



Bring them home
Col. Asaf Hamami, 41, kidnapped while fighting on the Gaza border

Historical justice
Trump seeks to rectify Egypt's and Jordan's failure with Gaza
Page 9



Sophie's choice
There is no other option but to get all the hostages back
Page 11



SMOKE RISES from the site of an IDF raid in Jenin yesterday. (Mohammad Mansour/AFP via Getty Images)

'Shock & awe': Jenin op. might backfire

ANALYSIS
By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

A series of explosions in Jenin yesterday conjured up the kind of fighting that has become hallmarks of the war against Hezbollah and Hamas.

The blasts were part of the IDF's latest operation to uproot terrorist infrastructure in Jenin and other areas of the West Bank. However, the large explosions that sent smoke rising into the sky from several locations represent a new way of war in the territory.

The images and their meanings were not lost on commentators. People seeing the videos of the explosions were reminded of Gaza. This sense that we are now seeing the war in Gaza expand to the West Bank, with similar tactics, is acknowledged on the Right and Left, among both pro-Israel and pro-Palestinian commentators. The explosions, designed to destroy terrorist infrastructure, have

thus had the effect of spreading shock and awe far beyond Jenin.

When we speak of "shock and awe," it is worth recalling that this terminology came from the opening US salvo of the 2003 war on Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Shock and awe are supposed to show an enemy what their adversary is capable of. This is a big difference from how Israel had waged war for many years before October 7, 2023.

Before that fateful day, the IDF sought to conduct precision strikes that often were so precise people might not have even known they happened with a lot of investment in special forces in the era between 2014 and 2023. However, the war against Hamas and Hezbollah has shifted the dynamic back to using more destructive power in West Bank operations.

But in the West Bank, the people cannot turn away from these images. Anyone

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Iron Wall could succeed where other W. Bank ops failed

ANALYSIS
By YONAH JEREMY BOB

Since October 7, 2023, the IDF has killed over 850 Palestinians in the West Bank, with over 90% of them said to be terrorists. It also said that it has arrested well over 6,000 Palestinians since the war began and carried out over 120 airstrikes in the territory.

In July 2023 and this past August, the IDF undertook massive and extended operations in Jenin and other parts of the northern West Bank. For a short amount of time, following these operations, there seemed to be a drop in terrorist activity. But this was short-lived, and Palestinian terror waves from the West Bank returned.

That is why on January 21, the IDF began "Iron Wall," its third major West Bank operation in less than two years, coupled with the nearly nightly raids it has been

undertaking since March 2022. The question is: How is this operation different from the previous ones, and might it mean that the IDF won't need to carry out another major one in six months?

The military has said it is proud that during the current operation, it killed over 50 terrorists – including around 35 in Jenin, Tulkarm, and Tammun – and that it arrested over 100 Palestinian suspects, along with the 15 airstrikes it says it has carried out.

However, these numbers seem like a drop in a bucket compared to the statistics of the overall war: Over 850 terrorists killed, 120 airstrikes carried out, and 6,000 suspects arrested. If Palestinian terror has morphed, found new recruits, and made comebacks after losing much larger numbers, what might

See IDF, Page 7

PM in DC to meet Trump, discuss deal, Iran, Saudi Arabia

Netanyahu wants to 'widen peace circle'

By AMICHAJ STEIN in Washington and Reuters

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu landed in Washington on Sunday evening ahead of his meeting with US President Donald Trump, where the two will discuss the continuation of the hostage deal, the fight against the Iranian axis, and the broader joint goals of Washington and Jerusalem.

One of the options that will be discussed will be extending the current first phase of the hostage deal, which was set to last 42 days, during which 33 hostages would be released. The initiative would be to extend the ceasefire while Hamas releases more hostages, critically distancing Hamas's demand of a full end to the war, including Israeli withdrawal – a demand Jerusalem opposes.

Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani called on Israel and Hamas to immediately begin negotiating phase two of the Gaza ceasefire on Sunday, adding there is no clear plan for when talks will begin.

The second stage of the deal is expected to include Hamas releasing all remaining hostages held in Gaza, a permanent end to hostilities, and the complete withdrawal of Israeli forces from the enclave.

Netanyahu is expected to meet on Monday with Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff – who was just in Israel and has met with several released hostages – to discuss negotiations on phase two of the deal.

A diplomatic source told *The Jerusalem Post* that the envoy is set to take an active role in the negotiations, as "Witkoff and

the Trump administration see themselves as active negotiators," in contrast to the Biden administration, which monitored and backed the negotiations but ultimately didn't bring them to fruition, the source explained.

As phase one advances, diplomatic and security commentators have set their eyes on the next stages, particularly on the livability issues in the enclave.

Last week, Trump said Egypt and Jordan should take in Palestinians from Gaza, which he called a "demolition site" following 15 months of war. Critics have called his suggestion

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ISRAEL AT WAR



Isolated, starved: Gadi Mozes's niece shares uncle's experiences in captivity, Page 2

Analysis: Friedrich Merz is trying to bury Merkel's legacy, Page 4

The 20 remaining hostages to be released in first phase

EXPLAINER

Jerusalem Post Staff and YONAH JEREMY BOB

There are still 20 hostages set to be released under the framework of the first phase of the Gaza hostage and ceasefire deal, after Omer Kalderon, Keith Siegel, and Yarden Bibas were returned to Israeli territory on Saturday.

Since the ceasefire on January 19, a total of 18 hostages – 13 Israelis and five Thai nationals – have been released in phase one: Liri Albag, Karina Arie, Agam Berger, Emily Damari, Daniella Gilboa, Romi Gonen, Naama Levy, Arbel Yehoud, Yarden Bibas, Ofer Kalderon, Gadi Moshe Mozes, Keith Siegal, Doron Steinbrecher, Seathao Bannawat, Thenna Pongsak, Rumnao Surasak, Sathian Suwannakham, and Sriaoun Watchara.

The five Thai nationals were not originally on the list of 33, but negotiators were able to secure their release later in the deliberation process.

The remaining 20 hostages are: Ohad Ben Ami, Ariel Bibas, Kfir Bibas, Shiri Bibas, Eliya Cohen, Sagui Dekel Chen, Itzhak Elgarat, Yair Horn, Tsachi Idan, Or Levy, Oded Lifshitz, Shlomo Mantzur, Eli Sharabi, Omer Shem

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'Haredim must join IDF, but must be respected for who they are' – Smotrich

INTERVIEW
By ELIAV BREUER

Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich is the leader of the Religious Zionist Party, which prides itself on combining Torah study and military service. Many of Smotrich's constituents have served long periods of reserve duty during the current war. The IDF needs more manpower to relieve the burden on the rest of the army.

Still, even though the legal exemption of haredim (ultra-Orthodox) from IDF service ended in July 2023, the government, of which Smotrich is a senior partner, has dragged its feet in increasing the number of draftees from the largest remaining Jewish manpower pool – the haredi public.

Smotrich sat down with *The Jerusalem Post* for an interview on Wednesday (January 29) and discussed the matter

at length. His views on the war in Gaza, the hostage deal, and other matters related to national security were laid out in a separate article.

He said that the fact that the haredim did not serve in the IDF was "painful," but that as a public servant, he did not have the privilege to act based on that pain. The easy option would have been to leave the government over the haredi lack of participation; the more challenging

but correct option was to take advantage of the current "historic opportunity" to create real change.

Change was possible now for two reasons, Smotrich said. The first was that in the past, the IDF did not need and did not want haredim in the army, but now there was a real need for manpower, and the IDF was showing that it was genuinely invested in drafting haredim.

The second was that

post-October 7, the haredi public had begun to accept that they needed to join the national war effort. Haredim are increasingly "uncomfortable" with the fact that they are not contributing and are increasingly open to fundamental change.

A sign of this change is that the haredi parties may eventually vote in favor of a draft law if it is reached via dialogue with haredi political and spiritual leaders, Smotrich claimed.

Haredi politicians adamantly opposed a bill proposed by the previous government in 2022 that required far fewer haredim to join the IDF than current proposals.

The fact that they are now willing to consider voting in favor of a bill that would draft a large number of haredim into the IDF and include "institutional and personal sanctions" against those who evaded the draft is unprecedented, Smotrich claimed.

He insisted that the only way the haredi draft could work was via dialogue with haredi leadership. This would take time, he admitted, as it was a significant change that could not be created from one moment to the next. The haredim did not have institutions that supported IDF service, such as the religious Zionist "Hesder" yeshivot.

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In Netanyahu-Trump talks, Gaza urgent but Iran is critical

ANALYSIS
By HERB KEINON

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump will meet in the Oval Office on Tuesday with Iran closer than ever to a nuclear weapon.

According to a report last week by Michael Singh of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Iran's breakout time in November 2024 was a week or less – compared to 3.5 months in November 2020. Breakout time refers to the period it would take for Iran, once it decides to do so, to produce enough weapons-grade uranium – using its existing stockpile of enriched uranium and operational centrifuges – for a single bomb.

Also in November 2020, Iran had only enough weapons-grade uranium to produce two nuclear weapons. Today, that number stands at 16.

Despite this alarming picture, media attention in the lead-up to the Trump-Netanyahu meeting has focused elsewhere – on the Gaza hostage deal and whether a second stage is forthcoming; on the day after the Gaza war; on

See GAZA, Page 7

Katz: Hezbollah will disappear if drones don't

IAF fires on two Gazan cars trying to avoid inspection in two separate incidents

By YONAH JEREMY BOB

Defense Minister Israel Katz on Sunday said that either drone threats from Lebanon will stop existing or Hezbollah itself will stop existing.

Speaking from an IDF position in Lebanon in a meeting with Division 146 Commander Brig.-Gen. Yiftah Norkin, Katz stated, "Israel will not accept the launching of drones from Lebanon." Several days ago, the IDF shot down a drone within Lebanon territory that did not appear to be attacking but rather collecting intelligence about Israeli defense positions.

"I advise the successor of the successor of Nasrallah not to make a mistake regarding Israeli determination as his predecessors did – lest he pay a heavy price," the defense minister said.

Katz was referring to Hassan Nasrallah, who led Hezbollah



DISPLACED PEOPLE carry Hezbollah symbols as they return to southern Lebanon yesterday. (Mahmoud Zayyat/AFP via Getty Images)



THIS WEEK IN THE KNESSET:

Haredi draft bill preparation advances in committee

• BY ELIAV BREUER

The Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee will hold a series of meetings this week for the preparation of a bill proposal to regulate the issue of haredi (ultra-Orthodox) service in the IDF.

The committee's schedule shows that the coalition is serious about passing the bill into law in the coming months after recent threats by haredi politicians indicated that a failure to do so may jeopardize the government. The committee meetings on the haredi draft in recent weeks focused on general principles, but this changed on Thursday when the committee began to debate the bill's actual language, paragraph by paragraph.

The legislation is a government bill that passed its first reading under the Lapid-Bennett 2022 government. The current government approved resuming the legislation from where the previous one left off. The Attorney-General's Office, which is responsible for providing legal advice to the government, said that this was "not legally viable," since the bill was no longer relevant to the current security situation.

The government ignored the A-G's opinion, claiming that renewing previous legislation was merely intended to speed up the process and that the text would be significantly altered. However, the coalition has yet to change the bill's existing language. The decision to renew the prior legislation is currently being challenged in the High Court of Justice.

Thursday's discussion focused on the definition of who is considered haredi. Government Secretary Yossi Fuchs said that the bill should stick with the current definition, which defines a haredi as someone who spent at least two years in a haredi educational institution between the ages of 14-18.

Members of the opposition, the A-G's office, and the IDF pointed out that the

definition was problematic, as it included people who met the criteria but no longer lived a haredi lifestyle and de facto no longer belonged to the haredi collective.

The committee on Thursday also began to debate paragraphs that lay out the quota of haredi draftees per year. The committee on Monday will continue debating this issue while also holding a classified meeting on the IDF's current personnel needs.

On Tuesday, the committee will formulate new quotas based on updated personnel requirements. It will also debate the paragraph that lays out institutional sanctions on yeshivot.

Fuchs last week outlined the most detailed version of the government's plan yet. According to the secretary, the government still intends to begin by drafting 4,800 haredim in the 2024 draft year (between July 2024-June 2025), 5,760 haredim in the 2025 draft year (July 2025-June 2026), and then a gradual increase until reaching a number equivalent to 50% of the 18-year-old haredi cohort within seven years.

This is projected to be approximately 9,000 out of a graduating cohort numbering 18,000.

Fuchs explained, however, that the yearly number of draftees would not come out of the specific graduating cohort but out of the entire "pool" of eligible haredi draftees, including older haredim who are still eligible for the draft. In other words, in seven years from now, according to the government's plan, 9,000 haredim must join the IDF, but they may include all relevant ages.

Regarding sanctions, Fuchs said that the requirement for the quota is on the haredi community as a collective. If the collective meets the quota, then all the eligible haredim who did not join the IDF will not be sanctioned and will be eligible for state benefits. However, if the collective does not meet the quota, all eligible haredim will be sanctioned and lose rights to benefits such as state-subsidized daycare.

According to the Attorney-General's Office, the government's plan may not meet constitutional standards, as it does not provide a legal basis for limiting the goal of the haredi draft to 50% of the annual cohort. It also suffers from procedural flaws – despite it being a government bill, the government did not debate the current version that Fuchs outlined.

In addition, the version laid out by the government secretary may not lead to the desired results. The head of the Finance Ministry's budget department, Yoav Gardos, said in the committee last week that history has proven that when the quota is a requirement on the collective, there is no incentive for the individual to enlist.

Even if the individuals will end up receiving sanctions, the individual haredi has no incentive to be the one to "fill the quota." In addition, positive incentives, as opposed to sanctions, have proven to be ineffective on the haredi public – already today, there are significant incentives to serve in the IDF, yet the haredi numbers remain low, Gardos said.

The Knesset Finance Committee this week has only one debate scheduled for the 2025 budget law. This continues a trend in recent weeks of slow progress on the budget, despite the fact that the government is now operating on a "continuing budget" from 2024 that hinders government decision-making procedures.

The finance committee will, however, hold two meetings on parts of the Economic Arrangements Bill, which traditionally accompanies the budget and includes major economic reforms.

Another central legislative proposal, to change the makeup of the Judicial Selection Committee, will not be debated this week, since Knesset Constitution Committee chairman MK Simcha Rothman, who is overseeing the bill's advance, is sitting shiva for his father, who passed away on Thursday.



RELEASED HOSTAGE Daniella Gilboa prepares a welcome sign ahead of the arrival of fellow released hostage Agam Berger at the Rabin Medical Center-Beilinson Campus in Petah Tikva, on Thursday. (IDF/Handout via Reuters)

Gilboa: All I did on Oct. 7 was pray; faith saved us

• BY EVE YOUNG

"First and foremost, I want to say thank you to the people who for a year and three months supported my family, did not give up, or lose hope for a moment," released hostage Daniella Gilboa said on Instagram on Sunday.

Gilboa was released from Hamas captivity just over a week ago, along with three other IDF observers taken captive with her from the Nahal Oz IDF base.

She also thanked supporters for waiting and for praying for her during her captivity, adding that this was her "final wish" before being taken hostage.

"I didn't want to give up and say goodbye, so instead, I prayed and believed with all

my heart that my end was not there – in that shelter."

She described praying for 30 minutes for all the women with her in the shelter, adding that this was the best thing she felt she could do.

"I couldn't hold on to the security that the army might give me and might come to protect me. I couldn't hold on to the security that the shelter might provide because it wasn't just missiles. At that moment, I also couldn't hold on to the few armed women who were there. I knew that the only thing that could save us was faith."

Gilboa added that she and the other observers who were freed in the hostage deal – Liri Albag, Karina Arie, Naama Levy, and Agam Berger – said the *Hagomel* blessing (expressing gratitude) on Saturday.

"I waited for that moment from the day I survived October 7 – to thank God, who against all odds saved us from the worst."

Gilboa also thanked her family and boyfriend, as well as the "heroic soldiers who fought with massive courage and those who gave their lives with one goal in front of them: to find and bring everyone home."

"With the help of God, we will very soon get to see everyone home," she added, saying that "we must not give up now."

"It's not over because there are still people who need to come back, and who knows better than I that you, the people of Israel who fight with all your strength, are the ones giving them that small hope in the great darkness."

State attorney opens criminal investigation into Sara Netanyahu

• Jerusalem Post Staff

The state attorney is opening a criminal investigation into Sara Netanyahu, its office announced Sunday.

Democrats MK Naama Lazimi's office was informed that the criminal investigation would be opened after she filed a request to investigate the actions of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's wife following an exposé by the *Uvdal* investigative journalism program on Channel 12.

"The prime minister's wife is a convicted criminal," Lazimi said. "I will not remain silent, I will not let up, and I will not let this affair be buried. Justice will be done; we will make sure it happens."

Lazimi stated that opening a criminal investigation into Sara Netanyahu is "important for parliamentary oversight, the justice system, and the rule of law."

She added that the prime minister's wife is "a convicted felon, and, as witnessed in the investigation [by *Uvdal*], acted to harm prosecution officials and discredit a witness – very serious offenses for which she must be brought to justice."



SARA NETANYAHU (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

According to the screenshot of a letter published by Lazimi's office, the state attorney informed her on January 30 that the investigation would be opened.

A special investigation allegedly exposed various issues with the prime minister's entourage, including that Sara Netanyahu deliberately created a system to harass witnesses against her husband in his criminal investigations, as well as harassing political players who were perceived as negative for the prime minister's ongoing criminal investigations.

Some of these political players included Yisrael Beytenu chairman Avigdor Liberman and Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, as well as prosecutors in the criminal investigation cases.

Gadi Mozes' niece: He created a routine in Hamas captivity, knew partner had been killed from news

• BY EVE YOUNG

Freed captive Gadi Mozes was "very, very scared" as he made his way to Red Cross vehicles through a huge mob of Gazans and terrorists when he was released on Thursday, his niece Efrat Machikawa said.

"He was terrified that something would happen to Arbel [Yehoud] or the Thai citizens" – captives released just before him, Machikawa explained.

While in captivity, he was able to catch snippets of the news, she said, adding this is how Mozes learned that his partner, Efrat Katz, had been killed.

Mozes was taken captive after leaving his safe room in an attempt to save Efrat and her daughter and granddaughters on October 7, 2023. He hoped that by leaving the safe room and talking to the terrorists, he could make them think he was alone in the house.

After Gadi was taken away by terrorists, Efrat was likely killed by Israeli helicopter fire, according to an IDF from April. Her



RELEASED HOSTAGE Gadi Mozes embraces his family as they are reunited at Sourasky Medical Center in Tel Aviv on Thursday. (Maayan Toaf/GPO/Handout via Reuters)

daughter Doron was taken captive with her children before being released in the November 2023 deal.

While Mozes knew that something terrible had happened on his kibbutz, he did not know the full devastation, his niece said, adding that he still does not know everything and is being filled in on infor-

mation slowly since his return to Israel.

"I don't think he knows how devastating the damage [to Nir Oz] is," she said.

Mozes was held above ground throughout his captivity and moved from place to place, according to his niece.

Asked if Mozes was sharing information about his time in

captivity, Machikawa explained that Mozes has always been the family's storyteller.

Since his return, he has shared freely with the family, giving them a strange sense of déjà vu, she said, adding that he manages to insert sarcasm and humor into the stories despite the difficult subject matter.

His stories about his time in captivity are terrible, she said, explaining that because Mozes is 80 years old, even sleeping on the floor was a challenge.

He used to count his steps, walking up to 10 km. back and forth in the spaces where he was held to keep his body healthy, she said.

He also had mental techniques he used to keep his mind as healthy as possible, she added, explaining that he would think about his future and his work and read books he insisted his captors give him.

He somehow managed to create a routine in captivity that helped him survive, she said.

The first time he hugged his niece after being released, he

said, "I'm alive. I'm normal," she recounted, explaining that she could tell Mozes knew his long captivity, most of it spent alone, could have had a significant impact on his mental health.

He knew that time in captivity could cause him to be "twisted or changed," she said, so that was the first thing he said.

"He is somehow OK," she said, adding that he lost a huge amount of weight in captivity and is still being examined in the hospital.

While Mozes is safe, the work is not done, Machikawa stressed. "We must bring all the hostages home."

This is for the hostages and their families but also for the sake of the State of Israel, its social solidarity, and healing, she explained.

While she described herself as joyful and relieved, Machikawa added that knowing what Mozes endured in captivity has only made her sense of urgency about bringing the other hostages home stronger. "Every single minute matters."

'I can finally see the light at the end of the tunnel'

Brother of hostage Guy Gilboa-Dalal discusses second phase of the deal, expresses optimism

• BY ARIELA OHRENSTEIN

"There is no one emotion that we [the hostage families] feel," Gal Gilboa-Dalal, whose brother, Guy Gilboa-Dalal, is still being held in Hamas captivity, said on Wednesday, discussing his expectations for the second stage of the hostage-ceasefire deal.

Gal spoke of how complicated the situation is at the moment for the hostage families who are not part of the first stage.

"On one hand, seeing the people that we fought for being released gives us tremendous hope and great strength."

However, he also stressed that "there are so many things that could happen" before the second phase.

"It makes a lot of us very worried, especially when we're speaking about the next phase."

Gal expressed the hope he has for the second phase of the deal. "I have no doubt that I will see him again." He explained that although there have not been any signs of life since October 7, he is still extremely optimistic. Hamas released a hostage video of Guy, Almog

Meir Jan, and Evyatar David on the day of the attack, and Almog was rescued, but until that point, no one knew anything about his status either. This gives Gal hope.

Gal said that Guy is young, healthy, and strong, so he sees no reason why Guy would not come back alive. He also emphasized the fact that Guy is not a soldier but is a civilian and so "he's worth so much more to them [Hamas] alive."

Touching on the incoming administration, Gal expressed he has more hope than ever before. He believes that President Trump is exerting significant pressure on both sides to secure the rest of the deal. "We trust that Trump will use his strength to make sure that the deal will eventually be signed," he said.

On October 7, Guy and Gal attended the Supernova Music Festival. Gal survived the massacre and returned home, while Guy was taken hostage by Hamas terrorists and has been held captive ever since.

"I went there to watch over him, and I came back without him," Gal explained that he was not supposed to go to the

festival, but he went for Guy since it was his first time at any festival of this kind and so Gal would be able to look out for him. Gal shared the guilt he felt that day, "Just imagine if you have kids. Losing your kids at the mall for one minute, what's going through your mind."

Gal said that the Nova Festival was a gathering of all different people, united by their advocacy for peace, his brother, Guy, being one of them. This is what made it even more difficult for him to grasp that Guy could have been taken hostage.

Gal expressed how his family has supported each other throughout this period. "We give each other strength," he said.

He also discussed Guy's close relationship with him and his sister. "Guy's my baby brother, but he's also an older brother for my little sister." He explained that despite their seven-year age gap, he and Guy are best friends who share the same hobbies and interests.

Gal mentioned that Guy is a self-taught guitar player and loves Japanese culture, to the extent that he planned to go on a trip to see the *sakura* (cherry

blossom) in Japan last April. "He even taught himself to read and write in Japanese to go on this trip."

Gal conveyed the impact of Guy's time in captivity on the rest of his family physically and emotionally, saying, "I left home a year before he was kidnapped. My little sister was left alone to deal with my parents. It affects the mind and the body." Guy and Gal's mother, Meirav, recently had open-heart surgery.

Gal also stressed how he and his family, along with his friends, are desperate for Guy to come home. "It's not like you forget his face or his voice, but once you hear it again, it takes you back to a conversation with him, a moment with him." He added that he is tired of seeing pictures; he just wants to see Guy.

He describes Guy as "the kind of guy that makes you laugh" and how "he has so many friends, and they all consider him their best friend."

Gal's main message was one of hope. He explained that everybody has some role to play in the return of the hostages. "With everyone doing what they can, in the end we will bring them home."

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Starved released hostages are able to stand. Here's why

• By ITAY GAL

After nearly 500 days of extreme starvation and drastic weight loss, Keith Siegel, Yarden Bibas, and Ofer Kalderon returned home – walking on their own, communicating, and functioning. Their overall condition appears good, but only in the coming days will medical evaluations reveal their true health status and the long-term effects caused by months of severe malnutrition.

Still, from the initial footage, medical officials were relieved to see the three functioning well – walking, waving, carrying weight, standing steadily, appearing alert, and even in high spirits.

“We have seen in previous cases that, before their release, some hostages were given large amounts of food, and in some cases, also medications – either sedatives or stimulants,” explains Prof. Ronit Endevelt, a clinical nutritionist from the University of Haifa and a nutrition consultant for the Hostage Task Force.

“It appears that the returning hostages, both from today and previous, have experienced significant weight loss. The full effects will become clearer later, but the adrenaline from being released, along with the possibility that they were given large amounts of food or certain medications, could have contributed to their elevated mood and high energy levels.”

According to Endevelt, the recent release of five Thai civilians reinforced the theory that hostages are given large amounts of food before their release.

“When the Thai hostages reached the border, the Egyptians gave them an abundant amount of food, which can actually pose a life-threatening risk. After months of surviving on minimal food intake, suddenly consuming a large amount can trigger refeeding syndrome, which is extremely dangerous and even fatal.”

Endevelt further explained that historical evidence from Holocaust survivors demonstrated the devastating effects of prolonged starvation.

“During the Holocaust, Jews sometimes survived on just 300 calories a day or less. When a person lives on such a minimal amount of food for an extended period, their body adjusts, and like in cases of anorexia, the hunger signals stop. They simply don't feel hungry anymore.

“On top of that, these hostages were confined in tunnels or apartments, with no movement. Critical systems deteriorate – muscle loss, heart damage, immune system collapse, and even cognitive impairment.”

According to the Health Ministry guidelines, each returning hostage undergoes vital signs monitoring – including heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen saturation – every four hours for the first 24 hours of refeeding.

Additionally, each hostage undergoes comprehensive blood tests. Based on the results and their body mass index, nutritional deficiencies are corrected gradually.

Under the Health Ministry's protocol, hostages are categorized according to their BMI: A BMI of 16 to 18.5 (the normal range starting at 20) is considered moderate risk. A BMI below 16 is classified as high risk and indicates severe starvation.

Nutritional rehabilitation includes a daily multivitamin for at least 30 days, vitamin D supplementation due to prolonged deprivation of sunlight, and vitamin B12.

Hostages in moderate-to-high-risk categories also receive fluid supplementation based on their body weight and caloric intake adjustments to compensate

for deficiencies. Their progress is closely monitored, with the goal of increasing calorie intake by 33% of the target every one to two days. The ultimate objective is to restore full nutritional needs within five to 10 days.

Despite the relatively good outward condition of Bibas, Siegel, and Kalderon, only their blood test results will confirm the full extent of their physical state and the long-term effect of prolonged starvation and horrific captivity conditions.

In addition to psychological rehabilitation, special forces will be placed on restoring essential vitamins, minerals, proteins, and fats to rebuild their skeletal, muscular, and organ systems.



