



## Bring them home

Daniel Perez, 22, kidnapped from Gaza border fighting

## All talk

Europe is not serious about Ukraine  
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## 'No Other Land'

Award-winning film traces Palestinian villagers' highs and lows  
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PUPILS FILL a street in Jerusalem as a van containing the remains of slain hostage Shlomo Mantzur passes by, en route to Kibbutz Kissufim where his funeral took place, yesterday. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

# Nation salutes slain hostage Shlomo Mantzur to burial

• Jerusalem Post Staff

Crowds lined the streets of Rishon LeZion on Sunday, accompanying slain hostage Shlomo Mantzur on his final journey.

People also gathered in Jerusalem to accompany Mantzur's family to the funeral, which took place in Kibbutz Kissufim.

Mantzur, who was born in 1938 in Iraq and joined the kibbutz as a teen, was the oldest hostage held in Hamas captivity. His body was returned to Israel in February.

President Isaac Herzog offered his condolences and expressed grief at the loss of Mantzur. He asked Mantzur for forgiveness, speaking as "a servant of the Israeli public, representing the entire State of Israel."

"I ask you, Shlomo, for forgiveness," Herzog said. "Forgiveness for our failure to protect you in the very place that

was meant to be your fortress. Forgiveness from you, from your family, from the members of the Kissufim, and from all the residents of the Western Negev – for not saving you on that bitter, terrible day."

Addressing the recent testimony stories of those who were freed from Hamas captivity, Herzog called for the release of all the hostages still held by the terror group.

"The testimonies of the hostages who have returned – harrowing, searing testimonies – make clear just how dire their humanitarian plight is. How their lives are in danger. How time is pressing and demands urgent action," Herzog stated.

He added that until all the hostages are returned, "The Jewish people will not be whole. The State of Israel will not be whole."

"May the memory of beloved Shlomo, and of all those who

fell and were murdered on October 7 and throughout this war, be blessed and forever held in our hearts," he said.

Mantzur's sister, Hadassah Lazar, spoke at the funeral, expressing that she was "deeply moved" by all those attending.

"It is very heartwarming to see so many people here. Our hearts are shattered, and we are emotionally overwhelmed. At the very least, they brought him back, and he is being laid to rest. It is deeply moving to see so many come to pay their final respects."

Hamas terrorists murdered Mantzur on October 7, 2023, and held his body until it was released in phase one of the ceasefire deal last month.

Mantzur "was much more than a community member to us – he was a father, a grandfather, a true friend, and a beating heart of Kissufim," said the kibbutz.

## OFFICIALS TO 'POST':

# Fighting to resume 'within days' if hostages not freed

## Israel, mediators cast hope on Witkoff framework

• By AMICHAEL STEIN

Israel is giving Hamas a few days to reach an agreement on the release of additional hostages, officials told *The Jerusalem Post* on Sunday. "We are willing to give a chance of a few days, but we won't let it drag on indefinitely. If we see that the negotiations are not being conducted in good faith, we will return to fighting in Gaza," they said.

On Saturday, a four-hour meeting was held with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and was attended by senior security officials, the negotiation team led by Coordinator for the Hostages and the Missing Brig.-Gen. (res.) Gal Hirsch, representatives from the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency), and several ministers, including Defense Minister Israel Katz, Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

At the end of the meeting, it was decided to adopt the plan proposed by US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff, which stipulates that Israel will agree to a 42-day ceasefire, during which, on the first day, half of the living hostages will be released and half of the bodies of the hostages held by Hamas will be returned, and on the final day, the second group of hostages will be released and the remaining hostages' bodies

will be returned.

In Israel, it was made clear that the negotiations will not be allowed to "drag on forever."

"If Hamas thinks it can extend the ceasefire or take advantage of the terms of phase one without releasing hostages, they are terribly mistaken," said the prime minister at the start of the cabinet meeting.

A senior Hamas official said on Sunday that Hamas will not agree to extend the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire deal, as requested by Israel.

Speaking to Al Jazeera,

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**European Jewish leader to 'Post': Jews, Israel can never cooperate with AfD, FPO, Page 5**

**BBC: Gaza documentary production paid Hamas member's wife, Page 5**



PEOPLE PROTEST in Jerusalem last night, calling for the swift return of all the remaining hostages. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

## Hostage families, including Yarden Bibas, join call for state COI

• By EVE YOUNG

Some 200 families of hostages, bereaved families, and families of freed hostages joined the October Council, which represents thousands of families of October 7 victims and has pushed for a state commission of inquiry into the massacre, the organization said Sunday.

The families joined the council in light of uncertainty about the continuation of negotiations for a hostage deal and ahead of discussions regarding a state inquiry set to take place in the Knesset, the council said.

The council now represents over 1,500 families, it said. Yarden Bibas, whose wife and two young children were

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## Egypt should rule over Gaza, absorb its population in Sinai

### COMMENT

• By AVIGDOR LIBERMAN

There are 2.2 million people in the Gaza Strip, residing in an area of 360 sq.km., in extremely crowded conditions, without ample employment opportunities, industry, or a port. Sinai, which is adjacent to Gaza, has an area of 60,000 sq.km. (close to 170 times larger than Gaza) with a population of 600,000. Gaza's population density is 600 times larger than Sinai's.

Ethnically and culturally, the people in Gaza and Sinai are alike. They speak the same language, share the same religion, and many even share family ties. This is particularly apparent in Rafah, which straddles the border, splitting many families on either side of the city.

Sinai largely serves as an arena for drug and weapons smugglers and human trafficking. Its vast territory is rendered idle, with little to no agriculture or solar energy, despite its great potential for both. Even the El-Arish port is largely empty with limited capacity. Turning El-Arish into Gaza's main port would be a boon for everyone: The people of Egypt and of Gaza

would benefit greatly.

Thus, Sinai presents an efficient and practical solution for the Palestinians in Gaza, which would not entail the migration of millions of people across large distances. In accordance with US President Donald Trump's initiative, one million people from Gaza could relocate to Sinai and be set on a path toward gainful employment, economic growth, and prosperity.

It must be emphasized that the sole requirement for such a solution is to insist on the principle of freedom of movement. Claims that voluntary emigration of people from Gaza is in any way objectionable – morally or politically – are disingenuous and hypocritical, given the open arms with which refugees have been accepted internationally from other combat arenas, such as Syria or Ukraine. All that is needed is for Egypt to open the border at Rafah and desist from its refusal to let Gazans out. The moment it does so, the large majority of Gaza's inhabitants, probably as many as 80%, will leave of their own volition.

In recent years, Egypt has grown increasingly dependent on the US and Israel. Without generous American financial and security assistance, it is doubtful whether the current Egyptian regime

## Defense policy is changing, but is now the right time?

### ANALYSIS

• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

Defense Minister Israel Katz spoke about how he envisions Israel's defense policy, at a conference of heads of regional councils last week.

He said he had spoken with IDF commanders in key units in Southern Command and discussed the conclusions drawn from the October 7 attack. "They said that it is not permissible to allow extremist organizations of this type to be close to the border of the State of Israel – whether in Gaza, in the North, in Syria, or near the settlements of Judea and Samaria, and anywhere – and that is our policy."

This is now a policy Israel is seeking to implement. This involves the buffer zone in Lebanon and, also apparently, in Gaza. In Syria, Israel is becoming more outspoken. Israel worked to prevent Iranian entrenchment between 2014 and 2024, during the Syrian civil war. After the Assad regime fell, Israel has now shifted to moving forces into the buffer zone and onto the peak of Mount Hermon. Now, Israel is saying southern Syria must be demilitarized and that Israel will support the Druze in Syria.

"It was clear to the prime minister and me that the buffer zone had to be captured

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TENTS LINE northern Gaza's landscape, as seen from Israel yesterday. (Amir Cohen/Reuters)

## What is IDF, Shin Bet narrative against PM for Oct. 7?

### ANALYSIS

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

With the IDF having disclosed last week in extreme detail its failures to block Hamas's October 7 invasion, and with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refusing a

state commission of inquiry into his actions after nearly 18 months, much of the media are now performing their own analysis of the head of government.

The central potential points of vulnerability for Netanyahu are claims that he: 1) was

the primary or key co-architect of the policy of containing and trying to deter Hamas versus pursuing other options with the Palestinian Authority, the Saudis, and other moderate Sunni groups;

2) was the primary or key co-architect of the policy of

facilitating Qatar sending millions of dollars per month to Hamas;

3) weakened the IDF in real terms and harmed Israeli deterrence vis-à-vis Hamas and other Iranian proxies in terms of perceived weakness due to the judicial overhaul;

4) vetoed several instances in which the IDF and Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) wanted to assassinate top Hamas leaders who pressed for the October 7 mass invasion; and 5) cannot blame the

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## 'Gov't whitewashed over NIS 1b. of coalition funds'

• By ELIAV BREUER

Coalition party leaders agreed in a meeting on February 23 to change the labeling of funding – over NIS 1 billion worth – for haredi (ultra-Orthodox) educational institutions to avoid legal hurdles, UTJ chairman Yitzhak Gold-

knopf wrote to Cabinet Secretary Yossi Fuchs on Friday.

According to the letter, which Goldknopf labeled as "urgent," the party leaders had agreed that over NIS 1b. in the 2025 budget proposal that are currently labeled as funds "allocated to implement political agreements,"

commonly known as "coalition funds," will instead enter the budget base as regular funds.

The funding in question has two purposes: to overcome the loss of daycare subsidies to 7,000 haredim in which the military-age father has not reported for IDF service;

and to increase the salaries of employees in the private haredi education systems.

Both are legally problematic. According to the Attorney-General's Office, the government cannot circumvent the loss of daycare subsidies by finding other funds to support families of yeshiva stu-

dents since this would serve as a financial incentive for them to continue evading IDF service, which is illegal.

In addition, the A-G's Office and the Education Ministry's legal adviser have blocked state funds to private haredi

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# Gaza war: One phase ended, now another begins

## ANALYSIS

• By HERB KEINON

The first phase of Israel's ceasefire with Hamas ended on Saturday, closing a chapter that saw the release of 25 Israeli hostages, five Thai hostages, and eight bodies.

In return, Israel released hundreds of Palestinian prisoners, including terrorists involved in some of the worst attacks in recent memory. It also pulled back from most of Gaza, except for the Philadelphia Corridor, the enclave's perimeter, and some pockets in northern Gaza.

The past six weeks also saw a massive influx of humanitarian aid into the Strip – some 25,000 trucks' worth – and Israel's withdrawal from the Netzarim Corridor, allowing hundreds of thousands of Gazans to return northward.

For weeks, the burning question was: what comes next?

Under the original plan, by now, both sides were to be deep in negotiations over a second phase that would culminate with the release of all remaining hostages, a withdrawal of all IDF troops, and an end to the war. Israel was to withdraw from the Philadelphia Corridor by next Saturday. Then, talks were to begin on the third phase: the reconstruction of Gaza.

But overnight, the entire equation shifted with the introduction of a new term into the lexicon: the Witkoff Framework, named after US Middle East negotiator Steve Witkoff.

It is easier to follow than the previous ceasefire:

The plan calls for a temporary ceasefire during Ramadan and Passover (Ramadan began Friday night, and Passover runs through April 20). On the first day, half of the living and deceased hostages are to be released. At the end of the framework, if an agreement is reached, the remaining hostages will be freed at the same time.

According to the Prime Minister's Office, Witkoff proposed this framework after concluding that an immediate resolution between the two sides was unattainable and that more time was needed to negotiate a lasting agreement.

Why the need for more time? Because the core Israeli dilemma – how to eliminate Hamas while securing the release of the hostages – remains as intractable as ever.

Israel's position is clear: Hamas must be dismantled, both militarily and politically,



IDF TANKS are deployed inside Gaza, as seen from Israel yesterday. (Amir Cohen/Reuters)

and its leaders need to be exiled before any discussion of ending the war can take place.

Hamas, on the other hand, demands an immediate end to the war while insisting on keeping its armed capabilities, even if it agrees to relinquish some degree of civilian control.

Israel faces the same dilemma it did nearly 16 months ago when the war began: how to dismantle Hamas militarily and politically while freeing the hostages. The Witkoff Framework is the latest attempt to square that circle.

THE NEW FRAMEWORK was announced just after midnight on Sunday following a high-level security consultation led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It was accompanied by two other major developments.

First, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio signed an emergency declaration to expedite the delivery of some \$4 billion in military aid to Israel.

A State Department statement made it clear: this move reverses the Biden administration's partial arms embargo. Since taking office, the Trump administration has already approved nearly \$14b. in major arms sales to Israel. The latest decision is part of a broader shift in US policy – one that is no longer about applying pressure on Israel but rather about enabling it to fight Hamas on its own terms.

The timing of the military aid announcement was no coincidence. By unveiling it alongside

the new framework, a pointed message was sent to Hamas: either extend the ceasefire and agree to the terms, or Israel will resume fighting – with full US support and no restrictions on its military campaign.

Hamas, predictably, rejected the Witkoff Framework outright.

Israel's response was immediate. The Prime Minister's Office announced that, effective Sunday morning, all goods and supplies entering Gaza would be halted.

This, too, appears to have been coordinated with Washington – Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer was in the US last week, and Netanyahu said Sunday that Israel is “fully coordinating with President Trump and his people.”

Under former president Joe Biden, the flow of humanitarian aid to Gaza was a constant source of friction between Israel and the US. The Biden administration repeatedly pushed for Israel to provide Gaza with food, electricity, and fuel, even as it waged war against Gaza's rulers.

In retrospect, this approach likely prolonged the war. The first hostage release in November 2023 came only after Hamas faced dwindling supplies, raising the question: what might have happened had there been no external pressure on Israel to maintain aid deliveries?

The Trump administration is making no such demands. In a notable shift, it recently lifted sanctions on Tzav 9, a

group that protested the entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Now, it appears that the policy that the group advocated – cutting off supplies until Hamas released the hostages – has traction at the highest levels.

At this stage, stopping aid trucks from entering Gaza does not include halting the supply of water and electricity, though Netanyahu seemed to leave that possibility open. Before Sunday's cabinet meeting, he warned that if Hamas persists in rejecting the Witkoff Frame-

work, there would be “additional consequences.” Hamas reportedly has enough food and supplies to sustain Gaza's population for another four or five months, but cutting off water and electricity could have more of an immediate impact.

If all of that wasn't a loud enough message, the cabinet on Sunday extended legislation allowing for the call-up of 400,000 reservists until the end of May. In addition, the IDF struck suspected terrorist targets in northern Gaza, with

the Palestinians reporting that four people were killed.

The accumulated message: There is a new framework on the table. If Hamas refuses, Israel will resume the war with its arsenal of weapons well-stocked and without the constraints of having to supply its enemy with food and supplies.

INTERNATIONAL PROTESTS against the halting of aid will follow, particularly in the Arab world, where they have already started, Europe, and the UN. But with Washington firmly in Israel's corner, those arguments will be easier to rebuff, and there will be much less danger of Israel being the target of any significant international sanctions.

All of this points to an apparent willingness of Israel to return to war. But why should fighting this time succeed in fully achieving the war's aims where 15 months of fighting – though it significantly degraded Hamas' capabilities – fell short?

First, it might not. There are no guarantees. But the battlefield has shifted in key ways.

Hamas is more isolated than ever. No one is militarily coming to its rescue – neither Hezbollah nor Iran. The Houthis may resume firing their missiles, but that is not a game-changer.

Diplomatically, as well, they are losing support. Qatar and Turkey, its principal backers on the world stage, have to be careful not to antagonize Trump, and the Trump administration

may also be able to convince Russia to take a more constructive role in this arena in return for the dramatic US about-face regarding Ukraine.

Secondly, if fighting is renewed, it will be done with Trump in the White House, who will not constrain Israel in the way Biden did.

So, how will Hamas react?

Its immediate response was to reject the framework. The next phase of its strategy will likely involve psychological warfare – more staged videos aimed at getting the Israeli public to pressure the government to end the war and bring all the hostages home.

There have been reports that Hamas has recruited new fighters and rebuilt its forces. But such claims should be taken with caution. It's one thing to put masks and green headbands on volunteers and parade them around brandishing Kalashnikovs in white pick-up trucks at staged events where hostages, or the bodies of hostages, are released. It's quite another to rebuild an organized fighting force capable of repelling a massive IDF air, land, and sea operation in Gaza.

Yes, Hamas still has terrorists able to engage in guerrilla warfare. But the type of capabilities to fend off a full IDF offensive? Hardly.

And while much has been made of how Hamas has used this pause to regroup, so has Israel – likely with at least as much, if not more, success than Hamas.

## Rubio signs declaration to expedite delivery of \$4b. in military aid to Israel

WASHINGTON (Reuters) – US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Saturday he had signed a declaration to expedite delivery of approximately \$4 billion in military assistance to Israel.

The Trump administration, which took office on January 20, has approved nearly \$12b. in major foreign military sales to Israel, Rubio said in a statement, adding that it “will continue to use all available tools to fulfill America's long-standing commitment to Israel's security, including means to counter security threats.”

Rubio said he had used emergency authority to expedite the delivery of military assistance to Israel to its Middle East ally, now in a fragile ceasefire with Hamas in their war in Gaza.

The Pentagon said on Friday that the State Department approved the potential sale of nearly \$3b. worth of bombs, demolition kits, and other weaponry to Israel.

The administration notified Congress of those prospective weapons sales on an emergency basis, sidestepping a long-standing practice of giving the chairs and ranking members of the House Foreign Affairs and Senate Foreign Relations Committees the opportunity to review the sale and ask for more information before making a formal notification to Congress.

Friday's announcements marked the second time in recent weeks that President Donald Trump's administration has declared an emergency to quickly approve weapons sales to Israel. The Biden administration also used emergency authority to approve the sale of arms to Israel without congressional review.

On Monday, the Trump administration rescinded a Biden-era order requiring it to report potential violations of international law involving US-supplied

weapons by allies, including Israel. It has also eliminated most US humanitarian foreign aid.

The January 19 Israel-Hamas ceasefire agreement halted 15 months of fighting and paved the way for talks on ending the war while leading to the release of 33 hostages held in Gaza and around 2,000 Palestinian security prisoners and detainees.

Hours after the first phase of the agreed ceasefire was set to expire, Israel said early on Sunday it would adopt a proposal by Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, for a temporary ceasefire in Gaza for the Ramadan and Passover periods.

Israel and Hamas have accused each other of violating the ceasefire, casting doubt over the second phase of the deal meant to include releases of additional hostages and prisoners as well as steps toward a permanent end of the war.

## Hostage families: How are we benefiting from the truce now?

• By EVE YOUNG

Israel must walk back its acceptance of a framework by US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff for a temporary ceasefire during the Ramadan and Passover period, families of hostages from the Tikva (Hope) Forum demanded on Sunday.

