com.

## Remembering others



**GRAPEVINE**  
By GREER FAY CASHMAN

IN ALL the rallies and meetings held on behalf of Israeli hostages in Hamas captivity in Gaza, there is a tendency to overlook those who are not Israeli. The same goes for foreign nationals who were murdered by Hamas on October 7. These include caregivers as well as students who came to Israel to study modern agriculture. Among them were students from Nepal who had been in the country for less than a month.

Prof. Haim Shaked, the president of Hemdat College of Education in Sdot Negev, considered it important to go to Nepal to visit the families of the murdered students and to catch up with some former students to see how they had progressed. The latter visits were heart-warming but the visits to the bereaved families were heartbreaking. Most live in totally isolated primitive areas, Shaked said in an interview on KAN Reshet Bet this week. For each, the deceased student was not only a beloved family member, but the key to the family's future if he had been able to put to use the knowledge gained in Israel. Thus his death was doubly devastating, erasing all hope for improvement in the quality of their lives.

Moreover, they cannot understand why Nepalese citizens who have no involvement whatsoever in the Middle East conflict, should be among the victims of Hamas. Apparently, before their deaths, the students were equally nonplussed. According to witnesses, one student who was outside, kept shouting "Nepalese," while pointing to his chest, and another who emerged with his hands raised, was promptly shot, as was the other student. Hamas simply didn't care. They were on a killing spree. Thai workers and students were also among the casualties and the hostages, but according to Shaked, the Thai government put far more effort into securing hostage release and repatriation of Thais in Israel than the Nepalese Government has done.

The Thais likewise have no involvement in the Middle East conflict.

President Isaac Herzog has been in frequent contact with ambassadors of foreign countries whose citizens are among the Hamas hostages. This week he went a step further and held a Zoom conversation with the family of Bipin Joshi, an agriculture student from Nepal, who was studying in Israel when brutally kidnapped by Hamas. The young man showed great courage as he deflected grenades during the terrorist onslaught.

Herzog assured the family that Israel would continue to do all in its power to bring Bipin and all the other hostages back to Israel.

THERE ARE many questions as to what may have prompted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to insult US President Joe Biden and the US administration in general by releasing an English-language video that contained barely a grain of truth regarding American supplies to Israel. Politically savvy Israelis have come up with a variety of scenarios, but no one knows the real reason. One possibility in the opinion of this columnist, is that Biden is a more forgiving individual than former president Donald Trump who wants to get back into the White House. With US Presidential elections on the horizon, Netanyahu wants to get back into Trump's good graces, in the event that he wins. If Biden wins, sufficient time will have passed to permit a reconciliation. In addition, Biden will remain pro-Israel, no matter what. His quarrel is with Netanyahu not with Israel. The big question is whether Netanyahu will still be in office after the Americans decide on which of the two candidates they want as their president.

PRIOR TO the shelving of the controversial 'rabbi's bill' there were few people who thought that they might one day side with screeching MK Tali Gottliv. But when an attempt was made to remove Gottliv from the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee in response to her declaration that she would vote against the bill, a hue and cry went up over the fact that such a move would be undemocratic, and Gottliv found herself supported by people who might ordinarily shun her. In the final analysis, she stayed put.

EVEN THE best PR agent cannot compete with a doting grandmother – in this case, Jerusalemite Shoshana Gabbay – who wants to make sure that as many people as possible will get to see the English language musical *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* that is being shown in venues around the country from July 1. The cast includes Gabbay's 11-year-old grandson.

The Israel Musicals production is an ideal summer holiday treat for both children and adults.

Founded in 2007, Israel Musicals is a live theater company passionate about Broadway productions and reproduces them in the original language – namely English – in Israel.

Over the years, the productions have not only received favorable reviews, but have also revived nostalgic memories for many audience members who may have initially seen the production on Broadway or in London.

For those Israelis who don't understand English, there are Hebrew subtitles to enable them to follow the plot.