RELEASED AMERICAN-ISRAELI hostage Keith Samuel Siegel who was kidnapped on October 7, embraces a loved one as he is reunited with his family at Sourasky Medical Center in Tel Aviv, on Saturday. (Ronen Harish/GPO/Handout via Reuters)

Five freed Thai hostages to be given permanent resident status – Arbel

• By JOANIE MARGULIES

The five Thai nationals who were released on Thursday from Hamas captivity in Gaza will be granted Israeli resident status as a gesture, Interior Minister Moshe Arbel (Shas) said at a Sunday meeting with Thai Foreign Minister Maris Sangiampongsa, Israeli media reported.

Sangiampongsa and Arbel discussed expanding the agreement between the two nations into other employment sectors within Israel, beyond home care and agriculture.

Arbel responded to the strategic move, telling *The Jerusalem Post*, “Hamas is a proxy of Iran. Its entire goal is to harm life and freedom against Jews and

non-Jews alike. We need to join hands together and fight this evil. Today, we grant residency to Thai workers, and this is the least possible for those who have decided to link their fate with the State of Israel.”

Thenna Pongsak, 36; Sathian Suwannakham, 35; Sriaoun Watchara, 33; Seathao Banawat, 27; and Rumnao Surasak, 32, are the Thai nationals expected to receive residency. At least one living Thai hostage, Pinta Nattapong, 35, remains in captivity.

Anti-immigration activists opposed the gesture, calling it a “nail in the coffin” for Israel's internal affairs. They claimed that offering residency to the released captives would force

them to stay in Israel, rather than return to “paradise” at home.

According to Thai Ambassador to Israel Pannabha Chandramaya, foreign workers from Thailand in Israel are their family's “primary breadwinners.” The bodies of two remaining Thai citizens who were killed on October 7 remain in the hands of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). Rintalak Suttisak, 43, and Sahaot Banawat, 30, were both murdered and kidnapped from Kibbutz Be'eri.

Hamas and PIJ are still holding 24-year-old Nepalese foreign national Joshi Bipin, as well as the body of Tanzanian national Joshua Luito Mollel.

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Friedrich Merz is trying to bury Merkel's legacy

ANALYSIS

• By ELDAD BECK

Last week, Friedrich Merz, leader of the German conservative Christian-Democratic Union (CDU) party, won a significant victory and lost an important battle on his journey to become Germany's next chancellor in the February 23 general election.

Both the victory and defeat had to do with the central issue of the electoral campaign: stopping mass immigration to Germany and, in other words, burying the open borders policy of the last conservative Chancellor, Angela Merkel, which has become a deadly burden not only to her party but to Germany as a whole.

Merz, who was forced out of the CDU's leadership more than two decades ago and returned only after Merkel left politics in 2021, knows that escaping her shadow is crucial to restoring the conservative character of the CDU, thus allowing it to win an election comprehensively.

He wishes to reaffirm the ideological borders between the Right and Left and, at the same time, keep a line separating him from the far Right, whose voters he still wants to win again. But such a political juggling act is a perilous endeavor, as last week showed.

First, on Wednesday, Merz won a symbolic victory, which, in the context of German politics, was very necessary for him and his conservative camp to make it clear to the German voters that the CDU is officially getting rid of Angela Merkel's legacy of the *Willkommenkultur* (Welcoming Culture) – opening Germany's borders to mass immigration.

Only three and a half weeks before the general election, Merz broke a gentleman's agreement with the other "democratic" center-left parties not to initiate votes in the Bundestag on resolutions that will be supported by the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party – considered by the German political establishment as "extreme Right" and as a "threat" to Germany's democratic order.

Merz decided to put to the vote a five-point motion on stopping mass illegal immigra-



PEOPLE ATTEND a protest against the migration plans of the Christian-Democratic Union party leader and top candidate for chancellor Friedrich Merz in Berlin yesterday. (Annegret Hilse/Reuters)

tion to Germany by renewing control over Germany's borders with all neighboring countries, blocking the entry to Germany of all those who don't possess valid documents including asylum seekers, and arresting and deporting illegal and criminal immigrants who lost their bid or right to stay in Germany.

This resolution, which has no binding validity, was adopted with an unprecedented majority combining for the time since 2017 – the year the AfD was elected for the first time to the Bundestag. The three right-wing parties in the Bundestag, the Conservative Union (Christian-Democrats and Bavarian Christian-Socials), the AfD, and the liberal FDP voted together.

Such political cooperation was unimaginable until now, as the Conservative Union and Merz himself still exclude any future coalition with the AfD on federal and local levels.

THE APPEARANCE of the AfD in German politics in 2013

made it impossible to form a right-wing government in Germany. The Conservative Union followed the famous words of the former prime minister of Bavaria and mythological leader of the Christian Social Union, Franz Josef Strauss, who was a very close friend of Israel, according to whom "there must be no democratically legitimate party right of the CDU-CSU."

The CSU is traditionally considered more conservative than the "sister party," the CDU. Strauss expressed this view in the summer of 1987, two years before the fall of the Berlin Wall and three years before the reunification of Germany.

At that time, a new extreme-right party, Die Republikaner (The Republicans), was gaining popularity and was hoping, as other extreme-right parties before it, to cross the 5% vote threshold that would allow it to be elected to the Bundestag.

The political barrier to the Right set by Strauss, which was

meant to hold back any breakthrough of electoral nationalistic forces on the national level, was broken by the AfD. The AfD was formed 12 years ago by liberal, conservative, and national forces as a protest against the general policies of the then-conservative chancellor, Angela Merkel.

The founders of the AfD explained that Merkel had transformed the Conservative Union into a center-left party, and Germany desperately needed a renewal of the conservative and national spirit, which would detach it from its obligations to the EU and dependence on the USA. The AfD was immediately branded by its political rivals, from the Left and Right, as an extreme-right party and haven of neo-Nazis.

In the general election of 2013, the AfD almost crossed the 5% threshold, and by attracting votes from the conservatives and weakening the liberals, it was impossible for

Merkel, despite her biggest electoral victory ever, to form a right-wing coalition. Merkel was forced to join forces with the Social Democrats, thus strengthening the claim of the AfD that Merkel was a "lefty."

The "refugee crisis" of 2015 and Merkel's decision to open Germany's borders to mass immigration that completely transformed Germany's social fabric enabled the AfD to make a historic electoral breakthrough in the general elections of 2017 and become the third-largest party in the Bundestag after receiving 12.6% of the votes.

DESPITE HAVING a right-wing majority composed of the conservatives, the AfD, and the liberals, Merkel categorically refused any cooperation with the AfD and had no other option but to form another government with the Social Democrats.

In the last general election, in 2021, after Merkel's depar-

ture from politics, the conservatives lost for the first time in 16 years. A center-left government was formed, and the AfD became the fifth-largest group in the Bundestag, with 10.5% of the votes.

All those who predicted that the AfD would be a short-lived and passing phenomenon had to admit the far-right party has become an important and relatively stable political element, especially in former East Germany. The most recent voting polls ahead of February's election suggest that the AfD will get 20-23% of the votes and will become the second-largest party in the Bundestag.

According to the polls, the conservatives and the AfD could have a comfortable majority to govern after the election. But Friedrich Merz fiercely held to the *Brandmauer* (Firewall) approach, banning any cooperation with the AfD. If he holds his promise, he will have to follow Merkel's steps and form a government either with the Social Democrats or even for the first time with the Greens.

However, Merz knows that if he wants a clear-cut victory in the upcoming election, he has to get rid of any similarity to Merkel and become an anti-Merkel figure. Only by doing so can he hope to seduce the voters of the AfD.

Therefore, he took the risk of joining forces with the AfD and breaking a political taboo in initiating his anti-immigration resolution at the Bundestag, which was rightly named by the German press the "hot air resolution" since it has no legal effect or validity.

With this resolution, Merz made himself attackable: The left parties accused him of "selling his soul" to the AfD. Left activists held loud demonstrations in front of the CDU headquarters in Berlin and attacked or occupied other branches of the party, calling its leader "Friedrich von Hindenburg" after Paul von Hindenburg, the German president who played a key role in the Nazi seizure of power by nominating Adolf Hitler as Chancellor in 1933.

Even Angela Merkel, who prefers avoiding any public involvement in daily politics, published a statement harshly criticizing Merz's maneuver. The AfD, in a bear hug,

congratulated Merz for finally adopting its proposed policies on immigration. Alice Weidel, the AfD's candidate for chancellor, still dreams that she will be able to mobilize the voters and win the election.

HOWEVER, MERZ insisted on pushing forward his tougher line on immigration. On Friday, he brought to vote in the Bundestag an "Influx Limitation Law" proposal aimed at tightening existing migration laws in Germany. This time, Merz suffered a severe blow, as the legislation proposal was rejected due to defections from his own party, with 338 deputies voting for it and 349 rejecting it.

Twelve voters from those who voted against the law proposal were needed for victory, this time not symbolic but effective. Twelve deputies of the Conservative Union did not cast the vote as a protest against Merz's leaning again on the AfD to assure a majority. Among the liberals, 23 deputies avoided supporting the proposed law.

Merz accused the left parties, the Social Democrats and the Greens, of rejecting any compromise on such an important issue. The Left took pride in "closing the doors to hell," opened by Merz's cooperation with the AfD. The AfD, hoping to take advantage of Merz's defeat, declared that the result of the vote was "the dismantling of Merz as a chancellor candidate."

But Merz, a real conservative, knows that whatever government he might lead after the election will have to change the direction of Germany and the EU. The resolution he passed with the support of the AfD and the rejected law proposal show the way he wants to go.

Today, he has enough partners all over Europe, from Sweden to Italy and from the Netherlands to Poland, to change old policies and choose another path to stop mass immigration and send as many "refugees" as possible back home.

Merz knows that Europe has no other alternative but to bury Merkel's legacy and choose Trump's immigration method. That's the only possible way to try and save Europe, even if it might already be too late.

Iran sends message to West with underground 'missile city'

ANALYSIS

• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

Iran sent a clear message to Israel, the US, and some Gulf states over the weekend, as the IRGC unveiled an underground base housing cruise missiles "designed to target destroyers in strategic southern waters," state media said.

The report was published on the same day as the Chief of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Maj-Gen. Mohammad Bagheri celebrated "Islamic Revolution Guards Day."

The unveiling of the underground "missile city," as Iran terms these types of bases, is not new. Iran has unveiled them in the past and emphasized different capacities for these underground facilities. Iran's goal is to show it can keep a lot of its forces underground in case of an attack by adversaries.

Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Commander-in-Chief Maj-Gen. Hossein Salami visited the missile city on Iran's southern shores on Saturday, state media said.

"During the visit, Salami inspected the combat readiness of the IRGC Navy's missile units at the new facility. The upgraded missiles stationed in the subterranean base are also equipped to counter electronic warfare and can be operational in the shortest time possible."

Iran's state media said this is the third underground missile base unveiled by the IRGC in less than a month. "On January 18, the IRGC Navy showcased an underground naval missile base in an undisclosed location in the Persian Gulf. Earlier, on January 10, the IRGC's Aerospace Force had unveiled another underground missile city."

Many messages are being conveyed here. The underground naval base that was revealed in mid-January was not impressive and showed that Iran had a way to keep some of its smaller fast boats underground.

The report said Iran's ballistic missiles are a deterrence against Israel and the US. This comes as Iran is also seeking to reopen possible talks with the US and is also working on its nuclear weap-

ons program. In 2024, Iran launched two large-scale attacks on Israel using ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones.

Meanwhile, Iran was celebrating a day devoted to the IRGC. "Bagheri also honored the sacrifices made by the IRGC, in particular those of Lt-Gen. Qasem Soleimani, who fought for the liberation of Palestine and upheld the principles of Islam," the report said.

The IRGC Public Relations office also issued a statement, "underlining that the force serves as a hub of dedicated and faithful individuals, who are remembered in Iran's history as true servants of the nation and protectors of the ideals of the Islamic Revolution."

The reports about the missile city came as Iran also unveiled a locally made large gas turbine.

"At the global scale, these types of turbines are built by US-based multinational company General Electric and Germany's Siemens company," Iranian state media noted, to showcase the country's local capabilities.

EU ends conflict zone warnings for Israel, Iran

• By EVE YOUNG

The European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) did not extend Conflict Zone Information Bulletins (CZIB) on Israel and Iran, it said over the weekend. Both CZIBs expired on January 31.

CZIBs are risk mitigation measures implemented by the EU and may include operational recommendations for countries with high risk.

The EASA decided against

extending the bulletins "following recent developments, notably the agreed ceasefire agreements and overall reduction of short-term tensions."

A CZIB was extended for Lebanon until the end of March, the agency also announced.

The CZIBs for Israel and Iran were replaced with Information Notes, advising operators to "exercise caution and follow all available aeronautical publications, including updates from the European

Information Sharing and Cooperation Platform."

"The advisory for Iran recommends also to consider daylight operations only," the agency added.

"The commission and EASA, together with member states, will continue to closely monitor the situation, with a view to assessing whether there is an increase or decrease of risks for EU aircraft operators as a result of the evolution of the threat."

The original CZIB regarding Israel had highlighted volatility and tensions in the Middle East, adding that thus far, Israel's Civil Aviation Authority was able to "efficiently manage the risks to civil aviation in its airspace."

The CZIB had recommended that air operators "implement a stringent monitoring process and risk assessment for each flight when intending to operate within the airspace of Israel."

Netanyahu appoints Caroline Glick to gov't adviser role

• Jerusalem Post Staff

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appointed journalist and columnist Caroline Glick to a position in his office's public diplomacy team, a move aimed at bolstering Israel's international messaging amid the ongoing war in Gaza. Glick joined Netanyahu on his visit to Washington on Sunday.

"Life takes you in different directions, and I am going back to the office where I worked nearly three decades ago as the prime minister leads Israel through the most difficult period in the history of the Jewish state," Glick told JNS on Wednesday. "I take it as

a profound compliment that at this critical juncture in our history, Prime Minister Netanyahu has asked me to join him as he continues his historic fight to secure the future of the Jewish state and people."

Glick, a well-known conservative commentator and vocal advocate for Israel's policies, previously worked in Netanyahu's office during his first term as prime minister in the late 1990s. Born in 1969, she has held senior editorial roles at *The Jerusalem Post* and *Makor Rishon*, contributed to Breitbart News, and was a founding member of Latma, an Israeli satirical website known for its sharp political commentary.

In 2019, Glick ventured into

politics, running with Naftali Bennett and Ayelet Shaked's New Right Party in the Knesset elections. Though the party failed to cross the electoral threshold, her influence in Israeli right-wing circles has remained significant.

Her appointment comes as Netanyahu reshapes his communications team to counter growing international criticism of Israel. With her extensive experience in media and diplomacy, Glick's role is expected to focus on reinforcing Israel's messaging in Western media, particularly in the US, where she has a strong following.

Queried by *The Jerusalem Post*, Glick confirmed her new position.

House, Senate resolution: Use any option to stop Iran nuke plan

• By HANNAH SARISOHN
Jerusalem Post Correspondent

NEW YORK – The US, Israel, and their allies should keep "all options" on the table to counter and contain the threat from a nuclear-armed Iranian regime, according to a resolution introduced this week by members of the House and Senate.

Iran-hawk Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) led the resolution along with Sens. John Fetterman (D-PA) and Katie Britt (R-AL) and Reps. Jared Moskowitz (D-FL) and Mike Lawler (R-NY).

Graham said the resolution does not authorize the use of military force but establishes "the truth regarding Iran's nuclear intentions and capability."

The resolution affirms that Iran's continued pursuit of nuclear weapons capability is "a credible threat" to the US and an "existential

threat" to Israel and other allies and partners in the Middle East.

It also demands Iran cease "any and all activities" that threaten the national security interests of the US, Israel, and its allies.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt was asked during Friday's press briefing for further details on President Donald Trump's Iran policy. She repeated Trump's threat of causing "hell to pay" against Iran and its proxies should the ceasefire and hostage release deal not come to an agreement. Leavitt did not go into detail about how the Trump administration plans to thwart a nuclear Iran.

Fetterman said the resolution sends an unmistakable message. "All options are on the table to prevent a nuclear-armed Iran," he said.

Britt stated peace is achieved through strength, the tagline of Trump's foreign policy agenda.



SYRIA'S FOREIGN MINISTER, Asaad al-Shaibani (right), receives his Saudi counterpart, Faisal bin Farhan, in Damascus two weeks ago, during his first visit to Syria since president Bashar al-Assad's ouster. (Bakr Alkaseem/AFP via Getty Images)

Syrian leaders shift focus to Arab states

ANALYSIS
By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

The newly self-appointed president of the Syrian Arab Republic, Abu Mohammad al-Julani, arrived on Sunday in Saudi Arabia for a historic meeting with Mohammed bin Salman, crown prince and prime minister of the kingdom, at Al Yamamah Palace in Riyadh, according to Syrian state media.

This marks the first official trip abroad by Julani since he came to power on December 8 after the collapse of the Assad regime. He was not declared president of the transition government until last week; one day later, he hosted the Emir of Qatar in Damascus, his first meeting with a head of state.

These two meetings with the Emir of Qatar and now the Saudis are highly significant to the Arab world. In recent years, Doha and Riyadh have often held different views of the region. Qatar is closer to Iran and Turkey and has supported Muslim Brotherhood-linked groups, such as Hamas. Saudi Arabia has opposed the Brotherhood and is closer to the UAE and Egypt.

Julani's trip shows how he is searching between these two poles, the Qataris and the Saudis. Ostensibly, the two Arab countries have now patched things up, but in the Middle East, nothing is ever as perfect as it seems, as waters that still run deep separate Doha and Riyadh.

The Syrian Arab News Agency noted that Julani was accompanied on these trips by Asaad al-Shaibani, his foreign minister. They have been holding numerous meetings since they swept to power on December 8, starting mainly in Western countries. Now, they are courting the Arab states.

"We held a long meeting, in which we perceived a real desire to support Syria in building its future, and keenness to support the will of the Syrian people and the unity and integrity of its territories," Julani said. "We held extensive discussions and talks in all fields and worked to raise the level of communication and cooperation in the humanitarian and economic fields," he said.

SANA reported further that the new Syrian leader said, "We discussed comprehensive plans for the future in the fields of energy, technology, education, and health to achieve a real partnership that will contribute to preserving peace and stability in the region and improving the economic reality in Syria, in addition to continuing political and diplomatic cooperation to boost Syria's role towards Arab and international positions and issues."

Al-Arabiya also documented the historic meetings, although it generally did not report more details than the Syrian state media reports. Other regional and Arabic language reports also didn't elaborate much on the meetings.

The visit illustrates how Saudi Arabia continues to command influence in the region as a key power. Julani was born in Saudi Arabia, later lived in Damascus, and joined al-Qaeda before becoming the head of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham in Syria.

HTS shifted away from al-Qaeda but was still considered a terrorist organization for many years. The US canceled a reward for Julani's arrest after HTS and other Syrian rebel groups overthrew the Assad regime.

Air India set to inaugurate Tel Aviv-Mumbai route

By STAV LIVNE

Less than a week after announcing the resumption of flights to Israel, Air India has announced the opening of a new route between Tel Aviv and Mumbai.

The company's CEO, Campbell Wilson, told the Tourism Ministry that his airline plans to launch the route "with the necessary logistics and aircraft inventory arranged."

Tickets for the direct flights cannot yet be purchased on the company's website, but round-trip fares on Tel Aviv-Mumbai flights with a stopover in Delhi in March 2025 start at \$485, according to the company's website.

Air India halted operations in Israel in October 2023 but resumed flying relatively quickly in March 2024. The Iranian attack on Israel in April led to the cancellation of the company's flights until May. Air India again halted flights in August but will resume services from Israel in March with five weekly flights to Delhi.

The decision to add flights to Mumbai comes after behind-the-scenes talks between the two countries about cooperation in the tourism sector, aimed at promoting the employment of Indian workers in Israel's tourism industry and bringing Indian tourists to the Jewish state.

Tourism Minister Haim Katz told *Globes* that India recognizes the importance of the Israeli market.

"Direct flights are the basis for prosperous activity," he said.

Air India is undergoing an upgrade process for its aircraft, which will suit premium customers who will fly on routes to Israel."

The Lufthansa Group has also expressed confidence in Israel by announcing the expansion of operations to a new destination, which will be operated by Eurowings, with two direct weekly flights to Hamburg.

The route is set to begin operating on Monday, two days after the Lufthansa Group's return to Israel. The starting price for a round-trip flight to Hamburg, according to the company's website, is \$199.

(Globes/TNS)

Envoy Danny Danon warns of Egypt's military buildup

'Why do they need all these submarines and tanks?'

Jerusalem Post Staff

Israeli envoy to the UN Danny Danon raised concerns about Egypt's military expansion, questioning its necessity in the absence of threats.

"They spend hundreds of millions of dollars on modern military equipment every year, yet they have no threats on their borders," Danon said recently during a Kol BaRama radio interview. "Why do they need all these submarines and tanks? After October 7, this should raise alarm bells. We have learned our lesson. We must monitor Egypt closely and prepare for every scenario."

Speaking to journalist Mendi Rizel on *News of the Week*, Danon pointed to Washington's role in supplying Egypt's military and urged a reevaluation of the issue.

"We need to ask the United States why Egypt requires all this equipment," he said.

His remarks marked the first time a senior Israeli official had publicly raised such concerns about Egypt's military expansion.

Danon's comments come amid heightened tensions in the region as Israel reevaluates its defense strategy following the October 7 massacre. While Egypt has played a central role as a mediator between Israel and Hamas, Danon's words highlight a growing lack of trust between the two nations.

Israel and Egypt signed a peace treaty in 1979, but Jerusalem has closely monitored Cairo's military procurement, particularly its ties with the US military and its purchases of advanced European weapons systems.

Netanyahu's test of leadership

COMMENT
By DAVID BRINN

Meetings between Israeli prime ministers and American presidents have always been dramatic and fateful.

However, none seem to bear the gravity of this week's summit between Benjamin Netanyahu and Donald Trump in Washington.

At stake is the future of the very shaky ceasefire with Hamas, the continued release of Israeli hostages, and whether Israel is going to withdraw from Gaza and leave the terrorist group in control. Trump has made platitudes about Hamas no longer being able to rule in Gaza but has made it clear that he wants the 15-month war to end.

That's why he is going to push for the second stage of the ceasefire, which would include an IDF withdrawal from Gaza and an end to the war, even if it means that Hamas stays in control.

Netanyahu knows that after the last two weeks of wrenchingly emotional hostage releases, a majority of the country feels that getting the remaining hostages out of Gaza is worth the sacrifice of the painful releases of hundreds of terrorists with blood on their hands – and not toppling Hamas.

He also knows that if he agrees to the second stage, there's a good chance that his coalition will crumble.

As Anna Barsky wrote in Sunday's *Post*, the aims of Israel and Hamas in the second phase of the ceasefire are diametrically opposed. Israel is demanding Hamas cease to exist as an armed organization with military, civilian, and political control to implement phase two. Hamas, on the other hand, expects Israel to leave Gaza so that they can continue to exert total control as they did before the war.

Will Netanyahu manage to convince Trump that it's impossible to have it both ways? Will Trump choose the 'easier' route of complete Israeli withdrawal in exchange for the rest of the hostages and Hamas's survival?

This is the time when our elected leaders are expected to prove their mettle. Making the hard decisions is what our prime minister is tasked with, without regard to personal survival; only what is best for the country. But in this case, what is best for the country is not clear-cut.

Yes, we want the hostages home. Seeing their condition, the reunions with their families, and the sense of relief everyone feels underscore the urgency of continuing the process. However, the scenes of Hamas and Islamic Jihad mobs still arrogantly ruling the roost in Gaza portend ill winds for the future.

As soon as the IDF withdraws, the countdown to the next attempted attack on Israel begins, not to mention the increased likelihood of terror attacks in Israel and the strengthening of Hamas in the West Bank as a result of the prisoner releases.

It's ironic how some of those in Israel pushing for phase two, even if it means Hamas staying in power, have turned into Trump-ophytes, assured that only the volatile and unpredictable president has made the current deal possible and can stand up to Netanyahu's hard line over its continuation.

Whereas the supporters of the coalition and those in favor of going back



PRIME MINISTER Benjamin Netanyahu addresses reporters before boarding his flight to the United States yesterday. (Avi Ohayon/GPO)

to war with Hamas are missing the days when Joe Biden was president, and it was easier to resist American persuasion.

Ultimately, though, it's not about who is the president, but who is at the helm of Israel. It's time for Netanyahu to demonstrate that he's the leader that he's always claimed to be. To make the argument and push for solutions that are based on the country's best interests and not on narrow political interests.

The trait of a great leader is realizing that sometimes, the goals that have been stated are not achievable. 'Total victory' over Hamas and the freeing of the rest of the hostages may have been the rallying cry mantra during the war, but the reality of today is different.

Every citizen has his or her own opinion of what we should do. But we haven't been given the mandate to decide. Only one person has. Does Netanyahu possess the vision and humility to accept that and choose which avenue to proceed on? Let's hope so.

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ANTISEMITISM IN AUSTRALIA:

Jewish women egged, homes trashed in 3 states

• By MICHAEL STARR

Jewish women were pelted with eggs in the Sydney area on Saturday, in an attack that coincided with a weekend wave of antisemitic vandalism of homes in the New South Wales capital, Perth, and Melbourne.

Jewish women were egged by men in a car at Bondi Beach on Saturday, according to statements by the NSW Police Force and the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies. Detective Superintendent Darren Newman said Sunday that it appeared that the victims were targeted because of their appearance.

The vehicle was found Saturday night with a petrol can and egg cartons inside, after it had crashed into a curb in Rose Bay, according to police. Three men were seen fleeing the scene.

The NSW Jewish board said in a Sunday statement that the incident was a “grotesque and depraved” antisemitic attack.

“Throwing eggs at innocent women simply because they’re Jewish is beyond contemptible,” the board said.

The Australian Jewish Association (AJA) wrote on X/Twitter on Sunday that the attack directly on Jewish people represented an escalation from attacks on buildings and cars.

Homes and vehicles were defaced with antisemitic graffiti over Saturday night in the Kingsford and Randwick Sydney suburbs, according to statements by the NSW Jewish Board and NSW Police Force. Authorities said that multiple vehicles, garages, and walls had been spray-painted.

As with other recent antisemitic vandalism incidents, the graffiti proclaimed “F*k [sic] Jews,” according to photographs published by Executive Council of Australian Jewry co-CEO Alex Ryvchin and the AJA.

Israeli ambassador to Australia Amir Maimon denounced the incident on X, describing it as an “ongoing barrage of attacks” and “deliberate intimidation” against Jews.

A man was arrested in Kingsford on Friday, according to police, for allegedly defacing a wall with “a number of drawings and writings, including a Nazi symbol and a swastika.”

The 37-year-old was charged for public display of a Nazi symbol, in violation of a 2024 federal law.

The Perth suburb of Dalkeith saw a home vandalized with antisemitic graffiti on Saturday, according to Western Australia Premier Roger Cook and Curtin MP Kate Chaney.

Cook promised on Facebook Sunday that the Western Australia Police Force would “hunt



PEOPLE LOOK at an art installation displayed during a rally against antisemitism at the Domain in February in Sydney. In response to a nearly 738% surge in reported antisemitic incidents, Down Under: The Never Again is now movement mobilized a huge number of people across Australia. (Lisa Maree Williams/Getty Images)

down and charge those cowards responsible.” Chaney said in a statement that she would liaise with the Australian Federal Police, state police, and the Jewish community to address the issue.