The Tikva Forum represents some family members of hostages who have pushed for military pressure and come out against dealing with Hamas, although they have come out in favor of some possible deals that would bring all the hostages home at once.

“We demand to abandon the Witkoff framework and return to the Trump framework – all together or unleash hell on Hamas,” the forum said.

The forum emphasized that one of the practical implications of the Witkoff plan is that “at this moment, a ceasefire is taking place without any return for Israel.”

“A ceasefire during Ramadan is a huge reward for Hamas, and it must not be given without the return of all the hostages home,” the forum added.

The forum said that a model with two stages of returning hostages, especially if the second stage is uncertain, is abandoning the hostages.

“The government of Israel must internalize – the hostages do not have time for unnecessary phases. We see the condition of those who have returned,” the forum said, calling on the state to “act decisively and use all its tools to pres-

sure Hamas, rather than surrender again and again.”

“The Witkoff framework is unacceptable to us, and we are shocked that the government has accepted it.”

Eli Albag, the father of freed hostage Liri Albag, who was freed at the start of the most recent hostage deal, commented on the stalled hostage deal to KAN News on Sunday.

“I am worried and concerned. I hope that the humanitarian pressure might help advance the completion of the deal, and the State of Israel and its prime minister must do everything to bring back all the hostages – every last one of them. And fast. They have no time in captivity,” he said.

Some family members of hostages said the government and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu have purposely sabotaged a deal.

Yehuda Cohen, whose son Nimrod is held in captivity and whose family said they recognized in a video put out by Hamas Saturday, addressed US President Donald Trump from a protest for the hostages Saturday night.

“Netanyahu is trying to sabotage your agreement, Mr. President. Netanyahu is the one creating the current crisis in the talks. He is the one who violated the agreement and dragged his feet.

“Don't let him blow up the deal,” he said Saturday.

“Netanyahu is undermining the agreement to convince you to allow him to resume fighting. He

is driven by political and personal considerations at the expense of the hostages, whom we may lose forever,” he added.

“The hostage families trust you, Mr. President. Demand that Netanyahu uphold the agreement, end the war, swiftly advance Phase B, and bring everyone back in one phase – now.”

Ifat Kalderon, cousin of released hostage Ofer Kalderon, also accused Netanyahu of purposely sabotaging a deal at the protest.

“The latest obstruction, called the extension of Phase A, is a selection among the hostages. The prime minister of the Jewish state is making a selection among his own people,” she said.

“But we will not give in – enough with the obstructions. We will not let you, Netanyahu, sacrifice lives. We demand everyone back in one phase – now.”

Danny Elgarat, whose brother Itzhak was killed in captivity and whose body was brought back last week, also spoke at the rally.

“Itzik was abandoned to his death in Hamas captivity, and there are no words to describe our rage and sense of missed opportunity. He could have been saved,” he said.

“My brother was sacrificed by Netanyahu and his partners, who deliberately sabotaged a series of deals for criminal political and personal interests. And they are doing it again now. Even now, we see how Netanyahu is undermining the agreement and obstructing the next phase.”

## ANALYSIS

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

The Middle East, Israel, and its neighbors are in a wild new era where the IDF has forces newly stationed in three areas that Jerusalem does not make any claim to: Syria, Gaza, and Lebanon. In the West Bank, forces have been stationed for an extended period, with the IDF claiming a significant portion of that area.

What do these military positions mean for the future, and what options and pitfalls do they open up?

Syria is the most unexpected and unpredictable of the three. There was never any plan to be in Syria because the Assad regime, which had an army, was expected to run the show indefinitely.

Israel's move into Syria on December 7-8 was a spontaneous act done to cut off the possibility of a sudden invasion by newly empowered Syrian jihadists before they had time to organize the idea.

But a funny thing happened after that, which many originally thought would only last a few months. The Trump administration basically told Israel that it did not care if the IDF stays there, that the new Syrian government has taken longer than expected to sort out its affairs, and so the pressure on Jerusalem to leave was minimal compared to expectations.

In the post-October 7 era, why would Israel give away an extra security zone?

Saturday night's events expressed why it is both useful and dangerous to have the buffer zone. On Saturday night, there was internal fighting

between elements connected to the new regime and some Druze militias in a neighborhood near Damascus.

In response, Israel issued threatening statements indicating it could intervene on the side of the Druze.

The positive side is that Israel can project power to deter invaders and even military actions anywhere near its border. The negative side is that this conflict had nothing to do with Israeli security, and getting drawn into an internal Syrian conflict could create new dangers for Israel that never existed before.

In Gaza, Israel and Hamas agreed to a deal that would lead to a full IDF withdrawal from Gaza. But, with support from the Trump administration, Jerusalem is seeking to expel Hamas from Gaza before it carries out a full withdrawal.

That could mean that Israel would hold a 700-1,100 meter security perimeter in Gaza for a long time. This provides significantly more security to the Gaza border communities.

On the other hand, if Gazans start marching or protesting Israel's presence in the enclave without firing on the IDF, any deaths that result from repelling such marching would be hard to defend before the International Criminal Court. Right now, only Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former defense minister Yoav Gallant are in such potential trouble.

An indefinite presence in Gaza without some kind of UN recognition could expose rank-and-file soldiers to a travel ban in around 125 countries that are part of the ICC.

Also, while some Israelis want the war to resume, those who do not may

see the security perimeter as a potential trap for restarting the war.

Though Hezbollah was the worst immediate threat for Israel prior to October 7, reality has flipped. Israel's presence of “only” several hundred soldiers spread over five small positions a few hundred meters inside Lebanon would seem to be the least explosive presence among the three problem spots.

Hezbollah has more to lose from a renewed war with Israel than anyone and, unlike Hamas, has no hostages to pressure Israel to hold back. Also, the footprint of the five positions is tiny compared to the large areas the IDF has taken up in Syria and Gaza.

And yet, Hezbollah has defined its identity for decades as a resistance group. Since Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000, Hezbollah struggled with framing a narrative for why it needs to fight Israel, given that the Jewish state was not holding any of its land.

Now, it may have a half-legitimate excuse of sorts, though obviously Israel's argument is that after Hezbollah violated its obligation not to create a terror zone in southern Lebanon since 2006, it has a right to have an extra set of eyes and ears in the area to block any potential Hezbollah invasion.

Hezbollah now is extremely weak and is not even responding when the IDF assassinates some of its leaders who are trying to smuggle weapons into the country.

But in the future, the group's confidence may grow again, and the five positions may be both a blessing (actually deterring an invasion) and a curse (serving as a new basis for war).



# Syria's Druze initiate measures to gain autonomy

## *In a historical moment for Druze community in Suwayda, hope rises for a better tomorrow*

ANALYSIS  
• By OHAD MERLIN

Earlier this week, Druze militants in the Suwayda province in southern Syria announced the establishment of a new military organization dubbed the "Military Council of Suwayda." The council announced that its missions would encompass protecting the Druze areas from extremist terrorists and weapon smuggling.

To preemptively counter any accusations of secessionism or treason, the leader of the new council, Tareq al-Shoufi, a former high-ranking officer in the Assad regime military who defected during the previous decade and engaged in anti-regime activity, also announced that the council views itself as a building block of the Syrian national army, which will join the renewed military – but only once a secular, democratic, and modern Syria is secured.

Shoufi also gave two important clues regarding the new council: that it was formed in coordination with the local spiritual leadership, led by the revered Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri, and that it was supported by a vague "international coalition."

To understand the current standing of the council, one must look at the recent history of the Druze of Suwayda and their relations with the ousted regime, its agents, and the jihadist organizations that thrived in Syria since the beginning of the civil war, almost a decade and a half ago.

The Druze in the Suwayda area have been engaged in long-standing peaceful anti-regime activity ever since the mid 2010s. Relations between the regime and the Druze began to deteriorate since around that period of time, as the Assad regime and its agents attempted to recruit large numbers of Druze soldiers to combat the rebels, applying much pressure and oppressive measures against the community in Suwayda.

This led to a series of anti-regime measures from the Druze community, including defection and peaceful weekly demonstrations and even armed activity against the jihadist factions surrounding the community.

These, in turn, coalesced into the "Rijal al-Karamah" (Men of Honor) movement, which openly protested against the regime. The movement called to implement UN Security Council Resolution 2254 from 2015, which implicitly called for a transition of power in the country following the early years of the civil war.

Rijal al-Karamah was led at its start by revered spiritual leader Sheikh Wahid al-Balous, who was assassinated in 2015 – most likely by the Assad regime – further worsening the relations between the residents of Suwayda and the oppressive regime.

In turn, the regime applied even more oppressive measures, described by locals as essentially "besieging" and "suffocating" the local communities and their economy in an attempt to discourage them from acting against the regime or even drive them away from their land altogether.

Another crucial date deeply etched into the collective minds of the Druze community in Suwayda was July 25, 2018, deemed by some as "the October 7 of the Druze." On this day, jihadist militants massacred more than 250 people in the southern Druze province and wounded about 180, by means of suicide attacks, mass shootings in homes, and even kidnappings and beheadings.

Many believed that the massacre took place with the knowledge of the Assad regime, and perhaps even with its encouragement, which explains even further the disdain felt by the Druze of Suwayda toward both the ousted regime and the jihadist factions, whose kin now control the new Syria.

The horrid attacks of July 25 became a symbol in the eyes of the Druze of the critical need to maintain their own armed forces to protect their community,

and as a sign of the terrible fate that awaits those who stand in the way of the jihadist sects without defense. They have no desire to see these events taking place again, and the forming of the military council in the face of all the critics from within should be viewed in this context.

The issue of foreign intervention or aid to the council has made many headlines in the last week, with many highlighting Shoufi's vague words about an "international coalition" aiding the council.

Additionally, Shoufi made comments vis-à-vis Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's remarks from Sunday demanding a demilitarized southern Syria and warning from any threats against the Druze com-

munity, replying vaguely that "any aiding hand to Syria is welcome."

However, Shoufi was not the only one from the Druze community who did not reject foreign intervention. Hijri, the current spiritual leader of Suwayda, also implicitly denounced Syrian leader Ahmed al-Sharaa this week.

Hijri claimed, "Until now... we have not seen the ability [of the current leadership] to lead the country." He then called openly, much to the dismay of many in Syria, for "international intervention" to "ensure that the process leads to a civilian state, with the separation of powers and the rule of law."

Another focal point in the context of external relations is the Druze community in Israel,

who have long been a supporting force for their kin in Suwayda, securing humanitarian, political, and even diplomatic assistance, to the extent possible under the political circumstances.

Despite being less significant in terms of population size, the Druze in Israel have become one of the strongest Druze communities in the region due to their respectable power within Israeli politics.

In this context, it is enough to see the recent meetings held by the spiritual leader of the community in Israel, Sheikh Mowafaq Tarif, in the United Arab Emirates, to get a taste of the Israeli Druze's overt and covert contribution to the situation of their brethren beyond the border.

It is important to note that the Druze in Syria are not at all a monolithic entity. Only two months ago, a viral video circulated online showing a Druze council of dignitaries in the Hader area, near the Golan Heights, in which the dignitaries expressed their desire to be annexed to the Israeli Golan, deeming Israel as the "lesser evil" and warning against horrific crimes from part of the jihadists.

However, the Druze from the Hader region were traditionally loyal to the ousted Syrian regime, and the events of al-Karamah and July 25 did not affect them. Therefore, for them, the fall of the regime was an even more shocking event, unlike their kin in Suwayda who had been openly calling

for its ousting for many years.

It is important to add that even within Suwayda itself there are conflicting trends, with the new military council facing criticism from a slightly older Druze organization called Hizb al-Liwa, which received American support and tried to lead a different line of reconciliation with the previous regime.

The coming days and months will be critical in the process of the consolidation of Syria, with the main question posed revolving around the success or failure of Sharaa's attempts at presenting a vision of integrating the ethnic and religious minorities into a predominantly Sunni society led by Salafist ideologues – all the while maintaining Syria as clear of unwanted foreign

intervention as possible.

The Druze in Suwayda are viewing the current government with growing disdain, while looking eastward at the successful Kurdish experiment of self-rule and autonomy, and westward at the growing fears of the Alawite minority following the sporadic violent riots directed at them by armed militants, always carrying their own catastrophe in mind.

For the Druze, these may be historical days leading to self-rule, self-defense, or perhaps even self-determination in some form or other. For Israel, these days should be seen as an opportunity to act wisely and ensure the establishment of stability, coexistence, and lasting peace in our tumultuous region.



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## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Haredi protesters block highway

Ultra-Orthodox protesters blocked Highway 4 near Bnei Brak during an anti-conscription demonstration on Sunday, police said. Police added that the protest was illegal and that the protesters called them Nazis. “The public is advised to use alternative routes and stay updated on traffic conditions,” the police said.

• Jerusalem Post Staff

## ‘Beersheba resident sent info to Iran’

The police and Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) arrested a Beersheba resident for offering to sell an Iranian agent information on the Negev Nuclear Research Center, the two agencies said on Sunday. The investigation found that Doron Bokobza carried out several missions for Iranian agents, including photographing facilities and transferring information. In the framework of such operations, Bokobza presented himself to the Iranian agent as someone who had access to the Negev Nuclear Research Center and transferred information on the facility to the agent, according to the agencies. The investigation further revealed that Bokobza initiated the contact with the Iranian agent, knowing he may harm state security. An indictment was filed against the Beersheba resident on charges of contact with a foreign agent and transferring information to the enemy.

• Jerusalem Post Staff

## Freed hostage invited to White House

US President Donald Trump has invited released hostage Eli Sharabi to the White House after watching his testimony on Channel 12’s *Uvda*, Sharabi’s brother, Sharon, told Channel 12 on Sunday. Sharabi was set to fly to Washington on Monday, and the meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, Sharabi’s brother said. Detailing his 491-day captivity on *Uvda*, Sharabi said in late February, “You’re 50 m. underground. The sanitary conditions are simply terrible. You shower once a month with a bottle of water, maybe half a bucket of cold water... The chains on my legs never left me from the day I arrived in Gaza until the last day,” he recounted.

• Jerusalem Post Staff

## With first phase over, Mideast expects Gaza truce to continue

## ANALYSIS

• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

Two weeks ago, in mid-February, there was talk that “hell will break loose” in Gaza if Hamas didn’t abide by the ceasefire and continue to release hostages. At the time, it appeared Hamas was willing to walk away from the first phase of the ceasefire and not release hostages on time. In the end, Hamas backed down and hostages were released. Now, the first phase of the ceasefire is over, and Hamas expects that it will be extended.

One can tell that Hamas expects things to remain calm by how it is behaving. It has set up tables for Ramadan in areas of Gaza and seems to expect that calm will prevail. There is also no sense of crises in Doha or Cairo, the two places where mediation is taking place. Israel has threatened to cut off humanitarian aid going into Gaza unless Hamas extends the ceasefire. However, the overall sense is that somehow a solution will be found.

The basic discussion surrounds whether the first phase of the ceasefire will be extended such that a few hostages are released each week, or if another framework will be



A BIRD flies above destroyed buildings in northern Gaza, as seen from Israel yesterday. (Amir Cohen/Reuters)

found to release more hostages at the beginning of a new ceasefire and then others at the end.

Hamas doesn’t like the new proposals. It wants phase two of the original deal agreed upon in mid-January to be completed, which would see Israel leave the Philadelphia Corridor in southern Gaza and the end of the war. Hamas wants this because it would

basically be a return to October 6. Then Hamas will rebuild its terrorist infrastructure and attack again and take more hostages, get more prisoners released, and do this again and again.

On the other hand, Israeli politicians are at an impasse. While some have warned about “hell breaking loose” in February, the tough talk has now been reduced. In Febru-

ary, there was talk of Israel supporting US President Donald Trump’s plan to move people out of Gaza so it could be rebuilt.

However, Israeli leaders have not presented any plan about how this might happen. Instead, they take a “wait and see” approach, expecting the Trump administration to sort things out. For instance, talks about the second phase

of the deal were supposed to take place weeks ago, but Israel stalled and waited. Right-wing politicians have said they don’t want to go to phase two; they want phase one to continue. Hamas disagrees.

The Arab states in the region don’t seem to think a crisis will grow too much. They may also assume the Trump administration can save things. The issue everyone faces is that the Trump administration may not have a magic wand to sort out all these problems. It is also dealing with the fallout from the meeting with Ukraine’s president and dealing with other domestic policy issues.

The key issues involved now are whether Israel will threaten to do more than just cut off humanitarian aid going into Gaza. Hamas has stockpiled the aid that arrived during phase one of the ceasefire and thus has enough aid for part of Ramadan. However, it will want to continue to have aid flowing as it seeks to begin rebuilding and show the population in Gaza that it has won and can secure their future.

This is all part of Hamas’s plan. Hamas expects the ceasefire to continue and thinks it has painted Israel into a corner in this respect.

## Russia takes gamble, keeps its army bases in Syria

## INSIGHT

• By SAMIA NAKHOUL and TIMOUR AZHARI

LATAKIA, Syria (Reuters) – For years, soldiers from Russia’s Hmeimim Air Base in Syria roamed freely through coastal cities with warplanes flying from the complex to bombard Islamist rebels fighting Bashar al-Assad’s repressive regime.

No longer. With Assad gone, at both Hmeimim and Russia’s Soviet-era Tartus Naval Base 60 km. south, small groups of former rebels guard the entrances, their Ha’yat Tahrir al-Sham Islamist force now in control of the country.

The khaki-uniformed guards escort any Russian convoys that venture out, they told Reuters reporters visiting the area last week.

“They have to notify us before they leave,” one of the guards said, declining to speak on record.

The future of the bases, which are integral to Russia’s military reach in the Middle East and Africa, is in the hands of Syria’s President Ahmed al-Sharaa.

He wants to renegotiate the generous Assad-era 49-year lease for Tartous and an indefinite lease for Hmeimim to secure better terms but doesn’t appear to want Moscow shut out altogether.

Instead, it appears the bases may stay in exchange for diplomatic backing and financial compensation from Russia, deeply involved in Syria’s economy and defense for seven decades before it joined the civil war in 2015 and wrought devastation that helped keep Assad in power for years.

Assad fell in December, fleeing to Russia through Hmeimim. The Islamist Syrian leadership – once the target of relentless Russian airstrikes – is now engaged with Moscow at the negotiating table.

For this story, Reuters spoke to eight Syrian, Russian, and diplomatic sources who gave previously unreported details from the first high-level meeting between Sharaa and an envoy sent by Russian President Vladimir Putin, including demands related to billions of dollars of debt, the future of Assad, and the repatriation of Syrian money alleged to be in Russia.