Although Israel Musicals has a regular team of actors, singers, and dancers, it always welcomes new on-stage and backstage talent.

Meanwhile, anyone who wants to have an enjoyable family outing with *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* should call 02-533-4561 during business hours (10 a.m. – 6 p.m.) to purchase tickets. Prices range from NIS 65 to NIS 105.

PR MAN and author Gil Samsonov launched his latest book *The Begins* at the Begin Heritage Center in Jerusalem last week.

Fellow author Micha Goodman presented a thesis on the road from politics to interviews and ideas about politics, on the path to reconciliation and unity.

Among those present were Eli Gonen, a former director-general of the Ministry of Tourism, Herzl Makov, the chairman of the Begin Center, and several former directors-general of government ministries and former CEOs of major business enterprises.

Samsonov had a previous launch in May at Tel Aviv's ANU Museum where those in attendance were riveted by a discussion between prominent journalists Ben Caspit and Amit Segal.

BUSINESS HAS started to pick up in the tourist industry and many displaced persons who have already lived in three or more hotels since October 7, have been given their marching orders. Fortunately, in some cases, they have received government subsidized extensions till August, but heaven only knows what will happen after that. Many residents of the North no longer have homes to which to return. Others refuse to return until the cessation of the daily barrage of rockets.

Frequent protests against inadequate action on the part of the government have been heard from the mayors of Kiryat Shmona and Metulla, but now Haifa Mayor Yona Yahav has added his voice. Haifa is the capital of the North, and generally speaking is a model of coexistence with joint Jewish-Arab cultural and business projects that should not be in danger of falling asunder.

In terms of tourism, there is obviously a cataclysmic drop with travel agents, travel guides, hotel managers and staff along with proprietors of bed & breakfasts feeling the brunt. In addition, because so many people from the North have moved away, many commercial enterprises have been forced out of business or are operating on a scaled-down level. This includes supermarkets. Yet in Tel Aviv, there are places where one would never know that the country is at war; and there are still hotels in which most of the guests are people who have been displaced from their homes. In most hotels, guests are pampered, and while



(L-R) MICHA GOODMAN, Gil Samsonov, and Herzl Makov. (Rami Shtibi - Begin Center)

they appreciate this, they miss the taste of home cooking, especially in those hotels where the majority – if not all the guests – are of North African background, and the hotels serve European-style cuisine.

One such establishment is the Hotel Jo whose general manager Yaakov Ovadia is well aware of this and invited one of the guests Tami Moyal, who is well known for her traditional Tunisian specialties, to occasionally make her mark in the hotel kitchen so that guests could have a taste of home. Moyal is also quite a Moroccan cuisine expert, so everyone is happy when she cooks. Hotel Jo is one of several hotels in which guests have been permitted to take over the kitchen under the eagle eye of the hotel's executive chef. It's a win-win situation in that hotel kitchen staff add to their culinary repertoires and guests receive what for them is soul food.

YESHIVA UNIVERSITY President Dr. Rabbi Ari Berman has conferred the inaugural Torat Tziyon Award on Rabbi Doron Perez, executive chairman of the Mizrachi World Movement, for being a voice of *emunah* (faith) and courage for the community.

Originally from South Africa, Perez made aliyah as a teenager and served in the IDF before raising a family committed to the ideals of Zionism. On October 7, his two sons – both officers – fought to defend Kibbutz Nahal Oz; Yonatan was wounded, has recovered, and got married during his rehabilitation period.

Daniel, 22, the commander of a tank crew, was murdered, his body taken hostage, and not yet returned. Despite his family's uncertainty and pain, Perez has helped to strengthen thousands, constantly stressing the connection between Torah, Jewish peoplehood, and the Land of Israel.

At the inauguration ceremony, Perez said: "Never before have I seen a need for leadership, specifically rabbinic leadership, to help



YESHIVA UNIVERSITY President Rabbi Ari Berman (right) with Rabbi Doron Perez. (Courtesy YU)

navigate the critical issues the Jewish people in Israel and around the world face.