AJA SHARED photographs on social media of the same slogan

used in incidents on the other side of the continent, alongside a Nazi swastika.

“The graffiti we have seen in parts of Perth overnight is absolutely vile,” said Cook. “I stand with Western Australia’s Jewish community and offer my full support to all those affected by these cowardly actions.”

Chaney also expressed that the behavior was not representative of the community, and assured that “people in my community believe everyone should be treated with respect.”

A Melbourne area home was also vandalized with antisemitic graffiti on Friday evening, according to the Victoria Police

Force and a Sunday statement by Port Phillip Mayor Louise Crawford. The suspect is also believed by police to have spat on a passerby. The Melbourne suburb’s municipality dispatched a team to remove the graffiti from the Middle Park home.

“While, thankfully, this incident did not involve physical injuries, it is still a cowardly attack targeting Port Phillip’s Jewish community,” Crawford said.

The mayor noted that the Melbourne Jewish community was still recovering from the December arson attack against the Adass Israel synagogue in Ripponlea.

The Sydney area incidents were part of a spate of antisemitic vandalism and arson attacks that have targeted the Jewish community in recent weeks, including Wednesday’s vandalism of a Maroubra Jewish day school and nearby home, an Eastgardens shopping center, and another incident in Eastlakes.

The NSW Jewish Board said Sunday that there had been 10 publicly reported antisemitic incidents of vandalism, arson, and more in just three weeks. “That doesn’t include the graffiti appearing in our streets on a daily basis or the abuse and harassment that goes unreported,” the board said.

ed,” the board said.

“It is incumbent upon society as a whole not to become desensitized to this campaign of domestic terrorism. This isn’t the Australia we know and love,” it said. “The Jewish community is not asking for any special treatment – only a return to normality.”

The NSW Police Force announced on Saturday that the January 21 doubling of human resources for Strike Force Pearl had come into effect. The task force, created in December to address antisemitic crimes in the Sydney area, deployed an additional 20 investigators. Operation Shelter, established in October 2023 to tackle Sydney’s antisemitic hate crimes, was also announced as folding under the wing of Pearl.

“Children shouldn’t feel scared to go to school; people shouldn’t feel afraid to go to prayer or practice their religion,” NSW Police Force Commissioner Karen Webb said on Saturday.

Israeli Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli issued a letter to the Australian Jewish community on Thursday, praising their resilience in the face of the wave of vandalism and a foiled potential antisemitic terrorist attack involving an explosives-filled caravan found on January 19.

‘Ignoring Soviet’s role in stopping Nazis is shameful’

MOSCOW (Reuters) – Russian President Vladimir Putin said ignoring the Soviet Union’s role in liberating Nazi German death camps such as Auschwitz and not inviting surviving family members of Soviet troops to liberation anniversaries was a shameful act.

A commemoration to mark 80 years since the liberation of the Auschwitz camp in Poland by Soviet troops was attended by German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Britain’s King Charles III, French President Emmanuel Macron, Polish President Andrzej Duda, and many other leaders.

Russia, the successor to the Soviet Union, was not invited due to the war in Ukraine.

“This is such a strange, shameful thing to do,” Putin told Russian state television in an interview released on Sunday.

“You can treat the head of the Russian state, me, in any way you want – no one is asking for any invitation. But if you had thought about it, you could have been a lot more subtle.”

Putin said if the Soviet soldiers who took part in the liberation of the camps could not be invited due to health or age, then at least their families could have been invited to the events marking the anniversary of the liberation.

As Soviet forces pushed back Nazi troops in Europe in 1944 and 1945, they liberated several death camps, including Majdanek, Auschwitz, Stutthof, Sachsenhausen, and Ravensbrück. US troops liberated Buchenwald and other camps, while British troops liberated Bergen-Belsen and other camps.

More than 1.1 million people, mostly Jews, perished at Auschwitz in gas chambers or from starvation, cold, and disease. Poles, Roma and Sinti, and Soviet prisoners of war were also killed there.

In all, between 1941 and 1945, Nazi Germany and its collaborators systematically murdered six million Jews across German-occupied Europe. The second largest group of victims of Nazi racial policy after the Jews were Soviet prisoners of war, according to the US Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Other major groups killed included Soviet citizens, Poles, gypsies, sexual minorities, disabled people, and others who offended Nazi ideas of racial superiority.

The International Criminal Court has ordered a warrant for Putin’s arrest for war crimes in Ukraine. Russia denies the accusations, which Moscow says were made up to smear its image.

Russian Odesa strike damages historic sites, including Jewish ones

• Jerusalem Post Staff

A Russian missile attack on Odesa, Ukraine, severely damaged multiple historic sites, including the renowned Bristol Hotel and a Jewish educational institution operated by Chabad.

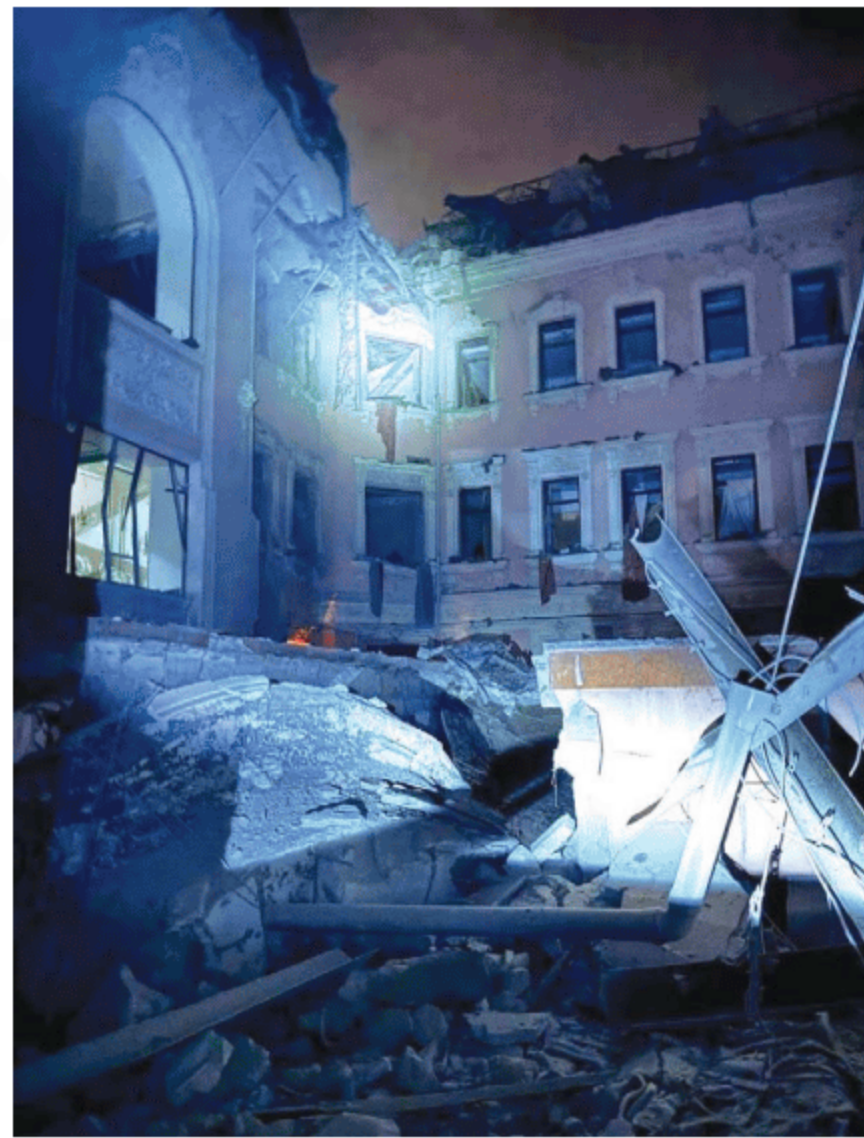
The strike, which left at least seven people wounded, also impacted the Odesa Philharmonic Theater and several UNESCO-protected buildings in the city center.

Friday’s attack marked another escalation in Russia’s war against Ukraine, with Odesa frequently targeted due to its strategic importance. Ukrainian officials condemned the strike, emphasizing the cultural and humanitarian toll.

Among the affected sites was the Bristol Hotel, an architectural landmark dating back to the late 19th century. The blast shattered windows, damaged the ornate marble staircases, and caused structural harm to the building’s historic façade.

The Odesa Philharmonic Theater, a cultural icon of the city, was also damaged in the strike. Local authorities warned that further assessments would be necessary to determine the full extent of the destruction.

A Chabad-affiliated Jewish educational center adjacent to the Bristol Hotel was also impacted. The institution, which serves as a university



THIS PICTURE shows damages sustained by a Jewish historic site in Odesa. (The Regional Administration of Odesa Oblast)

for Jewish students from across Ukraine, sustained structural damage significant enough to prompt the temporary closure of its facilities.

Following the attack, the school administration announced students would be sent on an extended break

until renovations could be completed or an alternative location secured. The university serves more than 100 students, many of whom are graduates of Chabad’s Or Avner schools or the Mishpacha orphanage in Odesa.

Chief Rabbi of Odesa and

Southern Ukraine Avraham Wolff sought to reassure concerned families.

“I want to calm all the parents; every student is safe and protected,” he said. “We are working tirelessly to restore normalcy as soon as possible.”

Wolff also emphasized the resilience of Odesa’s Jewish community.

“The Jewish community in Odesa has faced many challenges throughout history, and we have always emerged stronger,” he said. “With God’s help, we will overcome this as well and resume studies soon.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky condemned the attack and reiterated the need for stronger air defense measures.

“Once again, air defense remains our top priority. We are working with all our partners to secure more protection for our country,” Zelensky said.

The attack on Odesa is the latest in a series of Russian missile strikes targeting Ukraine’s cultural and historical sites. UNESCO and international preservation organizations have repeatedly expressed concern over the destruction of Ukraine’s architectural and religious heritage.

The Chabad-run rescue organization Jewish Relief Network Ukraine has not yet released details on the full extent of the damage or a timeline for the reopening of the Jewish educational institution.

Russian police arrest man over pro-Israel posts

• Jerusalem Post Staff

Russian authorities arrested a man in Vladivostok at the end of January for his social media posts supporting Israel in its war against Hamas. The Leninsky District Court of Vladivostok charged the man, whose name and image have not been released, with incitement of national or religious hatred, Russian state media reported.

He was sentenced to five days of administrative arrest, meaning he was not given a trial.

“A resident of Vladivostok, an active social media user, expressed support for Israel’s aggressive actions against Gaza residents and insulted opponents,” a press release from the district court reads. “The next day, law enforcement officers detained the ‘commentator.’”

The court found the man guilty of committing an administrative offense.

In a video shared on Telegram, the suspect, who had his face blurred and name redacted, admitted guilt and apologized for his comments. He then warned social network users against posting content that goes against Russian laws.

The man’s arrest comes after Russia saw proposed legislation that would enforce harsher punishments for inciting hatred or enmity.

CUNY union passes resolution to divest from Israeli gov’t, firms

• By MICHAEL STARR

The City University of New York Professional Staff Congress Delegate Assembly passed a resolution calling for the divestment from Israeli companies and the Israeli government in response to the war against Hamas in Gaza.

The PSC central decision-making body called on the union, which claims to represent 30,000 faculty and staff in the CUNY system, to divest “from any investment vehicle that includes in its portfolio stocks and bonds of Israeli companies and Israeli government bonds.”

The union would be required to meet this divestment objective by next January, and by next February, the congress would establish a volunteer committee to oversee further divestment.

The PSC Delegate Assembly

also called on the union to communicate to the Teachers’ Retirement System of the City of New York that it supported divestment from Israel.

The January 23 resolution drew a comparison between the union’s call for divestment and past divestment by American institutions to protest apartheid rule in South Africa.

“For over a year, the Israeli government has engaged in bombing and other warfare in the Gaza Strip, killing at least 40,000 people including, by Israel’s own account, 23,000 civilians,” reads the resolution. “These attacks have included those on schools and UN shelters, in violation of commonly accepted ‘rules of war.’”

The assembly argued that the International Court of Justice’s opinion last January asserted that it was “plausible” that Israel was committing genocide in Gaza. Since then,

however, then-ICJ president Joan Donoghue told the BBC that the statement was about rights to protection from genocide rather than about whether genocide was occurring.

New York City Workers for Palestine on Wednesday claimed on Instagram that the resolution’s passage as a victory that would eventually lead the District Council 37 public sector union and the United Federation of Teachers to adopt divestment against Israel.

The American Jewish Committee wrote on X/Twitter on Thursday that the resolution was “Yet another occasion where CUNY’s faculty and staff union distracts itself from its key responsibilities to focus on smearing Israel.”

Students, Alumni, and Faculty for Equality on Campus (SAFE Campus) said on Tuesday it filed a complaint to the New York State Division of

Human Rights, arguing that the resolution served as a discriminatory boycott in contradiction with state law.

The complaint also argued that PSC-CUNY violated a state executive order against the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions campaign and would subsequently require the state to divest from the union.

“It is no coincidence that hundreds – perhaps thousands – of Jewish faculty members have left the PSC union,” reads the letter.

NYC Workers for Palestine and the resolution noted that it followed a September DC37 Local 3005 health worker union vote to divest from Israel. The new resolution was almost the same as a September PSC-CUNY Graduate Center resolution. An anti-Israel boycott resolution was rejected by the congress in 2024.



PRO-PALESTINIAN PROTESTERS march outside of the CUNY Grad Center in July in New York City. (Spencer Platt/Getty Images)

TRUMP

Continued from Page 1

tantamount to ethnic cleansing.

Trump will meet with Jordan's King Abdullah II a week from Tuesday at the White House, the Jordanian state news agency reported on Sunday, following the president's call for the transfer of Palestinians to Jordan and Egypt.

Jordan appeared to reject Trump's suggestion, with Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi telling reporters last Sunday that the country's stance against any displacement of Palestinians from Gaza remains "firm and unwavering."

Jordan is already home to several million Palestinians, while tens of thousands live in Egypt. Both countries and other Arab nations reject the idea of Palestinians in Gaza being moved to their countries. Gaza is land that Palestinians would want as part of a future Palestinian state.

Netanyahu said before taking off on Sunday morning that it is a "very important meeting" and that the two will discuss the issue of Israeli-Saudi normalization.

"I will look to broaden the circle of peace and achieve a remarkable era of peace through strength," the prime minister said.

A spokesperson for Netanyahu, Omer Dostri, added, "We aspire to reach peace, and there's aspiration on the other side."

Dostri agreed that normalization faces more challenges now than it did before October 7 since Saudi Arabia has demanded an end to the war as a prerequisite for any talk on normalization.

"If such a process would have taken place without a war in Gaza, from the Saudis' perspective, it would have been more comfortable," Dostri explained to the *Post*, adding, "But we have not completed our goals in Gaza."

Were Israel to insist on meeting its war goals in the enclave, this could actually advance normalization, he said. "We must remember: Here in the region, 'the strongest survive,' and when countries see Israel annihilating its enemies – it brings normalization closer."

There exists a Saudi demand that Israel present a path that would result in a Palestinian state. Dostri said Jerusalem views the Palestinian Authority, largely seen as the body that would manage such a state, as "hostile."

He said Israel and the PA cooperate on security-related issues, but "Hamas wants to destroy Israel using military means, while the PA wants to do it using legal means, such as the ICC [International Criminal Court]. There are many things that the Palestinian Authority needs to improve in order for us to see them as a 'legitimate entity.'"

HOSTAGES

Continued from Page 1

Tov, Tal Shoham, Alexandre Sasha Troufanov, Omer Winkert, and Ohad Yahalom, who were all kidnapped on October 7, as well as Avraham (Avera) Mengisto and Hisham Al-Sayed, who were taken hostage in the 2014-2015 period.

They are due to be released every Saturday, three at a time, in the coming weeks, with the last nine hostages and the two earlier hostages mentioned to be released on March 1, or Day 42, which will conclude Phase I of the deal. Hamas has stated that of these 20 that are expected to be released, eight are deceased. Israel confirmed this last week, without naming who they are.

The comprehensive list disclosing the life status of the hostages still in captivity has not yet been released or confirmed by the Israeli government. Hostage family members urged the government to prioritize living hostages before those who are presumed dead.

"My brother is on the list of the 33 kidnapped people who are supposed to return. He is probably not alive. He is probably among the eight deceased hostages set to

return in the deal," Danny Elgarat, brother of hostage Itzhak Elgarat, said on Tuesday. "Leave the bodies there; bring back living people. My brother is there as a fallen soldier, and I am saying on my behalf that I am willing to leave him there for now if it means bringing back someone alive."

Of the 59 hostages that were not included in Phase I, 24 are believed to be alive. The remaining 35 were confirmed to be dead. The hostages set to be released in later phases are 11 Supernova music festival revelers, four soldiers, seven residents of the Gaza border area, and two foreign workers.

Their release depends on phases two and three of the proposed ceasefire deal going into effect. The framework that both parties agreed upon in January would see all remaining living hostages released in phase II and the bodies of the rest would be returned to Israel in phase III.

However, for Israel to get the hostages due to be released on Day 42 – let alone the Phase II hostages – it is due to withdraw from the Philadelphia Corridor, which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is saying he will not do unless there is a formula in place to replace Hamas as the governing force in Gaza.

The negotiations for the second phase of the ceasefire deal begin today. A Hamas source told *Al-Araby Al-Jadeed* that its mediators, along with those from Qatar, Egypt, and the United States, would be present in Doha. Reports have indicated that Israel may stay aloof, speaking directly only to the US, which would then represent its position in the Qatari capital.

The source also said that Hamas reportedly told mediators it was ready to engage in the second phase. However, Hamas spokesman Jihad Taha told the outlet that Israel was creating obstacles in the negotiations through "evasion, procrastination, and obstruction of the implementation of what was agreed upon."

On Sunday, Netanyahu took off for Washington to meet with senior US officials. On Tuesday, he will meet with US President Donald Trump to discuss phase II of the hostage deal, among other topics. •

JOIN

Continued from Page 1

For the haredi draft to work, there needed to be similar institutions, and these would take time to form, Smotrich said, adding that he supported "positive incentives" rather than negative ones. Rather than having haredim "not in the army and not receiving anything," his goal was to succeed in bringing them into the army.

Just as the ultra-Orthodox should not receive collective exemptions from the army that others do not have, they should not be slapped with sanctions that others do not have, Smotrich argued. But the issue of haredi IDF service needed to be addressed on a deeper level, he said.

"We need to be honest with ourselves as a society and say that we are willing to accept the haredim as they are. It is easy to tell them, 'Integrate,' but with a sort of paternalism, [telling them] 'we will show you the light and make you enlightened.' Is the secular public really willing to respect the haredi public?" Smotrich asked.

The current answer was no, he said. For example, Israelis were only willing to enable segregated university studies for bachelor's degrees, but not for advanced degrees, indicating that true respect for the haredi lifestyle would recognize their belief in segregated study.

Another example was that even if they join the army, haredim will not become Zionists – and should not be expected to, Smotrich said. They will view military service as a civic duty and nothing more. Religious Zionists should not expect haredim to become like them, and secular Israelis should not expect haredim to become secular.

The finance minister acknowledged that his evolutionary approach was not



A PAINTED mural depicting released hostage Emily Damari is seen in the Florentine neighborhood in Tel Aviv yesterday. (Miriam Alster/Flash90)

popular amongst part of his voter base, a large part of whom have been serving long periods of reserve duty. However, Smotrich claimed that since the war broke out, he has insisted on making correct decisions even if they were unpopular with his base.

He said that he should be judged by the results, and when the next elections come about – which he expected to happen on schedule, in October 2026, and not before – he was willing to pay the political price if the results were not there and his policy on the haredi draft did not work.

Smotrich contrasted his approach to that of Otzma Yehudit chairman MK Itamar Ben-Gvir. The two ran on a joint list in the last election but split into two separate parties after the election.

In recent months, they have feuded publicly on several issues. One of them was the hostage deal – Ben-Gvir quit the government over the deal and criticized Smotrich for not doing the same. Smotrich said that while he spent long hours poring over the details of the deal and working to change it so that it did not contradict the war goals, Ben-Gvir held "press conferences" and spent his time doing public relations. The two were far apart in both their views and conduct, the RZP head said.

However, the two politicians' names are often mentioned together, as representing the far-right wing of the government. According to Smotrich, this has been part of a strategy by the Left to demonize him, since it has not been able to counter his views with sound arguments.

He gave as an example the protests against the government's controversial judicial reforms in 2023, which Smotrich strongly supported. He said that, rather than engage in dialogue, opponents took to the streets, warning against a "dictatorship" and putting on displays of *The Handmaid's Tale*.

Smotrich added that the alliance between the traditional sides of the Likud, the haredim, and religious Zionists, which he called the "National Camp alliance," was "correct." He admitted that the haredim were not part of what political analysts have called the "Coalition of Servers," i.e., the parties representing Israelis who serve in the IDF.

But people who served in the military and reserves or were part of the anti-Netanyahu camp were not political partners since they boycotted both the prime minister over his corruption trial and Smotrich and Ben-Gvir over what they claim is their extremism, he said.

Smotrich views 2025 and 2026 as a window of "historic opportunity" due to the new Trump administration.

He likely will not hurry to leave the government over the haredi draft issue and may end up showing an amount of flexibility that his voter base, many of whom have served in reserves for months since the war broke out, will find hard to swallow. •

DRONES

Continued from Page 1

for over 30 years until he was killed by the IDF on September 27, after which he was briefly

replaced by Hashem Safiedine, who himself was killed on October 3, after which he was replaced by Hezbollah's current leader, Naim Qassem.

Further, he encouraged IDF troops there to maintain a zero-tolerance policy for even the smallest ceasefire violations by Hezbollah. Originally, the military was expected to withdraw from southern Lebanon on January 26, some 60 days after the ceasefire with the terrorist group was signed.

However, after Israel asked for a 30-day extension, saying that the Lebanese military had still inadequately enforced preventing Hezbollah from returning to southern Lebanon, the US and Lebanon agreed to extend the IDF withdrawal deadline to at least February 18.

Throughout essentially the whole ceasefire, Hezbollah has been careful not to fire on Israeli territory, but it has regularly probed IDF positions from the ground and recently used a drone from the air. In Gaza, the air force had fired on two separate cars – one in the morning and one in the early afternoon – both of which tried to avoid inspection moving from central Gaza to northern Gaza.

Unconfirmed reports stated that at least one person was killed and several were wounded in one of the incidents, with no clear reports on the second. Reports first started to stream out about the event around 9:45 a.m. Sources confirmed the strike at around 1:00 p.m., but the military remained publicly silent for more than another hour.

Video footage on social media appeared to show a vehicle on a road moving northward near the Mediterranean Sea suddenly exploding. In the morning incident, the IDF said it only undertook distancing or warning fire but was probing how the episode had turned out.

In the afternoon incident, the military said that before targeting the car, it took some precautions to avoid striking Palestinian civilians, such as using a precision weapon and following the car from the air long enough to wait for it to be farther away from civilians.

However, the IDF did not address whether the car's passengers could have been arrested or if they presented any immediate danger, signifying that current rules of engagement for cars that avoid a check may be to strike the car from the air without attempting an arrest.

Military sources later confirmed that firing from the air is currently the main option available to the military in such a case.

It may be more difficult for the IDF to carry out an arrest given that it has withdrawn much of its forces to external defense lines, and many of the inspections are now reportedly being carried out by a mix of private contractors, and American and Egyptian military inspectors.

The IDF did not say how many people were killed or wounded in either incident. To date, since the January 19 ceasefire, there have been very few such incidents; generally, there has been almost no fighting at all.

Where there have been minor departures from the ceasefire, it was mostly brief

attempts by Gazans to probe Israeli interim defense withdrawal lines to see if they could get through or how close they could get, with IDF forces responding with distancing fire.

It was unclear if the incidents were a limited move to stop narrow violations or part of some larger strategy, or if they were related from the perspective of Gazan terror. •

JENIN

Continued from Page 1

in Jenin would have seen and felt what happened, which was clearly designed to send a message.

The IDF has expertise in demolitions, having conducted many home demolitions over the years. The way they are usually carried out is that a home is mapped, civilians are removed, and the home is demolished in the middle of the night – the goal is to have as little friction with civilians as possible.

In many cases, the homes are part of larger buildings, and the demolition team is careful to only affect the one apartment or home linked to the terrorist.

Yesterday, the explosions in Jenin were in broad daylight when it was obvious they would be caught on video. This is "shock and awe."

The IDF said it destroyed several buildings, while Palestinian media claimed 20 buildings were destroyed. Al Quds media said the buildings affected included those in the historic refugee camp area of Jenin and that they are "built vertically," meaning many families will be affected. The report said 15,000 people had been displaced due to the fighting in recent days.

During this operation, the IDF eliminated several dozen terrorists in Jenin and expanded its operations to include areas in Tammun over the last day. The military has also detained at least 100 wanted suspects. Since the October 7 massacre, a total of 850 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank, and the estimate is that 90% of them were terrorists, while 6,000 have been arrested and 120 airstrikes were carried out.

The IDF said it "located and confiscated dozens of weapons, destroyed hundreds of explosive devices, and neutralized dozens of additional explosives that had been planted along routes to target our forces."

Uprooting all these threats didn't necessarily require blowing up several buildings, however. The shock and awe of the explosions are symbolic of how the new operation is growing. The goal is to send a message that this is not like all the other smaller raids in the West Bank. It also exceeds "Home and Garden," a Jenin raid in the summer of 2023.

The fact is that the IDF's raids over the last two years have not stopped the terror threat. If anything, things have become cyclical, and the threat is the same or growing.

This is not "mowing the grass" or "shrinking the conflict." Instead, it is clear that something worse may be coming in the West Bank. The problem is that the IDF already launched an operation designed to preempt terror there, in operation Break the Wave. Illegal rifles have

continued to flow to terrorists, though, and the threats are shifting and growing.

Can "shock and awe" work? Will it make people in Jenin, Tulkarm, Nablus, and Tammun think twice about joining groups such as Palestinian Islamic Jihad or Hamas? What if the shock and awe have the opposite effect of radicalizing people?

People who are asleep in their homes when the IDF conducts raids can pretend to ignore them because their everyday lives, and those of their families, are not affected. People who watch massive explosions in their city, while their kids attend school, may not be deterred but may become more angered and fearful.

The Italian diplomat and author Niccolò Machiavelli surmised that while it can be good to be feared, it is not helpful to be hated. If "shock and awe" means there is fear, it may have its desired effect. But if it leads to more hatred, it could backfire. •

IDF

Continued from Page 1

indicate to the IDF that it won't happen again?

The answer lies in two new approaches the military has taken in this latest operation: destroying terrorist infrastructure and maintaining a presence. In past operations, some structures were destroyed, but many remained usable, albeit with bullet holes and other minor damage. Now, the IDF is destroying whole structures on a much broader level.

If a structure was used significantly, like as a weapons lab, then instead of just seizing the explosive items or surveillance cameras, the IDF is now destroying it.

In combat against suspects resisting arrest, instead of trying to keep attacks limited so as just to kill the terrorist in question, the military is now not holding back and is often destroying the whole structure where the suspect in question is hiding out.