Like others in the story, the sources requested anonymity to speak about sensitive matters.



A RUSSIAN soldier rides on an infantry fighting vehicle in a Russian military convoy headed toward the Hmeimim Air Base in Latakia, on the coast of Syria, in December. (Umit Bektaş/Reuters)

Putting enmity aside has benefits for both parties. Despite the EU and US easing some sanctions on Syria, the remaining restrictions make it hard to do business with the war-shattered and impoverished country of 23 million.

A restoration of Russia’s traditional supplies of weapons, fuel, and wheat could be a lifeline. As such, the country’s leaders are willing “to make peace, even with their former enemies,” one Damascus-based diplomat told Reuters.

“Moscow still has something to offer for Syria” and is too powerful and entrenched to ignore, said Anna Borshchetskaya at The Washington Institute.

“Russia simply needs a government in Damascus that would ensure its interests, and it would be willing to make a deal with that government,” she said. One UN aid source said Russia has not exported grain to Syria under the new administration.

US President Donald Trump has said little about Syria since taking office, but he has sought to repair US relations with Moscow. A US State Department spokesperson said with Assad gone, there was an opportunity for Syria “to no longer be dominated and destabilized by Iranian or Russian influence.”

US ally Israel, however, wants Russia to stay as a bulwark against the Turkish influence, Reuters reported on Friday.

At the January 29 meeting

in Damascus, Sharaa sought the cancellation of loans contracted with Russia under Assad, two of the sources told Reuters. Syria, which was largely free of foreign debt before the war, currently has \$20 billion-\$23b. in external obligations, Finance Minister Mohammad Abazid said last month, without specifying how much was owed to Russia.

During the three-hour encounter with Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov, Syrian officials raised another key issue, the return of Assad to Syria, but only in broad terms, suggesting it was not a major obstacle to rebuilding ties, one of the sources said. Russia will not agree to extradite Assad and has not been asked to do so, a senior Russian source said.

Sharaa also urged the repatriation of Syrian funds his government believes were deposited by Assad in Moscow, but the Russian delegation denied such funds existed, according to a Syria-based diplomat familiar with the talks.

Sharaa’s office and the White House’s National Security Council did not respond to requests for comment.

In a statement issued after the meeting, Syria’s government said Sharaa stressed that new relations need to address past mistakes and demanded compensation for the destruction Russia caused. The meeting went relatively smoothly, all the sources said. A phone call between Sharaa

and Putin two weeks ago was described as constructive by the Kremlin.

Asked by Reuters on Tuesday whether talks between Moscow and Damascus on the fate of Russia’s military bases were progressing, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said: “We are continuing our contacts with the Syrian authorities.”

“So, well, let’s just say that the working process is underway,” he added.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry did not reply to a request for comment.

SERGEI MARKOV, a former Kremlin adviser, said this month that things were looking good for Moscow.

“The new Syrian authorities do not see Russia as a hostile country. But Russia will have to do something favorable for the Syrian government in return for these bases,” he wrote on Telegram.

In an interview with Saudi Al Arabiya News in late December, Sharaa acknowledged Syria’s “strategic interests” with Russia, which supplied the country’s now-defunct army for generations and financed power plants and dams along with other key infrastructure.

In turn, with American troops in Syria’s northeast, Turkish forces in the north, and Israeli troops newly in southern Syria, Russia is resolute in maintaining its only naval base in the Mediterranean.

Doing so would help Moscow retain political leverage

amid a diplomatic scramble for sway over Damascus after Assad’s fall.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov met his Turkish counterpart in Ankara on Monday. Their talks included Syria, a Turkish source said. Turkey’s Foreign Ministry did not respond to a request for comment.

Damascus wants compensation for wartime destruction. Rebuilding costs are projected at \$400b., according to the UN Economic and Social Commission for West Asia.

Moscow is unlikely to accept responsibility but instead could offer humanitarian aid, said a source familiar with Russia’s view on the matter.

In December, Putin offered the bases as hubs to deliver humanitarian aid to the Syrian people, and Russia’s ambassador to the UN, Vasily Nebenzya, said Russia’s alliance with Syria was “not connected to any regime.” The UN aid source said they were unaware of any aid having been moved through the bases.

The fate of Assad and associates who fled to Moscow is a delicate matter. Russia remains resistant to surrendering Assad, insisting on continuity in its alliances, the Russian and diplomatic sources said.

“Russia does not simply give people up because the wind changes direction,” the senior Russian source said.

Syria’s war, which erupted nearly 14 years ago with protests against Assad’s autocratic rule, left hundreds of thousands of people dead, some 13 million displaced, and swathes of the country in ruins.

Driving from Damascus along the highway to the Russian bases, entire areas stand as grim reminders of Syrian and Russian airstrikes. Buildings are gutted or reduced to rubble.

Across the street from Hmeimim Air Base, shopowners sat in empty food stalls, lamenting their dire conditions in the dilapidated town.

In its markets, store signs are in Russian, but the soldiers no longer visit or linger in cafes, locals said.

“Russian soldiers used to come here to buy beer, whiskey, and other drinks, but that’s stopped,” said the owner of a sandwich shop opposite the base. “Now, they only leave in convoys to their naval base. They don’t stop or venture out anymore.”

## Biden staff was hostile to Israelis, former envoy says

• Jerusalem Post Staff

The Biden administration exerted heavy pressure on Israel during the war, repeatedly urging restraint – particularly in responding to Iran’s direct attack – and creating bureaucratic obstacles that delayed essential weapons shipments, former Israeli Ambassador to the US Michael Herzog told *Israel Hayom* on Friday.

In an explosive interview, Herzog revealed that US officials strongly opposed an Israeli counterstrike on Iran, warning that retaliation could escalate into a regional war.

“They told us not to respond after Iran’s first attack. They expected us to contain it,” said Herzog. “We told them, ‘That’s not how the Middle East works. For us, this is existential.’” At one point, he recalled, senior Biden administration officials were furious with Israel’s actions, fearing they would be drawn into a broader conflict.

“More than once, they went crazy on me. They yelled, ‘You’ve lost your minds! You’re dragging us into a regional war!’” Despite US warnings, Israel did strike Iranian targets. But Herzog noted a double standard in Washington’s approach – once the Israeli response was successful in deterring further aggression, American officials tried to take credit for regional stability.

“They initially told us to be careful and not retaliate,” Herzog said. “But after our actions succeeded, they wanted credit, saying, ‘The Middle East is in a better place because we supported Israel.’ The problem is, they didn’t actually support these actions at the time.”

Herzog painted a grim picture of hostile elements within the US State Department, particularly those who sought to limit Israel’s military operations and block key security decisions. “There are many within the State Department who are not just unfriendly to Israel, but outright hostile,” Herzog told *Israel Hayom*. “Some actively worked to block nearly every Israeli request.”

One of the most troubling revelations was the legal division within the State Department that focuses solely on

scrutinizing Israel’s use of US weapons. Herzog noted that no other country is subjected to this level of oversight. “The Biden administration allowed bureaucrats with an anti-Israel agenda to influence US policy,” Herzog warned. “They made sure that nearly every Israeli request was delayed, watered down, or obstructed.”

Beyond diplomatic tensions, Herzog also addressed the delays in US weapons shipments to Israel, including the temporary freeze on 2,000-pound bombs – which the administration justified on humanitarian grounds. “There was no formal arms embargo,” Herzog clarified, “but bureaucratic delays and political pressure slowed down deliveries at crucial moments.”

Meanwhile, he noted, Ukraine continued receiving American weapons without similar restrictions. The situation escalated when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly criticized the delays in a viral video. Herzog admitted the move backfired, as negotiations that were close to securing the arms came to a halt due to political backlash in Washington.

While Herzog acknowledged that Biden provided military support at key moments, including assistance in intercepting Iranian missiles, he said that as the US presidential election approached, the administration’s stance toward Israel became increasingly shaped by domestic political considerations.

“We saw them trying to balance their pro-Israel instincts with the pressure coming from anti-Israel factions within the administration,” Herzog said.

Looking back on the war, Herzog argued that the Biden administration’s approach weakened Israel’s ability to act decisively, forcing Jerusalem into prolonged diplomatic battles over basic military needs.

“In the end, we had to work around US pressure,” he concluded. “If we had followed all their advice, our enemies would have sensed weakness. Instead, we acted in Israel’s best interest – even when it meant standing up to our closest ally.”



EUROPEAN JEWISH LEADER TO 'POST':

# Jews, Israel can never cooperate with AfD, FPÖ

## The future of my grandchildren is definitely not here, says EJC president

• By ELDAD BECK  
Jerusalem Post Correspondent

VIENNA – This week, the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) became the second strongest party in Germany. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar officially announced in Brussels that Israel was normalizing relations with three other far-right European parties that had been boycotted by Jerusalem until now: France’s National Rally, the Swedish Democrats, and Vox in Spain.

Prior to this, the Likud was admitted as an observer to the Patriots for Europe caucus in the European Parliament, in which all three parties are members, as well as the far-right Freedom Party of Austria. FPÖ used the meeting between its representatives and those of the Likud at the Congress of the Patriots in Madrid to announce the end of Israel’s long boycott against this party.

Since the FPÖ was at the same time downgrading relations with Israel in the coalition negotiations it held to form a new government in Austria, the Likud had to retract its reconciliatory position and announce that it is distancing itself from the FPÖ, which made the party very angry.

While Israel is looking for ways to create new political alliances in a changing Europe, Ariel Muzicant, president of the European Jewish Congress and former head of the Austrian Jewish community, feels a growing despair, not only because of the extremely troubled times that Jews are experiencing all over Europe, especially after the October 7 massacre, but at the growing misunderstanding among the Israeli government on the position of European Jewry as well.

“The results of the German election show that we have in Europe a strengthening of the extreme Left and Right,” Muzicant said in an interview with *The Jerusalem Post*.

“What the Jews in Europe feel today, and Germany is a very good example for that, is that we are between a rock and a hard place: the extreme Right, the extreme Left, and the Islamists. We don’t have a problem with right-wing populist parties. We have a problem with parties that cross a certain red line, on the Left and Right, when it comes to antisemitism and to national-socialist ideas.

“The AfD in Germany and the FPÖ in Austria are classic examples of that. The Jewish communities have good relations with [Italian Prime Minister] Giorgia Meloni, [Dutch far-right leader] Geert Wilders, and others. But they can not have relations with parties like the AfD and FPÖ for the simple reason that they have Nazi or neo-Nazi origins, deny the Holocaust, and promote antisemitic views.”

### Can you do something to change this situation?

1.5 million European Jews can not persuade 500 million Europeans. I can only tell you that the situation makes us extremely nervous. The tsunami of antisemitism that followed the atrocities of October 7 and the shock wave throughout the Jewish communities, seeing how Israel was attacked and the terrible situation of the hostages and their families, has dramatically changed the perception of our well-being in Europe as Jews.

The main question for us is not if we can change something about the extreme Right. The main question for us is, do we have a future in Europe, and how do we deal with the tremendous shock after what



CO-LEADERS of the far Right Alternative for Germany party, Alice Weidel and Tino Chrupalla, react after giving a media statement on the day of the party’s parliamentary fraction meeting following the German general elections in Berlin, last week. (Lisi Niesner/Reuters)

happened to so many Israelis? I don’t know if the Israelis understand how much this has affected and shocked European Jewry.

### Do you reject any contact with the AfD and FPÖ?

We cannot talk to the AfD and FPÖ at all. This is categoric, and it is not going to change. I have an ongoing fight with some members of certain Israeli parties who think that they have to meet and talk to AfD and FPÖ politicians.

Why do I have this stance? Because in Austria and in Germany – where national-socialism came from, where the perpetrators originated from – a Jew who wants to live in these countries must have a very clear stand against what we call in German “Keller-Nazis,” basement Nazis, who only expose their true views among themselves, and open Nazis and open antisemites that we have in the AfD and the FPÖ.

It’s a totally different situation to the other populist right-

wing parties, which you have in Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and other places.

### So you won’t talk to the AfD or the FPÖ no matter what?

If tomorrow these parties get rid of all their Nazis, meaning 40% of their personnel, stop denying the Holocaust, stop promoting Nazi ideology, stop using Nazi codes, then we will see. But, at the moment, what we see is exactly the opposite. Usage of Nazi codes is increasing, national-socialist ideas are increasing. In Austria, FPÖ leader Herbert Kickl presents himself as a “volkskanzler,” a people’s chancellor.

That is a classical Nazi term. Re-immigration, “bevölkerungsaustausch” (population transfer) – all these are constantly used codes, which are meant for the ears of the Nazi supporters and are a clear proof that these two parties have not changed. A prominent member of the AfD,

Maximilian Krah, said that not all members of the SS were criminals.

Kickl said exactly the same in a debate with me in 2010. For Krah’s quote, the AfD was excluded from the Patriots group in the European Parliament; the FPÖ, however, was not excluded. It is exactly the same wording and provocation. So why should we now consider changing our attitude towards them?

The problem that I have with some Israeli politicians is that they do not know history, and they do not speak to the Jewish communities. They think that they know better, and they tell us: “We know better what is good for Israel.” Well, they do not.

### But how effective is boycotting these parties since, at the end of the day, you see that it just makes these parties stronger?

The “firewall” against these parties is indeed not effective. They are indeed getting stron-

ger and stronger. But, understand: as a Jew, who is second generation to Holocaust survivors, with all the Jews who were murdered by Austrians and Germans, we must retain a certain moral and political position. If we lose this position, we have no right to live as proud Jews in these countries. We should pack and leave. It’s different if you live in Spain.

### You say that Jews do not feel at home here anymore, but Israel, after October 7, is not seen anymore as a safe haven. What are the options?

European Jews are desperate. They are not only desperate because their plan B – Israel as a safe haven – seems to have collapsed, but because of how much they are affected by what is going on inside Israel. Many in the Jewish communities mobilized to help the hostages and their families. This situation has shocked everybody.

The communities are overwhelmed with the necessity to stand by Israel. It is not just the war but the whole mess that happened before the war, with the demonstrations against the judiciary reform. Jews always believed that Israel is a real democracy, and with all the differences between the Left and Right, the Israelis will somehow overcome their problems.

The situation for us is bad. Jews have understood that Canada, the UK, and Australia are not safe havens, while Israel as a plan B is a difficult choice because people are afraid. On the other hand, I met with people of the Aliyah and Integration Ministry and the Jewish Agency and told them that if they act right, they might have one million *olim* from Western countries, especially from Europe where Jews say that they’ve had enough

of the antisemitic tsunami and there is no future for them in Europe. But we are afraid of what is happening in Israel. We are very concerned that infighting will start again.

### Doesn’t Israel need a strong Diaspora in such difficult times?

To have a strong Diaspora, we have to build it. The Diaspora right now is in a bad condition. Not every Jew is going to make aliyah. It will be a decision each person will have to make for themselves. But I can tell you that young Jews who have a strong Jewish identity are going to move to Israel. They’ve had enough. Those who are afraid of the situation in Israel or have less Jewish roots and identity will continue to live in the Diaspora.

Nobody expected that October 7 would completely change the Diaspora. Solidarity with Israel has risen tremendously – as much as antisemitism has risen. To have a strong Diaspora, we need the Israeli government to understand that its best ally, besides the US, is the Jewish Diaspora. Talking to the Diaspora, understanding the Diaspora, and helping the Diaspora are necessities.

Unfortunately, we have some members in the Israeli government that just don’t understand the problem. It’s not specific to the incumbent government, but in this government, there are some members who are really angry with.

### What did October 7 do to you personally?

There are two events that changed my life. The first was the Six Day War, and the second was October 7. I have participated in building the Jewish community in Austria for over five decades, and today, I am asking myself if it was the right thing to do. The future of my grandchildren is definitely not here. I have become more Zionist than I was before.

# Bibas family sues Al Jazeera for alleged Hamas ties

• Jerusalem Post Staff

A group of American victims from the October 7 terrorist attack in Israel has filed a lawsuit against Al Jazeera Media Network and its US subsidiary, alleging that the Qatar-based news outlet directly supported Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ). The lawsuit, filed under the US Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), claims that the network knowingly aided these designated terrorist organizations by providing a global platform for propaganda, recruitment, and incitement to violence.

The complaint, filed in the US District Court for the District of Columbia, alleges that Al Jazeera employed operatives linked to Hamas and PIJ as journalists, compensated terrorist leaders for interviews, and spread extremist narratives. The plaintiffs argue that these actions contributed to the planning and execution of the October 7 attack, which resulted in the deaths of over 1,200 civilians, including US citizens, and led to mass kidnappings.

Among the plaintiffs is Maurice Shnaider, the uncle of murdered victims Shiri, Ariel, and Kfir Bibas. Attorneys Robert J. Tolchin from New York and Nitsana Darshan-Leitner from Israel represent the plaintiffs. Meanwhile, Jordan Cope, the Director of Policy Education at StandWithUs, is a legal consultant. The lawsuit highlights longstanding allegations that Al Jazeera has close ties to terrorist organizations, a claim frequently supported by Israeli officials and security experts.

“Terrorist organizations require financial support, logis-

tical networks, and media outlets to further their agenda,” said Darshan-Leitner, president of Shurat HaDin. “The evidence shows Al Jazeera has acted as an accomplice to Hamas and PIJ, promoting their ideology and enabling their operations.”

The complaint alleges that Al Jazeera’s journalists included multiple Hamas and PIJ operatives, some directly involved in the October 7 attack. The network is also accused of glorifying terrorists, inciting further violence, and financially supporting individuals linked to these groups. Exclusive interviews with Hamas leaders – some of whom orchestrated attacks on Israeli and American civilians – are cited as evidence in the case.

Under the ATA, US victims of terrorism can pursue damages from those who provide material support to terrorist organizations. Plaintiffs include survivors of the attack and the families of Americans killed or injured. Shnaider expressed his family’s anguish: “The brutal murder of Shiri, Kfir, and Ariel by Gaza terrorists is an unspeakable atrocity that has shattered our family forever. The kidnapping and killing of toddlers is beyond comprehension. While no lawsuit can erase our pain, we are determined to seek justice and hold those responsible accountable.”

This legal action is part of a broader effort to combat terrorism financing and propaganda. The attorneys involved specialize in addressing extremist groups through legal measures, aiming to dismantle the global networks that support terrorist organizations.

# BBC: Production co. knew docu was linked to Hamas

• By MICHAEL STARR

The production company for a BBC Gaza documentary featuring people tied to Hamas paid the wife of a Hamas official and was aware of the links to the terrorist organization, the British Broadcasting Corporation said in a Thursday statement addressing the outrage surrounding it.