"What is needed today are those who will stand up for Truth as it applies to the world and its challenges."

Following Daniel's death, Perez was given his son's diary in which the young man reflected on his high school trip to the death camps in Poland, and the price Jews paid for not having a state and the capacity to defend themselves.

Daniel considered it his purpose, privilege, and responsibility to protect his people and his family. "What is my role as a soldier and an officer?" he wrote. "I have the ability to defend. And if not me, then who?"

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## Culture clash

### Why prosperous kibbutz industries shun the stock market

#### FINANCIAL AFFAIRS

• By HEZI STERNLICHT

Analysis by business information company Coface BDI for 2021 found that the revenue of the kibbutz industry surpassed NIS 50 billion that year, and was 4.6% higher than in the previous year. Revenue per worker in this sector was estimated at NIS 1.5 million, which compared with an average of NIS 1.2m. for Israeli industry as a whole.

Kibbutz members, however, are not keen on sharing their industrial activity with the public, and instead of dramatic members' meetings on choosing an underwriter to lead an IPO on the stock exchange, they prefer to sell control of the factory or to sell outright to a private equity firm or an overseas competitor.

The result is a long series of exits in recent years, enriching the selling kibbutz by tens, and sometimes hundreds of millions of shekels, turning a few hundred kibbutz members into millionaires, at least on paper.

Why have exits with a fat check replaced flotations on the stock exchange that produce public companies that are generally profitable and growing over many years? An experienced investor who bought kibbutz factories in the past explains: "Within the kibbutz, there is a young population and a veteran population. What does the veteran population want? In the end, it wants cash, for example, because the daughter has left for Tel Aviv, got married, and needs help from her parents," for a car or a home.

On the other hand, the investor says, "The young people on the kibbutz come to me and say that they want us to stay for the long term. A young man in this category explained to me once that he might go to study engineering at the Technion, and then he would want to return to work in the factory. In many cases, as an investor. I find contradictory thinking."

"I have also bought several successful family businesses. The factory is never in their homes. On the kibbutz, it's different. So as an investor, when I come to a company that belongs to a kibbutz, I explain that I'm not looking for my own benefit, but first of all for a way of structuring the factory better, and then I'll also come out ahead."

Adv. Arnon Mainfeld, head of the securities and capital markets department at the law firm S. Friedman Abramson & Co., which deals with many kibbutz companies, says, "The

capital market has underpriced these companies for years, despite the fact that they are stable companies and not leveraged, with significant liquid assets, and oriented to overseas activity.

"These are also companies that distribute regular dividends. Instead of perceiving the steady activity of these companies as an advantage, the market sees it as a disadvantage."

At present, only nine kibbutz companies are traded on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange (not including Meshek Energy, which is held by an association of all the kibbutzim). These are generally growing, export-oriented industrial companies and four of them have market caps in excess of NIS 1b.

The outstanding company for returns in recent years has been Palram, the maker of thermoplastic panels from Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan. Its share price has shot up 70% in the past three years, to give it a current market cap of NIS 1.3b.

Another standout is Gan Shmuel, controlled by the kibbutz of the same name, which produces juices and other products from fruit and vegetables. Its share price has risen 52% in the past three years, giving it a current market cap of NIS 446m.

The kibbutz company with the lowest return is Maytronics, the manufacturer of swimming pool cleaning robots from Kibbutz Yizre'el. A downturn in its business has led to a 72% slide in its share price in the past three years.

The share price of Raval, which produces fuel tank ventilating systems for the automotive industry and is located at Kibbutz Revivim, has fallen by a similar percentage over the same period.

While kibbutz enterprise has been floated on the stock exchange for over a decade, the list of exits, that is, the sale of all or part of the holding of the kibbutz in its industrial enterprise, is very long.