This is all part of a Gaza-ization mindset of the IDF, which is using tougher tactics it learned from Gaza, tactics that may produce greater deterrence against Palestinian terror in the West Bank. Now, about two weeks into the operation, the army has said it will remain in play in Jenin and other sites for longer. This could mean a much longer presence in the area, something the IDF has done, to some extent, in Gaza.

Is the purpose of a longer stay to catch more terrorists, deterrence, or to create the infrastructure to return to a semblance of normal life once the military pulls back its troops? The hard truth is that the last two operations and the current one all happened not long after significant Palestinian terror incidents.

The IDF has talked of catching the Jenin fighters by surprise, but it seems that many still succeeded in fleeing. In one location, "top" terrorists was killed in February, July, August, and October of 2024. So, it seems like they recruit quickly.

There can always be hope that the new aspects of this operation will work, but it is just as likely that absent either a much longer show of force or a bigger diplomatic horizon, the waves of terror will be back not long after the IDF ends this latest round. •

GAZA

Continued from Page 1

the possibility of advancing Saudi-Israeli normalization; and on Trump's proposal for Jordan, Egypt, and possibly other Muslim countries to take in Gazan refugees.

These issues are urgent and, at the moment, more attention-grabbing. Netanyahu has been discussing Iran with successive US administrations for more than 15 years – the same debates over negotiations versus military action, how to negotiate, what to offer, what to expect from the Iranians, and what to do if talks fail. As a result, the Iranian dimension of the discussions takes up less space in the Israeli media landscape.

It's a case of "been there, done that" so many times that interest tends to wane.

It shouldn't.

The Trump administration is in the process of formulating its Iran policy, and Netanyahu's visit at this early stage in the president's second term affords him a golden opportunity to give his input. And Iran remains Israel's number one threat and problem.

During his first term, Trump took a hard line on the Islamic Republic, withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), calling it a terrible deal, and implementing a policy of "maximum pressure" to isolate Tehran diplomatically and economically. While his administration still seeks to contain Iran's regional influence and prevent it from obtaining a nuclear weapon, there have been early signs of shifts in tone and priorities.

These shifts may reflect internal divisions within the administration – between Iran hawks like Secretary of State Marco Rubio and National Security Adviser Mike Waltz and isolationists like Vice President JD Vance, who said in October: "Our interest very much is in not going to war with Iran... this is where smart diplomacy really matters."

Trump told reporters last week in the Oval Office that he hopes a resolution can be reached without an Israeli strike. "It would really be nice if that could be worked out without having to go that further step," he said.

"Iran will hopefully make a deal, and if they don't make a deal, that's okay too."

Trump's first term was defined by fierce opposition to the JCPOA, a belief that maximum pressure – through sanctions targeting Iran's oil exports and financial sector – could force a change in Iranian behavior and by explicit threats of military action.

Those themes remain evident in the early days of his second term as well. But there is also a clearer openness to diplomacy as a preferred path.

As Trump said in his inaugural address: "We will measure our success not only by the battles we win but also by the wars that we end – and perhaps most importantly, the wars we never get into."

In his talks with Trump, Netanyahu will seek to clarify the administration's diplomatic approach. This is an opportunity for him to argue that recent Israeli successes against Hamas and Hezbollah make this the right moment to intensify pressure on Iran.

If Trump is serious about diplomacy, Netanyahu will want to understand what kind of deal the administration envisions – what it will demand of Iran and what concessions the US will be willing to make. He will also seek clarity on timelines, given Iran's track record of prolonging talks while making quiet progress toward its nuclear goal.

And perhaps most critically, Netanyahu will want to know what Trump plans to do if diplomacy fails. Would the US take military action to prevent a nuclear Iran, or – more likely – would it give Israel the green light to act?

If so, Israel will need to know in advance what level of US military assistance to expect in carrying out such a strike and what kind of defensive umbrella Washington would provide in the event of Iranian retaliation – an attack likely to be far greater than the drone and missile attacks Iran launched at Israel in October and April that caused only minimal damage.

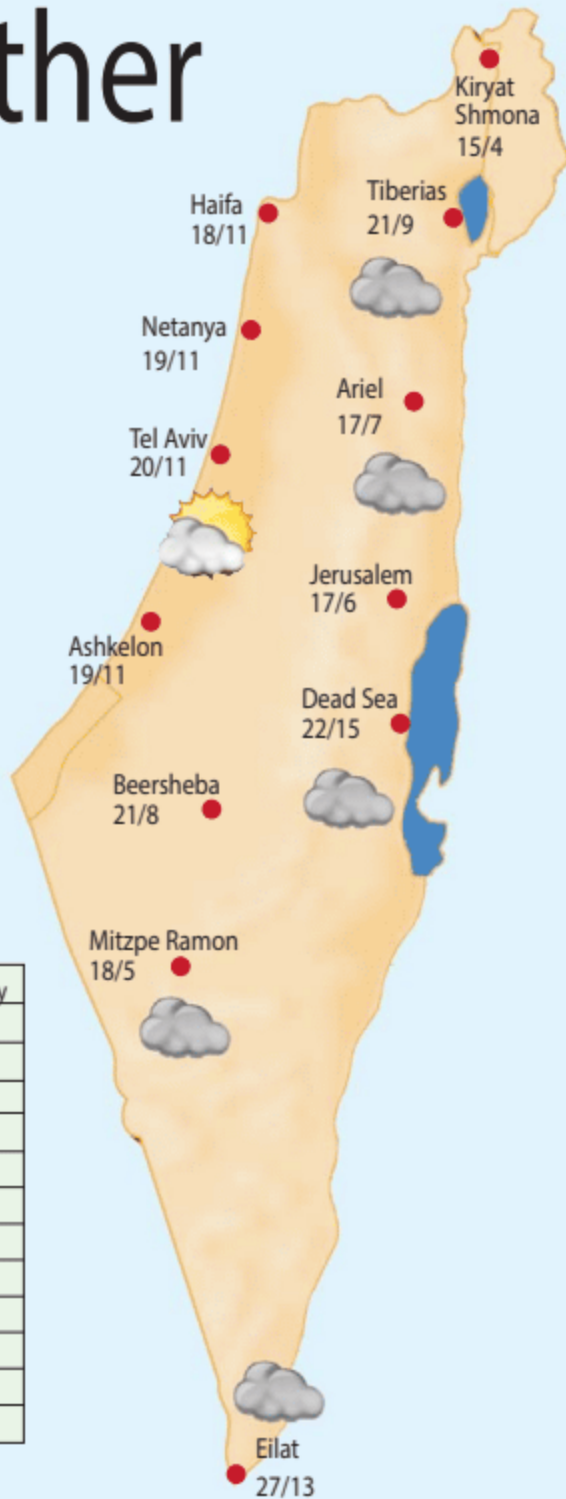
Right now, the Trump-Netanyahu meeting is being framed around short-term crises and diplomatic maneuvers. But the long-term challenge of Iran's nuclear ambitions looms in the background, more urgent than ever.

If diplomacy is to be Trump's chosen path, Netanyahu will push to ensure it is not just another drawn-out process that buys Iran more time. And if diplomacy fails, the real question remains: What then? •

SPORTS

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Weather



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Dan Kraft and Kevin Youkilis reflect on 'eye-opening' mission to Israel

• Jerusalem Post Sports Staff

In the wake of the tragic events of October 7 – and with the continued hope of the hostages' return – Dan Kraft, a prominent Boston-based philanthropist, and former Major League Baseball star Kevin Youkilis embarked on a solidarity mission to Israel that was both deeply emotional and profoundly impactful. The trip, organized by Kraft and his wife Wendy, is part of a long family tradition of supporting Israel, one that spans generations.

"Wendy and I have been leading missions to Israel for the last dozen or so years," Kraft told ILTV on Saturday night from Kraft Stadium in Jerusalem. "My parents, [New England Patriots owner] Robert and Myra, of blessed memory, used to lead missions as well, so it's *l'dor v'dor* – from generation to generation," said Kraft. "For us, it's really the joy of seeing Israel through other people's eyes. Kevin's become a good friend over the last several years, and he always said, 'I want to get to Israel.' I said, 'Yeah, yeah, you'll come, you'll come.' When October 7 happened, he said, 'No, I want to get to Israel, now.'"

Kraft recalled questioning whether Youkilis, surrounded by older participants from Boston, truly wanted to join.

"He said, 'I'm in, I'm coming,' and he's had an unbelievable time here this week."

The trip – under the auspices of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP) – was not just about solidarity but also about raising awareness. CJP unites the Greater Boston Jewish community around a common purpose: to ignite positive change at home, in Israel, and across the globe.

Kraft's family foundation, established after his father received the Genesis Prize in Jerusalem, has been active in combating antisemitism for the past five years.

"My dad wanted to start a foundation because he was seeing what was happening on campuses in America. He said, 'We've got to do whatever we can now to stop this, make people aware of the problem – people who are not Jewish – and get them to identify with what antisemitism is and stand up to it.'"

For Youkilis, who had long dreamed of visiting Israel, the trip was transformative.



KEVIN YOKILIS (left) and Dan Kraft at the Western Wall last week. (Courtesy)

"It has been one of the most eye-opening trips I've ever had in my life," he shared. "From everything that Israel is about and stands for, it was truly a special trip to come here for my first time."

The itinerary took them from historical and cultural landmarks to sites marked by the scars of recent tragedy. "We went everywhere – from some deep, emotional things we had to witness in Kibbutz Be'eri and the Nova Festival site. I don't think you can put it into words until you see what kind of destruction happened and how bad it was on October 7."

The emotional weight of the trip was matched by a sense of purpose.

"For us Jewish people in the United States, all we're trying to do is put out the true story," Youkilis said. "There's a lot of stuff that is misrepresented and doesn't get reported properly, and it needs to be."

"These places were very emotional to be at, but it was the most amazing and important place I could be – to see firsthand not

only what happened on October 7 but to understand this country as a whole."

Yet amid the pain, Youkilis also discovered Israel's vibrancy and diversity.

"It's an amazing country, and it's just booming with all the technology, the growth – there are cranes everywhere. It's just special from top to bottom."

This journey to Israel was particularly meaningful for Youkilis given his strong Jewish roots. Born and raised in a Jewish family in Cincinnati, Ohio, he has always embraced his heritage, earning the nickname "The Greek God of Walks" during his MLB career with the Boston Red Sox. Despite the Greek-sounding last name, Youkilis's Jewish identity has been a central part of his life. His connection to Israeli baseball deepened when he served as a coach for Team Israel during the 2023 World Baseball Classic, helping guide the team on the international stage.

Over his impressive MLB career, Youkilis played for the Boston Red Sox, New York

Yankees, and Chicago White Sox, earning two World Series titles with the Red Sox and finishing with a .281 career batting average, 150 home runs, and three All-Star selections.

Reflecting on his heritage during the trip, Youkilis shared: "So many special moments – from the Dead Sea, Masada, and many more – that I learned about as a Jewish child in America, and then to see them is so special. That we gave charity to plant trees, and then to go to the forests and see the trees that were planted – I could go on for hours about this..."

One of the most significant experiences was meeting Israel President Isaac Herzog.

"The message we shared with him is that a lot of the things that Israel needs are not just from Jewish people, but also from non-Jews in America and around the world," Youkilis emphasized. "For them to come and experience Israel, to see the amazing things going on, and really just the culture." He was struck by Israel's rich tapestry of communities.

"To see all the cultures from within the country – the Jews, Druze, Christians, Arabs, Bedouin – it's beautiful and very diverse. And I think that is one of my biggest take-aways. This is an extremely diverse country, and not what you would expect it to be. While it is a Jewish State, it is not just a Jewish State for Jews, but a Jewish State for all."

For Dan Kraft, the trip also highlighted his deep connection to Israeli sports. In addition to his philanthropic work, Kraft has been instrumental in promoting sports initiatives in Israel through the Kraft Family Sports Campus in Jerusalem and has played a key role in supporting Israel Lacrosse, fostering athletic development and cross-cultural connections. As part of the Kraft family, closely linked to the New England Patriots and the broader world of sports philanthropy, Dan continues to champion initiatives that bridge communities through shared values and experiences.

For both Kraft and Youkilis, this journey to Israel was more than just a visit – it was an affirmation of solidarity, a commitment to combating misinformation, and a powerful reminder of the enduring strength and diversity of the Israeli people and the special bond with their American brethren.

Lakers, Mavs surprise with Luka-AD trade



The Los Angeles Lakers have reached a deal to acquire Luka Dončić from the Dallas Mavericks as part of a three-team trade that has Anthony Davis, Max Christie and a first-round pick going to Dallas in a stunning blockbuster trade that also involves the Utah Jazz.

The Lakers will also receive Maxi Kleber and Markieff Morris in the trade. The Jazz will receive Jalen Hood-Schifino and a 2025 second-round pick from the Lakers and a 2025 second-round pick from the Mavericks.

News of the unbelievable trade broke shortly after the Lakers defeated the New York Knicks 128-112 Saturday at Madison Square Garden with LeBron James going for a 33-point, 12-assist, 11-rebound triple-double.

It is seismic shift in the Western Conference, which Dallas won last season.

Even James did not know the trade was happening and was at a post-game dinner in New York when he learned of the deal as it broke, said a person familiar with the situation. James and Davis are close friends and are both represented by Rich Paul, the CEO of Klutch Sports.

The 31-year-old Davis, now a 10-time All-Star, is sidelined with an abdominal strain, and the 25-year-old Dončić, a five-time All-Star, has been out since Christmas with a strained left calf. Both are expected back in the lineup this month.

ESPN first reported details of the trade. The deal comes just ahead of the Feb. 6 trade deadline.

The Lakers get one of the league's best young players

who is just entering his prime years. Dončić finished third in last season's MVP voting and led the Mavericks to the NBA Finals, where they lost to Boston in a five-game series. Before his calf injury on Christmas, Dončić averaged 28.1 points, 8.3 rebounds and 7.8 assists and shot 46.4% from the field and 35.4% on 3-pointers this season.

Dončić is one of the league's most gifted offensive players, and he gives the Lakers offensive help now alongside James in Los Angeles coach JJ Redick's offense, and he gives the Lakers another face of the franchise, especially when the 40-year-old James decides to retire.

Davis provides All-NBA offensive and defensive versatility for Dallas and averages 25.7 points, 11.9 rebounds, 3.4 assists, 2.1 blocks and 1.2 steals in 2024/25. He joins a team that features Kyrie Irving and a deep roster with six other players averaging at least 10 points, including Klay Thompson.

Before the start of the 2023/24 season, Davis signed a three-year extension and he is under contract through 2027/28 at \$175.3 million. However, he has a player option on the 2027/28 season and can become a free agent in the summer of 2027.

Dončić signed a five-year, \$215.1 million contract with the Mavs in 2022. He is under contract through 2026/27 but can become a free agent in the summer of 2026. He is also eligible for an extension this summer.

The Lakers are 28-19 and in fifth place in the West, just one game behind the Denver Nuggets. Dallas is 26-23 and in ninth place in the West – but just 2½ games behind the sixth-place Los Angeles Clippers. (USA Today/TNS)

Arsenal routs Man City • United loses • Liverpool, Forest triumph



LONDON (Reuters) – Arsenal delivered a statement of intent in the Premier League title race with a 5-1 hammering of champions Manchester City to close the gap at the top to six points on Sunday.

Captain Martin Odegaard gave Arsenal the lead in the second minute after woeful City defending and although Erling Haaland equalized after the break, the host ran out as the comfortable winner to extend its unbeaten league sequence to 14.

City was level for less than a minute as Thomas Partey's deflected effort restored Arsenal's lead before teen Myles Lewis-Skelly netted his first goal for the club. Kai Havertz made sure there was no way back for Pep Guardiola's side with a sweet finish from a counter-attack and substitute Ethan Nwaneri put the icing on the cake with a stunning curler with the last kick of the game.

Arsenal moved to 50 points from 24 games with Liverpool on 56 having played a game less. City stayed a distant fourth with 41 points from 24 games.

Also Sunday, Manchester United's woeful home form this season continued as it slumped to a 2-0 defeat by Crystal Palace.

Despite United chasing a fourth successive win in all competitions, Palace was much the better side in the first half at Old Trafford, passing up several chances to capitalize on the superiority.

The visitors did make one count after 64 minutes, Jean-Philippe Mateta reacting first after the ball had come off the crossbar to give his side a deserved lead.

United upped the ante in search of an equalizer but lacked ideas, with Mateta condemning the hosts to a seventh home league loss this term with a late second, helping Palace climb above 13th-place United into 12th in the standings.

"The result is really bad," United manager Ruben Amorim told Sky Sports. "The performance was a little bit better than the last games. We controlled the transitions quite well for Crystal Palace."

"It's normal for the fans to feel negative, it is a hard season for them but football can change in certain moments. I will prepare the next game and move forward. Better things will come."

Earlier, Tottenham Hotspur bounced back from a four-game losing streak with a vital 2-0 win at Brentford thanks to Vitaly Janel's own-goal and Pape Sarr's late strike.

The first half was frantic at times but low on quality, with the deadlock broken when Spurs captain Son Heung-min's whipped corner bounced in off Janel as he was grappling with Yves Bissouma in the 29th minute.

The Bees began the second half rapidly as Spurs were largely penned back in their own half as they chased a much-needed win.

But Brentford never really threatened an equalizer, with a succession of crosses and 10 corners coming to nothing and Spurs goalkeeper Antonin Kinsky was rarely tested after the break.

Spurs had dropped a league-high 21 points from winning positions and not won a league game by a single goal this season, but they defended doggedly under pressure.

Substitute Sarr nutmegged goalkeeper Hakon Valdimarsson with a lovely finish in the 87th minute to secure the three points, though the away fans still chanted "we want Levy out" at chairman Daniel Levy.

On Saturday, Liverpool's Mohamed Salah scored twice in a 2-0 win at Bournemouth that

put the Reds nine points clear atop the league while Nottingham Forest's Chris Wood went one better with a hat-trick in a 7-0 rout of Brighton & Hove Albion.

Newcastle United missed the chance to move fourth though as it surrendered the lead in a 2-1 home defeat by Fulham.

Bottom club Southampton enjoyed some rare joy as it beat Ipswich Town 2-1 away for only its second league win of what has been a gloomy campaign.

Salah now has 21 Premier League goals this season and 178 in his career, taking him sixth on the all-time list ahead of Chelsea great Frank Lampard.

Forest's 5-0 loss to Bournemouth last weekend had some people suggesting its bubble may have burst. But Nuno Espirito Santo's team put that notion to bed in devastating fashion.

Wood's hat-trick and goals from Morgan Gibbs-White, Neco Williams and Jota Silva plus an own-goal helped Forest consolidate third spot as it chases what would be its first Champions League qualification in 45 years.

Fulham substitute Rodrigo Muniz struck in the 82nd minute to secure a 2-1 win at Newcastle.

Ipswich must have felt a home game against hapless Southampton would be the ideal opportunity to escape the relegation zone, but it fluffed its lines.

Paul Onuachu struck late on though to give Southampton a glimmer of hope.

Everton's Abdoulaye Doucoure scored the fastest goal of the Premier League season and fourth-fastest in the competition's history as he latched onto a long ball from 'keeper Jordan Pickford to score in 10.18 seconds.

Beto netted twice before half-time and Iliman Ndiaye added a fourth in the 90th minute as Everton moved up to 15th with 26 points.

Wolverhampton Wanderers moved above Leicester into the safety zone with a 2-0 victory at home to Aston Villa.

Israel loses to Germany



• By ORI LEWIS

Jerusalem Post Correspondent

VILNIUS, Lithuania – Despite Israel's valiant efforts, Germany's tennis team wrapped up a clear-cut victory in their Davis Cup Qualifying Group I match that was played in the Lithuanian capital on Friday and Saturday.

Israel's Yshai Oliel and Daniel Cukierman, world ranked respectively at Nos. 531 and 556, pleased the few hundred spectators who enjoyed some sparkling shot-making, although their ability to deliver any surprises against higher-ranked opposition never appeared to be in prospect as German No. 2 player Maximilian Marterer (198) overcame Oliel 6-2, 5-7, 6-4 in a battle of two lefties, and Yannick Hanfmann (92) then dispatched Cukierman 6-4, 6-4.

On Saturday, Germany's Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz, one of the world's top doubles pairs, had little difficulty in seeing off opponents Cukierman and Amit Vales 6-0, 6-3 to seal overall victory in the clash.

Israel's newly-crowned national champion, Ofek Shimanov, made a winning Davis Cup debut in the meaningless final match of the encounter to give hosts a slight air of respectability and an overall 3-1 scoreline when he beat Daniel Masur. Shimanov, 19 and ranked below 1,200 in the world beat his German opponent ranked 265 on a match tie-break after the two players each won one set.

Israel was supposed to be the host nation for the event and afford local tennis fans the chance to see their heroes at home, but because a location had to be determined well ahead of the match and before the ceasefires in Gaza and Lebanon took hold, the International Tennis Federation took it upon itself to host the event at a neutral venue in which neither side was designated as the home team.

Several hundred tennis fans, mostly locals, but some from

Germany and from Israel who flew in to support their respective teams were treated to a weekend of pure, uninterrupted sport that was completely devoid of political protest or disruption.

The state-of-the-art SEB Arena racket sports complex in Vilnius, one of Europe's finest such facilities that would be the envy of many nations, was an ideal venue for the clash that was played on a hard court.

In the two single matches, the quality of play was well above expectations and if the Germans, who were the hot favorites going into the match were expecting to roll over their Israeli opponents lightly, it did not happen.

Friday's play had the spectators riveted by the quality of the powerful shot-making.

Neither Oliel nor Cukierman looked as if they deserved to hold a ranking of between 300-400 places lower than their opponents, but it was also fairly obvious that the Israelis would be hard pressed to deliver the goods when play the play reached a crucial juncture, as Marterer and Hanfmann, both physically more imposing players, would be able raise the level of their game in order to secure victory.

Saturday's doubles clash was completely one-sided as Krawietz and Puetz raced to victory in little over an hour.

The result leaves the Germans, who did not field their three best players, Alexander Zverev, currently the world No. 2, Jan-Lennard Struff (45) and Daniel Altmeier (91), in a position to qualify for the finals comprising the world's top-eight teams and vie for the trophy if they manage to beat Japan in an away clash in September.

Israel will seek to win their next clash in September against as-yet undetermined opponents in order to stay at the current level. A loss will see them relegated to a lower division, classified in the revised format of the competition as World Group I.

COMMENT & FEATURES

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Painting the world orange

The release of Yarden Bibas from captivity by Hamas should have brought unbridled joy, but the return after 484 harrowing days is bitter-sweet due to an unbearable absence: he is unsure what has become of his wife, Shiri, and their two young children, Ariel and Kfir. While rejoicing over the return of a son, brother, and friend, the gruesome reality is that the home to which Yarden was fighting to protect has yet to be rebuilt. In the words of the Bibas family told to *The Jerusalem Post*, "Yarden is home, but home is missing."

Israel is a country that never leaves its own behind. Since October 7, the whole nation has held its breath as hostages returned, one by one, but the question has invariably been: Who is left in the dark? The release of hostages is not an end, but rather a step in an agonizing process of recovery. "We are overjoyed for every hostage who comes home, but we cannot ignore the pain of those still waiting," former hostage negotiator Gershon Baskin told *Ha'aretz*.

Hamas has claimed that Shiri and the children were killed in an Israeli airstrike. No proof has been provided, and Israel has not confirmed the claim. Yarden himself was reportedly shown a video during his captivity in which his captors informed him that his family was gone.

The Bibas family became an iconic image of October 7. A baby with bright red hair – Kfir, only nine months old – clutching his mother as she was dragged into Gaza, his four-year-old brother crying in terror. The images that emerged from that day encapsulated the brutality of Hamas's attack on Israeli civilians. "The kidnapping of children is a war crime," Amnesty International noted in a statement following the attack.

Now, with Yarden's return, the nightmare is not over. Instead, it has evolved into something even more agonizing – the limbo of uncertainty. Israel has been working relentlessly to verify the fate of the remaining hostages. The Hostages and Missing Families Forum, a group representing many of the families of those still in Gaza, released a statement urging the government to act quickly, saying, "The return of Yarden without his family is an unbearable reality. We must do everything in our power to ensure that no one is left behind."

Yarden Bibas did not ask to be a hero. He is a welder, a lover of music and comedy, and a father who, when terrorists broke into his home, did what any father would do – he fought. He was beaten, separated from his family, and thrown into a world of uncertainty.

During his captivity, Yarden was reportedly tormented with stories about his family's supposed fate.

How does a man rebuild his life when he does not know if his loved ones are alive? How does he begin to heal when the home he left behind is still broken? "Survivor's guilt is an unbearable burden, and Yarden is now carrying the heaviest weight of all," said Dr. Orit Galili, a psychologist specializing in PTSD to *Ynet*.

The return of a hostage should be a victory. But when that return comes with unimaginable loss, it is a hollow victory. Yarden Bibas is not the only one experiencing this bittersweet reality – other hostages have returned to find their families murdered, their homes destroyed, their lives forever changed.

The Bibas family has become a symbol of Israel's ongoing pain and resilience, and we must ensure that their story is never forgotten. In honor of Ariel and Kfir, the two redheaded boys still missing in Gaza, we call on people around the world to wear orange as a sign of solidarity. Let orange ribbons, clothing, and social media posts remind the world that these innocent children and their mother are still captives whose fate remains unknown. We urge communities, organizations, and public figures to illuminate buildings in orange, raise awareness, and demand the immediate return of all hostages.

Until the last hostage is returned, the nation will not rest. And until that day comes, Yarden Bibas will remain the tragic hero of October 7 – a man who survived against all odds, but who is still waiting for his family to come home.

Only when that happens will the war truly be over.