A BBC spokesperson said that Hoyo Films had paid the mother of the boy that narrated the *Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone* documentary, but had reportedly assured that no payments were made to members of Hamas or its affiliates, despite their acknowledgment that they knew the boy’s father was a deputy agriculture minister in the Hamas government.

A full audit of program expenditures is reportedly set to be conducted to obtain additional assurance that £400,000 of BBC funds did not go to the proscribed terrorist organization, and the BBC said it was requesting financial accounts from the production company.

The state broadcaster blamed Hoyo Films for failing to disclose the Hamas connections to the BBC despite being privy to them.

“During the production process, the independent production company was asked in writing a number of times by the BBC about any potential connections he and his family might have with Hamas,” said the BBC spokesperson.

Amid calls for an independent inquiry, the BBC said that editorial complaints and reviews director Peter Johnston would review all the issues with the program. The spokesperson asserted in the statement that Johnston was independent of BBC News and reported direct-

ly to the organization’s director-general.

Hoyo Films said in a statement that it was fully cooperating with Johnston.

“When we were commissioned to make *Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone*, our aim was to make an engaging and insightful documentary about the lives of young people in Gaza,” Hoyo Films explained. “We felt it was important to hear from voices that haven’t been represented on screen throughout the war with dignity and respect – and to tell the story about the devastating impact of war on their everyday lives.”

The BBC statement came after the BBC Board’s Thursday meeting, with the board acknowledging that there were “serious flaws in the making of this program.”

“Some of these were made by the production company, and some by the BBC; all of them are unacceptable. BBC News takes full responsibility for these and the impact that these have had on the corporation’s reputation,” said the BBC spokesperson. “We apologize for this.”

During a Thursday parliamentary session, Secretary of State for Culture, Media, and Sport Lisa Nandy said that she had discussed the documentary scandal with BBC director-general Tim Davie earlier that week and sought “cast-iron assurances that no money paid has fallen into the hands of Hamas.”

Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch on Friday thanked the BBC board for taking the scandal seriously, but said that television license fee payers deserved more answers.

Badenoch noted on X/Twitter that if the BBC repeatedly asked

about Hamas ties, they must have had suspicions about the issue. She also rejected the BBC’s investigation as independent, since the department was staffed by BBC employees. Badenoch reiterated the warning in her letter last Sunday to Davie that the party’s support of license fees was dependent on the institution’s response to its bias issues.

Yesh Atid chairman and opposition leader Yair Lapid said on X on Friday that it was difficult to take the BBC’s apology seriously when the broadcaster demonstrated systemic bias against Israel.

Researcher David Collier, who discovered the documentary’s Hamas connections in a February 18 exposé, also warned on social media that the issues at the BBC were not just about one documentary.

“They have been producing Hamas propaganda for years,” said Collier. “The only difference this time is that we proved it.”

After the documentary was pulled from its streaming service, over 800 media figures and workers issued a joint statement condemning a “campaign” against the film.

“A campaign has sought to discredit the documentary using the father of 14-year-old Abdullah al-Yazouri, one of the film’s child protagonists,” read the letter.

MP Claudia Webbe said on social media on Thursday that the documentary was removed because it documented “Israel’s genocide” and made “the powerful uncomfortable.”

Socialist commentator Owen Jones said Friday on X that the BBC was whitewashing “one of the most obscene crimes of our age” by removing the documentary.

## GLAZER AT CÉSAR AWARDS:

# ‘Holocaust used as excuse to justify genocide in Gaza’

• By MICHAEL STARR

*The Zone of Interest* director Jonathan Glazer reiterated claims that the Holocaust was being hijacked to justify massacres of Gazans in a letter, read at Friday’s 2025 César Awards.

Glazer was not in France to accept the award for best foreign film, but a proxy read a message to the audience asserting that the Holocaust film’s subject of dehumanization was “alarmingly” relevant.

“The Holocaust and Jewish security are being used to justify the massacres and ethnic cleansing in Gaza after the October 7 massacre and the hostage-taking in Israel,” read Glazer’s letter. “In both cases, these are acts of terrorism against innocent people made possible by the dehumanization of people on the other side of the wall of the zone of interest.”

Glazer’s statement was met with applause and cheers

from the audience of the Paris national film awards.

Council of Jewish Institutions of France (CRIF) president Yonathan Arfi said Saturday that for their applause, the audience had won the award for “indignity” and Glazer the award for “indecenty” for his Holocaust comparisons.

“Gaza is not Auschwitz. This collective jubilation in turning the memory of the Shoah against Israel is a form of revisionism as perverse as it is dangerous,” Arfi said on X/Twitter. “Hamas could not dream of a better ambassador.”

Glazer said in his letter that he was echoing what he had said during his March 10 acceptance speech for the Oscar for Best International Film.

“Right now, we stand here as men who refute their Jewishness and the Holocaust being hijacked by an occupation that has led to conflict for so many innocent people,” Glazer said in his acceptance speech.



ENGLISH DIRECTOR Jonathan Glazer (right) accepts the award for Best International Feature Film for ‘The Zone of Interest,’ in Hollywood, in March. (Patrick T. Fallon/AFP via Getty Images)



# Pro-Israel group to honor Steve Bannon despite his Nazi-like salute

• By BEN SALES/JTA

An Orthodox right-wing pro-Israel group will honor Steve Bannon nine days after the former Donald Trump adviser faced criticism for a gesture that resembled a Nazi salute.

Neither the gesture nor the rebuke fazed Israel365, whose founder calls it "Israel's voice in the MAGA movement" and which caters to an evangelical Christian audience. On Saturday night, the group is hosting an event in Dallas where, it confirmed to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, it will proudly fete Bannon as the guest of honor.

Bannon – whose podcast, "War Room," commands considerable influence among pro-Trump diehards – will also deliver a speech and answer questions. The event is hosted by Israel365 Action, the group's advocacy arm, which is running a slate in the upcoming elections for the World Zionist Congress.

"We are grateful to Steve Bannon for using his voice and his War Room platform to help the Jewish State achieve Total Victory and are proud to honor him this Saturday night as a Warrior for Israel," Rabbi Tuly Weisz, Israel365's founder, wrote in an email to JTA.

In a subsequent message, he wrote, "Anyone who listens to Bannon knows that he is a Warrior for Israel and is frequently even criticized for being the most pro-Israel voice in the movement."

Even as Israel365 is rebuffing those who call Bannon an antisemite, the event has sparked some local controversy. It was originally set to take place at a local Orthodox Jewish day school, Akiba Yavneh Academy, but at least one parent complained, and the school canceled.

"Appalled and embarrassed that my children's school is the location this event is taking place," the parent, who asked to remain anonymous, wrote on Torah Trumps Hate, a Facebook group largely of Orthodox Jews who oppose Trump. "How any Jewish group is comfortable aligning with antisemite Steve Bannon is crazy to me."

The parent praised the school for canceling. Akiba



STEVE BANNON speaks during the Conservative Political Action Conference at the Gaylord National Resort Hotel and Convention Center, in February, in Maryland. (Andrew Harnik/Getty Images)

Yavneh did not respond to JTA requests for comment on Friday, but Weisz confirmed that the school canceled the event booking shortly after Bannon was announced as a speaker.

The school is not the only institution to distance itself from Bannon. His gesture at the conservative confab CPAC last week drew criticism from Jewish groups, including the Anti-Defamation League, which called out his "long and disturbing history of stoking antisemitism and hate, threatening violence, and empowering extremists."

THE BLOWBACK extended beyond the Jewish community and into Bannon's own political camp. Far-right French leader Jordan Bardella canceled his own CPAC appearance because of Bannon's gesture, which Bardella called "a gesture alluding to Nazi ideology." Bannon denied it was a Nazi salute and said Bardella "wets himself like a little child."

The gesture was the latest one by a pro-Trump figure after Elon Musk, the billionaire Trump adviser, made a similar salute at an inauguration event in January, drawing widespread criticism.

Another wave of criticism came in response to Bannon's subsequent statement that "the number-one enemy to the people in Israel are American Jews that do not support Israel and do

not support MAGA."

Weisz says accusations of antisemitism against Bannon are misinformed and defamatory. He said his group was "fighting ferociously against the dangerous antisemitism slowly metastasizing on the far Right" — and called Bannon a staunch ally in that battle.

He called Bannon a "counterweight" to far Right voices such as Candace Owens and Tucker Carlson, who have criticized Israel and made a series of statements widely seen as antisemitic. (Carlson also has Trump's ear: He spoke at the Republican National Convention last year and has visited the White House since the president returned to office.)

"When people get demonized unjustly as antisemites, it makes the charge of Jew hatred meaningless," Weisz wrote. "Instead of letting the ADL dupe the Jewish community by demonizing him as an antisemite in an effort to cancel his voice, we decided to get him in front of a Jewish audience so the pro-Israel community can actually hear what he has to say."

Weisz later clarified that the group's invitation to Bannon was unconnected to the CPAC controversy. He called the timing "fortuitous."

This is not Bannon's first invitation to a Jewish conservative pro-Israel event. He spoke at a 2017 gala of the Zionist Organization of

America, where he called himself a "Christian Zionist."

For Israel365, which fiercely supports Israeli West Bank settlements and seeks to build bridges between evangelical Christians and Israel, the Bannon invitation is the latest manifestation of its outspoken support for Trump and his "Make America Great Again" movement.

ISRAEL365 ACTION'S executive director, Rabbi Pesach Wolicki, has been called the "MAGA rabbi" by other Trump supporters and is a frequent guest on "War Room." He said in a video that he and Bannon have "a close personal friendship," and he dismissed concerns about the gesture, which he acknowledged "looked very much like a Nazi salute."

When it came to Bannon's statement about American Jews who don't support Israel, Wolicki said he agreed. He pointed to a Reform Jewish organization that raised concerns about evangelical leader Mike Huckabee, Trump's pick for US ambassador to Israel because Huckabee opposes a Palestinian state.

"The greatest enemy of the Jewish people in America for sure is the progressive left-wing establishment of the Jewish people, those same people who call Steve Bannon an antisemite," Wolicki said in the video.

He continued, "Now, what was he doing with his arm

there? I don't know. Maybe he was trolling some people, maybe he was just waving, and it came out a little strange. I have no idea what Steve was doing there. But focusing on that is missing the point."

In a War Room appearance in February, Wolicki praised Trump's plan to completely depopulate Gaza of Palestinians and have the United States take over the territory – which has drawn bipartisan and international opposition. He said it "makes sense from every perspective."

Saturday night's event will also honor local Jewish leaders, including an Orthodox rabbi, a conservative activist, and an Israeli emissary at Akiba Yavneh. A pastor, who emphasizes Christianity's Jewish roots and who is active in Holocaust remembrance, will also receive an award.

The event page also touts Israel365 Action's campaign in the upcoming elections for the World Zionist Congress, a body elected by Jews worldwide that allocates \$1 billion to Jewish causes annually and oversees institutions such as the Jewish National Fund. The Israel365 slate advocates a staunchly right-wing vision for Israel, including opposition to a Palestinian state and perpetual Israeli control of the West Bank.

The slate was involved in its own controversy a few months ago when David Friedman, Trump's former ambassador to Israel, publicly distanced himself from it. His statement came at a time when dozens of people left the slate around allegations that it was promoting a hidden Christian agenda.

Israel365 denies those allegations and says people focusing on its latest controversial honoree are also off-base. Weisz warned that Jews who fight against the MAGA movement do so at their own peril.

"If the Jewish establishment thinks the best course of action is to push MAGA away by unjustly demonizing them as antisemites, it will only become a self-fulfilling prophecy," he wrote to JTA. "MAGA is the ascendant force in American politics, and the Jewish establishment is missing the plot."

## AUSTRALIA IN CRISIS:

# 39 campuses adopt definition of antisemitism

• By MICHAEL STARR

Thirty-nine Australian universities adopted an antisemitism definition to coordinate their approach to anti-Jewish behavior, the academic representative body Universities Australia said on Thursday.

The definition – closely aligned with the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition – describes antisemitism as discrimination or harassment that "impedes Jews' ability to participate as equals in educational, political, religious, cultural, economic or social life."

"It includes hate speech, epithets, caricatures, stereotypes, tropes, Holocaust denial, and antisemitic symbols," reads the definition. "Targeting Jews based on their Jewish identities alone is discriminatory and antisemitic."

While criticism of the Israeli government and state was not deemed as antisemitic, the definition contends that such criticism can be antisemitic when it is grounded in classical anti-Jewish tropes, calls for the elimination of the country or all Jews, or to hold Jews accountable for Israel's actions.

"All peoples, including Jews, have the right to self-determination. For most, but not all Jewish Australians, Zionism is a core part of their Jewish identity," reads the definition. "Substituting the word 'Zionist' for 'Jew' does not eliminate the possibility of speech being antisemitic."

Shadow Education Minister and Liberal Party Senator Sarah Henderson welcomed the move on Wednesday, during an address at the Address to 2025 Universities Australia Solutions Summit – but argued that the decision came too late.

"So much damage has been done," said Henderson, adding that if elected, her party would require all universities to adopt the "more robust" IHRA definition.

Australian Greens Deputy Leader and spokesperson for Higher Education Senator Mehreen Faruqi attacked the universities' decision on Sunday as an attempt to restrict criticism of Israel.

"Shamefully, universities have betrayed their students, their staff, and their reputation by shutting down free speech and criticism of Israel. They are weaponizing antisemitism to sanitize campuses of anyone who speaks up for Palestinian human rights or against Israel's genocide and occupation," Faruqi said in a statement. "By adopting a definition of antisemitism that threatens academic freedom, silences Palestinian voices, and prevents legitimate criticism of Israel, they have failed their staff, students, and the very mission of higher education."

The Australian Federation of Islamic Councils on Thursday also expressed concern about the definition's potential to limit legitimate criticism of Israel, with AFIC president Dr. Rateb Jneid saying in a statement that "If universities are to remain spaces where complex global issues can be navigated safely and constructively, they must reject such restrictive definitions."

Amnesty International also condemned the definition on Thursday.

"This dangerous definition will be used to silence students and staff alike, suppress protest, and shut down criticism of Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, the unlawful brutal and unlawful military occupation as well as apartheid that we determined to be a crime against humanity," said Amnesty International Australia's Occupied Palestinian Territory Spokesperson Mohamed Duar.

The antisemitism definition came in response to a recommendation from the Parliamentary Joint Committee on Human Rights. The February inquiry into antisemitism at Australian universities report called for the adopting of a definition close to the IHRA proposal.

The committee found a "disturbing prevalence of antisemitism," including "brazen" incidents that had gone unaddressed, resulting in Jewish students and staff feeling unsafe and hiding their identities.

# US antisemitism squad to visit ten universities

• Jerusalem Post Staff

The US Federal Task Force to Combat Antisemitism will visit 10 university campuses where reports of discrimination against Jews have been made, the US Public Affairs Office said on Friday.

The reports on antisemitic incidences that encouraged the task force's visits were all made after the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks.

The universities the task force will visit are Columbia University; Harvard University; George Washington University; New York University; the University of California, Los Angeles; the University of California, Berkeley; the University of Southern California; Johns Hopkins University; Northwestern University; and the University of Minnesota, according to the US Department of Justice.

Leading task force member Leo Terrell notified the 10 institutions that the force was made aware of allegations that the schools failed to protect their Jewish students and faculty members from discrimination.

Terrell also said that the task force will meet with the leadership from each university, law enforcement from the cities in which the institutions are located, and community mem-

bers to gather information on antisemitic incidences.

The US Justice Department announced last month the launch of the task force, which includes representatives from the US Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Service, following US President Donald Trump's "Executive Order on Additional Measures to Combat Antisemitism."

Terrell, who is also the senior counsel to the assistant attorney-general for civil rights, added that these visits to the universities "are just one of many steps this administration is taking to deliver on the commitment" to combat antisemitism on college campuses.

In Trump's executive order in late January, the US president said Hamas's attacks in October 2023 unleashed an "unprecedented wave of vile antisemitic discrimination, vandalism, and violence against our citizens, especially in our schools and on our campuses."

"Jewish students have faced an unrelenting barrage of discrimination; denial of access to campus common areas and facilities, including libraries and classrooms; and intimidation, harassment, and physical threats and assault."

Hannah Sarisohn contributed to this report.

# 'There's no longer hope for two-state solution in my lifetime,' American Reform rabbi says

• Jerusalem Post Staff

Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch, a longtime peace advocate and prominent Reform rabbi, declared in a sermon on Saturday that he has lost hope for a two-state solution in his lifetime, citing continued Palestinian rejectionism and incitement. He said that he still dreams of a future where coexistence is possible, though.

Hirsch, of the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York, lamented what he described as the definitive end of his lifelong hope for a peaceful two-state solution between Israelis and Palestinians.

"This was the week that finally ended the hope, at least in my lifetime, for a Palestinian state and a Jewish state existing side by side," Hirsch said. "The Palestinians themselves strangled this fragile hope in its crib."

For decades, Hirsch has been an outspoken advocate for peace and coexistence. He remained steadfast in his optimism even in the face of significant setbacks, including the collapse of the Oslo Accords and the violent aftermath of the Camp David Summit in 2000, maintaining his belief that a two-state solution was still achievable.

"I have been my entire life, in all of the 25 years since the collapse of the Oslo Accords, committed to peace and coexistence. Even after the Palestinians rejected a state offer to them at Camp David on practically all of the territory they said they wanted, and then launched a brutal killing spree in the restaurants, schools, hospitals, buses, and streets of Israel, even then, I never gave up hope," he said.

This past week marked a turning point for him. His disillusionment stems from continued Palestinian rejectionism,



DESTROYED BUILDINGS are pictured in Jabalya on the first day of the Muslim holy fasting month of Ramadan, on Saturday. (Bashar Taleb/AFP via Getty Images)

ongoing incitement against Israel, and what he sees as a failure to foster a culture of moderation and tolerance within Palestinian society.

"Until such time as the Palestinians themselves say they want peaceful coexistence, two states living side by side, we must cease deluding ourselves that a two-state solution is available now," he said. "It is harmful to us and to the Pal-

estinians themselves, who are deprived of the international support they need to create a culture of moderation and toleration, educating their children to love peace rather than hate Jews."

Despite his despair, Hirsch expressed a lingering hope that history might prove him wrong. "I hope I'm wrong," he said. "I hope that within a decade, you pull out this sermon from our archives, wave

it in my face, and offer the incontrovertible truth that I was wrong. Nothing would please me more."

Citing the biblical vision of universal peace, he said: "I dream of the days when nations shall beat their swords into plowshares and spears into pruning hooks, when they shall learn war no more, and all shall sit under vine and fig tree, and none shall be afraid."