Kibbutz Gazit, for example, sold Plazit-Polygal Plastics Industries, which produces plastic panels, to US company Plaskolite for \$210m., a few weeks after selling, together with Kibbutz Hama'apil, MCP Performance Plastic, which produces plastic trays for the food industry, to Danish food packaging company Faerch, at a valuation of NIS 229m.

Kibbutz Metzger sold the pipes division of drip irrigation equipment company Metzger-plas (now known as Metzger)



IN THE PAST, the sales of kibbutz enterprises could not be seen in isolation from the process of privatization that the kibbutz collective model had undergone. (Amir Cohen/Reuters)

to Inrom Construction Industries for NIS 150m.; Kibbutz Ha'ogen's Haogoplast, a developer of PVC products, was sold to German company Kap for NIS 105m.; Kibbutz Yehiam sold control of its sausage and cured and smoked meats factory Maadanei Yehiam to the Green Lantern fund for NIS 80m.; and Kibbutz Shamir sold its remaining 50% stake in Shamir Optical Industry to Essilor Luxottica for about \$500m..

A source closely familiar with the kibbutz industry told *Globes* in the past that the sales of kibbutz enterprises could not be seen in isolation from the process of privatization that the kibbutz collective model had undergone.

"As the kibbutz entered into the process of privatization more deeply, the question always arose of the sources for supporting the community over time - was it right that a community of a thousand people was reliant upon a single business? That drove a process in which the kibbutzim parted from their holdings and diverted resources to new businesses, for the benefit of their members. I see that phenomenon continuing."

There is also another reason for the kibbutzim to avoid the capital market: the huge sums that the enterprise transfers to

the owners, the kibbutz, annually, and that are approved by the shareholders. Two weeks ago, Palram, of Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan, summoned a shareholders meeting to approve an agreement for the provision of services by the kibbutz (such as carpentry, vehicle maintenance, groceries, laundry, photography, and film production) and of course the salaries of the workers that the kibbutz assigned to work in the factory. The reported cost of this agreement was almost NIS 60m.

In 2018, Tsahi Avraham's hedge fund Reading Capital fumed at a similar agreement brought before the shareholders. Avraham told *Globes* at the time, "It seems that Kibbutz Ramat Yohanan did not understand the need to behave in a more suitable fashion towards the minority shareholders and to share profits with them. If the kibbutz wants to take all the company's profits for itself, it should do the right thing and file an offer to purchase, and delist the company from trading."

Adv. Mainfeld believes that the capital market is missing the general picture.

"These companies buy services from the kibbutz, which is the controlling shareholders, under long-term agreements. These are amazing agreements as far as the company is con-

cerned because this way it has veteran employees with experience and expertise, a very strong connection to the company, and high motivation. But when the companies seek approval for these agreements, the capital market starts to ask questions, and often raises difficulties."

A manager from a kibbutz who grew up on it and today specializes in the management of kibbutz companies says that these frictions created resentment over the years and that this gradually led to some kibbutzim avoiding the idea of a flotation and preferring to bring in privately held funds to invest in the enterprise.

"The encounter with the capital market is a kind of trauma for the management of the kibbutz companies, chiefly in relation to the sale of services by the kibbutz to the enterprise," he says.

"For example, if there's a kibbutz carpentry shop that makes pallets for the factory's products before the flotation there is no question about ordering the pallets from the kibbutz. After the flotation, the kibbutz company finds itself having to speak a different language. It has to obtain approval from an external entity like a shareholders' meeting. It's a culture clash."

"Over the years, the kibbutz-

zim grew to understand what the capital market meant and how cumbersome it could be, and that's even before considering the costs of maintaining a public company. So it became more comfortable for them to approach privately held entities. The private funds are often experienced investors who come into the kibbutz and learn to take account of its needs."

So the privately held investment fund comes with a check in hand, which the kibbutz members yearn for so that they will have something to give their children, and also with a promise to settle the agreements between the enterprise and the kibbutz discreetly, without other vociferous shareholders who would be liable to thwart such a move. The capital market finds it hard to comprehend just how much the enterprise sees itself as part of the kibbutz, even when it is partly sold off.