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The historical justice The Trump plan for Gaza

• By PESACH WOLICKI

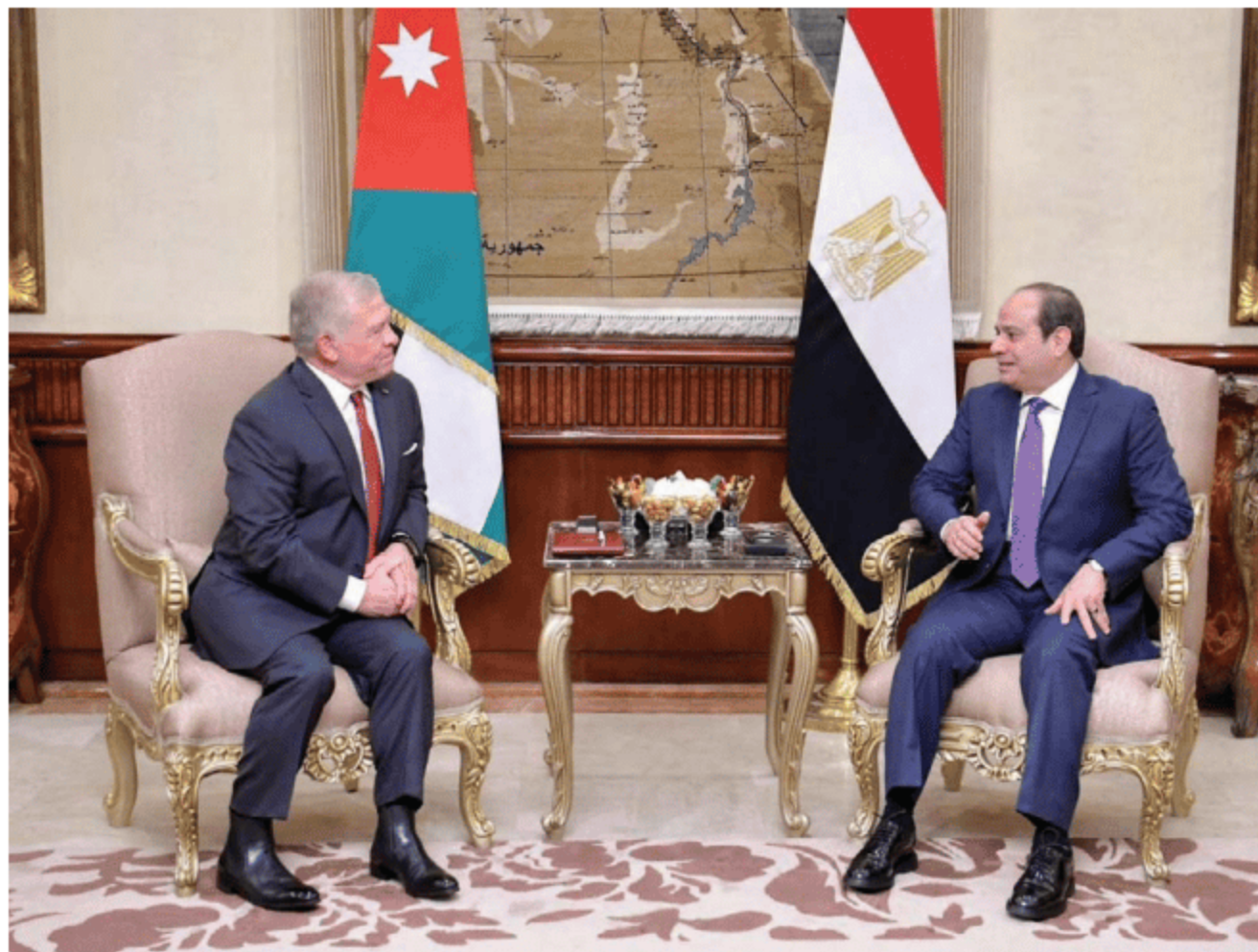
On January 29, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Jordan's King Abdullah II rejected the idea of relocating Gazans, after US President Donald Trump proposed moving Palestinians from the region to the two Arab nations.

In his initial public response to Trump's remarks, Sisi emphasized that "displacing the Palestinian people from their land is an injustice that we cannot be involved in." Jordan's King Abdullah II, for his part, expressed his "firm position on the need to keep the Palestinians on their land and to guarantee their legitimate rights, in accordance with the Israeli and Palestinian two-state solution."

Referring to Trump's idea as an "injustice" and invoking Palestinian "legitimate rights" are cynical and ironic when we consider both international law and the history of the Gaza problem.

First, to the issue of international law. Article 14 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 states that "everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." The 1951 Refugee Convention, to which both Egypt and Jordan are parties, built on this declaration by outlining the obligations of countries of destination. Among those obligations are the acceptance of refugees from war zones and their protection. By refusing to accept refugees from Gaza since the beginning of the war, both Egypt and Jordan are in direct violation of these agreements.

When we consider the history of the Palestinian refugee problem, the comments by Sisi and Abdullah become



EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT Abdel Fattah al-Sisi (right) meets with Jordan's King Abdullah in Cairo, in 2023. The two leaders have rejected the idea of relocating Gazans in their countries, says the writer. (The Egyptian Presidency/Reuters)

even more egregious. The simple fact is that had the Arab states accepted the UN partition plan of November 1947, there would have been a Palestinian Arab state alongside Israel, and not a single Palestinian Arab would have become a refugee. It is only due to the war initiated by numerous Arab armies that any Arab was displaced. The two largest armies were those of Egypt and Jordan.

Beyond Egypt and Jordan, without which that war could never have happened, the primary culprits in the creation of Palestinian refugee camps were the Arab leaders at the time. On March 8, 1948, the Arab Higher Committee ordered most Arabs in parts of Jerusalem to leave their homes. The order stated that

"any opposition to this order is an obstacle to the holy war and will hamper the operations of the fighters in these districts."

In the words of Khaled al-Azm, the Syrian prime minister at the time, in his memoirs, "Since 1948 we have been demanding the return of the refugees to their homes. But we ourselves are the ones who encouraged them to leave. Only a few months separated our call to them to leave and our appeal to the United Nations to resolve on their return."

While Arab leaders were calling for Arabs to evacuate, hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees from Arab countries were streaming to Israel. Forced to flee in the wake of the creation of the

Jewish state, most were prohibited from taking their possessions with them.

For 19 years from the end of the war in 1948 to the Six Day War in 1967, Gaza, with its large population of refugees, was under Egyptian rule. During these years, while Israel successfully absorbed the Jewish refugees from Arab lands, Egypt and Jordan refused to afford Palestinian Arab refugees the same basic human right. In 1952, UNRWA set up a \$200 million fund to provide homes and jobs for the refugees. The funds were never used.

From 1948 to 1967, not only were Gazan refugees prohibited from entering mainland Egypt, the Egyptians went so far as to prevent them from emigrating elsewhere. And

although King Abdullah of Jordan did grant citizenship to some Palestinian refugees, he refused to accept any from Gaza.

The situation was summed up in 1952 by Sir Alexander Galloway, former head of UNRWA in Jordan, "The Arab States do not want to solve the refugee problem. They want to keep it as an open sore, as an affront to the United Nations and as a weapon against Israel. Arab leaders don't give a damn whether the refugees live or die."

In this upside-down world, we now have Egyptian President Sisi wrapping himself in high moral language, declaring President Trump's plan to be "an injustice that we cannot be involved in." Apparently, any attempt to, in Trump's words, "get people living in areas that are a lot safer and maybe a lot better and maybe a lot more comfortable," is immoral to Sisi. And Abdullah's sanctimony about protecting the "legitimate rights" of Palestinians is gaslighting of the highest order. What about the right of asylum from a war zone? What about the fact that for 19 years Jordan ruled Judea and Samaria and did not lift a finger to help the Palestinian Arabs there achieve independence?

Sisi and Abdullah have it exactly backward. Egypt and Jordan are the two states that bear the greatest responsibility, both legally and morally, for the situation that Trump seeks to rectify. Trump's plan would correct a historic injustice while granting a basic human right that has long been denied to the civilian population of Gaza.

The writer is executive director of *Israel365Action.com* and host of *the Shoulder to Shoulder podcast*.

Are the Kurds tactical or strategic allies?

• By MEM HUSEDIN

Ibn Khaldun famously said, "Geography is destiny." Geography shapes the decisions of statesmen and generals.

This principle is exemplified by the importance of the Golan Heights and Mount Hermon. Israel cannot allow its enemies to control the Golan Heights; hence, it is compelled to control or annex them. From Israel's perspective, these areas are strategic defense positions; in enemy hands, they become strategic threats.

Kurdistan's significance for Israel must be understood from a similar strategic viewpoint. Under current considerations, Kurdistan is where Iran's logistical access to its proxies can be disrupted. From this vantage point, one observes the direct land corridor extending through Iraq and Syria to Israel's borders.

If the Kurds were supported to form their own agency in the north of Syria and Iraq and the bordering region between the two and granted control of lands from the Turkish borders of Iraq and Syria down south to where the borders of Iraq, Syria, and Jordan meet, their influence could be justified for Israel's security. However, while this addresses the Iranian/Shia threat, it does not mitigate the other, larger threat: Turkey.

In a previous article, I delved into the history of Turkish racism and its evolution from the hierarchical structure of the Ottoman Empire's Sharia-based system. Under that system, Muslims were superior; this notion was rebranded as "Turks" with the establishment of the Turkish Republic. In the Ottoman era, Muslims coexisted with non-Muslims (the dhimmis), but in the modern Turkish Republic, the Turkish identity was constructed to claim the land exclusively for Muslims identifying as Turks. This ideology has resulted in the nonrecognition of Kurdish identity and systemic racism against them.

If one adds to this Islamist President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's irredentist pol-



AT THE UN General Assembly in 2019, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shared a map showing Turkey's desired control of all of northern Syria. The writer asks: What would Turkey do next? (Brendan Mcdermid/Reuters)

icies in the Eastern Mediterranean, Turkey poses a direct threat to Israel.

Erdogan enjoys strong domestic support, but the real issue lies in his and his AK Party's almost total control over the revised republic. His grip on the state leaves little room for democratic opposition. Secure at home, his regime continues to expand its borders, adding northern and western Syria to the already occupied northern Cyprus.

Abroad, in the Middle East and North and West Africa, Erdogan is allied with the Muslim Brotherhood but does not hesitate to align with groups like al-Qaeda – evident in his support for Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham – or even ISIS. During the siege of Kobani, where the Kurdish-Western alliance was forged, Turkey allowed ISIS fighters to use Turkish border areas to attack Kurdish fighters from behind.

With the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's regime, Syria has become an open field for Turkish influence. Initially, Turkey exercised control over some northern territories directly or through mercenaries now called the Syrian National Army.

Today, the only ongoing war in Syria is the Turkish-directed SNA's attacks on Kurdish regions defended by the Syrian Democratic Forces.

Since the fall of Damascus, the SNA has captured territories like Tel Rifat in northwest Syria and Manbij. Once territory is under SNA control, Turkish occupation follows, complete with Turkish-appointed governors, Ankara-paid bureaucracies, Turkish postal systems, the Turkish lira as currency, and Turkey-managed curricula. This amounts to de facto annexation, though undeclared. Yet, Turkey's ambitions extend further.

At the UN General Assembly in 2019, Erdogan shared a map showing Turkey's desired control of all of northern Syria. The question then arises: What would Turkey do next?

Turkey's actions and rhetoric must be considered together. The actions reveal an irredentist pursuit of former Ottoman territories, while the rhetoric declares a mission to "liberate al-Quds" (Jerusalem), with access to Damascus as the first milestone.

A Kurdish agency controlling lands from Iran to Israel would be a valuable asset for Israel's defense. While the Shia axis led by Iran weakens, another axis – the Turkish axis – emerges, using similar anti-Israeli rhetoric to unite Sunni Arabs under the Turkish flag.

THE SOLUTION is straightforward: support the Kurds in defeating Turkish mercenaries across northern Syria, blocking Turkish access to Damascus and further south. Kurdish legitimacy on their lands is strong, and opposition to their agency would come only from Turkey – an obstacle that could be managed. The Kurds are increasingly pro-Israel and represent the right ally for balancing regional politics.

What do the Kurds gain from this? Everything, starting with the promises made in 1918 by US president Woodrow Wilson in his Fourteen Points. The 12th point stated:

"The Turkish portion of the present Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities now under Ottoman rule should be assured undoubted security of life and an absolutely unmolested opportunity for autonomous development. The Dardanelles should be permanently opened as a free passage to ships and commerce of all nations under international guarantees."

The 12th point is as valid today as it was in 1918, not only in the case of Kurds but also in the case of the Dardanelles, where Turkey's refusal to grant free passage to NATO navies complicates support for Ukraine against Russia.

Recognizing the historical promise to the Kurds and ensuring the free passage of the Dardanelles are essential steps in addressing modern geopolitical challenges – and in securing a more stable and strategically advantageous future for Israel in the region.

The writer, born in Iskenderun and based in Vancouver, is a writer on international politics, the Middle East, and Kurdistan. He is vice president of the Canadian Kurdistan Confederation and hosts the podcasts *Rojewa Kurdistan* and *Nation on the Rise*. On X @mhusedin

Iran's nuclear threat

• By NEVILLE TELLER

A significant topic of discussion at this year's Davos meeting was Iran's nuclear program.

The World Economic Forum, founded in 1971, is an international organization with its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. Its annual meeting in Davos brings together world leaders from business, politics, academia, and other sectors to discuss pressing global issues. The 2025 meeting took place from January 20 to 24.

On January 22, Rafael Grossi, head of the International Atomic Energy Agency, told reporters in Davos that Iran is "pressing the gas pedal" on its enrichment of uranium to near weapons grade. Previously, said Grossi, Iran was producing each month about 7 kg. of uranium enriched to 60%. "Now it's above 30 kg., or more than that. So I think this is a clear indication of an acceleration."

According to the IAEA, about 42 kg. of uranium enriched to 60%, if further enriched to 90%, is enough in principle for one nuclear bomb. Grossi said Iran currently had about 200 kg. of uranium enriched to up to 60%.

He said that although it would take time to install and bring online the extra uranium-enriching centrifuges necessary to produce weapons-grade material, nevertheless the acceleration was starting to happen.

Israel and Iran clashed during the conference. President Isaac Herzog was in Davos and, according to London-based Iran International, the independent Persian-language TV and news medium, he found himself early on in a slanging match with Javad Zarif, the Iran regime's representative.

Iran International reported that on January 21, Herzog was asked by conference interviewer Faeed Zakaria what message he had to convey to Zarif. "I'm not sure he's involved any longer in decision-making in the Iranian leadership," said Herzog, "even if he has a title."

Zarif, Iran's vice president for strategic affairs, was outraged. The next day, participating in a roundtable discussion, he declared that Herzog is "a nobody in Israel."

Herzog riposted with a public statement, which included: "Mr. Zarif, I suggest you look in the mirror."

Zarif came back suggesting that the proof of Herzog's lack of status was that the International Criminal Court had not included him in the arrest warrants it issued against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant for war crimes and crimes against humanity. There the personal tit-for-tat appears to have ended.



IRAN'S VICE PRESIDENT for Strategic Affairs Javad Zarif speaks at the annual World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last month. 'I'm not sure he's involved any longer in decision-making in the Iranian leadership, even if he has a title,' quipped President Isaac Herzog. (Yves Herman/Reuters)

However, during his main Davos speech, Herzog called Iran an "evil empire" that spends billions to finance its military allies.

"This is the strategic issue above everything," he said. "Iran is repeatedly investing billions, at the expense of its citizens, to create a base for terrorism... They continue to rush towards the bomb, constantly planning terrorist attacks all over the world, including in our region - especially the Revolutionary Guards... There is a great danger as long as this regime in Iran remains in place and continues its efforts... We believe that there should be a clear message from world leaders to Iran: No more."

The start of the Davos meeting coincided with Donald Trump's inauguration as US president, and the implications of his return to power for the Iranian regime and its nuclear ambitions occupied many minds.

UN SECRETARY-GENERAL Antonio Guterres suggested Iran must take a first step towards improving relations with countries in the region and the US by making it clear it does not aim to develop nuclear weapons.

Since any such statement emanating from the Iranian regime would be a down-right falsehood, most of the new Trump administration was having none of it. The new Secretary of State Marco Rubio was quoted as saying, "I believe it is in our national security interest for the UN Security Council to snap back the sanctions that were suspended under the JCPOA [the nuclear deal master-minded by then-president Barack Obama in 2015 and rejected by Trump in his first term]."

Similarly, Trump's choice for the new US ambassador to the

UN, Elise Stefanik, said during her Senate confirmation hearing: "Pushing back on Iran is a top priority. It was a success during President Trump's first term."

The new US secretary of defense, Pete Hegseth, was sworn in after Davos had ended. In his letter of congratulations, Israel's Defense Minister Israel Katz hinted at potential action against Iran in the "upcoming months."

"Iran and its partners continue to threaten... regional and global stability," wrote Katz. "I am confident that together we can succeed, creating long-term stability and a better future for the region."

New information about Iran's nuclear program was revealed on February 1 by the UK's Daily Telegraph. The National Council of Resistance of Iran (NCRI) had passed on details of how the IRGC has been expanding its weapons program.

It revealed that two sites, camouflaged as communication satellite launch facilities, have been used to rush the production of nuclear warheads. They are both under the control of the regime's nuclear weapons arm, the SPND (Organization for Advanced Defense Research).

At the first site, known as the Shahrud missile site, about 35 km. from a city of the same name, SPND and IRGC Aerospace Force experts have been working on producing a nuclear warhead capable of being fitted to a Ghaem-100, solid-fueled rocket with a range of 3,000 km.

Missiles with that range would allow Iran to launch nuclear strikes deep into Europe from its territory - as far as Greece. There have been at least three successful launches of the rocket, which the NCRI says "enhances the

regime's capability to deploy nuclear weapons."

A second site, situated around 70 km. southeast of the city of Semnan, is being used to develop Simorgh missiles, a weapon based on the North Korean UNHA-1, an 18-meter tall rocket.

Significant portions of the site are underground to conceal the work from intelligence satellites capturing images of the area. The regime has been steadily expanding the site since around 2005.

The Jerusalem Post's senior military correspondent, Yonah Jeremy Bob, recently reported that some Israeli and US officials have been indicating that a direct attack on Iran's nuclear facilities could be a viable possibility. Strategists believe that following Iran's second missile onslaught on Israel, Israel's counterattack on October 26 destroyed a significant proportion of Iran's air defenses, leaving its nuclear sites more vulnerable than they have ever been.

Trump, however, in a recent interview with the New York Post, refused to indicate whether he would support preemptive strikes on Iranian nuclear facilities. What he was quite clear about was that the Islamic Republic "can't have a nuclear weapon." He was confident he could cut a deal with Iran that would stop it from obtaining a nuclear weapon. Without exactly saying how, beyond specifying that "you have to verify times 10," he said, "there are ways that you can make it absolutely certain."

As ever, Trump will do it his way.

The writer is Middle East correspondent for Eurasia Review. His latest book is *Trump and the Holy Land: 2016-2020*. Follow him at: www.a-mid-east-journal.blogspot.com

Turning point for the Middle East

Netanyahu's visit to the White House

• By BOBBY RECHNITZ

With Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu becoming the first foreign leader invited to the White House following US President Donald Trump's second inauguration, the significance is immediately clear.

This is not merely a diplomatic courtesy; it is a momentous gesture that is demonstrating a reset in ties between Israel and the United States, and, more crucially, could symbolize a new chapter in Middle East diplomacy.

Unlike his predecessor, Trump is showing that the real way diplomacy between two allies works is directly, honestly, and with a show of deep friendship.

This invitation, and the partnership it represents, mark a pivotal point in the history of the Middle East.

It is now clear to all that Iran and its proxies, chiefly Hamas, launched the October 7 massacre to derail the upcoming historic and paradigm-shifting normalization agreement between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

This expansion of the Abraham Accords, the historic peace agreements that had already begun to reshape the region under the previous Trump administration, ushered in an era of cooperation, stability, and prosperity across the Middle East.

The Islamic Republic and its terrorist arms could not let that happen because it would have isolated its murderous rejectionist ideology and ensured the people of the region had a better future, free of its radical Islamist domination.

Thanks in large part to Netanyahu's determined leadership, Iran has nonetheless still been severely weakened. Over the last 15 months, Hamas has been largely militarily defeated, Hezbollah was routed, and the Assad regime is no more. Moreover, Iran itself has been left largely undefended after successive Israeli air raids.

So, now is precisely the time to return to former plans to rewrite history and bring peace and prosperity to the region.

Thus, Netanyahu's visit highlights the unwavering commitment of both Israel and the US to a shared vision of peace.

From the outset of Trump's first term, his administration sought to address long-standing regional conflicts by challenging conventional paradigms and fostering direct engagement between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

The Abraham Accords, launched under this vision, broke through decades of hostility and division, culminating in historic normalization agreements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco, which have withstood the test of time and war.

Netanyahu's invitation to Washington is a

natural progression of these diplomatic breakthroughs, signaling a continued dedication to expanding and solidifying these accords, and, with them, the promise of lasting peace in the Middle East.

The ramifications of Netanyahu's visit go far beyond just the strengthening of ties between Israel and its Arab neighbors; they are deeply relevant to the broader geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East.

Most notably, this growing cooperation presents a united front in the face of Iran's destabilizing influence. As Iran continues its pursuit of nuclear weapons and attempts to rebuild its proxy-driven bloody activities across the region, the strategic importance of isolating Tehran has never been more critical.

The Abraham Accords provide a powerful counterbalance to Iran's ambitions, with Israel and its Arab partners now united in their efforts to curb Iranian expansionism and ensure the security of the region.

The message sent by Netanyahu's visit is unmistakable: the US-Israel relationship is more important than ever, and the Abraham Accords are here to stay. The diplomatic momentum that Netanyahu's visit signals will ensure all players in the region understand who is the "strong horse" that can help shape peace and prosperity.

In 2025, as Trump and Netanyahu meet once again, the world watches a region in transformation wracked by unnecessary conflicts brought on hopefully by the Islamic Republic's final bloody scramble.

After Iran's defeat, the Middle East should no longer be a place defined solely by conflict and violence.

It needs to become a place where peace is possible, prosperity is achievable, and security is becoming a shared priority. Netanyahu's visit to Washington is not just a personal milestone for both leaders, it is a clear statement to the world that the future of the Middle East will be defined by cooperation, not conflict. And in this new era, Iran's quest for regional dominance stands increasingly isolated and rejected.

With the Abraham Accords expectantly continuing to expand and strengthen, the Middle East is on the cusp of a new dawn, one characterized by peace, prosperity, and a united front against destabilizing and violent forces. And in the heart of this transformation stands the unshakable partnership between Israel and its allies, led by Prime Minister Netanyahu, working alongside President Trump to create a better future for all.

The writer is a Los Angeles-based philanthropist and real-estate developer who serves as chairman of the Abraham Accords Roundtable and Golda Meir Commemorative Coin Committee in Washington.



PRIME MINISTER Benjamin Netanyahu meets with US President Donald Trump prior to signing the Abraham Accords, at the White House, in 2020. Trump is showing that the real way diplomacy between two allies works is directly, honestly, and with a show of deep friendship, the writer argues. (Tom Brenner/Reuters)

LETTERS

Building new lives

In "The legacy of Holocaust survivors" (February 2), Jamie Geller is correct in describing as inspirational, the choice of many Holocaust survivors to build new lives instead of living in the past or seeking revenge.

Recalling the resilience of her own grandparents, she hopes that the October 7 survivors today will likewise refuse to let trauma define their future. When Geller mentioned that her parents joined a group called Children of Holocaust Survivors, I was reminded of a similar group formed in Rockland County, NY, at the Rockland Center for Holocaust Studies.

As my husband was a founder of that museum, I had the opportunity to share the observations of the members of the group firsthand, and discovered that they shared certain effects on their upbringing that could be traced to the original trauma in their parents' lives. One example was extreme caution in supervising ordinary children's activities.

Further, in 1993, I accompanied my husband to the Hidden Children's Conference, where I had the opportunity to hear informally the anguish that still remained 50 years later.

There is still another aspect, described by a Hunter College professor, Maria Rosenbloom, who testifies about those survivors who could not adjust and lived out their lives in mental torture, some even kept in psychiatric hospitals because of a lack of knowledge at the time of how to deal with victims of such trauma.

Indeed, the lesson for today's survivors, as Geller says, is "to choose life," but it is the responsibility of the community at large to provide the space and tools for them to do so successfully.

MARION REISS
Beit Shemesh

In the thousands

Regarding Herb Keinon's "A show of hate; a nation's resolve" (January 31): Viewing "the blood-curdling pictures of the frenzied mob that Gadi Mozes and Arbel Yehud had to walk through on their way to freedom," as Keinon puts it, it is clear that the Gaza populace that showed up to harass the two during their hand-off to the Red Cross extended beyond the edges of the photographs and videos, and easily numbered in the thousands.

Putting aside the issue of whether and to what extent the people of Gaza are or are not collectively guilty for invading Israel, murdering, raping and kidnapping Israelis and holding them hostage, one must wonder how such a large crowd could be assembled on such relatively short notice if indeed, as the world's antisemites assert, Israel has committed genocide in Gaza.

KALMAN H. RYESKY
Petah Tikva

Relentlessly pursued

Regarding "Three hostages released in chaotic handover" (January 31): If proof were ever needed, though I'm sure that for every Israeli it wasn't, the unedifying chaotic release of our hostages who had spent nearly 500 days in unimaginable hellholes showed the world the heinous terrorists with whom we are forced to deal.

For sure nothing is more important than obtaining the release of our people even when it means that those tried and sentenced for murdering Israelis have to be set free.

All hostages are of equal importance, although

I have etched on my mind the Bibas family and truly hope that all of them are alive and will be back in the arms of their loved ones so very soon. However, should the worst be discovered for any one of them, I look to our divisive government coalition to stop waving the white flag.

I unfortunately don't have an answer for what transpires following the various stages of this ceasefire deal, but what is glaringly obvious is that letting Hamas fighters remain as our ruling neighbor will have to be a non-starter. It therefore becomes even more imperative than ever that tomorrow's meeting between Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Trump, which at the outset looks like one of the most highly important ones between an Israeli prime minister and the leader of the free world, is able to produce sustainable answers.

Decisions will need to be made going forward for the rebuilding of Gaza, and determining who will be acceptable and capable of governing there, as well as dealing with the hot spot that is Judea and Samaria (the West Bank) before that area too transpires into another unacceptable war zone. Yes, these are difficult questions requiring answers which would satisfy all concerned, which up to now has not proved possible.

It has also been truly transparent that when one entity is imbued with hatred, it might well prove beyond the ability of man to resolve the situation to everyone's satisfaction. Nonetheless, for this and future generations, it must still be an exercise relentlessly pursued.

STEPHEN VISHNICK
Tel Aviv

When Dylan went electric

Regarding "Jewish blues-rock musician Barry Goldberg dies at 83" (*The Mercury News*/TNS, January 27): It's mentioned that he backed Bob Dylan when he went electric at the Newport Folk Festival in 1965. Listed in the article as the bass player for this music history-making event was fellow Jewish bassist Harvey Brooks. This is totally not true. On electric bass that day was Jerome Arnold along with Jewish guitarist Michael Bloomfield who both played in the Paul Butterfield Blues Band.

Harvey Brooks played his first Dylan session just a few days later in New York City for the *Bringing It All Back Home* album. Shortly afterward, he was rehearsing with Al Kooper who had backed Bob Dylan in Newport, along with Robbie Robertson and Levon Helm of the Hawks. It was this group of musicians who would play with Dylan weeks later when he appeared at the Forest Hills Stadium in New York City and then the Hollywood Bowl in Los Angeles.

Though the Hawks eventually changed the name of their group to The Band, by the end of that month they were backing Dylan on his American tour. Brooks went on to play with Bloomfield in the Electric Flag, and then they did Super Session together along with Al Kooper and Stephen Stills. The good news for all of us here in Israel is that Harvey along with his wife Bonnie made aliyah 15 years ago and they live right here in Jerusalem.

HOWIE KAHN
Jerusalem

A complete hostage release

Will Israel go through with it?



THINK ABOUT IT
• By SUSAN HATTIS ROLEF

One of the most sensitive issues on our national agenda at the moment is the question of whether or not we should go through with all three stages of the hostage release agreement we signed with Hamas on January 15.

Those who argue in favor of breaking the agreement claim that the price we have agreed to pay in exchange for all our hostages, which includes the release of over a thousand Palestinian prisoners with Jewish blood on their hands, and the complete cessation of the fighting, is much too high.