# ‘Witnesses cannot testify concurrently with PM’

• By MICHAEL STARR

Having a defense witness testify concurrently with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's corruption trial testimonies may contaminate witness statements, the prosecution told the Jerusalem District Court following a ruling accepting

the trial's hearing schedule change.

According to the Thursday ruling, Netanyahu would take the stand on Mondays and Wednesdays, with another defense witness testifying on Tuesday, but the prosecution warned that the witnesses could influence one another and

damage the authenticity of their statements. The defense could adapt its line of inquiry and the defendant could change his version of events according to what others testified.

“The testimony of these witnesses is expected to deal with issues and evidence that the defendant

is still testifying about or is expected to testify about in his main examination and cross-examination,” said the prosecution.

The eight witnesses proposed by the defense to testify parallel to the prime minister over the next two months are expected by the prosecution to review

subjects such as the champagne and cigars Netanyahu received from mogul Arnon Milchan allegedly as part of a bribe. Netanyahu has yet to testify on the Case 1000 gifts affair.

Netanyahu's weekly testimony hearings were altered to two days a week instead of three in response to the complex political and state security situations the leader faced.

The judges had acknowledged that conventionally witness testimonies do not overlap, but the need for efficiency and the practical problems of the case overshadowed the standard.

Netanyahu had previously requested a similar docket change when his testimonies began in December but was rejected by the court. In practice, due to constant delays and cancellations, there have not been three testimonies a week.

Netanyahu has 12 more hearings for his testimony, with Monday set to be his 14th session in the underground Tel Aviv court.

## HOSTAGES

*Continued from Page 1*

Mahmoud Mardawi said Hamas would only release the remaining Israeli hostages under the terms of the already agreed-upon phased deal.

Israel blocked the entry of aid trucks into Gaza on Sunday as a standoff over the truce that has halted fighting for the past six weeks escalated, with Hamas calling on Egyptian and Qatari mediators to intervene.

“Hamas is currently controlling all supplies and goods sent to the Gaza Strip,” the prime minister told several ministers on Sunday. “It is abusing the Gaza population trying to receive aid, shooting at them, and turning humanitarian aid into a terrorist budget directed against us. We will not accept this under any circumstances.”

Israeli officials believe that right now Hamas has enough aid for another five to six months.

The White House said it fully supported Israel's move, which was done in full coordination with the Trump administration.

“Israel has negotiated in good faith since the beginning of this administration to ensure the release of hostages held by Hamas terrorists. We will support their decision regarding the next steps, given that Hamas has announced it is no longer interested in a ceasefire,” Brian Hughes, a spokesperson for the US National Security Council, told the *Post*.

Both Israel and the mediators are currently waiting for Witkoff's visit to the region, expected by the end of the week. “At this point, things are stalled. No breakthrough is expected before the visit,” said two sources familiar with the negotiations.

If agreed, the truce would halt fighting until the end of the Ramadan fasting period around March 31 and the Passover holiday around April 20.

The truce would be conditional on Hamas releasing half of the living and dead hostages on the first day, with the remainder released at the conclusion, if an agreement is reached on a permanent ceasefire.

In the first phase of the ceasefire, Hamas handed over 33 Israeli hostages as well as five Thais returned in an unscheduled release, in exchange for around 2,000 Palestinian prisoners and detainees from Israeli jails and the withdrawal of Israeli troops from some of their positions in Gaza.

Under the original agreement, the second phase was intended to see the start of negotiations over the release of the remaining 59 hostages, the full withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, and a final end to the war.

However, the talks never began, and Israel says all its hostages must be returned for fighting to stop.

A source said, “There is no 100% certainty that Hamas will agree to the release of additional hostages. If there is no deal, preparations are being made to return to war within days.”

Thousands gathered in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv last night, calling to secure the return of the remaining hostages.

*Reuters contributed to this report.*

## BIBAS

*Continued from Page 1*

killed in captivity and whose bodies were returned to Isra-

el last month, is one of the family members who joined the council, along with Pnina and Ofri, his mother and sister.

Orly Gilboa, whose daughter Daniella Gilboa was one of five IDF observers freed in the most recent hostage deal, also joined the council, along with Gali Idan, whose husband, Tsachi Idan, was killed in captivity and was buried this weekend.

Family members of Shlomo Mantzur, Arbel Yehoud, Karina Arie, Omer Wenkert, and many more freed, slain, and still-captive hostages also joined.

Freed hostage Yagil Yaakov, who was released as part of the first hostage deal when he was just 13 years old and whose father's body is still held by Hamas, also joined the council.

New members of the council signed a statement demanding that a state inquiry be formed to investigate “among other things, the management of the negotiations for the return of our loved ones.”

“Only a state commission of inquiry can provide us with answers, bring some peace to our souls, and prevent the next disaster. The failure to establish a state commission of inquiry and draw lessons would mean harming the security of the state.”

A state probe, or national committee of inquiry, is the most powerful probe in the country's legal system and the only type of probe that operates completely independently of the political echelon. Its members are appointed by the chief justice, and it has the power to subpoena witnesses and make personal recommendations regarding individuals.

The council laid out three questions that it seeks to have answered by a state inquiry:

1. Was bringing the hostages back truly a central goal of the war, as presented?

2. Were chances to bring hostages back missed?

3. How many hostages could have been brought back alive?

“This past week once again highlighted the hostage disaster – the heartbreaking funerals of the Bibas family members, Oded Lifshitz, Tsachi Idan, and Shlomo Mantzur, alongside the return of the bodies of Itzik Elgarat and Ohad Yahalomi. How many of them could have been saved if the state had fulfilled its commitments?” the council asked.

It said a state commission of inquiry must be established immediately before the evidence disappears.

“The internal investigations presented to the families last week are just the tip of the iceberg and are in no way a substitute for a comprehensive investigation at all levels – political, intelligence, and military alike.”

Some “1,500 families demand answers. Enough with the foot-dragging, enough with the disregard for bereaved families. After 514 days – it's time for truth, accountability, and security.”

*Eliav Breuer contributed to this report.*

## POLICY

*Continued from Page 1*

– and our policy is to remain there, at the peak of Mount Hermon and at the controlled points, indefinitely,” Katz said. “Southern Syria must be a demilitarized zone – we conveyed the messages, and the IDF was prepared... we have a great commitment to our Druze friends in Syria, we certainly strive to maintain contact with them.”

Katz also spoke about the importance of the Philadelphi Corridor and how quickly Hamas could return to smuggling if Israel is not there to control the problem. “If you don't hold this axis, then, in those 42 days, everything would be filled with weapons. I say this from a security perspective, based on the opinions of the people and commanders on the ground.”

In the West Bank, Israel is working to remove terror threats that have built up in certain areas of the northern West Bank. “The main infrastructure of terrorism in Judea and Samaria is the refugee camps. For more than two years, Iran has been pushing weapons, funding, and guidance into the camps to build battalions, build a force, and an eastern front,” Katz said.

A key part of ending the threat is for the IDF to remain in some areas of the northern West Bank and completely clear these areas of threats. “The soldiers and commanders say that they are finally being allowed to do what is necessary, and the fact that they are staying there means that they do not have to come and go every time,” Katz said.

This is important. However, when analyzing the policy, it is clear Israel is trying to change the equation on multiple fronts. This will be a challenge in the future. How can Israel continue to deal with buffer zones in Syria, Lebanon, and Gaza, as well as long-term battles in the West Bank? This is a new kind of policy. It has some commonalities with how Israel also faced unrest on borders between 1949 and 1956.

In fact, after 1967, the unrest then moved to other fronts, as Palestinian terror groups attacked from Jordan and then Lebanon in the 1970s. Israel has, therefore, witnessed this process again and again. Israel tried to maintain a security zone in southern Lebanon in the 1980s and 1990s.

This didn't always work well. When Israel left, Hezbollah filled the vacuum. The challenge ahead is for Israel to see if the new policy will lead to peace or lead to extremists continuing to fill the vacuums on the border.

While Gaza, Lebanon, and the West Bank are not new phenomena in this respect, the Syrian border looks to be a new type of potential front. The Assad regime worked with Iran, and this threatened Israel. The weaker the regime became, the more Iran and Hezbollah operated near the Golan.

This is the challenge for Israel. Weak regimes create power vacuums, and ungoverned spaces allow extremist groups to exploit the situation. A policy of pushing into buffer zones can help protect Israel, but the question is what will appear in the vacuum near these zones.

## IDF

*Continued from Page 1*

IDF for failing to try to update him about the pre-invasion signs as it was Netanyahu's intelligence officer and personal military secretary who decided not to wake or update him.

None of these points is one-sided, but Netanyahu's failure to allow an independent review of these issues does not bode well for taking his narrative on them at face value.

For example, he can legitimately argue that the defense establishment supported containing and deterring Hamas and facilitating Qatari payments to

keep Hamas from starting a sudden “needless” war over a lack of financing, as occurred in 2014.

But there is another side to this: It is possible that Netanyahu could have pursued a more aggressively diplomatic option directly with the Palestinians, or with a Saudi normalization package – normalize ties with Israel and oust Hamas, in the effort towards a broader resolution with the Palestinians.

Sources in the Mossad have said the Saudi option was concrete, but that the prime minister wanted to block it to keep Hamas in Gaza and to keep the Palestinian Authority weak and isolated in the West Bank – to thwart any two-state solution.

Regardless of whether these options would have worked, and the position of the defense establishment on deterrence, it seems undisputed that Netanyahu himself, as the primary decider of policy, was in favor of keeping Hamas in power, contained, and deterred – as opposed to the other options.

Likewise, Netanyahu can legitimately say that there were top defense officials, like former Mossad chief Yossi Cohen (2016-2021), who were in favor of facilitating the Qatari funding. But, there were defense officials who opposed this, and most defense sources portray the prime minister as an active promoter of the idea, not a passive acceptor of recommendations.

Also, there were instances where even Cohen in 2021, and his successor, current Mossad Director David Barnea, recommended ending the Qatari funding.

While it appears that many IDF officials opposed this during prime minister Naf-tali Bennett's era (mid-2021 to late 2022), leading to the Qatari funding to continue, even if limited in some ways, Netanyahu dismissed any such objections to Qatari funding when he returned to office in early 2023.

Also, the IDF provided Netanyahu a plan for conquering Gaza and ousting Hamas in 2014, with military sources saying he sabotaged the idea, leaking the estimated expected losses to the media.

Netanyahu, in turn, has said the IDF was against a larger operation in Gaza in 2014 to begin with.

Regarding the judicial reform legislation, Netanyahu can legitimately accuse those reservists who publicized their intent to refuse to serve as being responsible for weakening the military.

However, the vast majority of the political establishment and the general public as of now believe that the legislation was too aggressive and too rushed.

Further, once the reservists' public opposition was a fact on the ground, Netanyahu's refusal to pause the judicial reform and his active avoidance of security warnings from top defense officials in March and July 2023 were viewed by many as a separate and significant error.

The IDF probes have now redeemed Netanyahu in a sense on this issue, with the conclusion that Hamas came close to invading Israel twice in 2022, long before the judicial plans were pushed.

Yet the fact that Hamas chose to go for the mass invasion in October 2023 at one of the lowest points for the IDF – in terms of readiness – due to the judicial reform debate and called off the 2022 attempts, still leaves significant room to blame Netanyahu on the issue.

The issue of assassinations is probably one of the hardest to evaluate.

There were times when Netanyahu approved daring assassinations and times when he did not. There were also times when the defense establishment pushed for daring assassinations and times when they did not. Still, there were times when the defense establishment was split on the issue.

All the different sides of this debate – trying to present only one side as having blocked assassinations – does not do service to the complex and constantly evolving circumstances.

The assassinations issue also cannot be separated from the broader strategy of how to best handle Hamas.

To the extent that both the defense establishment and Netanyahu believed that Hamas could be contained and deterred, there was always a fair argument against assassinations because such moves could lead to an “unnecessary” war.

All of these officials were wrong about deterrence and, therefore, maybe also wrong not to undertake the assassinations, but it is hard to say that Netanyahu versus specific members of the defense establishment were more or less responsible for the error of failing to assassinate top Hamas officials.

The one thing that can be said for certain is that all of the defense officials and Netanyahu carry joint blame on the issue.

Regarding the night of October 6-7, it has been unfair for Netanyahu to try to blame all of the disaster on those top IDF and Shin Bet officials who misunderstood the desperation and immediacy of the invasion signs.

Unquestionably, these top defense officials should receive additional blame for the errors they made that night. But the virtual universal view is that the largest error was the failed understanding that Hamas was deterred for the whole decade before, and this error was continued decisively on the evening of October 6-7.

In the pre-October 7 mentality, it appears that the signs on the eve before the invasion would not have been sufficient to lead Netanyahu or anyone else to suddenly realize that their decade-long view of Hamas was completely wrong and to rush huge reinforcements to the border.

In that light, the new revelations that Netanyahu's personal intelligence official received updates from top defense officials about the signs of an invasion, which he passed on to Netanyahu's personal military secretary, and which that secretary did not pass on to the prime minister, probably do not change a lot.

What they do change is that Netanyahu should be holding his fire against the top IDF and Shin Bet officials for not realizing an invasion underway because his personal security officials fell into the same trap.

Indirectly, this means that he had given them the impression that he should not be woken up for a borderline security issue, not all that different from Unit 8200 chief Yossi Sarief.

In short, the IDF and the Shin Bet have plenty to answer for. But so does Netanyahu.

## BUDGET

*Continued from Page 1*

institutions that do not

meet the necessary criteria laid out in Education Ministry directives, such as sufficient training for teachers and minimal levels of “core curriculum” studies, including English and mathematics.

Funds labeled as “coalition funds” require specific legal approval to be distributed. However, funds that are part of the base of the budget do not require the same levels of approval.

In addition, funds that are part of the base of the budget automatically remain there in the ensuing years unless specifically removed. This raises the chances of the funding becoming permanent.

A draft of a government decision that appears as an appendix to Goldknopf's letter said that a “professional and legal examination” had concluded that funds that had been deemed “coalition funds” for the past 10 years no longer needed to be labeled as such.

However, according to a source with knowledge of the matter, the attorney-general and the Finance Ministry's legal adviser had not approved this conclusion.

In response to criticism by the opposition over the significant hike in coalition funds under the government, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich indicated in the past that he intends to lower them by changing their label and making them a part of the regular budget. However, the move faced criticism from Finance Ministry officials.

The 2025 budget is currently being prepared by the Knesset Finance Committee and must pass into law by the end of March, or the government will fall. According to the most recent government decision on the matter, in late November, the 2025 budget will include slightly over NIS 5b. in coalition funds.

However, the government has yet to approve the details of these funds. The government was reportedly set to approve the details on Sunday, but removed the issue from Sunday's weekly meeting agenda in the wake of Goldknopf's letter.

Goldknopf, on Sunday, put out a statement detailing what he claimed were numerous violations of the coalition agreements his party signed with the Likud prior to the government's formation in December 2022.

These included passing a Basic Law: Torah Study prior to the passing of the 2023 budget; funding two projects involving food stamps for poor families; inserting the budget for yeshivot into the base of the budget already in 2023; forming a new government body within the Jerusalem and Tradition Ministry to “strengthen and fortify tradition throughout the State of Israel”; and, perhaps most importantly, entering the two major privately run haredi school systems already in 2023 into a labor agreement called *ofek hadash* (“new horizon”).

## EGYPT

*Continued from Page 1*

could function or even survive.

When ISIS gained a foothold in Sinai several years ago, it was Israel, specifically its air force and special forces, that got the job done and helped Egypt overcome the severe problem. Today,

when Egypt faces criticism in Congress and calls to curtail US assistance due to its human rights record, it is to Israel that it turns for assistance.

Thus, the relationship cannot continue to be one-sided. If we want to solve the problem in Gaza, we need to get Egypt to play its part. It is not clear whether Egypt wants to solve the problem in Gaza or perpetuate it. Judging by Egypt's conduct, one gains the impression that Egypt's strategy is to preserve the problem to keep Israel occupied with it.

In this way, Egypt maintains its status as a mediator between Israel and Hamas, while at the same time profiting from smuggled goods passing from Sinai to Gaza as well as from goods passing “officially” through the Rafah crossing.

In practice, Egypt collaborates completely with Hamas. All of the positions they convey in the context of mediation efforts are coordinated with Hamas. Moreover, Egypt's deployment in Sinai is well in excess of that permitted by the security annex of the Camp David Accords. In some cases, they have done so with Israel's permission; in other cases, they have unilaterally exceeded the manpower and weaponry permitted by the agreement.

While Israel is preoccupied with Hamas, Egypt has been engaged in a dizzyingly rapid force buildup, purchasing new weapons in large quantities. Moreover, in all of Egypt's war exercises, it is Israel that serves as the target adversary, not Libya, Saudi Arabia, or any other country.

The entire framework of relations between the US and Egypt and between Israel and Egypt needs to be reviewed. Unfortunately, in this domain, as in others that have cost Israel dearly, the political and security establishment is beholden to an outdated approach, unwilling to consider new ideas, and, in particular, unwilling to contemplate posing demands to the Egyptian side.

The overall responsibility for the Gaza Strip should rest with Egypt, as it did prior to 1967, under the auspices of an Arab League mandate. There are 22 Arab countries that can back the initiative both financially and from a military and organizational standpoint. Egypt would be responsible for the provision of electricity, water, fuel, and commercial goods into Gaza to the roughly one million Palestinians who would remain there.

Trump's initiative pertaining to the relocation of Palestinians offers, for the first time, a genuine opportunity to change things for the better by providing a real and practical solution to the core problems that have cumulated in Gaza. It opens the path to curtailing the threat of terrorism, alongside a pragmatic and responsible management of the area to foster employment, economic growth, and prosperity.

We must make an effort – the US and Israel – to convince the Egyptians to play an active role in implementing Trump's bold vision and to confidently rebut arguments raised against it, which at their core are little more than a reflection of conventional, unimaginative thinking.