Neri Nehorai, CEO of Plastopol Hazorea, at Kibbutz Hazorea, which develops and manufactures packaging for the chilled food industry, says, "The kibbutz companies always sought to innovate and invest, not necessarily based on 'return on investment.' They were always interested in being creative, and they have their own language. I was in a com-

pany that was known for years for its innovation and groundbreaking ideas, and to this day I see how purposeful these companies are and the quantity of new products that they come up with."

"The kibbutz company has undergone a process of financial strengthening. The industry, which underwent difficulties in 1984-1985, got back on its feet and set up good, strong, economically sound enterprises. The process of maturation continued in the last decade as well, when the companies turned for investment to privately held funds."

What is the capital market missing?

"The degree to which the sense of ownership of the kibbutz companies is important. I'm amazed anew every time at the strength of the commitment. In our factories in the South, in Sderot and other places, there's shooting all around and smoke from fires, but the workers do everything they can to get to work."

"I have a logistics manager from Kibbutz Nirim. He went back and slept at the kibbutz, almost alone, and every morning he got up and went to the factory so that the goods would be shipped out. These are people who feel that it's their home in every sense."

(Globes/TNS)



## SECURING OUR FUTURE:

## Israelis must see beyond views in black and white



EDITOR'S NOTES  
• By ZVIKA KLEIN

When Israelis are very into WhatsApp groups, especially family groups. My extended family group, with dozens of cousins, aunts, and uncles, came to life this week. Instead of the usual "Mazal Tov" on the birth of a new cousin, it was different: My cousin, Tzvia, in her late 30s and a mother of four, decided to enlist for reserve IDF service.

"Tzvia, a mother of four, a registered nurse at Meir Hospital, and a paramedic, has collaborated with the IDF several times since the start of the war," my uncle, Ray Rubin, posted on Facebook as a proud father. "She concluded that she could contribute more in uniform. Today, I took leave from my reserve duty to accompany her as she enlisted in a unique program for religious women with professional training in fields needed by the IDF."

He later explained, "They are all in medical professions and will likely be part of the statistics of the haredim (ultra-Orthodox)." My uncle Ray, who has been exempt from mandatory reserve service for decades, and my cousin Tzvia, who has a successful career and a family to raise, decided to step up because Israel truly needs more volunteers.

Though the ultra-Orthodox dress is black and white, the haredi draft issue has many shades of gray. Few problems in Israel are as tangled and fraught with emotion as the haredi draft law. It stirs deep passions, divides communities, and challenges the very fabric of Israeli society. Since the state's founding, the question of whether ultra-Orthodox Jews should serve in the IDF has been a perennial thorn in the nation's side.

Many leaders in the haredi world understand the importance of service but will never say so out loud. On the other hand, some secular Israelis want the haredim to join the IDF so that they can assimilate into Israeli society and break their strict traditions.

The law is not a recent development but a complex issue with deep historical roots. In 1948, when the State of Israel was still in its infancy, then-prime minister David Ben-Gurion granted a handful of yeshiva students exemptions from military service to continue their religious studies, aiming to preserve Jewish scholarship after the Holocaust. This modest exemption has since evolved into a widespread practice, sparking a heated debate about equality, national duty, and the role of religion in a modern state.

The story of the haredi draft law is like a legal and political soap opera. In 2002, the Tal Law was introduced to provide a formal structure for the exemptions. It allowed yeshiva students to defer their service indefinitely if they stayed in religious study. But by 2012, the Supreme Court declared the Tal Law unconstitutional, saying it violated the principle of equality by failing to ensure a fair distribution of the burden of military service.

What followed were years of legislative ping-pong. The Knesset tried again in 2014, passing a new law that included quotas for haredi enlistment and criminal penalties for evasion. This, too, was amended and eventually struck down by the Supreme Court in 2017, which said it perpetuated inequality.