I belong to those who believe that though the agreement is far from ideal, it is the best we could get and that bringing all the hostages home is vital. My basic premise is that the state has a basic duty to do its best to bring its citizens who have come in harm's way, whether in Israel or abroad, back home safely, as rapidly as possible.

In the current situation, resulting from the events of October 7, the responsibility of the state towards the victims of the Hamas onslaught on southwestern Israel – those who were attacked, slaughtered, and/or kidnapped to the Gaza Strip – is absolute, for it was the duty of the state to prevent what happened, and both the political level and the armed forces failed dismally in doing so.

In addition, I believe that unless all the hostages are returned home, either to rehabilitate their lives or to be properly buried (as the case may be), the rehabilitation of

society as a whole, after the events of the last two years, will be impossible.

Having been born in this country several years before the establishment of the state, and having grown up on the ethos of the state's responsibility for the well-being and safety of its citizens in all respects, even though the Knesset has never passed a law to this effect, I find it very difficult to accept the claim that this obligation is not absolute, as the Halacha seems to claim.

Like many others in this in this country, religious and secular, I am inclined to quote the halachic command concerning the redemption of captives (*pidyon shvuyim*), which was discussed by the Rambam some 800 years ago. Even the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) politicians today are inclined to quote this command with regard to the release of the hostages from the Gaza Strip, though they, like the rest of us, are also inclined to ignore the halachic reservations to this command.

These reservations include the statement that one should not pay for the redemption of captives more than their real worth. There are reservations to this reservation as well, but it certainly may be seen as a justification for those today who believe that the release of thousands of Palestinian prisoners and a cessation of the war against Hamas is too high a price to pay for the release of our hostages.

The question, of course, is who decides the "worth" of each captive, and how one



FRIENDS OF OFER KALDERON ride bicycles as they wait for his arrival at Sheba Medical Center for treatment following his release from Gaza on Saturday. The writer asks: Can anyone imagine a situation in which the latest three released hostages – Yarden Bibas, Ofer Kalderon, and Keith Siegel – had been left behind? (Nir Elias/Reuters)

determines the correct price one agrees to pay. Is it the Rambam, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, US President Donald J. Trump, or someone else?

We know that for Netanyahu, whether the price is acceptable, depends on whether it

will directly or indirectly help preserve his political career. For Trump, it is believed that it is acceptable if it will help lead to his receiving a Nobel Peace Prize.

SEVERAL DAYS ago, I got into

a stormy argument with a colleague on the issue of whether the vote by the Otzma Yehudit and Religious Zionist ministers against the hostage release agreement was morally acceptable, given that it constitutes a death sentence to all those

hostages who are still alive, and will not be released should Israel decide to renege on its signature on the agreement.

My colleague reacted to my insinuation that this act was morally faulty by asking me whether in my opinion there is a limit to the price we should be willing to pay for the hostages. When I responded that as long as the decision-makers put up a fight to keep the price as low as possible, the deal was legitimate and unavoidable in my eyes, he shot back: "You are not answering my question."

Fortunately, the argument was cut short, but had it continued, and had I managed to regain my composure, I would have raised what is perhaps the strongest argument in favor of the deal. One has to be devoid of any human feelings not to conclude from the return so far of the first 18 hostages released within the framework of the current deal, that deliberately putting an end to the process would be a miserable and inhuman act.

All 44 surviving hostages are human beings, the majority young men and a few older men, with whose names and biographies we are familiar, as well as with the circumstances of their abductions.

How on earth would leaving them behind to join the 32 hostages, who have already perished, to try to forestall future events, the exact nature of which we do not know, in which thousands of unnamed persons are liable to be killed and hundreds raped (as some of the prophets of doom are predicting), add to our society's welfare?

Are we really so unsure of ourselves that we do not believe we are capable of dealing successfully with events of

a similar nature to those of October 7?

Can anyone imagine a situation in which the latest three released hostages, who we received two days ago – Yarden Bibas, Ofer Kalderon, and Keith Siegel – had been left behind?

And what about the three Israelis released last Thursday – Agam Berger, Arbel Yehoud, Gadi Mozes – and another five Thai agricultural laborers?

As things look at the moment, if the final decision on this issue will be left in Netanyahu's hands, I believe that he would seek some excuse to renege on the agreement we signed, primarily to prevent his government from falling apart. At the same time, he keeps telling the hostages' families that he plans to bring all the hostages back home, which clashes with other sayings he utters to the effect that the war will be resumed after the current stage of the agreement is completed, and possibly even beforehand.

In the final reckoning, the issue might well be decided this week when Netanyahu will meet Trump in Washington. All the indications point to Trump seeking the return of all hostages to Israel, and the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas turning into a permanent cessation of hostilities.

The writer published her first article in The Jerusalem Post in 1966. Over the years she has held both academic and journalistic positions and published articles on Zionism, European politics, current affairs, and Israeli politics. She has published several books, in both Hebrew and English, the last of which was Israel's Knesset Members – A Comparative Study of an Undefined Job.

Gaza beyond Hamas

A fight for true liberation

• By CATHERINE PEREZ-SHAKDAM

The future of Gaza must not be framed as a question of governance alone, nor reduced to an endless debate about post-war reconstruction. At its core, this is a battle between liberation and enslavement, between those who seek a future beyond war and those who thrive on the perpetual suffering of their own people.

The destruction of Hamas's military capabilities is a necessary but insufficient condition for peace. Hamas is not merely an armed group – it is an ideological regime, one that has transformed Gaza into a war economy, a launchpad for jihad, and a psychological prison where an entire population has been conditioned to believe that death is preferable to compromise. It is not occupation that defines life in Gaza but subjugation – by Hamas itself.

For decades, the world has been sold a narrative in which Gaza is cast as an occupied territory, its suffering solely attributed to Israel. This is a grotesque inversion of reality. The true occupier of Gaza is Hamas – a theocratic mafia that has ruled not by consent but by force.

It has crushed political rivals, murdered dissenters, and imposed its Islamist vision with an iron grip. Since its violent coup in 2007, Hamas has held Gazans hostage, their lives dictated by a regime that has no interest in state-building, only in perpetuating conflict as a means of maintaining power.

Western policymakers, journalists, and international institutions have indulged the absurd fiction that Hamas is a legitimate national liberation movement. It is not. A political movement can negotiate. A death cult cannot.

Hamas is an organization whose founding charter explicitly calls for genocide, and whose leadership openly declares its commitment to annihilation rather than coexistence. It does not seek a Palestinian state alongside Israel; it seeks Israel's destruction as a

precursor to Islamic conquest.

IT IS TIME to ask a different question: what does liberation look like for the people of Gaza? The world's fixation with Israel's role in the conflict has obscured the most important reality: the primary victims of Hamas's rule are the Palestinians themselves.

The removal of Hamas from power cannot be treated as a military objective alone. It is not enough to destroy its tunnels, assassinate its leaders, or dismantle its rocket capabilities. If Hamas is to be permanently erased, then its ideological and economic stranglehold over Gaza must also be dismantled.

A post-war Gaza that is truly free must begin with a total de-Hamasification of its institutions. This is not an abstract concept – it is a historical necessity. After World War II, Germany was not merely defeated militarily; Nazism was systematically uprooted. The same must happen in Gaza.

The first step is education reform. Hamas has turned Gaza's schools into factories of extremism, where children are not taught mathematics or science but martyrdom and hatred. The international community has for years poured billions into Palestinian education, yet it has done so with no oversight, allowing Hamas to weaponize schools as recruitment centers for its next generation of jihadists.

No international aid should be sent to Gaza unless it is conditional on the total eradication of Hamas propaganda from its educational system.

Beyond education, Hamas's patronage networks must be shattered. Hamas operates like a cartel, controlling employment, aid distribution, and public services in Gaza. If you are not loyal, you are cut off. If Hamas is to be permanently removed, international reconstruction efforts must bypass its institutions entirely, channeling resources instead to independent local councils, vetted technocrats, and economic initiatives that do not serve as vehicles for

Hamas's resurgence.

Hamas's power is not just derived from ideology or violence – it is deeply rooted in economic control. By monopolizing trade, taxation, and employment, Hamas ensures that its survival is inextricably linked to the material survival of Gazans themselves. This must end.

Gaza's economic future must be torn from Hamas's grasp and reintegrated into a broader regional framework. For too long, Hamas has fostered economic isolation as a propaganda tool, blaming Israel for the suffering of a population it has deliberately impoverished.

But Gaza does not have to remain a prison state – it can be rebuilt through economic partnerships with moderate Arab nations, creating pathways for trade, investment, and employment that bypass Hamas entirely.

A crucial step in this transformation will be the creation of industrial free zones under international oversight, ensuring that job opportunities are not contingent on loyalty to Hamas and that economic growth is tied to productivity rather than political allegiance. If Gazans can work, earn, and thrive outside Hamas's networks, then the foundation of Hamas's rule will begin to crumble.

HAMAS'S GREATEST weapon is not its arsenal – it is its ability to control the narrative, both within Gaza and abroad. It has convinced Gazans that their suffering is caused not by Hamas's corruption, but by Israel's existence. It has convinced the international community that Hamas is a victim rather than a perpetrator of violence. This illusion must be shattered.

The first step in breaking Hamas's grip is exposing its failure as a governing force. Hamas has stolen international aid, diverted humanitarian resources into terror tunnels, and built palaces for its leaders while Gazans live in squalor. The more the people of Gaza see that Hamas's leadership lives in

luxury while they starve, the more Hamas's moral authority erodes.

Equally important is amplifying the voices of defectors and dissidents. Hamas has ruled through fear, executing those who dare to question its rule. But even the most totalitarian regimes have cracks. Former Hamas operatives and Gazan civilians who oppose Hamas must be given a global platform to speak out. The more these voices are heard, the more Hamas's aura of invulnerability weakens.

The destruction of Hamas is not a question of political preference – it is a moral necessity. Hamas is not just a terrorist organization; it is a cancer within Palestinian society, one that has robbed its own people of their future while masquerading as their champion.

A post-war Gaza must not be allowed to descend into yet another Islamist dictatorship. Nor should it be handed over to another corrupt and inept Palestinian Authority. Instead, the only path forward is a decentralized governance model, where power is distributed among independent Gazan leaders, local councils, and international oversight mechanisms that prevent a Hamas resurgence.

The choice facing the world is stark: a Gaza free from Hamas, or a Gaza condemned to endless bloodshed. There is no middle ground. Hamas cannot be managed, reformed, or contained. It must be destroyed – completely, irreversibly, and without the possibility of resurrection.

If the world truly wants peace, it must abandon the failed strategies of appeasement and half-measures. The real battle for Gaza is not just against rockets and tunnels, but against the ideological machinery that has enslaved its people. Only when Hamas is gone in every sense – militarily, politically, and ideologically – can Gaza begin to reclaim its future.

That is the only path to true liberation.

The writer is executive director of the Forum for Foreign Relations.

Holocaust remembrance

• By DANI DAYAN

As we gathered last week to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, a day chosen to coincide with the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau, we were reminded of a chilling truth: The Holocaust unfolded in plain sight. It was not a hidden atrocity, shrouded in secrecy. Instead, it was a horrifying reality that occurred before the eyes of a world that chose silence and inaction.

The ghettos, where countless Jews were forcibly confined in the worst conditions, were often situated in the heart of urban areas, just a few steps away from the non-Jewish population. These segregated neighborhoods were not surrounded by invisible walls preventing passersby from seeing them; they were visible to the naked eye. A reminder of the deep-seated antisemitism that plagued society.

Often on a daily basis, the general population witnessed the degradation of their Jewish neighbors, yet many chose to turn a blind eye, allowing prejudice to overshadow their humanity.

Even more harrowing was the sight of Jews being escorted to deportation, often in broad daylight, as they were led away to an uncertain fate. Families were torn apart, and lives were irrevocably shattered under the indifferent gaze of bystanders. The streets were filled with the echoes of despair, yet the overwhelming collective response was one of silence.

That silence is not merely a historical footnote, it is a stark reminder of our shared responsibility to confront hatred and intolerance in all its forms.

In light of this painful history, this past week's co-naming of a street in New York City as Yad Vashem Way is a significant turn of events. In a city that never sleeps, this street sign stands high as a beacon of remembrance and a call to action for all humanity. Yad Vashem has become synonymous with Holocaust remembrance, education, research,



'THIS PAST week's co-naming of a street in New York City as Yad Vashem Way is a significant turn of events; in a city that never sleeps, this street sign stands high as a beacon of remembrance and a call to action for all humanity,' the writer states. (Nir Arieli/Yad Vashem)

and documentation. The very mention of its name evokes deep emotion and a commitment to ensure that such atrocities never happen again.

This street sign is not just a tribute to the organization that safeguards the memory of the Holocaust, it is a powerful reminder that the lessons of the Holocaust must remain at the forefront of our collective consciousness.

When we honor the memory of those who perished, we also acknowledge the duty of the living to speak out against injustice and hatred. Each time someone walks past Yad Vashem Way, they are confronted with the weight of history and the imperative to remember.

As we transition into the next generation of Holocaust remembrance, expressions of commemoration, such as this one, are crucial. They create a space for dialogue and reflection, allowing us to engage with our past in mean-

ingful ways. I sincerely hope that more cities in the United States and around the world will follow New York City's lead, naming their own Yad Vashem Way in plain sight.

Such initiatives serve as vital reminders that we must not only remember the victims of the Holocaust but also actively combat the antisemitism and hatred that continue to permeate our societies today.

The Holocaust was a crime committed in plain sight, and our response must likewise be unambiguous. We must bear witness to the past, educate future generations, and foster a culture of remembrance that transcends borders and backgrounds. In doing so, we honor the memory of the six million Jews who were murdered in silence. We affirm our commitment to a future where such darkness can never again take root.

The writer is the chairman of Yad Vashem.

Trump introduces tariffs on Canada, Mexico, China

• By DAVID LAWDER

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – US President Donald Trump has pushed into new trade law territory with an emergency sanctions law to justify 25% tariffs on Canadian and Mexican imports and an extra 10% duty on Chinese goods to curb fentanyl and illegal immigration into the US.

Trade and legal experts said the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act is untested for imposing import tariffs, and Trump's action will likely face swift court challenges that could set important precedents.

As widely expected, Trump declared a national emergency under IEEPA on Saturday, citing the "extraordinary threat" from fentanyl and illegal immigration. The law gives the president broad powers to impose economic and financial sanctions in times of crisis, including against Russia over its war in Ukraine.

IEEPA gave Trump, in the second week of his second

term in the White House, the fastest path to imposing tariffs, as trade laws he used in his first four years for duties on steel, aluminum, and Chinese goods would have required months-long investigations and public consultations.

"The courts have historically upheld the president's power to take emergency actions, especially when they are related to national security," said Tim Brightbill, who co-chairs the international trade practice at the law firm Wiley Rein.

"The question is, does that include tariffs, since IEEPA has only been used for sanctions," Brightbill said. He added that companies or industry groups would be likely to seek an injunction but may face an uphill battle blocking the tariffs.

"Judges are not likely to second guess a president on what constitutes an emergency," said William Reinsch, a trade expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, adding that



US PRESIDENT Donald Trump talks to reporters after signing an executive order in the Oval Office on Friday. (Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images)

the "emergency is whatever he says it is."

The closest parallel to Trump's action was the late president Richard Nixon's use of IEEPA's predecessor law, the 1917 Trading

With the Enemy Act, to impose a 10% across-the-board US tariff in 1971 to stem rising imports amid a balance-of-payments crisis after pulling the dollar off the gold standard.

Courts upheld Nixon's action, but Jennifer Hillman, a trade law professor at Georgetown University and former World Trade Organization appellate judge, said Trump's action may not fit

the emergency.

The Nixon ruling and reporting requirement language in the IEEPA statute suggest that there needs to be a causal connection between the emergency – fentanyl and migrants – and the remedy: universal tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and China.

"At least for me, I don't think there is such a connection in this case," Hillman said. "The tariffs would not be applied only to fentanyl, so there is not a clear reason why tariffs on all goods are 'necessary' to deal with a problem of fentanyl or migrants."

Nixon's use had a much clearer connection between the level of imports and the value of the dollar, she added.

Trump threatened to use IEEPA in 2019 to back 5% tariffs on Mexican goods over border migration issues but never declared an emergency after Mexico agreed to step up border security.

Trump also invoked the National Emergencies Act to use federal funds to pay

for construction of a wall on the southern border in his first term.

If courts allow the use of IEEPA for tariffs to stand, Congress should reform IEEPA to require greater oversight, said Peter Harrell, a national security lawyer and senior fellow at the Center for a New American Security.

"At the very least, however, courts should find that allowing Trump to wave his magic Sharpie to sign an IEEPA executive order imposing tariffs would upset the balance Congress has long sought to strike when it delegates its tariff authority to the president," he said in a note on Friday.

Sen. Tim Kaine, a Virginia Democrat, last month introduced legislation to restrict IEEPA's use for tariffs, arguing it was never designed or intended for such tariffs.

He said, "Virginians want lower prices, not higher ones, and the last thing we need are new, senseless taxes on imports from America's three largest trading partners."

At least seven dead in Philadelphia plane crash

• Reuters

At least seven people died when a medevac plane crashed in Philadelphia on Friday, including six Mexicans aboard the plane and one person who was on the ground, according to Mexico's president and Philadelphia's mayor.

Philadelphia Mayor Cherelle Parker told a press conference that the person who died on

the ground had been in a car at the site of the crash.

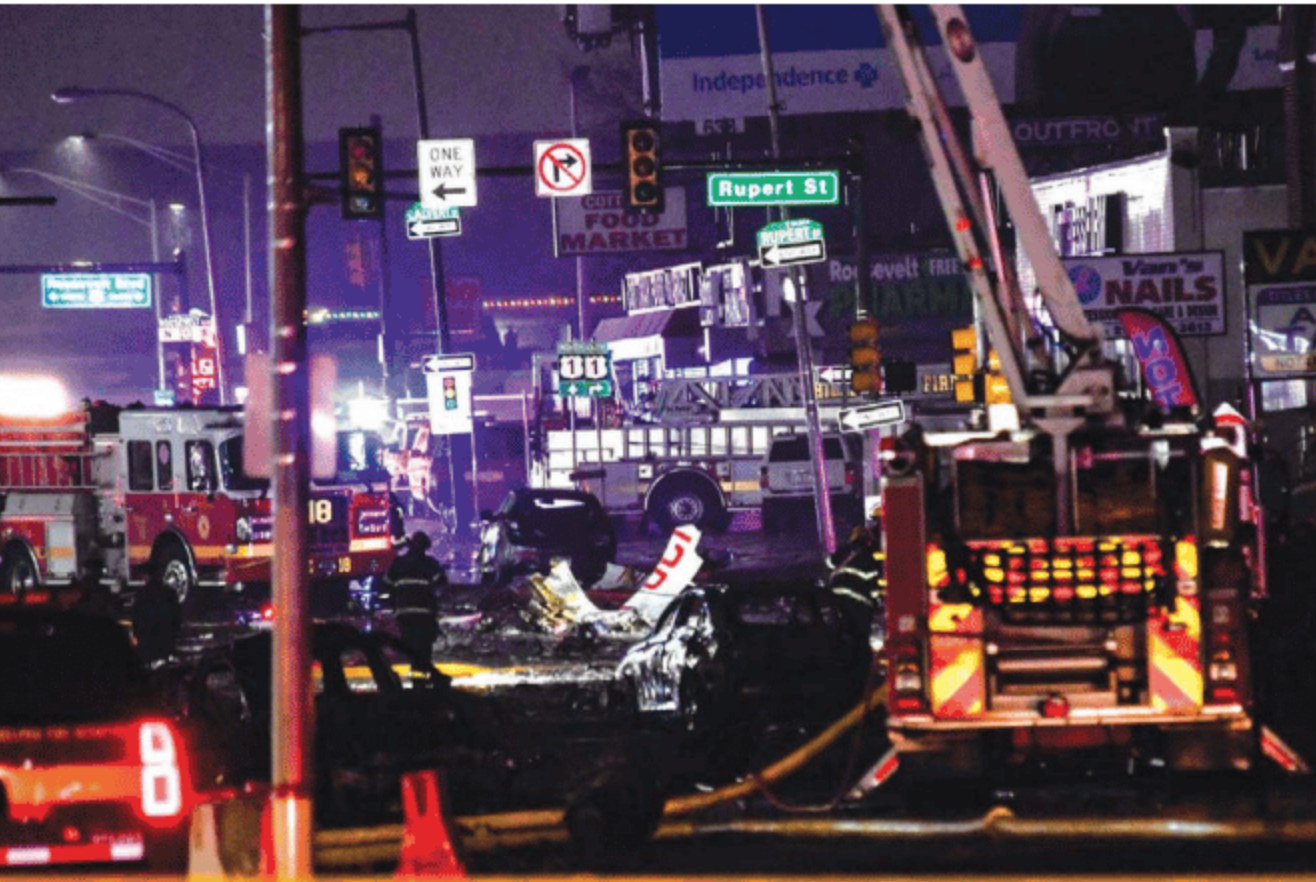
"Thus far, our count is that there are 19 injured victims," Parker said on Saturday.

Separately, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum said in a post on X/Twitter that she had asked consular officials to support the families of the six Mexican citizens who were on the plane and died when it crashed.

Jet Rescue Air Ambulance,

based in Mexico and licensed to operate in the US, on Friday said its aircraft crashed with four crew members, one pediatric medical patient, and the patient's mother on board.

The child was a girl on her way home with a final destination of Tijuana, Shai Gold, who works on corporate strategy with Jet Rescue Air Ambulance, told CNN on Friday. Her mother was also aboard, he said.



EMERGENCY SERVICE workers respond to a plane crash in Philadelphia on Friday. (Matthew Hatcher/Getty Images)

Greece issues seismic activity warning for Aegean island Santorini

ATHENS (Reuters) – Greek authorities have advised those on the Aegean Island of Santorini to shut schools on Monday, avoid two small ports, and refrain from gathering in indoor spaces after increased seismic activity in the area over recent days.

A series of tremors up to a 4.3 magnitude were regis-

tered on Friday and Saturday in the area between the volcanic island of Santorini and Amorgos, the Citizen Protection Ministry said on Saturday afternoon.

The ministry said the activity was not linked to volcanic activity and was receding, but experts had proposed precautionary measures, including

the school closures on Monday. They also urged people not to access or remain at the small port of Ammoudi and the harbor of Fira, which serves mainly cruise ships.

Earthquakes measuring between 2.8 and 4.5 struck the area on Sunday morning, according to the Athens Geodynamic Institute, without

causing damage. Greece sits on multiple fault lines and is often rattled by earthquakes.

Santorini is one of Greece's top tourist destinations.

One of the largest eruptions in history, around 1600 BCE, formed the island in its current shape. The last eruption in the area occurred in 1950.

Ukraine, Russia trade blame over deadly strike on school in Kursk region

• By OLEKSANDR KOZHUKHAR

KYIV (Reuters) – Ukraine and Russia traded blame for a deadly missile strike on Saturday that killed at least four people in the dormitory of a boarding school situated in a part of Russia's Kursk region held by Kyiv forces.

Some of the war's fiercest battles in recent months have taken place in the Kursk region that borders Ukraine, where Kyiv forces have held swaths of the land since staging a major cross-border incursion last August.

Ukraine's Armed Forces said on Telegram that Russia had launched an aerial bomb from Russian territory that

struck a boarding school in Sudzha, killing at least four. The boarding school housed people preparing for evacuation.

As of 10 p.m. on Saturday, 84 people had been rescued or received medical assistance, the statement said. Four of the injured were in a serious condition. Rescue efforts to clear rubble were proceeding.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said the attack on Sudzha, some 12 km. from the border with Ukraine, showed how Russia fights the war. "They destroyed the building even though dozens of civilians were there," Zelensky wrote on X/Twitter.

"This is how Russia waged

war against Chechnya decades ago. They killed Syrians the same way. Russian bombs destroy Ukrainian homes the same way."

Russia's Defense Ministry said early on Sunday on Telegram that Ukrainian forces had launched "a targeted missile strike on a boarding school in the city of Sudzha" from Ukrainian territory.

In a statement, Russian foreign ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova called the strike a "terrorist attack" and vowed to bring Kyiv to justice. Russia's acting governor of the Kursk region, Alexander Khinshtein, also blamed Kyiv forces for the strike and said there was no reliable informa-

tion yet about the number of potential victims.

Ukraine's military spokesperson, Oleksiy Dmytrashkivskiy, said in a video posted on Facebook earlier that nearly 100 people were under rubble at the site, which he said had housed mostly the elderly and infirm.

Reuters was not able to verify the claims by either side independently, and the scope of the attack remained unclear.

Both sides deny targeting civilians in the war that Russia launched with its full-scale invasion in February 2022. Thousands of civilians, however, have been killed, the vast majority of them Ukrainian.

CONGO HEALTH MINISTRY:

Over 700 dead in Goma morgues after Rwanda-backed offensive

• Reuters

There were 773 bodies in morgues in and around the eastern Congolese city of Goma as of January 30 following last week's offensive by Rwanda-backed M23 rebels, the Democratic Republic of Congo's Health Ministry said.

Morgues are over-filled, and more bodies are lying on the street, the ministry said. It added that 2,880 wounded were recorded between last Sunday and Thursday.

The Tutsi-led M23 rebels on Tuesday seized Goma, east Congo's largest city and the capital of the North Kivu province, home to lucrative gold, coltan, and tin mines.

They then moved on toward Bukavu in South Kivu but appeared to be held up on Friday by Congolese troops supported by Burundi's army.

Well-trained and professionally armed, M23 is the latest in a long line of Rwandan-supported rebel movements to emerge in Congo's volatile eastern borderlands following two successive wars stemming from Rwanda's 1994 genocide.

The latest escalation has

worsened a long-standing humanitarian crisis that has driven hundreds of thousands to seek shelter in Goma after fleeing fighting between M23 and Congolese troops.

Thousands more streamed into the city this month as the rebels advanced.

Humanitarian organizations struggled to operate during the days of heavy fighting surrounding Goma's capture, supporting overwhelmed hospitals and providing relief amid widespread looting of their warehouses and crossfire that also affected their own staff.

Doctors Without Borders said on Friday it had only a small stock of medicine left and had stopped assisting people in displacement camps. The World Food Programme said it had evacuated staff and suspended activities.

There was a shortage of medical supplies, ambulances, and body bags, Congo's Health Ministry said, with security concerns still limiting access to parts of the city.

Daily life was tentatively resuming in Goma on Saturday after intense fighting



A GROUP of children, some of them displaced and seeking refuge following clashes, gather in the courtyard of the Notre Dame d'Afrique Church in Goma on Sunday. (Jospin Mwisha/AFP via Getty Images)

that led to human rights violations, including summary executions, the bombing of displacement camps, reports of gang rape, and other sexual violence, according to the UN.

M23 has been intent on

showing they can restore order and govern. Power and water, which were cut for days, have been partially restored, while residents were told school would resume and that displaced people would

be allowed to return home.

Markets reopened, although food remained scarce, with many stalls empty. One customer said mobile internet was still down.