*The writer is the leader of Yisrael Beytenu.*



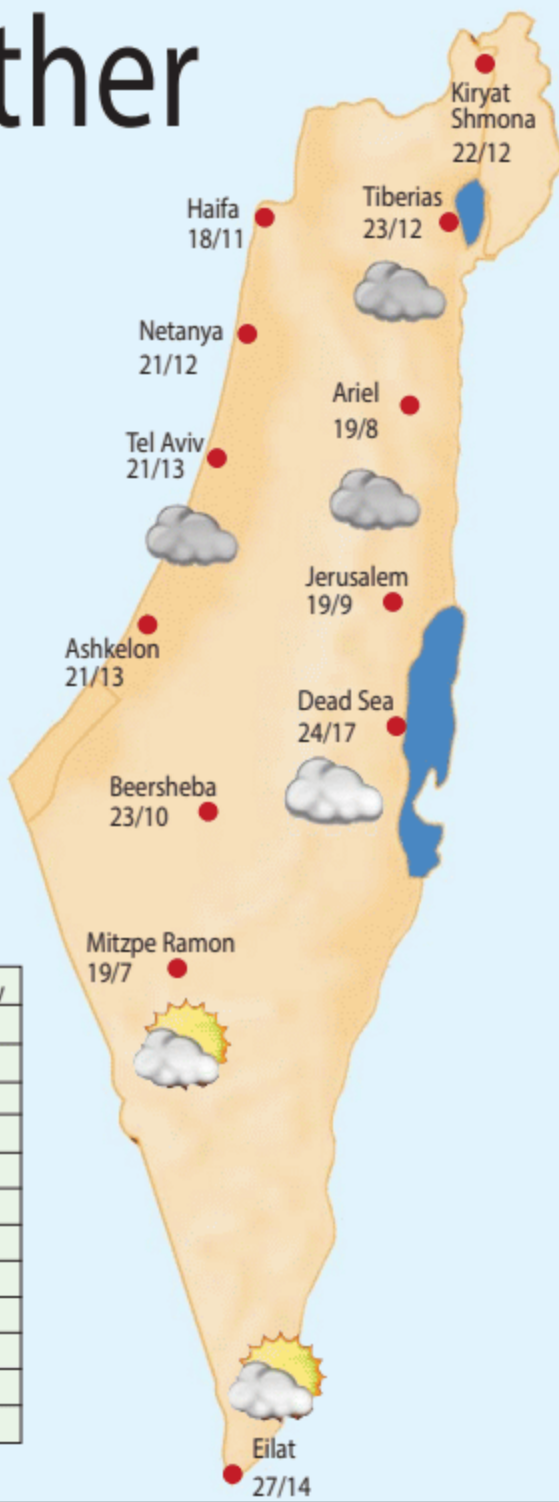
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Comments/Questions: sports@jpost.com

Weather

Today  
Cloudy

Tuesday  
Cloudy

Wednesday  
Scattered  
Thunderstorms



	Tuesday
Kiryat Shmona	22/11
Tiberias	24/12
Haifa	17/10
Netanya	21/12
Ariel	18/8
Tel Aviv	20/13
Jerusalem	18/8
Ashkelon	20/12
Dead Sea	24/16
Beersheba	21/10
Mitzpe Ramon	17/6
Eilat	26/13

North America Weather Today



Israeli-Arab swimming champ Ayham Nasser murdered: A community in mourning

• Jerusalem Post Sports Staff

Israeli swimming champion Ayham Nasser, a former national silver medalist and record-holding youth athlete, was shot and killed in Tira over the weekend. His murder has sent shockwaves through the Israeli sports community and his hometown, underscoring the alarming rise in violence within Arab society.

Nasser, 25, was a rising star in Israeli swimming. He began his career at Hapoel Hod Hasharon and later competed for Hapoel Dolphin Netanya. In 2019, he won the Israeli youth championship in the 50-meter backstroke at the short course championships, setting a national record. He later became the silver medalist in the same event, finishing just behind European champion Jonatan Kopelev.

Beyond his own achievements, he was committed to training the next generation, working as a swimming instructor in recent years.

On Thursday night, Nasser was returning home in a friend's car when gunmen lying in wait opened fire as he stepped out. His father, Said, described the horrifying moment: "He tried to run, but they chased him and shot him down at our doorstep. I built a house for him, hoping he would live there one day. They took him from me before that dream could come true."

His brother, Haithem, expressed disbelief: "No one could believe it. When they published his name, everyone thought it was a mistake. My brother was full of life, always laughing with me. I still can't comprehend that he's gone."

Nasser was rushed to Meir Hospital in Kfar Saba, where he succumbed to his injuries the next day. His murder remains under police investigation, though he had no known ties to criminal activity.

The Israeli swimming community was devastated. His former coach, Nikita Shklienko, called him "one of the most talented swimmers I've ever coached, a sprinter with exceptional



AYHAM NASSER was an active member of the Israel swimming community. The 25-year-old was shot and killed over the weekend in Tira. (Guy Yechieli/Israel Swimming Association)

underwater ability. But more than that, he was a kind-hearted, generous person who was always there for his teammates. His family was deeply involved in supporting the club and its events. This is an unbearable loss."

The Israel Swimming Association issued a statement mourning his death.

"We are shocked and deeply saddened by the tragic loss of Ayham Nasser. He was an exceptional backstroke swimmer, a youth champion, and a national record holder. He competed at the highest levels and was an integral part of Israeli swimming. Our thoughts are with his family during this painful time."

Member of Knesset Simon Davidson, chairman of the Subcommittee on Sports, also reacted with sorrow.

"Ayham was an outstanding swimmer, one of our most promising talents. I followed his career for many years and knew him as a dedicated and hardworking athlete who achieved great things. His murder is heartbreaking. We are witnessing a horrifying wave of violence – 46 people have been murdered in Arab society since the start of the year. This must stop."

Nasser's murder was not an isolated case. Just hours earlier, another man was shot dead in nearby Kalansuwa, and a six-year-old boy was critically wounded in a separate shooting in Ar'ara.

Community members fear the violence will escalate further, while frustration grows over law enforcement's inability to curb the bloodshed.

Despite the rising death toll, police have solved only two out of 46 murder cases in Arab communities this year. Families of victims, like Nasser's, continue to demand justice, hoping their loved ones' deaths will not be in vain.

Nasser's murder has sparked outrage and renewed calls for action against the unchecked violence in Arab society. Friends, family, and former teammates gathered to mourn his loss, remembering him not only as a champion in the pool but also as a kind, hardworking, and beloved figure in his community.

As his loved ones struggle to come to terms with his tragic death, they hope that his story will serve as a wake-up call, pushing authorities to take meaningful steps to curb the violence and prevent more promising young lives from being cut short.

Nasser's tragic death leaves a void in Israeli swimming and a grieving community behind. His story is a painful reminder of the fragility of life and the urgent need to address violence.

While his achievements in the pool will be remembered, his untimely passing underscores a deeper crisis that must be confronted before more lives are lost.

Fulham bounces Man U from FA Cup; Brighton into quarters



MANCHESTER (Reuters) – Fulham knocked out FA Cup holder Manchester United in a penalty shootout in a dramatic fifth-round tie on Sunday to secure a spot in the quarterfinals after the match ended 1-1 with goals from Fulham's Calvin Bassey and United's Bruno Fernandes.

Fulham goalkeeper Bernd Leno saved Victor Lindelof's penalty, leaving United's Joshua Zirkzee needing to bury his to keep the Red Devils' hopes alive. Yet he fired his effort straight at Leno sparking wild Fulham celebrations.

Fulham caught United's defense flat-footed from Andreas Pereira's corner to strike first blood seconds before halftime, with Rodrigo Muniz nodding on for Bassey to head home.

Fernandes leveled in the 71st minute when Diogo Dalot cut it back from the left-hand side and United's skipper unleashed a left-footed shot from just inside the 18-yard box that sailed past two Fulham defenders and goalkeeper Leno on its way into the far corner to send the game into extra time.

Earlier Sunday, Danny Welbeck scored deep into extra time to send Brighton & Hove Albion into the quarterfinals with a dramatic 2-1 victory over Newcastle United after both teams were reduced to 10 men.

Newcastle's Alexander Isak and Brighton's Yankubah Minteh scored in the first half and Welbeck struck the winner in the 114th minute with an exquisite finish from a tight angle.

Isak opened the scoring in the 22nd minute when he planted



MANCHESTER UNITED'S Victor Lindelof (right) reacts after his penalty is saved by Fulham's Bernd Leno (left) during the penalty shoot-out of the clubs' FA Cup fifth-round duel, which Fulham won 4-3 on penalties after it was knotted 1-1 after 120 minutes. (Phil Noble/Reuters)

his penalty, awarded after Minteh fouled Tino Livramento, beyond the reach of goalkeeper Bart Verbruggen into the far corner of the net.

Minteh atoned for his mistake when he sprinted on to a thread-of pass from Joao Pedro to equalize in the 44th minute.

Newcastle's Anthony Gordon and Brighton's Tariq Lamptey were sent off in the closing stages of normal time.

On Saturday, favourite Manchester City stayed on track for an eighth FA Cup triumph but was given a scare by second-tier Plymouth Argyle and Bournemouth reached the quarterfinals for only the third time by knocking out Wolverhampton Wanderers.

Crystal Palace moved into the last-eight after it beat second-tier Millwall although their 3-1 win was marred by an injury to French forward Jean-Philippe Mateta who was taken to hospital with concussion and a head

wound after being clattered by Millwall goalkeeper Liam Roberts who was sent off.

Plymouth, second from bottom of the Championship, had stunned Premier League leader Liverpool in the previous round and thousands of fans made the long trip from Devon to the north west hoping for another massive upset.

Maksym Talovierov gave them reason to dream when he headed Plymouth in front at The Etihad Stadium.

But teenager Nico O'Reilly equalized with a header from a Kevin de Bruyne free kick in first-half stoppage time and the left-back then put City in front late on with another header from De Bruyne's corner.

De Bruyne then made sure of City's progress in the final minute but it was a battle for the Premier League champion, which also came from a goal down to beat third-tier Leyton Orient in the previous round.

Bournemouth is chasing a European qualifying spot in the Premier League and its superb season under Andoni Iraola continued as it beat top-flight rival Wolves on penalties after a 1-1 draw on the south coast.

Evanielson gave Bournemouth the lead after 30 minutes and it should have finished the job before Matheus Cunha leveled for Wolves on the hour mark with a stunning long-range shot.

Cunha was sent off near the end of extra time after a clash with Bournemouth defender Milos Kerkez.

Wolves full back Matt Doherty had the chance to send his side through in the penalty shoot-out but missed the target and when Boubacar Traore's effort struck the crossbar, Luis Sinisterra calmly sent Bournemouth through.

"I feel like we could have done it in 90 minutes, but the most important thing is we got the win and we're into the

next round," Bournemouth's Antoine Semenyo said.

Wolves could rue the loss of Cunha in the relegation battle as he faces a three-match ban.

"Cunha is a special player, he played in extra time when he was not in condition to play," manager Vitor Pereira said.

"Last three weeks he has had a hamstring issue, emotional side was high in game, a lot of pressure and in the end it has happened, we must now cope."

Palace eased past south London rival Millwall but not without a cost. The 27-year-old Maheta was kicked in the head by Millwall keeper Roberts in the seventh minute at Selhurst Park and needed oxygen on the pitch before being taken to hospital.

Roberts was shown a red card, following a VAR review, after coming off his line to clear a long ball and catching the on-rushing Mateta in the head with his raised studs.

Palace chairman Steve Parish described Roberts's challenge as the most reckless he had ever seen.

An own-goal by defender Japhet Tanganga in the 33rd minute and a close-range effort by Daniel Munoz put Palace in command but 10-man Millwall hit back before halftime through Wes Harding. Eddie Nketiah, who had replaced Mateta, sealed Palace's progress in the 81st minute with a looping header.

Speaking at halftime to the BBC, Parish said Mateta had sustained a bad gash behind his ear and a head injury and was being assessed in hospital.

Preston North End is in the quarterfinals for the first time since 1966 after stunning Championship rival Burnley 3-0 with goals by Milutin Osmajic, Robbie Brady and Will Keane.

Burnley has gone 12 successive games in the Championship without conceding a goal.

Aston Villa reached the last-eight on Friday with a 2-0 victory over second-tier Cardiff City.

In the remaining fifth round fixture, Ipswich Town travels to Nottingham Forest on Monday.

SPORTS SHORTS

Grimes, Sixers beat Warriors to snap skid

Quentin Grimes scored a career-high 44 points as the Philadelphia 76ers snapped a nine-game losing streak with a 126-119 home victory over the Golden State Warriors late Saturday.

Guerschon Yabusele made five 3-pointers en route to 18 points for Philadelphia, which played its first game since announcing that Joel Embiid (knee) would miss the remainder of the season.

Kelly Oubre Jr. had 20 points for the Sixers and Paul George scored 17, while Tyrese Maxey dished out 11 assists while shooting 2-of-14 for five points.

Stephen Curry recorded 29 points and 13 assists to pace the Warriors, who had won their previous five games. Golden State played without Jimmy Butler (back) for the first time since acquiring him in a trade with the Miami Heat last month.

In other action, De'Aaron Fox capped a back-and-forth affair with a tiebreaking 20-footer with 2.6 seconds remaining, allowing the visiting San Antonio Spurs to complete a 130-128 victory over the Memphis Grizzlies.

Fox finished with 20 points, as did Devin Vassell, and Stephon Castle had a team-high 24 off the bench for the Spurs, who won for just the second time in six games since Victor Wembanyama was lost for the season with a shoulder injury.

Elsewhere, DeMar DeRozan and Zach LaVine combined for 41 points as the visiting Sacramento Kings notched a 113-103 victory over the Houston Rockets; Jalen Duren powered for 18 points, 11 rebounds and a career-high six blocks and the host Detroit Pistons won for the ninth time in 10 games, downing the Brooklyn Nets 115-94; Khris Middleton and Bilal Coulibaly scored 17 points apiece as the Washington Wizards won for just the second time in nine games with a 113-100 conquest over the Charlotte Hornets; and Giannis Antetokounmpo led the Milwaukee Bucks with 29 points in a 132-117 win at the Dallas Mavericks. • Reuters

Trump to pardon baseball great Pete Rose

US President Donald Trump said over the weekend he would pardon baseball great Pete Rose, criticizing Major League Baseball for barring the all-time hit champion from the sport's hall of fame for gambling.

Rose, who died last year at 83, was banned from baseball for life. He admitted in 2004 that he had bet on games, though never against his own team.

"Over the next few weeks I will be signing a complete pardon of Pete Rose, who shouldn't have been gambling on baseball, but only bet on his team winning," Trump posted on Truth Social. "He never betted against himself, or the other team. He had the most hits, by far, in baseball history, and won more games than anyone in sports history."

Trump did not say what the pardon would cover. Rose pleaded guilty in 1990 to felony charges of filing false tax returns, news reports said at the time.

In 2017 the Philadelphia Phillies canceled a ceremony to honor Rose after allegations surfaced that he had had a sexual relationship in the 1970s with a girl before she turned 16. He said she was 16, the age of consent, at the time, ESPN reported.

Rose, who spent most of his 1963-1986 career with the Cincinnati Reds, won the World Series three times and leads MLB's all-time charts in hits, games played, at-bats, singles and outs.

On Saturday, multiple sources reported that MLB Commissioner Rob Manfred is considering a petition filed on Jan. 8 by Rose's family to have him posthumously removed from baseball's ineligible list, which could potentially open the door to Rose being enshrined in the Baseball Hall of Fame. • Reuters



# COMMENT & FEATURES

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## THE JERUSALEM POST

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## Tale of two months

This weekend saw two religious occurrences of different significance. The Muslim world welcomed Ramadan, a month of spiritual reflection, discipline, and renewal, while the Jewish calendar marked the arrival of the month of Adar, a time of joy, resilience, and salvation from destruction.

These two months – sacred in their respective traditions – offer a stark contrast in how faith is invoked in times of war. While Ramadan should inspire humility, peace, and concern for the suffering of others, it is exploited by the likes of Hamas and the Iranian regime to justify violence, oppression, and destruction.

Meanwhile, Adar reminds Jews of their historical survival against those who sought their annihilation, namely the Persian Empire, and offers a different lens through which to view Israel's war with Hamas.

For Muslims, Ramadan is a time of fasting, empathy, and purification and is a period when believers are meant to restrain from anger, avoid harming others, and practice self-control. It is a month that teaches gratitude, particularly for the basic necessities of life, and calls for acts of charity and kindness to the less fortunate.

But in Gaza, Hamas has twisted Ramadan's meaning beyond recognition. Instead of protecting the vulnerable, it hides behind civilians, turning them into human shields. Instead of calling for peace, it refuses ceasefires that could bring relief to its people. Instead of fasting to feel the pain of the hungry, Hamas leaders feast in luxury while ordinary Gazans struggle to survive. How will the remaining living hostages pass this month while remaining in captivity? Ramadan, which should be a time of self-restraint, is being used by Hamas as a shield for continued violence, hostage-taking, and terror.

Meanwhile, Israel, despite being at war, has taken all necessary procedures to ensure the respectful observance by Muslims in the country, including Israel Police's stringent policies to keep worshippers safe and avoid trouble. The paradox is glaring: The Jewish state is doing its best to ensure that its Muslim citizens can observe their holiest month, while Hamas continues to violate the most basic tenets of Islam.

In contrast, Jews enter Adar, a month of joy and redemption. The Talmud teaches: "When Adar enters, joy increases." But this is not a naïve, passive joy – it is a joy born from the Jewish experience and the Jews' triumph over its enemies.

Adar is the month of Purim, the holiday that celebrates the defeat of Haman, the Persian official who plotted to annihilate the Jewish people. The parallels between Haman and Hamas/Iran are impossible to ignore:

Haman sought the total destruction of Jews in the Persian Empire; Hamas and Iran seek the destruction of the Jewish state.

Haman's hatred is ideological, rooted in deep-seated antisemitism. Hamas's charter openly called for Israel's destruction since its inception, not as a political dispute, but as a religious duty.

In the Purim story, the Jews did not seek conflict, but when faced with a threat to their existence, they defended themselves and endured, just as Israel does today in the wake of October 7, confronting those who seek its destruction.

Adar teaches that Jewish survival is not a given but must be fought for and defended. Just as the Jewish people overcame Haman in ancient Persia, we will, as a nation, overcome Hamas in modern Gaza and the ayatollahs in Tehran.

Here lies the contrast between Adar and Ramadan, between Israel and Hamas, between those who use faith to uplift and those who use it to destroy.

This war is not just military; it is moral. It is a battle between those who celebrate life and those who glorify death.

Israel, even in war, continues to celebrate life, freedom, and survival.

Hamas, even in the holy month of Ramadan, continues to spread suffering, destruction, and oppression.

This Adar, as Jews rejoice in their historical triumph over enemies who sought their destruction, the message must be clear: Israel will prevail, just as it has, time and time again.

If Ramadan is to remain a sacred month, Muslim leaders must reject Hamas's perversion of Islam and demand that faith be used for peace, not terror. This war is not about religion – it is about who truly values life. And that is a battle Israel will always fight and always win.

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• By NEVILLE TELLER

Will the Gaza ceasefire deal survive its first phase? That was the unanswerable question hanging over the formal end of phase one on March 2 and the scheduled start of phase two.