So, where do things stand now? In the last few weeks, the saga has taken yet another



AN ILLUSTRATION OF a haredi man and an IDF soldier standing side by side, united, as is the army standing behind them, under a colorful blue and white Israeli flag. (Dall-E)

twist. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his allies in the haredi parties are working on a new draft bill. This one aims to lower the exemption age from 26 to somewhere between 21 and 23, thus enabling haredi men to enter the workforce earlier while still providing benefits to those who serve.

Different solutions were suggested, aimed at encouraging haredi Israelis to join the IDF: In 1999, the IDF established the *Nahal Haredi* battalion, also known as *Netzah Yehuda*, for ultra-Orthodox Jewish soldiers. According to the IDF, *Nahal Haredi* provides an environment that respects their religious lifestyles and accommodations for kosher dietary laws, daily prayers, and Torah study. This unit was meant to allow haredi youth to serve in the military without compromising their religious values, integrating thousands of ultra-Orthodox soldiers into the IDF and bridging the gap between their community and

national defense. That said, not all of the battalion's soldiers come from haredi backgrounds; many come from religious-Zionist or Modern Orthodox communities.

Earlier this week, I obtained a letter from Rabbi Yitzhak Bar Chaim, co-founder and rabbi of *Nahal Haredi*. He wrote to Maj.-Gen. (res.) Eliezer Shkedy about the contentious issue of recruiting haredim into the IDF. He highlighted the need for frameworks that respected the haredi lifestyle and values, noting that integration within the general army had led many haredim to abandon their religious practices.

"Without a fundamental change in approach by the IDF towards the need for frameworks that support the lifestyle and values of the haredi public, the community, its parents, and educators will not cooperate and will even fight by all legal and educational means at their disposal to prevent such recruitment," he wrote.

Bar Chaim stressed that the IDF's current approach lacked trust and failed to address these issues, leading to resistance from haredi parents and educators. He advocated for separate systems within the IDF to encourage haredi enlistment while maintaining their way of life. Unfortunately, Bar Chaim wrote that these suggestions were not included in the committee's recommendations, leading to internal conflicts. "The lack of trust in the sincere desire of the IDF to change its approach is the main reason why the recruitment of haredim has been stagnating in recent years," he wrote.

No one can claim that Bar Chaim doesn't want to draft haredim into the IDF; this has been his life mission. But his letter makes you wonder if there may be better ways to make the IDF a more friendly place for haredi Jews.

On the other side, Israel is at war.

Almost every sector in Israeli society has paid a massive toll these past nine months: the kibbutz members from the south who were butchered and kidnapped, the secular Israelis who were killed at the Nova festival, the many religious Zionist soldiers who were killed in action and are being buried on an almost weekly basis, and the Bedouin and Druze communities who have lost many of their sons in the army, as well as members of these groups who were killed on October 7 or kidnapped and taken forcefully to Gaza.

IT IS CLEAR: Israel needs more soldiers. Period. Full stop.

This isn't a myth. This isn't a conspiracy theory. Many of my friends have served for months, some even more than 200 days of active reserve duty. They paid physical, mental, and personal costs for doing so. Many lost friends or saw the most terrifying sights on

October 7 and onward. Some suffer from post-traumatic stress, fearing they might not possess the same spirit and strength they did at the start of the war when called back. The real question is: Why do these same individuals need to return to IDF reserve service?

Meanwhile, let's not ignore the importance of Torah learning. This is our essence, our culture, and our history. Preserving these texts is something that we should all cherish. That said, we cannot ignore the fact that the majority of Israelis believe it problematic that haredi Jews, as a community, are against serving in the IDF. However, we cannot begin a dialogue without acknowledging these elements. Though it is challenging now, we cannot address this issue without understanding nuance and seeing the good on the other side. Furthermore, negative public discourse has caused both sides to become more extreme and even toxic.