Three humanitarian sources

said people were leaving displacement camps. Corneille Nangaa, head of the political coalition backing the Alliance Fleuve Congo, which includes M23, said people were leaving because roads had reopened and that their aim was to facilitate their return home "as soon as conditions allow."

"We are going to ask all these NGOs for their support, but the challenge is to do everything to move from humanitarian aid to development," Nangaa said on Friday.

Fighting appeared to have stalled on Saturday after the army pushed back.

Local civil society leader Justin Mulindangabo said Congo's army had taken back the villages of Mukwija, Shanje, Numbi, and Nyamasasa and other localities in Kalehe territory, around halfway between Goma and Bukavu.

Mulindangabo, who lives in Kavumu, a town 35 km. north of Bukavu, said residents there were resuming daily life.

Another civil society source said there was no fighting in Kalehe on Saturday morning. A local official said the army had strengthened its position

in Kalehe and retaken several villages, including Mukwija, though fighting was continuing elsewhere.

Congo's army did not respond to a request for comment on Saturday.

Burundi, which shares a border with both Rwanda and Congo, has been reinforcing Congolese forces in South Kivu and elsewhere.

On Friday, Burundian President Évariste Ndayishimiye warned he would retaliate against any Rwandan encroachment into his country and "generalization" of the conflict.

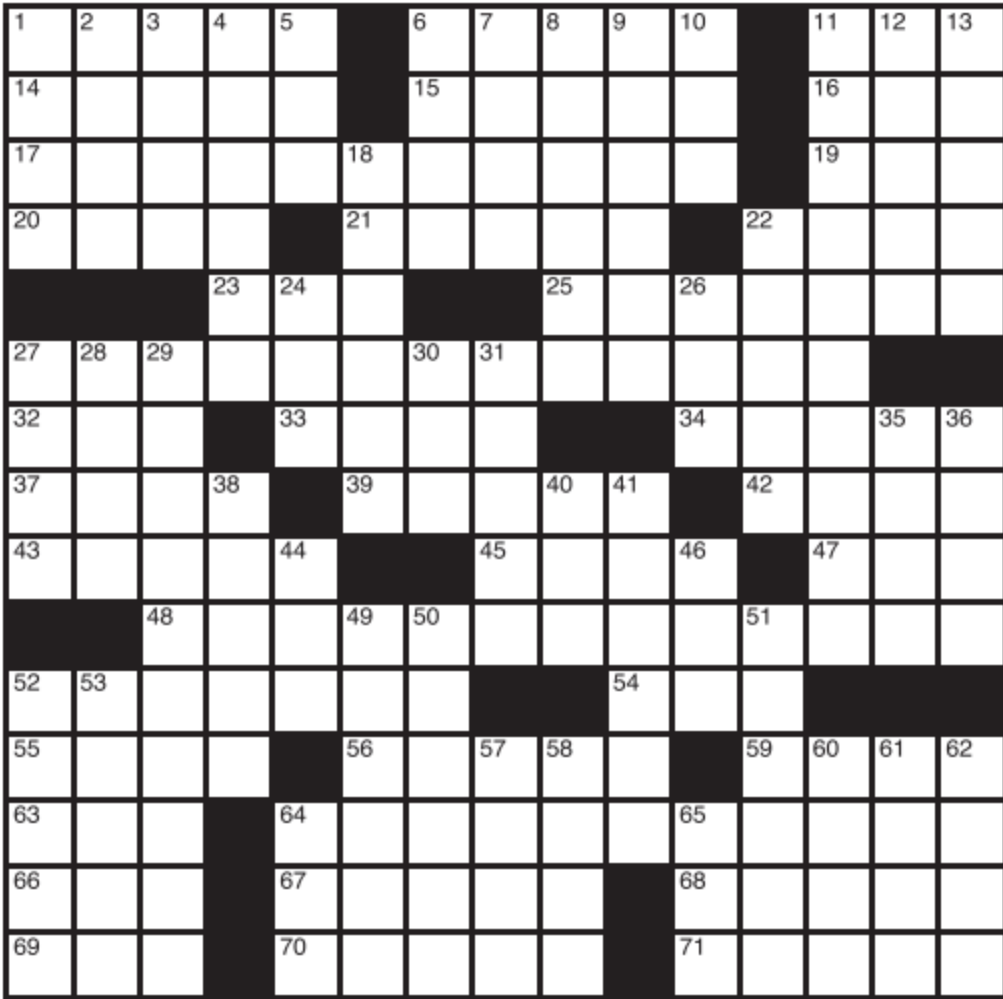
Rwanda's Foreign Affairs Minister Olivier Nduhugirehe said on Saturday it was Burundi that was seeking to overthrow its government in Kigali.

The latest escalation of the conflict has sparked international criticism of Rwanda and repeated calls for a ceasefire.

Rwanda has long denied supporting M23 and says it is defending itself. Congo denies the allegations and accuses Rwanda of using M23 to pilage valuable minerals.

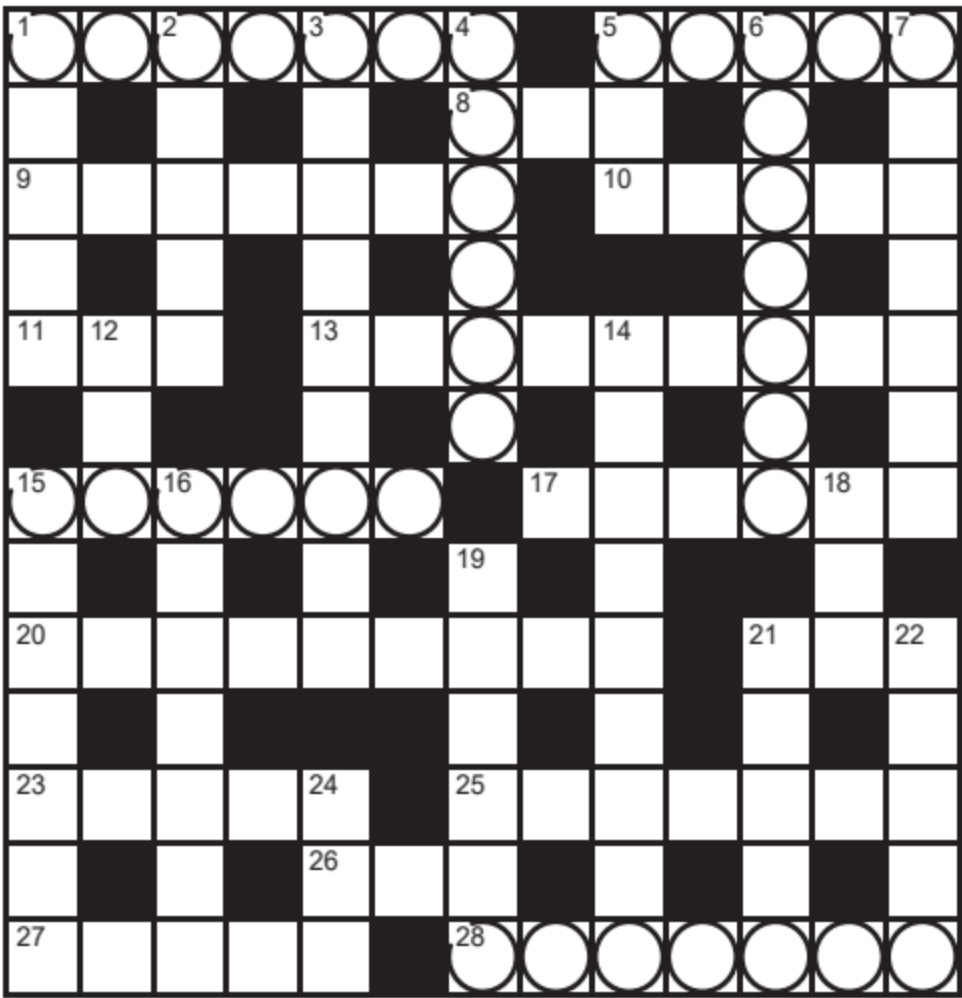
THE JERUSALEM POST

DAILY BRAIN TEASERS



- ACROSS**
1 Prohibited by social custom
6 Collect over time
11 “WandaVision” actress Dennings
14 Hawaiian greeting
15 “It’s not just you”
16 Oral health org.
17 *Vintage spot for a bubble bath
19 Director Howard
20 London art gallery
21 Delta rival renamed in 1997
22 Picnic spot
23 “You really ___ us down”
25 Channel changers
27 *Undertaking that could have a good or bad outcome
32 Festive night, often
33 Big name in sneakers
34 Tear conduits
37 Three ___ salad: picnic staple with legumes
39 Works hard
42 “Pygmalion” playwright
George Bernard ___
43 “Star Wars” ___ prequel series starring Diego Luna
45 Many a blackclad teen
47 ___Clean: laundry brand
- 48 *House pet that oinks, familiarly
52 Expanse for clear sailing
54 Pl. of TGIF
55 Glass piece
56 Ruffle
59 Stately shade trees
63 List-shortening abbreviation
64 The “surf” of surf and turf, often, or what the first word of the answer to each starred clue can be
66 Outdoor gear co-op
67 With sincerity
68 Actress Davis with two Oscars
69 ___-purpose flour
70 Passover meal
71 Money-grubber’s trait
- DOWN**
1 Diplomatic skill
2 Penne ___ vodka
3 Bathtub toy
4 “Can’t win ‘em all”
5 Clumsy sort
6 Singer-songwriter Tori
7 Self-referential
8 Apparel
9 Turned bad, as milk
10 Weep audibly
11 Board-breaking move in a dojo
12 Be wild about
- 13 Sleeveless tops
18 Apparel
22 “Hocus ___”: 1993 film featuring a trio of witches
24 Forever and a day
26 So-so, informally
27 Country star McEntire
28 Brick ___ pizza
29 Writing instrument with an inapt name
30 Boxing ref’s ruling
31 “Firefly Lane” actress Katherine
35 Car for hire
36 Gulp from a bottle
38 “... said ___ ever”
40 Texter’s giggle
41 Suppress, as a yawn
44 Some NFL blockers: Abbr.
46 She/___ pronouns
49 “___ I forget ...”
50 Tiny headphone
51 Weight watcher
52 Verdi composition
53 “Lion” Oscar nominee Dev
57 ___ of Wight
58 Space travel meas.
60 After curfew
61 Tiny arachnid
62 Iditarod vehicle
64 Mil. officers
65 Biopic about a Supreme Court justice

QUICK CROSSWORD



- Across**
1 A southern US state bordering Florida (7)
5 The ___ State (Nickname for 1 ACROSS) (5)
8 Baseball great Brock or Gehrig (3)
9 Texas sight (source of “black gold”) (3,4)
- 10 Place for a hairdo (5)
11 Despondent (3) 13 Characteristic signs (PRINT GAPS anagram) (9)
15 Herschel ___: Lost a 2022 Senate bid in 1 ACROSS (6)
17 ___ Sebastian Bach(6)
20 Asset at the card table (PEACE FORK anagram) (5,4)



5x5
Insert the missing letters to complete ten words - five across the grid and five down.

A		G		T
		O		
A		I		N
		E		L
S		E		T

5681

S	P	I	R	E
T	U	N	E	R
O	R	D	E	R
P	E	E	V	E
S	E	X	E	D

PREVIOUS SOLUTION (other combinations may be possible)

© THE PUZZLE COMPANY
Reference: Concise Oxford 10th Edition

- 21 N. ___ (state next to Minn.) (3)
23 The moon’s lasts about 27 days (5)
25 Numbers game (7) 26 Mysterious sighting in the sky (3)
27 This crossword’s is “Georgia” (5)
28 Raphael ___: Senator who beat 15 ACROSS in 2022 (7)
- Down**
1 Word with “eeeww!” (5)
2 Eyed rakishly (5)
3 Ursa Major (5,4)
4 The ___ Brothers (“Ramblin’ Man” band from 1 ACROSS) (6)
5 Abscess stuff (3)
6 Capital of 1 Across (7)
7 Direct (5-2)
12 “Carte” or “mode” pre-ceder (3)
14 Movie theater necessity (9)
15 Surfer’s tumble (7)
16 Pleasant, congenial (7)
18 Achinoam Nini (3)
19 Candle fat (6)
21 World Cup legend ___ Maradona (5)
22 Palindromic rapids craft (5)
24 Before Wed. (3)



WORD-BUILDER
5721
G A S
S E

How many words of three or more letters, including plurals, can you make from the five letters, using each letter only once? No foreign words or words beginning with a capital are allowed. There’s at least one five-letter word.

TODAY’S GOALS:
Good - 7 Excellent - 9 Amazing - 11

SOLUTION 5720: ait, apt, atop, iota, oat, opt, pat, patio, pia, pit, pita, poi, pot, tap, tip, top, topi.

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

No. 0202

LETTER OPENERS
BY RICH PROULX / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Rich Proulx (pronounced “proo”) of Berkeley, Calif., works for the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S.D.A. This is his ninth crossword for The Times since 2017, and his first Sunday. For this puzzle, he originally wanted the images to appear in circles in the grid, but those proved too small to make out. So he revamped the puzzle and placed them in the clues instead. — W.S.

ACROSS
1 “The weekend is almost here!”
5 Pioneers of freeze-drying food
10 Share from an illicit endeavor
14 Polite term of address
18 Lifted one’s spirits?
20 Riveting persona of W.W. II
21 Frozen treat with a domed lid
22 See 19-Down
23 Place for a white picket fence and a mom-and-pop shop
25 Aid for using Bluetooth
26 Startle
27 Flirt with
28 Feel bad
29 See 29-Down
32 Highly capable
33 Passion
37 Water feature created by rising sea levels
38 STEM part: Abbr.
39 Sierra ___
40 “What are the ___?”
42 See 46-Down
47 Awkward people to butt-dial, perhaps
48 Circuit board device
51 Vast, as an operation
53 ___ Collins, author of “The Hunger Games”
55 Helen of “The Queen”

56 Futon component
57 Was transfixed by, in a way
59 Glass ___, spaghetti-like fish
60 Give a darn?
62 French aperitif
63 Weapon with wires
64 See 67-Down
68 Justice Kagan
70 Natural feature between México y Texas
71 ___ Kosh B’gosh
73 TV journalist Navarro
74 Annual observance for breast cancer awareness
76 Knee parts, in brief
78 Auto mechanic’s tool
80 War room briefings, in military shorthand
81 Gold Medal offering
83 “Au contraire!”
84 Cause of puddles in early spring, say
87 See 82-Down
88 Go a little one way or the other
90 Gordon ___, engineer with a “law” predicting a doubling of transistors on microchips every two years
91 Record label for the Backstreet Boys
92 Tech company exec, for short
93 In a corner
95 Cause of some sleep issues
98 See 101-Down
102 “Ten-___!”

103 Show listlessness
104 “See above,” in footnotes
105 Got online, say
109 “Conclave” actress Isabella
111 See 107-Down
114 Saber alternative
115 Worst time for a double fault
116 Approaches furtively
117 “Over here!”
118 Hydroelectric projects
119 “White & ___” (2006 Weird Al Yankovic parody)
120 Structure that’s set on fire

DOWN
1 Network owned by Showtime
2 Mighty wind
3 One might start as a seed
4 “Have no ___ of perfection — you’ll never reach it”: Salvador Dalí
5 Just like *that!*
6 Without regard to privacy
7 Temporary residence
8 Largest public sch. in the U.S., by enrollment
9 P.S.T. part: Abbr.
10 So far
11 Safe harbors
12 Poker pot
13 Fair-hiring letters
14 Storage devices made obsolete by MP3 players

15 Sharp
16 “The Boy Who Cried Wolf” author
17 Intended
19 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
20 Kashmiri king
24 Offs
29 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
30 Number two
31 Bit
33 Public house offering
34 White House dog of the 1980s
35 Helps, informally
36 Guarantee
38 Part of an act
41 More crafty
42 [Shivers]
43 Visible signs of maturity
44 Got down to business, in a way
45 ___ Urquhart, co-host of the podcast “Morbid”
46 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
48 Many a school chaperone
49 Later
50 Cognizant of
52 Folk singer Guthrie
54 Diddly-squat
55 Hip-hop’s ___ Thee Stallion
57 They’re for suckers
58 Meditative martial art or without an apostrophe
61 Common word with
64 Meaty pasta sauce

66 Ridge in metalworking
67 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
69 Office folder?
72 Vowel sound in “father”
75 Dude
77 Audiophile’s system
79 Cut (off)
80 What “fitz-” or “-ovic” means, in names

82 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
83 Innocent sort
85 “Chances ___”
86 Became one
89 Modern prefix with anxiety
90 Salt’s companions
93 Theseus’ need in the Labyrinth
94 In an uncouth manner

95 Marketing worker, informally
96 Credit, informally
97 Prominent features of elephant seals
98 Comedian Radner
99 A perfect storm, e.g.
100 Planet whose day is longer than its year
101 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
105 Done

106 Extend one’s military service
107 **CIRCLED LETTER** +
108 Hard thing to find in a house of mirrors
110 “Wee” fellow
111 Channel with the onetime spinoff America’s Store
112 Suffix with emir
113 S.F.-to-Napa dir.

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TELEVISION

PROGRAMS

KAN HD (Y/H11)

06:00 This Morning - with Arieh Golan
08:00 Kalman Liberman
10:00 Daily Agenda - with Keren Neubach
12:00 The World's Most Remote Hotels - Episode
12:28 The Grand Trip 2 - Episode 1
13:25 Someone to Live With - Episode 8
14:00 News Flash
14:05 Someone to Live With - Episode 8
14:17 Come Dine with Me 7 - North 4
14:47 The Chase 7 - Episode 24
15:00 News Flash
15:05 The Chase 7 - Episode 24
15:47 Through the Looking Glass - with Guy Zoh
16:00 Game of Pockets - with Liel Kyzer
16:55 The World Today - with Yoav Zehavi
18:00 Kan at Six - with Maya Rachlin
18:55 Seven - with Ayala Hasson
19:53 The Evening News - with Michal Rabbinov
21:30 Enemies 4 - Yahya Al-Sin-wi
22:34 Through the Looking Glass - with Guy Zoh
22:47 Night News - with Akiva Novick
23:17 Couch Stories 4 - Episode 6
23:50 Bosch - Episode 6

KESHET HD (Y/H12)

06:00 News Flash
06:10 The Morning Headlines
07:00 News Flash
07:08 The Morning News with Niv Raskin
09:30 News Flash
09:35 Morning News - with Nesli and Yoav
11:00 Keren Agam: Recipe with a Story
12:00 Special News Broadcast
15:00 Today's Edition - With Ofer Hadani and Am
16:55 Five With Rafi Reshef
18:00 6:00 P.M with...
19:00 The Evening News Edition
19:55 Main Edition
21:30 The Imposters
22:40 The Imposters - In Studio
22:55 Guy Pinnes
23:30 Avri and Sherki

RESHET HD (Y/H13)

06:00 This Morning - Preview
07:00 This Morning - Omer Yardeni
09:30 News Flash
09:35 Starting the Day - Yarden and Elad
10:00 News Flash
10:05 Starting the Day - Yarden and Elad
11:00 News Flash
11:05 Starting the Day - Yarden and Elad
12:00 News Flash
12:05 The Legal Countdown - Elad Zohar
13:35 New Love - The Decision
13:00 News Flash
13:05 New Love - The Decision
14:00 News Flash
14:05 The Daily Report
15:00 Today's News - Sharon Kidon
16:55 Today's Talk - With Lucy Sharish
17:55 The Six O'Clock News
18:59 War Zone - Raviv Druker
19:53 The Main News Edition
21:30 New Love - Episode 4
23:00 The Tube - Guy Lerer
23:30 The Past Day - With Tal Berman
00:00 It's all Written

HOT CHANNEL 3 (H3)

09:45 Matlock
10:30 A Million Little Things 2
11:14 Offspring 2
12:00 Matlock
12:46 Suits 3
13:32 Offspring 2
14:18 A Million Little Things 2
15:00 Days of Our Lives
15:40 The Young and the Restless, Yr. 46
16:17 The Bold and The Beautiful (2 eps)
17:00 Days of Our Lives
17:42 The Young and the Restless, Yr. 46
18:19 Suits 3
19:02 Matlock
19:45 Offspring 2
20:30 The Other Two 2
20:56 The Other Two 2
21:22 Suits 3
22:04 Zaguri 2
22:47 And Just Like That... 2
23:31 The Other Two 2
23:59 The Other Two 2
00:29 A Million Little Things 2

HOT ISRAELI ENTERTAINMENT

06:00 Renewal of Broadcasts at 08:00
08:00 Duo
08:27 The Stylists: Fashion Battle
08:57 Superstart
09:23 Towers
09:46 Touching Happiness
10:35 Michaela
11:23 The Champ 3
11:51 The Sade Family
12:17 Full Moon 2
12:44 Towers
13:06 Touching Happiness
13:54 Michaela
14:45 The Champ 3
15:13 Duo
15:41 The Stylists: Fashion Battle
16:09 Superstart 2
16:37 Towers
17:03 Touching Happiness
17:51 Michaela
18:39 The Champ 3
19:07 The Sade Family
19:35 Towers
20:02 Touching Happiness
20:50 Michaela
21:32 The Champ 3
22:04 Towers
22:31 Full Moon 2
22:58 Touching Happiness
23:45 Michaela
00:30 The Champ 3
00:58 The Sade Family
01:25 Towers
01:53 Duo
02:21 The Stylists: Fashion Battle
02:50 Superstart 2
03:21 Full Moon 2
03:44 Renewal of Broadcasts at 08:00

HOT HBO (H4)

08:00 Renewal of Broadcast at 10:15
10:15 Mad Men 6
11:03 Mayor of Kingstown 2
11:55 The Day of the Jackal
12:49 Dear Vivi
13:39 Curb Your Enthusiasm 8
14:10 Mad Men 6
14:55 Mayor of Kingstown 2
15:53 The Day of the Jackal
16:47 Dear Vivi
17:37 Curb Your Enthusiasm 8
18:11 The Day of the Jackal
19:03 Dear Vivi

19:52 Curb Your Enthusiasm 8
20:26 Mad Men 7
21:23 Mayor of Kingstown 2
22:00 Lockerbie
22:53 Culpri
23:46 The Sympathizer
00:46 Industry

HOT ZONE (H5)

07:15 Chicago Fire 12
07:56 NCIS 21
08:39 Blue Bloods 13
09:22 S.W.A.T 8
10:03 Fire Country 2
10:46 S.W.A.T 7
11:28 NCIS 21
12:11 CSI: Vegas 3
12:53 Chicago Fire 12
13:34 S.W.A.T 8
14:15 Blue Bloods 13
14:58 Chicago PD 8
15:40 NCIS 21
16:23 CSI: Vegas 3
17:05 Fire Country 2
17:48 Chicago Fire 12
18:29 Blue Bloods 13
19:12 NCIS: Hawaii 3
19:54 S.W.A.T 8
20:35 S.W.A.T 7
21:17 NCIS 21
22:00 Blue Bloods 13
22:43 NCIS 22
23:26 Chicago Fire 12

YES TV DRAMA

07:00 Charmed 2018 4
07:42 Suits 2
08:25 Shitsel Season 2
09:24 A Million Little Things 5
10:06 The Bold And The Beautiful 2020-2021
10:27 The Young And The Restless 15
11:10 All And Eva
12:03 Suits 2
12:53 Shitsel Season 2
13:53 A Million Little Things 5
14:42 Charmed 2018 4
15:31 Suits 2
16:20 The Bold And The Beautiful 2020-2021
16:45 The Young And The Restless 50
17:23 A Million Little Things 5
18:06 Shitsel Season 2
19:05 All And Eva
19:50 The Bold And The Beautiful 2020-2021
20:20 The Young And The Restless 50
23:40 Yellowjackets 2
00:03 Billions 3
01:05 The Couple Next Door
02:00 Sweetpea

YES TV ACTION

06:07 Fire Country
06:52 Fire Country
07:37 NcIs: La 13
08:22 Law & Order: Organized Crime 3
09:07 Law & Order: Organized Crime 3
09:52 NcIs 22
10:37 NcIs: La 14
11:22 Fire Country
12:07 Fire Country
12:52 Silicon Valley 5
13:37 Law & Order: Organized Crime 3
14:22 Law & Order: Organized Crime 3
15:07 NcIs: La 13
15:52 NcIs: La 13
16:39 Fire Country
17:26 Fire Country
18:13 NcIs 22
18:58 NcIs: La 14
19:45 Fbi: International 2
20:30 Law & Order: Organized Crime 3
21:15 Law & Order: Organized Crime 3
22:00 Protection
22:48 Protection
23:33 Snowfall 6
00:18 The Wire 5 HD
01:16 The Wire 5 HD
02:15 Game Of Thrones 6

YES TV COMEDY

06:00 Silicon Valley 5
06:30 Silicon Valley 5
07:00 Hot In Cleveland 4
07:22 Hot In Cleveland 4
07:44 Veep 4
08:12 Veep 4
08:40 The Nanny 2
09:05 The Nanny 2
09:30 The Franchise (Hbo)
09:57 The Franchise (Hbo)
10:27 Silicon Valley 5
10:57 Silicon Valley 5
11:27 Hot In Cleveland 4
11:49 Hot In Cleveland 4
12:11 Veep 4
12:41 Veep 4
13:09 The Office 3
13:31 The Office 3
13:53 Married With Children 6
14:18 Married With Children 6
14:43 The Nanny 2
15:08 The Nanny 2
15:33 Silicon Valley 5
16:03 Silicon Valley 5
16:33 The Franchise (Hbo)
17:03 The Franchise (Hbo)
17:33 The Office 3
17:55 The Office 3
18:17 Married With Children 6
18:42 Married With Children 6
19:07 Veep 4
19:35 Veep 4
20:03 Starstruck 3
20:28 Starstruck 3
20:53 The Nanny 2
21:18 The Nanny 2
21:43 The Office 3
22:13 The Office 3
22:33 Married With Children 6
23:00 Married With Children 6
23:25 Curb Your Enthusiasm 2
23:55 Curb Your Enthusiasm 2
00:21 Entourage 3
00:49 Entourage 3
01:19 Silicon Valley 5
01:49 Silicon Valley 5

MIDDLE EAST TV (Y109/H150)

11:00 Rawhide
12:00 Touched by an Angel
13:00 The 700 Club
14:00 Make Today Count with Laurie Ditto
14:30 Supernatural Love of Yeshua
15:00 The Rifleman
15:30 The Rifleman
16:00 Gunsmoke
17:00 Rawhide
18:00 ILTV Weekly Review
18:30 It's Supernatural
19:00 The 700 Club
20:00 Touched by an Angel
21:00 One America News Network
22:00 It's Supernatural
22:30 Israel Daily
23:00 Manna Feast with Perry Stone
23:30 The Real Pro-choice
00:00 Insider
00:30 The Rifleman
01:00 The Rifleman

HISTORY (Y37/H43)

06:00 Storage Wars 15 - Ep. 1
06:23 The Food that Built America 5 - Ep. 4
07:06 History's Greatest Mysteries 4 - Ep. 14
07:50 Beyond Skinwalker Ranch 2 - Ep. 5
08:32 Pawn Stars 24 - Ep. 30
09:13 Pawn Stars Do America - Ep. 6