Some commentators believe that Israel simply wants to extend phase one for the time being. They point out that, under the terms of the agreement, Israel was supposed to begin withdrawing from the Philadelphi Corridor – the strip of land on the Gaza side of the border with Egypt – on the last day of the first phase and complete their evacuation within eight days. But on February 27 an Israeli official told the media that to prevent weapons smuggling, the IDF will be remaining in position.

That decision may have been in reaction to an announcement by Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem on February 18. He suddenly declared that Hamas was interested in speeding up the hostage release process – but in return for a major concession.

Hamas, he said, had submitted a new proposal to the mediators offering to release all the remaining hostages in phase two. The quid pro quo, said Qassem, would be for Israel to agree to an immediate permanent ceasefire and a complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, including the Philadelphi Corridor.

This "offer" would place Hamas in a much stronger position to secure its long-term intention of remaining the ruling power in Gaza.

On February 19, Rami Igra, former head of the Mossad's Prisoners and Missing Persons Division, warned in a radio interview that Hamas is seeking to establish a Hezbollah-style rule in Gaza. Using the PA as a front, Hamas aims to retain effective control; to be, in effect, "the power behind the throne."

By infiltrating the government in Lebanon, Hezbollah was able to build itself into a



AT A NEWS conference with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio last month in Jerusalem, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said: 'We have a shared strategy, which cannot always be detailed to the public – including when the gates of hell will open. And they will open if all our hostages are not returned – every last one of them.' (Alex Kolomoisky/Flash90)

formidable power bloc, rivaling the state itself and its institutions.

"They want to continue ruling Gaza," said Igra. "They will do everything to make that happen."

ISRAEL IS unlikely to be wooed into a premature withdrawal from Gaza. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said repeatedly that the IDF will not evacuate the Strip completely until it is clear that Hamas's military and political capabilities have been so degraded that it can no longer rearm or govern Gaza.

The mediators – the US, Egypt, and Qatar – will soon have to grapple with the problem of how Gaza is to be governed when the war ends – and get both sides to agree about it.

There is no support from the Arab world for Hamas to stay in control. Some Arab states wish to see neither Hamas nor the PA controlling a post-war Gaza; some Arab commentators have favored a role for a perhaps reformed PA.

Trump's proposal for the US to take over the Gaza Strip

and evacuate the population generated instant rejection from the Arab world. In reaction, some Arab nations initiated substantive discussions aimed at developing a comprehensive plan for Gaza's future governance and reconstruction, but based on upholding the rights of the Gazan population. Some speculate that it was Trump's intention from the start to goad the Arab world into considering Gaza's future and how to achieve it.

It is significant that US Secretary of State Marco Rubio seems far from wedded to Trump's vision of Gaza's future. On February 13, he said on an American radio show "If the Arab countries have a better plan, then that's great."

On February 20, Saudi Arabia hosted a summit in Riyadh, bringing together leaders from Egypt, Jordan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Its primary purpose was to consider Egypt's counter-proposal to Trump's suggested solution.

After intensive diplomatic activity, Egypt presented a comprehensive three-phase reconstruction plan

for Gaza, and has apparently garnered support from European nations, including France and Germany, as well as regional Arab countries. It favors the creation of "secure areas" within Gaza to house displaced residents temporarily as essential infrastructure is rebuilt.

A significant aspect of the proposal is the establishment of a new Palestinian administration in Gaza, distinct from both Hamas and the current PA, to oversee the reconstruction efforts. A police force composed of former PA officers would be established. Egypt's plan maintains that Hamas has agreed to a governance structure that excludes its participation. Financial backing for the reconstruction, estimated at \$53 billion, is expected to come from the oil-rich Gulf states.

Some, but not all, of the proposals in Egypt's plan received instant endorsement from the conference participants. The leaders reached a consensus on the necessity of sidelining Hamas, but some apparently favored reinstating the authority of the PA in Gaza during the reconstruction phase.

A follow-up summit, scheduled for March 4 in Cairo, is aimed at finalizing a unified Arab plan for Gaza's reconstruction, crucially reaffirming opposition to any forced displacement of its population.

Since Egypt, along with Qatar and the US, is acting as a mediator in the indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas over the Gaza ceasefire deal, the Arab "day after" plan being constructed under Egypt's leadership will probably be put to both sides in due course.

How Israel will react is far from clear. During a joint press conference with Rubio on February 16, Netanyahu said: "We have a shared strategy, which cannot always be detailed to the public – including when the gates of hell will open. And they will open if all our hostages are not returned, every last one of them."

Two days later, following a meeting of Israel's Security Council, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar told reporters: "We need a total demilitarization of Gaza and no presence of the Palestinian Authority."

So it seems clear that, as part of phase two, if it eventually comes into effect, Israel will be demanding the release of all hostages in addition to the dismantling of the Hamas military and, possibly, the expulsion of the Hamas leadership from Gaza. Only then would Israel consider withdrawing from the Philadelphi Corridor.

Hamas is not likely to accept these demands. However, while keeping its true long-term aims under wraps, Hamas might go along with the Egyptian proposals, especially if they emerge as a unified Arab plan.

All in all, the auguries for a successful outcome to phase two – even if negotiations get underway – are not good.

The writer is the Middle East correspondent for Eurasia Review. His latest book is Trump and the Holy Land: 2016-2020. You can follow him at: [www.a-mid-east-journal.blogspot.com](http://www.a-mid-east-journal.blogspot.com)

## Supporting terror with British courtesy

BBC praises Hamas, incites against Israel

• By ANAT VIDOR

Saying the British Broadcasting Corporation is the greatest generator of antisemitism in Europe is stating the obvious. Even before the October 7, 2023 massacre by Hamas, the Simon Wiesenthal Center ranked the top antisemitic organizations in the world, and the BBC came third after Iran and Hamas.

The broadcasting network earned this notable achievement through hard work after years of rampant antisemitic incitement based on lies and biased, misleading language.

Some of the channel's content creators, in moments of indiscretion, exposed themselves as antisemites through sweet tweets such as "Hitler was right" and "Israel is worse than the Nazis," but most maintained their composure and under a hypocritical veneer of British courtesy and polished language, patiently crumble Al Jazeera into the English teacup, serving the poison to every home in England and the wider world.

The Israel-Hamas War found the BBC aligning itself with the Gazan terrorist organization, relaying its data and claims as if they were objective truth, downplaying the actions of the most sadistic and dark organization in the world and attributing war crimes to Israel that didn't actually happen.

A long series of lies and apol-



A PRO-PALESTINIAN march takes place in London last month with a sign reading: 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free.' The writer asks: Is the antisemitic mood in Britain a result of BBC propaganda, or is the media channel being dragged in its feebleness after the public mood? (Chris J. Ratcliffe/Reuters)

ogies from the channel – and an inconceivable list of 1,500 violations against Israel in war coverage – led us to last month, when an original documentary was broadcast about the suffering of Gaza's children, naturally caused by Israel's cruelty.

The film was presented as a reliable journalistic product without the network bothering to inform viewers that the child featured in it, who also narrates the story, is the son

of a senior Hamas terrorist and that the film's creators, operating under Hamas's watchful eye, previously created and distributed content supporting Hamas and saluting the October 7 massacre.

One could have summarized the event as yet another routine foul by the antisemitic broadcasting body, with another forced apology for protocol's sake. But another publication from last week, on Israel's state

broadcasting channel, caught my eye.

"Explosion of antisemitism in Britain," declared the headline based on a report by the Community Security Trust in Britain, showing a dramatic rise in antisemitic incidents in the UK.

"The speed with which antisemitism mobilized in Britain on October 7 and immediately after shows that the rise in antisemitism was a celebra-

tion of Hamas's attack on Israel, not anger about Israel's military response in Gaza," stated the report.

Is the antisemitic mood in Britain a result of BBC propaganda, or is the media channel being dragged in its feebleness after the public mood? This is apparently the chicken and egg question, but it's clear there is a direct connection between the two.

In a place where the masses' minds are washed with poisonous propaganda over the years, it eventually turns into hatred that leads to violence, and this atmosphere of violence can be found today in the kingdom's streets in increasing doses.

Even if the BBC is only the third most antisemitic body in the world, it should concern us even more than the direct enemies that precede it in the ranking. Hamas will eventually be eliminated by force of arms and the blood of our best sons, and Iran will probably be defeated militarily, too.

In contrast, the BBC is beyond the range of the air force's radar, and the enormous poison machine created in London will only be defeated when it realizes firsthand that violent and extremist Islamists like Hamas are not fighting only against "Jews" but against the entire free world. The Jews are just standing in the way.

The writer is the president of WIZO.



# The 45 years since Yigal Allon's death



THINK ABOUT IT  
• By SUSAN HATTIS ROLEF

I had the great honor of working with Yigal Allon (1918-1980) – the man who was appointed commander of the Palmah at the age of 27 and became one of the heroes of the War of Independence at the age of 30 – during the last two and a half years of his life.

I had met Yigal just after Labor's defeat in the 1977 elections, when I was working as a research assistant for Lord Nicholas Bethell on his book *The Palestine Triangle*, about the last 10 years of the British Mandate.

We interviewed Yigal at the Foreign Affairs Ministry several days after the elections. Like other Labor leaders he was in a complete state of shock. After realizing that I was Israeli, he suggested that I should return to interview him after things calmed down a bit. I arrived the following September and stayed with him until his death on February 29, 1980.

After the establishment of the state, Allon was a member of the Ahdut Ha'avoda party – the most hawkish member of the labor movement – and then the Labor Party. Some of Ahdut HaAvoda's members actually joined the supporters of Greater Israel after the 1967 Six Day War. In the years 1961-1977, Allon served in various ministerial posts, the last of which were as education and culture minister and foreign minister.

When Allon passed away prematurely at the age of 61, I was asked by *The Jerusalem Post* to write one of the eulogies published in the paper. Inter alia I wrote:

"Serving Yigal was a labor of love. He made each of us who worked for him feel that we were indispensable and used to greet us as if he was pleasantly surprised that we had bothered to turn up. If he erred with us, it was in never chastising us when we erred.

"He himself was willing to listen to criticism. On several occasions, I asked for permission to play court jester and say some harsh words – to which he always replied 'Why as court jester? Why not just as a friend?'"

"Yigal left so much undone. But it is as if he made us, who worked closely with him, promise to go on struggling for the things he believed in: a society imbued with social and national values, love and respect for labor, political morality, religious pluralism, peace based on a territorial compromise which will both cater for Israel's security and offer a satisfactory solution to the Palestinian problem." (*Jerusalem Post*, March 2, 1980).

Working with a myth can be difficult, especially since living myths are frequently unbearable egocentrics. That was not the case with Yigal, who was a mensch, open minded, and with the ability to make anyone he happened to be talking with feel that he/she was important.

AS YIGAL'S yahrzeit approached this year, I started thinking how I could describe to him the events of the last 16 months if he were suddenly to turn up. To my horror, I suddenly realized and he would have great difficulty understanding what I was talking about.

At the beginning of 1980, when Yigal passed away, Menachem Begin had been prime minister for less than three years: the first Likud prime minister ever. Yigal was still in the habit of thinking of the Likud as the offspring of the Irgun, which he viewed as a former terrorist organization, and frequently spoke of its members as "dissidents."

The character of current Likud leader, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, would have been completely outside his frame of reference as a potential Israeli leader, and Netanyahu's refusal to take responsibility for the events of October 7, 2023 as completely unthinkable. After all, prime minister Golda Meir hadn't hesitated when she resigned office in April 1974, just over six months after the Yom Kippur War ended.

Hamas, the terror group that initiated the current war, was only established in 1987. Hezbollah was established in 1982. Though Rabbi Meir Kahane made aliyah in 1971, Kahanism was still in diapers in 1980, and Otzma Yehudit Itamar Ben-Gvir was an unimaginable figure in Israeli politics.

While the national religious population was at the beginning of a process of extremism, it was still part of the basic national mainstream. Yigal couldn't have imagined anything like today's Religious Zionism and its leader, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich.

Last, but not least, the number of ultra-Orthodox in Israel when Yigal passed away was around 155,000, and haredi evasion of military service was a non-issue.



YIGAL ALLON served as foreign minister from 1974 to 1977. His premature death at age 61 'left so much undone,' laments the writer. (Foreign Ministry)

I did, however, find one issue that Yigal would have understood without difficulty, which is the aspiration of extreme right-wingers in Israel to reconquer the Gaza Strip, and Judea and Samaria, and annex them to the sovereign State of Israel.

Toward the end of the War of Independence, Yigal had tried to convince prime minister David Ben-Gurion that the IDF should conquer parts of the West Bank. Though this was militarily feasible at that time, Ben-Gurion rejected the idea, largely due to the demographic problem it would entail. However, in the aftermath of the Six Day War, Yigal rejected any thought of Israel holding on to most of the territories it had occupied, for the very same reason Ben-Gurion had rejected it in 1949.

In May 1978, Yigal wrote that, in the course of an excursion to the Golan Heights on the fifth day of the Six Day War, he reached the conclusion that while the results of the war had literally saved the people of Israel from an unsavory fate, doubts had crept into his mind "regarding the realization of our historical right to the whole of western Eretz Yisrael now that victory was in our hands..."

THE OUTCOME of this was the Allon Plan, based on the principle that within the territory of Mandatory Palestine (western Eretz Yisrael and Transjordan) there should be two states: a Jewish state that would include pre-1967 Israel, a united Jerusalem, Gush Etzion, the Latrun area; and a Jordanian-Palestinian state that would include Jordan east of the River Jordan, and most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip as a demilitarized zone.

Under this arrangement, Israel was to remain in military control of the Jordan Valley, and in the Jordanian-Palestinian state the two sides of the Jordan River were to have been connected by a passage around Jericho. This idea was actually discussed in October 1974 by former prime minister Yitzhak Rabin and Yigal Allon with King Hussein I of Jordan at a secret meeting in Aqaba. However, the subsequent Arab Summit Conference at Rabat declared that only the PLO could negotiate a settlement over Palestine – not Jordan.

The Allon Plan is probably unfeasible today for demographic, political, and security reasons, though it is certainly no more pie in the sky than some other permanent settlement plans floating in the air these days, including Trump Gaza.

Over the years, the writer has held academic, administrative, and journalistic positions, the last one (1994-2010) in the Knesset Research and Information Center. She has published articles on Zionism, European politics, current affairs, and Israeli politics, and several books in both Hebrew and English, the last of which was Israel's Knesset Members – A Comparative Study of an Undefined Job.

# Mike Huckabee should harmonize US Jews

• By MARTIN OLINER

As horrible as Simchat Torah was in 2023, falling on October 7 that year, Yom Kippur two weeks earlier was also a tragedy. That was the day Jews physically fought other Jews in Tel Aviv over how to organize a public prayer service in the large central Israel city. The lesson of both Yom Kippur and Simchat Torah was that Jews must unite, because internal rifts are dangerous.

Unfortunately, that important lesson was not learned by Rabbi Jonah Dov Pesner, director of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC), whose organization instigated that ill-fated Yom Kippur fight. Pesner sent a letter last week to all 100 US senators criticizing President Donald Trump's appointment of former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee as America's next ambassador to Israel.

In full disclosure, I will say that I have known Mike Huckabee for many years and consider him a friend. In fact, I consider him to be a friend of the Jewish people as a whole and the Jewish state. He is an *ohav Yisrael*, a man who loves the land, people, and State of Israel. Any organization that supports Israel, as Pesner's claims to do, should overwhelmingly welcome the appointment.

Instead, Pesner bashes Huckabee, suggesting that his values and interests do not align with the best interests of Israel, the United States, and the Jewish people. "The essential goal of any ambassador is advancing US interests and values abroad," he wrote. "Gov. Huckabee's record raises serious questions about his commitment to these values and interests that have persisted across Republican and Democratic administrations alike."

Pesner singled out Huckabee's support for Israel annexing Judea and Samaria and opposing calling Israel's control over the biblical heartland of the Jewish people "annexation." It is time for the RAC leader to wake up and realize that it is no longer October 6, 2023. Plenty of polls show that both Israelis and American Jews have understandably moved rightward after Israel faced its worst ever massacre.

The invasion of Israel by Hamas terrorists and ordinary Gazans who came to murder, rape, and kidnap did not whet the appetite of Israelis to give their enemies a sovereign state to use as a launching pad to infiltrate again. The monthly polls of the Israel Democracy Institute indicated that there has not been a majority for a Palestinian state among Israelis for many years.

HUCKABEE'S VALUES match mine and are more mainstream than ever, while Pesner represents a small minority fringe. He wrongly claims to represent 1.8 million American Jews, as if all secular Americans would choose his movement's synagogues if they would ever go to one.

He actually represents a dwindling movement that is selling synagogues left and right. Orthodox Judaism is the only stream that is growing. Pesner's movement never criticized former president Joe Biden, even when his administration blocked key weapons shipments to Israel at a sensitive time when the Jewish state was fighting its enemies on seven fronts.

How disconnected from reality can Pesner be to write every senator a letter rejecting the president's candidate for ambassador because he does not advocate for the advancement of "Palestinian national aspirations?" Does Pesner not realize that those aspirations include eliminating the world's only Jewish state and cre-

ating a 58th Muslim country?

Pesner wrote that Huckabee's support for Israeli sovereignty in Judea and Samaria did not "advance the causes of peace and regional security." Why does the control over the land by the murderous Fatah or Hamas advance peace or security? Is it not obvious that if Israel controlled the land under the watch of the IDF, it would be more peaceful and secure?

Pesner then had the chutzpah to blast Huckabee's Evangelical Christian faith. Evangelical Christians like Huckabee have been the cornerstone of support for Israel, when Reform Jews abandoned the Jewish state for the latest trendy liberal humanist cause. Pesner's letter was also unwise for Reform Jews, because it instigated a fight that could not be won.

Huckabee's appointment will be passed easily in the Republican-controlled Senate and House of Representatives, where a majority have views on Israel closer to Huckabee's than Pesner's. The letter's only accomplishment was to send a message to the world that Jews are hopelessly divided. The good news on that is that Pesner is wrong on that, too.

Especially since October 7, 2023, American Jews have united behind Israel as the Jewish state faces countless harrowing challenges. They will not fight any more on Simchat Torah or on Yom Kippur. And soon-to-be ambassador Huckabee will attend those holidays and represent America and its values well, with pride.

The writer is the chairman of Religious Zionists of America, president of the Culture for Peace Institute, and a committee member of the Jewish Agency. He currently serves as a member of the US Holocaust Memorial Council, appointed by President Trump. The views expressed here are his own. Contact him at [MartinoLinier@gmail.com](mailto:MartinoLinier@gmail.com)



MIKE HUCKABEE speaks at a presidential campaign event in support of Donald Trump last October. (Brendan McDermid/Reuters)

## LETTERS

### Ordinary people

In "A moment of national tragedy" (February 28), Yaakov Katz asks: "Where were the public officials?" He was referring to the heartbreaking funerals we have witnessed, and it brought to mind a question that has been puzzling me for some time.