I support the draft of haredim. But I also know that if the government forces this draft, it will backfire. Therefore, the haredi rabbis and leadership must get off their high horses and make brave decisions; the Israeli sentiment is becoming very hostile towards them. Those who agree that haredim (at least those who aren't sitting in yeshivas 24/7) should enlist in the IDF must also understand what a huge step this group would need to take for this to happen. Also, we must not seek to change them but rather allow them to live according to their beliefs while serving and guarding Israel, which is under the most dangerous threat since the establishment of the modern Jewish state in 1948.

Let's not forget that the Hamas terrorists slaughtered left-wing peace activists in the same way they butchered religious Israelis. Hamas is the true enemy. Let's never forget that.

## An ugly war and ugly words



MY WORD  
• By LIAT COLLINS

*La guerre, comme a la guerre!* First attack Israel, then blame it for fighting back. I wish naïveté were sweet rather than dangerous.

There has been a lot of talk recently about what will happen if Israel goes to war with Hezbollah. This misses the point: Israel is already at war with Hezbollah. Thousands of rockets and killer drones have been launched at northern Israel since October 7, the black date when Hezbollah's ugly sibling in Gaza invaded southern Israel and carried out a mega-atrocity.

Some 60,000 Israelis remain displaced from their homes close to the northern border. Devastating fires sparked by Hezbollah rocket fire have wiped out vast areas of agricultural land, forests, and nature reserves. If this isn't war, it certainly ain't peace.

In an interview last week with Annon Lord in *Yisrael Hayom's* weekend supplement, Col. (ret.) Gabi Siboni compared US Secretary of State Antony Blinken to "a beauty queen who wishes for world peace. But she says it and then goes home; he remains and tries to force it." Blinken, Lord noted, was already calling for Israeli restraint by October 8. But you can't turn the other cheek when your face has just been blown to pieces.

Regarding the hostilities in the North, White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby went a step further this week, saying: "We haven't seen Hezbollah jump in with two full feet here. They have been, of course, conducting strikes across that

border. The Israelis have been defending themselves against that. We don't want to see escalation. We don't want to see a second front." Okey dokey. Should we just wait a bit for the terrorist army to cross the border like their Hamas counterparts?

It's been eight months since the horrors of the Hamas attack in which some 1,200 were killed – many of them tortured, raped, and burned to death – and some 250 taken hostage. Even before the deaths of 12 soldiers (in four incidents) were announced last weekend, Israelis were aware of the costs of tackling terrorism, as well as the dangers of letting it grow unimpeded.

There is a deliberate obtuseness in the international diplomatic community. Instead of calling on Israel to exercise restraint in fighting back, more could be done to prevent the attacks on the Jewish state. On the northern border, for example, it is widely accepted that the war on Israel is being waged by the terrorist organization Hezbollah (with Iranian funding and support).

But this ignores an essential point: Hezbollah is part of the Lebanese government. It might be hard to put pressure on a terrorist organization – which doesn't feel bound by international law – but a sovereign state could and should be held accountable.

BUT DON'T look to international jurists for support. The head of the International Court of Justice, Nawaf Salam, who last month ruled against Israel's actions in Gaza, is not only



PRO-PALESTINIAN demonstrators protest against Israel in Brooklyn on June 15. (Adam Gray/Reuters)

a Lebanese citizen but is also the country's former ambassador to the UN. Somehow, the judicial expert did not think this should disqualify him from judging a state with which his own country is openly at war.

The ICJ is run under the auspices of the United Nations, where the double standards against Israel are inherent. After Israel successfully rescued four hostages being held in two private homes in Gaza earlier this month, UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese posted on X: "Israel has used hostages to legitimize killing, injuring, maiming, starving, and traumatizing Palestinians in Gaza. And while intensifying violence against Palestinians in the rest of the occupied territory and Israel." You read that correctly: Israel is guilty of the consequences of Hamas having abducted hostages. Has she lost the plot, or is she making it up as she goes along?