10:34 Pawn Stars 24 - Ep. 23
11:15 American Pickers 21 - Ep. 5
11:59 Pawn Stars 25 - Ep. 2
12:40 The UnXplained with William Shatner 5 -
13:22 The Food that Built America 5 - Ep. 4
14:05 History's Greatest Mysteries 4 - Ep. 12
14:47 Beyond Skinwalker Ranch 2 - Ep. 3
15:29 The Proof is Out There 4 - Ep. 10
16:10 Pawn Stars 24 - Ep. 23
16:51 American Pickers 21 - Ep. 5

17:35 Pawn Stars 24 - Ep. 28
18:17 The Food that Built America 4 - Ep. 16
19:01 The Proof is Out There 4 - Ep. 15
19:42 History's Greatest Mysteries 4 - Ep. 15
20:24 Beyond Skinwalker Ranch 2 - Ep. 6
21:06 The Proof is Out There 4 - Ep. 19
21:47 History's Greatest Heists - Ep. 4
22:30 Great Escapes with Morgan Freeman 2 - Ep.
23:13 Pawn Stars 25 - Ep. 5
23:55 The Food that Built America 5 - Ep. 6
00:39 History's Greatest Mysteries 4 - Ep. 14
01:23 Beyond Skinwalker Ranch 2 - Ep. 5
02:05 The Proof is Out There 4 - Ep. 18
02:47 Pawn Stars 24 - Ep. 23
03:28 American Pickers 21 - Ep. 5

04:13 Pawn Stars 25 - Ep. 4
04:54 The Food that Built America 5 - Ep. 5

CLASSICA HD

06:22 Final: Hugo Laporte
06:41 Chopin: Polonaise-fantaisie, Op. 61
07:00 Mozart: Piano Quartet No. 2, K. 493
07:32 Mozart: String Quartet No. 19, K. 465
19:05 Haydn: The Creation (Equilbey)
09:44 Semi-final: Deepa Johny
10:55 Seljan Nasibli
12:08 Mozart: Piano Sonata No. 5, KV 283
10:42 Classica Spotlight
11:03 Discovering Masterpieces
11:34 Kristine Opolais Recital
13:15 Beethoven: Symphony No. 4 (Jordan)
13:52 Strauss: Piano Quartet in C minor, Op.13
14:33 Schumann: Humoreske, Op. 20
15:00 Tchaikovsky, Berlioz and Bizet
16:39 Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 3 (2014)
17:03 C(h)œurs
18:51 Villa-Lobos: String Quartet No. 11
21:24 Gala from Berlin 2009: Lang Lang
01:04 Documentary: Heitor Villa-Lobos
21:28 Semi Final II: Alexander Ullman
22:00 Puccini: La Boheme (Dudamel)
00:17 Rimsky-Korsakov: The Tale of Tsar Saltan
00:37 B. Strozzi: Sino alla morte
01:00 Handel: Agrippina (Ostman)
03:34 Mahler: Symphony No. 1

YES DOCU (Y8)

08:30 The Treasures Of Crimea A collection of historical artefacts from Ukraine is stranded in a museum in Amsterdam as Russia annexes Crimea. For to whom should they be returned? Dir. Oeke Hoogendijk. Netherlands. 2021.
09:55 Call Me Miss Cleo The mythology of the exuberant Miss Cleo, who rose to fame in the late 1990s as the animated spokeswoman for the ill-fated Psychic Readers Network, is at the heart of the film. Dir.: Celia Aniskovich, Jennifer Brea. 2022.
11:25 Beanie Mania A documentary features interviews with collectors, notable influencers and company insiders of Beanie's Babies, the stuffed toys created by Ty Warner that spawned a frenzy of American greed. Dir. Yemisi Brooks. 2021.
15:45 Brandy Hellville: The Cult Of Fast Fashion (Hbo) "Brandy Hellville: The Cult Of Fast Fashion". Hiding behind the Instagram-perfect image of Brandy Melville, the clothing brand for young women, is a shockingly toxic culture endemic to fast fashion. Dir. Eva Orner. 2024.
14:15 Hans Zimmer: Hollywood Rebel The story of the Oscar-winning German composer Hans Zimmer, who set completely new standards in film music and thus became a Hollywood star. Dir. Francis Hanly. UK. 2022.
15:10 Once Upon a Debutante For the first time cameras are granted access to the world's most prestigious debutante ball, Le Bal Paris, which brings together high-profile youths from around the world in the name of fashion and charity. Canada, 2024.
16:50 JFK Revisited... "Jfk Revisited: Through The Looking Glass". Thirty years after acclaimed director Oliver Stone's first examination of JFK's assassination, Stone reassesses the horrific event that shaped a generation. 2021.
18:50 Subject Documentary examines well-known documentaries of the past decade and reveals the impact their commercial success has had on the lives of the onscreen subjects. Dir.: Camilla Hall, Jennifer Tiexiera. 2022.
20:30 Cunningham (2019) The iconic Mercer Cunningham and the last generation of his dance company is stunningly profiled in Alla Kovgan's documentary, through recreations of his landmark works and archival footage. 2019.
22:00 There's No I In Three...some Newly engaged and maintaining a long-distance relationship, director Ian Oliver Lucks and his fiancée decide to throw traditional rules out the window by opening up their relationship before they tie the knot. 2021.
23:25 Free People - Ep.1 A mini-series dedicated to the history of the Israeli trance scene: how a small country in the Middle East became an international trans-power and what is the origin of the conflict between trance culture and the authorities. Dir. Roy Pinchy. 2021.

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CHANNEL 8 (H8)

06:02 BODY PARTS
07:30 Broken Heart

08:06 Wonders of the Human Body
08:52 WWII Women on the frontline
09:42 We'll never say goodbye
10:30 999: The forgotten girls
11:55 1979
12:47 Wonders of the Human Body
13:33 WWII Women on the frontline
14:23 We'll never say goodbye
15:11 999: The forgotten girls
16:36 1979
17:28 WWII Women on the frontline
18:17 We'll never say goodbye
19:04 999: The forgotten girls
20:29 Wonders of the Human Body

21:15 Year on Planet Earth
22:03 1979
22:53 RIKI GAL: WITH NO GREAT SORROW
00:27 Year on Planet Earth
01:17 1979
02:06 RIKI GAL: WITH NO GREAT SORROW
03:40 Year on Planet Earth

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC (Y41/H46)

06:25 Ice Road Rescue 3 - 9. Edge of Disaster
07:12 Money Meltdown - 7. Cofin Up Cash
07:36 Money Meltdown - 8. Platinum Payday
08:01 Life Below Zero: Next Generation 6 - 4.
08:47 Air Crash Investigation Special Report 5
09:32 Air Crash Investigation Special Report 5
10:16 Drain The Oceans Compilations - 2. Ghost
11:03 Ice Road Rescue 4 - 1. Freak Weather
11:49 Money Meltdown - 9. Cash in the Chem Lab
12:12 Money Meltdown - 10. Fight of Flight
12:37 Life Below Zero: Next Generation 6 - 5.
13:21 Machine Impossible - 2. Superhumans
08:01 Machine Impossible - 5. Get Around Gadge
14:53 Machine Impossible - 6. Game On
15:39 Air Crash Investigation Special Report 5
16:23 Air Crash Investigation Special Report 5
17:08 Car S.O.S. 5 - 8. Caterham 7
17:54 Science Of Stupid 3 - Episode 5
18:18 Science Of Stupid 3 - Episode 3
18:42 Drain The Oceans Compilations - 8. Vanis
19:25 Food Factory 2 - 14. Fancy a Sausage Roll
19:51 Food Factory 2 - 15. Hill Of Beans
20:14 Colossal Machines: Season 2 - 4. Titan T
21:00 Mysterious Islands - 1. Ghost Island
21:42 Lost Treasures of Angkor - 1. The Discov
22:28 UFOs: Investigating the Unknown 2 - 2. P
12:50 Colossal Machines: Season 2 - 4. Titan T
23:58 Mysterious Islands - 1. Ghost Island
00:06 Primal Survivor: Extreme African Safari
00:53 Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted Showdown - 1. E
01:38 Lost Treasures of Egypt 3 - 5. Legend of

17:54 Science Of Stupid 3 - Episode 5
18:18 Science Of Stupid 3 - Episode 3
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00:06 Primal Survivor: Extreme African Safari
00:53 Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted Showdown - 1. E
01:38 Lost Treasures of Egypt 3 - 5. Legend of

MEZZO FULL (H195)

10:26 InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artistic - enjoy a variety of genres from jazz to Classical music.
11:00 Itzhak Perlman, Virtuoso Violinist Philharmonia Orchestra, Itzhak Perlman & Pinchas Zukerman (violin), Vladimir Ashkenazy & Bruno Canino (piano), Lynn Harrell (cello) led by Lawrence Foster perform Bach, Beethoven, Vivaldi & more.1978.
11:58 Bach: Mass in B minor English Baroque Soloists and Monteverdi Choir led by John Eliot Gardiner perform Johann Sebastian Bach's Mass in B minor. BWV 232. Chateau de Versailles, 2023.
13:49 InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artistic - enjoy a variety of genres from jazz to Classical music.
12:50 Richard Strauss: Der Rosenkavalier Opera in 3 acts. Sachsische Staatskapelle Dresden and Staatsopernchor Dresden led by Fabio Luisi. Anne Schwanewilms (Marschallin), Princesse von Werdenberg), Kurt Rydl (Baron Ochs auf Lerchenau). 2007.
18:02 InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artistic - enjoy a variety of genres from jazz to Classical music.
18:15 Antonio Pappano: Boulevardier Opera in 3 acts. Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liege and Nikolay Lugansky (piano) led by Gergely Madaras. 2024.
00:15 Theatime Langlois de Swarte: Bach Orchestre de l'Opera Royal, Magdalena Sypniewski (violin), Ludmila Piestrak (violin), Theatime Langlois de Swarte (violin, conductor) perform works by Johann Sebastian Bach, Palace of Versailles, 2024.
01:37 Ted Brandsen: Mata Hari Dutch National Ballet performs Mata Hari by choreographer Ted Brandsen. Anna Tsygankova (Mata Hari-Margaretha), Casey Herd (Rudolph McLeod), Jozef Varga (General Kiepert). Amsterdam, 2015.

10:26 InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artistic - enjoy a variety of genres from jazz to Classical music.
11:00 Itzhak Perlman, Virtuoso Violinist Philharmonia Orchestra, Itzhak Perlman & Pinchas Zukerman (violin), Vladimir Ashkenazy & Bruno Canino (piano), Lynn Harrell (cello) led by Lawrence Foster perform Bach, Beethoven, Vivaldi & more.1978.
11:58 Bach: Mass in B minor English Baroque Soloists and Monteverdi Choir led by John Eliot Gardiner perform Johann Sebastian Bach's Mass in B minor. BWV 232. Chateau de Versailles, 2023.
13:49 InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artistic - enjoy a variety of genres from jazz to Classical music.
12:50 Richard Strauss: Der Rosenkavalier Opera in 3 acts. Sachsische Staatskapelle Dresden and Staatsopernchor Dresden led by Fabio Luisi. Anne Schwanewilms (Marschallin), Princesse von Werdenberg), Kurt Rydl (Baron Ochs auf Lerchenau). 2007.
18:02 InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artistic - enjoy a variety of genres from jazz to Classical music.
18:15 Antonio Pappano: Boulevardier Opera in 3 acts. Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liege and Nikolay Lugansky (piano) led by Gergely Madaras. 2024.
00:15 Theatime Langlois de Swarte: Bach Orchestre de l'Opera Royal, Magdalena Sypniewski (violin), Lud

Lady Gaga, Billie Eilish, Nirvana boost LA at FireAid benefit

• By LISA RICHWINE
and ROLLO ROSS

LOS ANGELES (Reuters) – Billie Eilish sang with Green Day, and Stevie Nicks thanked the firefighters who saved her home, at two star-studded concerts on Thursday to raise money for wildfire relief in Los Angeles.

The FireAid benefit featured surprise pairings and generation-spanning acts, many with connections to the devastated communities of Pacific Palisades and Altadena.

Artists at two venues in Inglewood near Los Angeles offered thanks to first responders, in between soft ballads, poignant moments, and rousing rock and pop performances.

Nicks, the Fleetwood Mac singer and solo artist, dedicated “Landslide” to the firefighters who kept the fast-moving Palisades blaze in early January away from her longtime home.

“They never gave up,” she said. “Until you actually see it, you can’t believe the bravery of these men.”

In one of several surprises, Eilish joined Green Day to open the FireAid shows with a duet of the band’s song “Last Night on Earth.”

“It’s one of the most important gigs we’ve ever played,” Billie Joe Armstrong, Green Day’s lead singer, said in an interview before the show. The Bay Area



ST. VINCENT performs onstage with Nirvana; from left: Pat Smear, Dave Grohl, and Krist Novoselic during the FIREAID Benefit Concert for California Fire Relief on Thursday in Inglewood, California. (Photo by Scott Dudelson/Getty Images for FIREAID)

punk-rock group has recorded several albums in Hollywood, he said, and regarded Los Angeles as a second home.

“It’s just really important for us to sort of do our part in a small way,” Armstrong said.

Eilish, a Los Angeles native, later teamed with her brother Finneas for a “quiet and chill” acoustic set featuring “The Greatest” and “Birds of a Feather.”

Lady Gaga, the night’s clos-

ing performer, sat at a piano and sang a “hopeful” song she said she wrote with her fiancé, businessman Michael Polansky, specifically for the FireAid show.

“All I need is time,” she sang in an upbeat chorus, “to heal my broken wings, and then I’ll soar.”

In the crowd, men and women in “First Responder” T-shirts danced as Sting joined Stevie Wonder to sing Won-

der’s hit “Superstition.”

Among other performances, rock legends Nirvana reunited, with female vocalists replacing the late Kurt Cobain, including drummer Dave Grohl’s daughter, Violet Grohl, on the classic “All Apologies.”

The Red Hot Chili Peppers blasted out “Californication,” with bassist Flea nearly naked in just a hat, shoes, socks and his underwear. Katy Perry waved a state flag as she danced

across the stage to “California Gurls.”

Comedian Billy Crystal appeared in the navy hoodie, jeans, and knit cap he had worn when he evacuated his home of 46 years in the Palisades. Crystal said he wept when he saw the burned-out remains, but was moved by the community’s support.

“A young girl said she understood my pain because she had lost TikTok for a day,” Crystal quipped.

Videos of fire survivors were interspersed between musical performances. Viewers were given instructions on television screens on how to donate via text or a website.

“It’s all about the love for me tonight,” West Coast hip-hop pioneer Dr. Dre said, before leading the crowd in a sing-along of “California Love.”

Another Los Angeles icon, folk singer Joni Mitchell, delivered her ballad “Both Sides Now,” moving some audience members to tears.

Gracie Abrams, who grew up in the Palisades, sang an acoustic version of what she called “a love letter to LA,” the Counting Crows song “A Long December.”

Money raised through FireAid will go to short-term and long-term recovery efforts, organizers said. Funds will be distributed with advice from the Annenberg Foundation.

Painting from the inside

Artist Raquel Sanchez digs into her Jewish spirituality

• By BARRY DAVIS

An artist’s own life story and personal baggage always inform their creative output, whether they like it or not. In Raquel Sanchez’s case, there’s a lot to tell. The mere bio facts make for mouthwatering reading.

Try this for starters. “I was born in Paris to Venezuelan parents, with an affluent writer father,” says Sanchez. The said parent was Juan Sánchez Peláez, an acclaimed man of letters who won his country’s National Prize for Literature in the poetry category. “He died in 2003, right before he was due to be up for a Nobel Prize,” she adds.

Sanchez had plenty of creative endeavors, every way she looked, in her infant milieu and later on. “There were a lot of artists around us,” she recalls. “My mother became friends with [celebrated Latvian-American abstract painter] Mark Rothko, when I was little. She told me he was a great painter,” Sanchez laughs. “When I met him I kept touching his hands, to see where the magic came from.”

Her mother is American-born still active painter and sculptor Ellen Lapidus Stern, and Sanchez herself is, somewhat unsurprisingly, a poet and painter. She currently has an exhibition on show at Artists House in Tel Aviv, curated by Vera Pilpoul, which goes by the highly evocative name of *Viewing Spirituality*.

That, for starters, is an intriguing titular pairing. The first, observational, part is self-explanatory in an artistic context, but the spiritual side to the creative experience largely feeds off Sanchez’s decision to become religiously observant later in life.

Sanchez, who was born in the 1960s, says she always had a paintbrush in her hand, although she was not always set on becoming an artist. “I started to take it way more seriously a few times. Once after my father passed. I felt I couldn’t write [poetry] anymore. I was sad.”

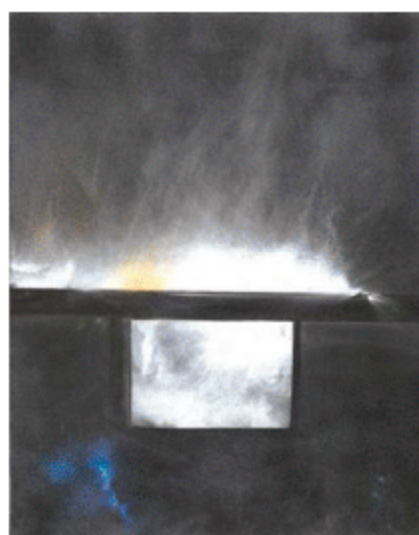
By now I was beginning to get some idea of Sanchez’s spread of gifts and skills, although I only later discovered she’d also trained as a psychiatric nurse and set up a center for English-speaking at-risk youth in Jerusalem called The Rose Institute.

Painting eventually won out. She continued to make inroads, landing a gig in New York with a new arts publication that brought her face-to-face with pop art icon Andy Warhol. She also became a close friend of neo-expressionism leading light Jean-Michel Basquiat.

It wasn’t just a matter of finding her feet in the art world. It was more of a homecoming. “It was a world where I really felt comfortable, a world where I kind of understood everything. I was in like 22 different schools before graduating high school. My comfort zone was always the art world.

“And I hung out with Basquiat. We’d do one-line drawings together. And he spoke all my languages – French, English, and Spanish. I was the only one who called him Jean-Michel. Everyone else called him Michael. We had fun together.”

SANCHEZ IS a soft-spoken character who exudes an air of quiet determination and subtle undertones of fun. It also comes across in the *Viewing Spirituality* collection. She returned to painting, with a vengeance, about eight years ago, around the time she met American-born Jerusalem gal-



A WORK from Raquel Sanchez’s exhibition, “Viewing Spirituality.” (Jerusalem Fine Art Prints Ltd.)

lery owner Uri Rosenbach.

Sanchez’s inner odyssey, her embracing of a religious lifestyle, and her decision to settle here all come through in the works. It also helped to center her and, at long last, provide her with a solid base from which she is able to aspire to higher planes of personal and creative expression.

“I work from inside and really try to have my own voice, and express what language I want to be speaking. This is the first language that I kind of have control of making,” she says.

Having spent so much of her early life flitting across such diverse cultural and artistic milieus, she found herself blessed with a sumptuous multi-layered source of inspiration, but cursed with a referential overload. She had to try to sort out the wheat from the chaff and found her very own pathway through the disciplinary minefield.

Getting a look at some of Sanchez’s paintings, just before they were unveiled in Tel Aviv, I got an unmistakable sense of her drive to have her say to get her feelings and thoughts, her take on life, the universe, and everything else out there and onto the canvas.

The works lean toward the abstract but have clear figurative elements and suggest something akin to surrealism. All the paintings attempt to grasp and portray ethereal light, in various guises. There is also a recognizable divine orientation to the whole project. That, presumably, is fueled by her religious proclivities.

“I think that everything that we are always becomes part of our artistic expression, unless we’re trying to copy Van Gogh.” Succinctly put.

There is also an incendiary dynamism to the pictures offset by a sense of unfathomable substrata and vast space. She says it emanated from her endeavor to dig into her own subtext, with more than a little help from Rosenbach. “I think my ability to really get to my soul language came about because of Uri. He understood what I was saying.”

What Sanchez is saying is up for grabs, for we viewers to have our say and add our understanding of Sanchez’s mystical yet patently accessible offerings to her work.

She does, however, provide some interpretive and encouraging pointers. “It takes a lot of fighting within yourself to find something that you can put out there and really work out how to get rid of the negativity, to find something higher.

“I think what we need, and what we have needed for a long time, is how to evolve. We need to find something we can do to evolve. We need to stop fighting with each other, and within ourselves. That’s the same thing.”

“*Viewing Spirituality*” closes on February 8. For more information: (03) 524-6685 and artistshouse.org.il*

British pop icon Marianne Faithfull dies at 78

• By ALISTAIR BELL

Marianne Faithfull, the wild woman of London’s Swinging ‘60s who survived drug addiction, homelessness, two comas, cancer, and COVID-19, died at age 78, after a singing career that began as a teenager and lasted until her 70s.

A spokesperson did not provide a cause of death, though Faithfull suffered for years with health problems, including breast cancer and hepatitis C, and had contracted COVID at the outset of the pandemic.

The convent-educated daughter of a World War II British intelligence officer, Faithfull’s slow, haunting voice in her first hit, “As Tears Go By,” in 1964 seemed to portend a darker side to the British pop sound that was winning hearts around the world with the breezy early tunes of the Beatles and the Rolling Stones.

The former girlfriend of Mick Jagger, Faithfull became

addicted to heroin and suffered from anorexia when the relationship ended, spending two years living on the streets of London’s Soho district in the early 1970s.

But no matter how hard she fell, Faithfull always bounced back. She released 21 solo albums, including the critically acclaimed *Broken English* in 1979 that won her a Grammy nomination, wrote three autobiographies, and had a film acting career.

“I am so saddened to hear of the death of Marianne Faithfull. She was so much part of my life for so long,” Jagger wrote in a post on social media platform X. “She will always be remembered.”

Her most recent comeback was in 2020 when she caught COVID-19 and went into a coma during a three-week stay at a London hospital.

“Ever since my days at the convent, my secret heroes had been decadents, esthetes, doomed Romantics, mad



MARIANNE FAITHFULL (Reuters)

Bohemians, and opium-eaters,” she wrote in her 1994 book *Faithfull: An Autobiography*.

Her formative years were in the swinging London of the mid-1960s when she was a budding folk singer. At 18, she married and had a son but attended a party that changed her life.

There she met Rolling Stones manager Andrew Loog Old-

ham who launched her popular music career and brought her into the band’s inner circle.

In 1966, she left her husband, artist John Dunbar, and started a relationship with Jagger, forming the “It Couple” of London’s psychedelic scene. Faithfull contributed backing vocals to the Beatles’ “Yellow Submarine” single and helped inspire the Stones’ “Sympathy For The Devil.”

She and Jagger were arrested in 1968 for possession of cannabis. Perhaps her most notorious caper was when police came across her, wrapped in a bearskin rug, during a drug raid at Keith Richards’ country home in 1967.

As the 1960s ended, Faithfull’s life of glamor faded quickly and she spent two years living on the streets of London as an anorexic heroin addict after she and Jagger split in 1970.

Among the squalor, she found an upside.

“For me, being a junkie was an admirable life. It was

total anonymity, something I hadn’t known since I was 17. As a street addict in London, I finally found it. I had no telephone, no address,” she wrote in her autobiography.

The experience was grist for the mill for her gritty album *Broken English*, which she described as her masterpiece.

Ahead of performing at the International Women’s Festival in Holon in 2008, Faithfull told *The Jerusalem Post*, “I’m really a musician. Maybe I would have been an actress if I hadn’t fallen into the pop world. But I’m not sure I’m film star material. I love singing, making records, and performing.”

Speaking to the *Post* in 2011, before appearing at the Zappa Shoni Amphitheater in Binyamina, she said, “I keep on writing and performing because I still enjoy it but also because we have to do something. After all, life is long.” (Reuters)

David Brinn contributed to this report.

Grateful Dead honored at MusiCares gala

• By MIKAEL WOOD

LOS ANGELES – Deadheads mixed with bigwigs Friday night at the annual MusiCares Persons of the Year gala, where the members of the Grateful Dead were honored by the Recording Academy for their philanthropy and cultural impact 60 years after the iconic jam band formed in 1965.

“Longevity was never a major concern of ours,” the Dead’s Bob Weir said to laughs in the audience as he accepted the award. “Lighting folks up and spreading joy through the music was all we ever really had in mind, and we got plenty of that done.”

Held at the Los Angeles Convention Center, the Grammy-weekend charity event – dress code: “colorful black tie” – raised more than \$5 million for music professionals affected by the wildfires that devastated much of Los Angeles last month.

Though it never really was in danger, the Dead’s extremely durable legacy got a major boost last year when Dead & Company – in which 77-year-old Weir and 81-year-old Mickey Hart perform music from the Dead’s catalog with Mayer, Jeff Chimenti, Jay Lane, and Oteil Burbridge – set up at Sphere in Las Vegas for a hot-ticket summer residency that seemed to go viral every weekend



FROM LEFT: John Mayer and Jay Lane of Dead & Company, and honorees Bob Weir and Mickey Hart perform onstage during the 2025 MusiCares Persons of the Year, honoring the Grateful Dead, on Friday in Los Angeles. (Matt Winkelmeyer/The Recording Academy/Getty Images/TNS)

on TikTok. Here, youngsters and oldsters alike turned up to pay tribute to the band.

Vampire Weekend offered a taut “Scarlet Begonias” and Maren Morris a stirring “They Love Each Other.” Noah Kahan and Béla Fleck were folksy yet precise in “Friend of the Devil,” while Norah Jones glided smoothly through “Ripple.”

The War and Treaty did a typically

fiery “Samson and Delilah” with help from a pair of dueling drummers: Fleetwood Mac’s Mick Fleetwood and Stewart Copeland of the Police. Dwight Yoakam brought a hard country edge to “Truckin’”; the War on Drugs found a wistful drive for “Box of Rain.”

Wynonna Judd was the night’s musical and emotional high point: Describing Weir as her “family of choice,” she thanked the whiskey guitarist for sing-

ing at the funeral of her mother, Naomi, in 2022, then brought the audience to its feet with a rollicking “Ramblin’ on Rose.”

Other performers included Zac Brown, Billy Strings, Sammy Hagar, Bruce Hornsby, My Morning Jacket, and the duo of Sierra Ferrell and Lukas Nelson, who teamed up for “It Must Have Been the Roses.”

The night’s excellent backing band was led by Don Was and featured guitarists Rick Mitarotonda (of the ascendant jam band Goose) and Grahame Lesh, son of the Dead’s founding bassist, Phil Lesh, who died last year at 84, just days after the announcement of the MusiCares honor. The Dead’s late mastermind, Jerry Garcia, was represented by his daughter Trixie; Bill Kreutzmann, the band’s founding drummer, sent a video message along with his son Justin.

After Weir and Hart’s remarks – actor Woody Harrelson also spoke at some length about having done a vast assortment of drugs with Garcia – the two stalwart musicians joined the rest of Dead & Company for a mini-set of classics that climaxed, warmly if inevitably, with the Dead’s improbable late-’80s pop hit, “Touch of Grey.”

“I will get by,” they sang with help from the crowd. “I will survive.” (Los Angeles Times/TNS)