European Union High Representative Josep Borrell also couldn't help himself. He welcomed the news that Noa Argamani, Almog Meir Jan, Shlomi Ziv, and Andrey Kozlov were "free and safe," and called for the release of the remaining hostages. Then, showing the more usual side of his two faces, he accused Israel of "another massacre of civilians" and described the situation in Gaza, based on Hamas's own figures, as "appalling."

Yes, Gazans were killed during the operation – that's because the Israeli rescue team came under massive fire (costing the life of counterterrorism commando Arnon Zamora after whom the operation was posthumously named). This residential neighborhood not only sheltered the terrorists – including an elderly doctor and his journalist son who were holding three Israeli captives – it was also riddled with terror

tunnels and overflowing with weapons. However, it was not starving, despite the Palestinian narrative.

FOR LIGHT relief, we will always have the moment BBC anchor Helena Humphrey asked former IDF International Spokesman Lt. Col. (res.) Jonathan Conricus: "Would there have been a warning for those citizens to get out in time?"

Conricus kept his cool and politely pointed out that if you warn terrorists that you're just about to run a rescue operation, "they would kill the hostages, and that would defeat the purpose."

Perhaps Humphrey, who has worked for both the UN and the Red Cross, really expected the terrorists to put the kettle on and make a nice cup of tea. Maybe we should have given a precise time for the rescue and asked the captors to make

sure the hostages were wearing shoes.

In Humphrey's defense, it should be noted that the IDF – unlike most militaries – does routinely warn residents ahead of operations in an attempt to avoid civilian casualties as far as possible. Perhaps this is what confused the TV journalist. Israel is expected to abide by a higher standard, even when it endangers its own soldiers.

ISRAEL AND France are also involved in a public battle. Citing the war in Gaza, the French government last week banned Israel from participating in the prestigious Eurosatory defense exhibition, where Israeli companies are usually in high demand.

Taking it further, at the request of pro-Palestinian groups, not only were companies prevented from displaying their products, but a district court also barred Israelis from attending the event without signing a waiver that they were not there in an official capacity. Representatives of China and Iran – fighting to make the world a better place in their own image – were free to come and go, of course.

For good measure, the court ordered that the letter announcing the ban be posted at the entrances to the exhibition. It was long and convoluted. But it could be summed up as "No Israelis allowed." It's a step away from "No entrance for Jews." A step in the same direction.

On Tuesday, after the start of the week-long event, a higher court overturned the ban as "discriminatory." Well, this is 2024, not the 1940s, whatever it feels like to those suffering from the effects of the worst attack on Jews since the Holocaust and the massive increase

in antisemitism worldwide.

At last week's G7 Summit, French President Emmanuel Macron announced that Israel, the US, and France had agreed in principle to set up a trilateral group to try to calm Israel's border with Lebanon. After the Eurosatory ban was announced, however, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant blasted France for displaying bias against Israel and declared that Israel would not participate in the French-led efforts.

Like Macron, US President Joe Biden and Blinken have also proven to be unpredictable in their position on Israel, one moment offering open support, and the next delaying the supply of weapons and trying to restrict IDF actions. This week's decision by the Biden administration to add members of Tzav 9 to the steadily growing list of Israelis being sanctioned in the US did nothing to improve trust.

The group protests (and peacefully tries to block) convoys of "humanitarian aid" to Gaza which, as members note, usually ends up in Hamas's hands, literally fueling the conflict rather than ending it.

The message that Hamas, Hezbollah, the Houthis, and their Iranian backers are receiving is that terrorism pays. No matter what atrocity they carry out, the "enlightened" world will ensure that the Jewish state gets equal blame.

In the perennially funny movie *Miss Congeniality*, hapless FBI agent Gracie Hart (Sandra Bullock) goes undercover to thwart an attack at the Miss America beauty pageant. She ends up delivering an impromptu lesson on the importance of self-defense. Wishing for world peace is not enough – you must be able to defend yourself.