I recall that in the US, any tragic event, whether national or local, brought to the fore public officials to express their concern and condolences. These included not only elected officials but leading members of the clergy, as well. With notable exceptions, I have not noticed such a presence here in Israel, and I wondered if it was due to a different tradition or, as Katz suggests, a fear of seeming to be taking responsibility. The upside of this, however, is the rush of ordinary people to fill the gap. As in the early days after October 7, when the groundswell of volunteers rose up to provide essential services, so have the citizens of Israel come to the fore to express their caring for the victims and their families. This started from day one with the spontaneous lining of the funeral routes of the fallen by neighbors, friends, and even strangers, out of respect and solidarity.

MARION REISS  
Beit Shemesh

### Having regrets

Regarding "They voted for Trump, but now they're losing their US government jobs" (March 2, *Los Angeles Times*/TNS): This is just one of many examples of why many Americans will have regrets about voting for President Trump. According to economic experts, his plans

to apply significant tariffs will increase inflation, reduce economic growth, and have other adverse financial effects.

His plans to reduce spending for medical research and Medicare, and pulling the US out of the World Health Organization will have negative health effects. Pulling the US out of the Paris climate agreement, appointment of climate-deniers to key environmental posts, and plans to roll back legislation designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions will hinder efforts to reduce climate threats.

His many cabinet appointments, based on complete loyalty to him rather than competence and experience, will have adverse effects in many areas.

RICHARD H. SCHWARTZ  
Shohesh

### Entirely rational

Amotz Asa-El assumes that anything Donald Trump does is evil, and then shoehorns perfectly reasonable actions into that framework ("Beware the urge to purge," February 28).

Asa-El decries the emailing of "dismissal threats to millions of federal employees." This email simply asked each employee to identify five things they had achieved at work in the past five days. The purpose was to make sure those federal employees, many of whom now work from home rather than report to an office, actually exist and are making reasonable contributions. It is not too onerous to ask people paid by the taxpayer to explain in bullet form what the taxpayers are receiving for their money. Asa-El criticizes Trump

for replacing Gen. CQ Brown as chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff "for no clearly stated failure." Incumbents in this position serve at the pleasure of the president. It is not unusual for presidents to replace chairmen as they see fit. Brown was an outspoken supporter of Black Lives Matter, and oversaw the military's emphasis on DEI.

At the behest of the president, newly-installed Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth calls for an emphasis on lethality rather than wokeness. It is within the president's authority and responsibility as commander-in-chief to select people who will lead the military in the direction essential for the country's defense.

Asa-El objects to closing USAID and the Department of Education. He ignores USAID's outrageous expenditures on projects that either do not advance or actually harm US interests. This has included funneling millions of dollars to terrorist organizations. With regard to the DOE, US expenditures on education have increased without a commensurate improvement in academic performance of public school students. Perhaps it's time to return the responsibility for educating young people to the individual states. President Trump was elected to implement a major course correction for the government. This includes returning the country to its position of preeminence on the world stage and rooting out waste, fraud and mismanagement.

The country is approaching an unsustainable level of debt. Faced with looming catastrophe, the head of any private company would limit spending wherever possible, including reducing staff and cutting wasteful programs. President

Trump, the government's chief executive, is following that entirely rational course of action.

EFFRAIM COHEN  
Zichron Ya'acov

### Completely ridiculous

In "Letter from America" (March 2), Michael Cohen bemoans President Trump's decision to close down USAID, suggesting that this will be a loss to America. He claims that USAID is well-known and respected abroad. When Elon Musk started to examine USAID, he found numerous examples of projects that were either completely ridiculous or often contrary to American interests. These were well publicized.

Cohen fails to mention any useful projects which were terminated, other than the Alliance for Middle East Peace, an organization I have never heard of but one that I assume promotes the two-state solution, a non-starter in the minds of about 90% of Israeli Jewish citizens.

In passing, Cohen also takes a swipe at Israel's government for planning to impose an 80% tax on money given to Israeli NGOs by foreign governments. These NGOs all have a political objective. As an Israeli, I object strongly to foreign governments meddling in Israeli politics; 80% is too low.

Cohen's final objection is that Trump's actions are an attack on democracy. It's the last resort employed by the Left when it loses an election and the Right starts exercising its democratic rights.

STEPHEN COHEN  
Ma'aleh Adumim



# Europe is not serious about Ukraine

*Photo ops are not foreign policy*

• By JUDAH WAXELBAUM

Following the exchange involving US President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, European leaders came out of the woodwork to give their words of encouragement to Ukraine.

While these pleasantries play online and in think tank communities, the actions of these nations betray their words. Europe has not taken long-term steps to decouple from Russian energy and is, in effect, funding the Russian invasion through these purchases.

The United States has by far provided the most resources to support the Ukrainian war effort, and to pretend otherwise is ignoring reality. Including direct appropriations, indirect aid, and military packages, the US has supplied around \$200 billion in assets to Ukraine.

Meanwhile, European assistance has never outpaced their purchases in Russian energy. Europe has reduced its usage of Moscow's energy since the beginning of the war but has done so kicking and screaming. If not for the attack on the Nord Stream pipelines, I highly doubt the reduction would



FOLLOWING THE exchange involving US President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance, and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky last week in the Oval Office, European leaders came out of the woodwork to give words of encouragement to Ukraine even as they still fund Russia through energy purchases, says the writer. (Brian Snyder/Reuters)

have reached its already painfully slow pace. Other than France, EU nations have refused to move

toward any tangible form of energy independence. Germany and Belgium shuttered nuclear facilities, in some

cases destroying them to remove the option of reversing course. In the process, they deepened their depen-

dencies on Russian supplies. These nations decline to admit their horrible mistake and now want to eat their cake

and have it too. They feel good criticizing President Trump for questioning what his citizens' tax dollars are going toward while powering their halls with Russian crude oil and natural gas.

The stark situation we find ourselves in is that Russia is fine with the current paradigm. Moscow is more than willing to throw lives away, importing soldiers from Syria, North Korea, and Cuba along with large-scale conscription. It is content with a stalemate; in a war of attrition, Putin can outwait Western leaders and force Ukraine into de facto isolation.

During the ramp-ups in war funding, the Russians never came close to calling it quits or seeking a deal; it does not make sense to believe this time is different.

I, too, want a solution to the land Russia is occupying, the children stolen, and the lives slaughtered, but what is left to try other than striking a deal? At minimum, we must attempt to proceed by agreeing to stop the fighting to get Russia to the table.

I fully understand not trusting Putin; he has provided no reason to believe him, and safeguards should be designed in any deal. Such safeguards are

exactly why an economic mineral deal with the US made so much sense.

I have little remorse for world leaders who want to be able to say one thing and do another in this war. Several European leaders have attempted to play peacemaker while taking zero steps beyond summits.

Photo ops are not foreign policy nor is grandstanding against the largest funder of the Ukrainian resistance. If EU heads of state truly want to hurt Russia, they would stop buying their products and sanction the parts of the Russian economy they rely on.

While I would have preferred the Oval Office discussion to happen in private, Zelensky should have never attempted to litigate the conflict with the president in front of the media. US taxpayers have spent billions on this war in the pursuit of hurting Russia and defending a democracy; do not lecture us – the criticism from those who themselves will not take action rings hollow and does not help.

The writer was granted the AIPAC Activist of the Year Award in 2019 and 2020. He is an Arizona State University-Watts College of Public Service master of public policy graduate.

## A moment in time

*New insights about the Global RSJ community*

• By YULIA BEZRUKOVA

What does it mean to be a part of the Russian-speaking Jewish (RSJ) community at this time? We kept coming back to this question as a global team of Jewish professionals serving the RSJ within Mem Global (formerly Moishe House) programs. The answer is deeply complex, especially in a post-October 7, 2023 world and with the war in Ukraine still raging.

As a Jewish educator, I have never been intimidated by complex questions – they attract and fascinate me, and this has no exception.

I needed to know the answer, or the answers, to be able to meet my community builders where they are and support them in ways they need, not based on my assumptions and guesses.

The best approach seemed straightforward: What if we asked them directly? Not virtually but in person, giving them time and space to consider the question and giving us the chance to look into their eyes as they answered.

What if we asked in different parts of the world and compared the responses? What if we allowed them to pose big questions, knowing that other RSJ community members in different parts of the world would be answering?

Jewish learning retreats are a perfect setting for these conversations. They provide a direct touchpoint with the RSJ community, and the participants are usually people who value Jewish learning and find introspection meaningful.

We created two learning session formats last year: the RSJ Today Survey, which we conducted in Toronto, Canada, and in Prague, Czech Republic; and the Big RSJ Questions session, which we facilitated in Tbilisi, Georgia, and Seattle.

Below are the main takeaways so others in our field can better understand the Russian-speaking Jewish experience and perspectives. We hope these findings will inspire you to approach dialogue in your own community with creativity and curiosity.

### WHAT IT MEANS TO BE RSJ

We asked two groups of RSJ community leaders and members 40 questions about various aspects of the RSJ experience, covering Jewish identity, Israel, immigration, leadership, heritage, RSJ community, and family traditions.

Questions ranged from “When did your Jewish journey begin?” and “What languages do you speak in your family?” to “Did you have a used teabag on your kitchen counter that was reused multiple times when you were a kid?” (For the record, the answer to that last one was a resounding “yes.”)

We printed each question and gave participants stickers to mark their answers. At the end, they were divided into groups to analyze the findings together and form their



AT MEM GLOBAL'S Russian-speaking Jewish learning retreat in Prague, last May, participants engage with the RSJ survey. (Courtesy Mem Global)

own opinions on their community.

As a result, we uncovered unique characteristics of North American RSJ communities compared to RSJ communities in other parts of the world (Global RSJ). Two paths, shaped by different environments, yet rooted in the same history.

- North American RSJ communities: RSJ identity is often inherited, shaped by family, relationships, and a broader Jewish environment. Integration into mainstream Jewish communities is common, and RSJ identity exists as a distinct cultural layer. Leadership within RSJ circles is less pronounced, and many see Jewish and RSJ spaces as separate entities.

- Global RSJ communities: RSJ identity is frequently a choice, something individuals create for themselves through education and intentional community-building. Strong RSJ friendship networks form deep cultural bonds, weaving Jewish identity together with other local cultures and traditions. Leadership engagement is more prevalent, with many viewing Jewish and RSJ communities as interconnected rather than separate.

### RSJ BIG QUESTIONS: GLOBAL DIALOGUE, TALMUD-STYLE

Next, we moved from closed-ended questions to open-ended, reflective ones. We asked participants to brainstorm together and then divide into smaller groups to come up with five “Big RSJ Questions” that reflect current concerns and challenges in RSJ community.

These questions were addressed to North American RSJ community leaders and members, with the answers returned in the format of a Talmud page – a central question, surrounding commentary, and an even deeper question as a conclusion.

Here are the five Big RSJ Questions we collected from Global RSJ communities:

1. How can we shift the relationship between the American Jewish community and the RSJ community from sponsorship to partnership?
2. Do you believe secular Judaism

will replace religious Judaism in the coming decades?

3. Should modern Jewish communities uphold divisions based on Jewish law?

4. Who benefits from keeping RSJ and non-RSJ communities separate? Why?

5. What can we do to combat xenophobia in Jewish communities?

And here are the questions created in response by North American RSJ communities a few months later:

1. What would the Global RSJ community want and need from a true partnership with American Jews? How would you like to feel connected to the American RSJ community?

2. Is secular Judaism sustainable? Is it dissolving itself?

3. How can future generations support diverse community members while preserving the essence of Jewish law?

4. What are the benefits of gathering in shared identity spaces? How can non-RSJ Jews support the RSJ community?

5. To bridge gaps in Jewish communities, how can we break through defensive barriers shaped by perceptions of other communities?

We will bring these questions and the accompanying commentary to our next Jewish learning retreat in Budapest in June 2025, delving deeper into specific themes to develop actionable steps to address the challenges we face.

This is just the beginning of a process that we hope will shape how we think about, talk with, and more deeply engage the RSJ community.

These findings help us better understand our communities and guide our future choices in creating Jewish resources and experiences.

The more we listen, question, and engage with each other across borders, the better we can shape a future where RSJ identity is not just remembered but actively lived and strengthened, and our community builders are thriving.

The writer is a Global RSJ Jewish educator for Mem Global.

## Israel-China economic diplomacy

*The limits following the Hamas attack on Israel*

• By DIVYA MALHOTRA

China's diplomatic approach toward the ongoing Israel-Hamas War has jeopardized its once-strong relationship with the Jewish state.

In 1950, Israel became the first country in the Middle East to officially recognize the People's Republic of China. The two countries had already established representative offices in Beijing and Tel Aviv that served as de facto embassies prior to the official establishment of diplomatic relations in January 1992. After emerging from the shadows, their relationship developed gradually.

Jerusalem and Beijing have strong economic ties, proven by trade figures. China is now Israel's second-largest trading partner, after the United States, and its largest trading partner in the goods and commodities category. It is important to highlight that trade relations between Israel and China are focused primarily on goods with almost negligible trade in services.

Overall, trade with China constitutes around 12% of Israel's international commerce in goods in 2023. However, the Jewish state's imports from the PRC outweigh its exports, resulting in a significant trade imbalance.

Chinese imports have doubled between 2013 and 2022, from \$5.6 billion in 2013 to \$13.1b. in 2022. Even though in 2023, imports from China registered a decrease of 15% from a peak of \$13.1b. in 2022 to \$11.2b., imports rose steeply by almost 20% a year later, touching \$13.53b.

Meanwhile, Israeli exports to the PRC, dominated by electronic components, have been stagnating for years. After peaking at \$4.77b. in 2018, exports to China stood at \$3.4b. in 2023, a drop of 27.7%.

Chinese investment in Israel also rose dramatically between 2010 and 2020, predominantly in the technology sector. In 2015, the China-Israel Joint Committee for Innovation Cooperation was formed to institutionalize this collaboration. Between 2012 and 2017, at least 30 new Chinese investors entered the Israeli market.

Despite Washington's discomfort and apprehensions, Chinese industry behemoths like Xiaomi, Lenovo, ChemChina, and Alibaba established their footprints in Israel, mainly in artificial intelligence, semiconductors, and communication networks. Israel-China ties peaked during this decade, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 2017 calling the relationship a “marriage made in heaven.”

However, the October 7, 2023 attack by Hamas came as a major setback to China-Israel ties. Even though the PRC publicly tried to portray an impartial and neutral position, it had essentially sided with Hamas.

On October 8, one day after the attack, the Chinese Foreign Ministry urged the international community to “step up input into the

Palestinian question [and] facilitate the early resumption of peace talks between Palestine and Israel.” Beijing did not issue any statement to question or condemn Hamas's actions on October 7 despite its own public campaigns against domestic Islamist terrorism.

On October 11, China's special envoy to the Middle East, Zhai Jun, spoke to Palestinian Authority Foreign Ministry officials, expressing concern over the “deterioration of the security and humanitarian situation in Palestine.” This was followed by a phone call to Israel's Foreign Ministry on October 12, calling for “an early ceasefire and the end of violence” based on a two-state solution.

Subsequently, the Chinese officials, as well as (state-controlled) media, continued to project a clearly pro-Palestinian position. Interestingly, in late October, Israel signed a joint statement with 50 other countries, including the US and UK, to condemn human rights violations by the PRC against Uyghur Muslims in the Xinjiang region – a move that may have further infuriated Beijing.

Addressing the International Court of Justice in The Hague in February 2024, Ma Xinmin, legal adviser to China's Foreign Ministry, called Israel a “foreign power occupying Palestine” while justifying the use of force by Palestinians as “an inalienable right well-founded in international law.” On April 30, 2024, Beijing even hosted a Hamas delegation led by its head of international relations, Mousa Abu Marzouk.

This meeting was scheduled two weeks after a high-level Israeli delegation led by President Isaac Herzog visited Taiwan to meet President Tsai Ing-wen to discuss matters of mutual interest ranging from trade to terrorism.

In July, Beijing again hosted representatives from 14 Palestinian factions and mediated talks between rival groups – Hamas and Fatah – who agreed to form a unity government in post-war Gaza. Both sides have been hitting each other where it hurts the most.



CHINESE FOREIGN MINISTER Wang Yi speaks with Mousa Abu Marzouk (right) – the head of Hamas's international relations office based in Qatar – and Mahmoud al-Aloul, vice chairman of the Fatah Central Committee, in Beijing last year. Palestinians will eventually realize that China is a fair-weather, opportunistic friend, the writer maintains. (Pedro Pardo/Reuters)



# ‘UK, France, Ukraine working on peace deal’

## Russian foreign minister Lavrov: ‘We don’t trust Ukraine; Zelensky is pure Nazi’ – sources

• By GUY FAULCONBRIDGE

LONDON (Reuters) – Britain and France will work on a peace deal with Ukraine and present it to US President Donald Trump, British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said on Sunday, describing it as a step in the right direction following Friday’s explosive meeting in the White House.

Starmer, due to host Western leaders in London in a bid to revive a peace deal, said he hoped a European “coalition of the willing” would come together to support Kyiv, but that any ceasefire had to be underpinned by the United States to prevent Russian President Vladimir Putin from invading Ukraine again.

“In other words, we’ve got to find those countries in Europe that are prepared to be a bit more forward leaning,” he told BBC television.

“The UK and France are the most advanced on the thinking of this, and that is why President [Emmanuel] Macron and I are working on this plan, which we will then discuss with the US.”

Starmer spoke to Macron and Trump on Saturday after he hosted Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky in Downing Street, a day after Trump



A PROTESTER waves Ukrainian, EU, and Union Jack flags during a gathering outside Downing Street, as European leaders meet for a summit about the war in Ukraine in London, yesterday. (Henry Nicholls/AFP via Getty Images)

and Zelensky clashed in an extraordinary meeting at the White House.

Starmer repeated his assertion that a peace deal would

only work in Ukraine if a possible European peacekeeping force had a security guarantee from the United States.

“I’ve always been clear

that that is going to need a US backstop, because I don’t think it would be a guarantee without it,” he said.

Separately, Russian Foreign

Minister Sergei Lavrov on Sunday praised Trump’s “common sense” aim to end the war in Ukraine, but accused the European powers which have

rallied around Kyiv of seeking to prolong the conflict.

“Donald Trump is a pragmatist,” Lavrov told the Russian military newspaper *Krasnaya*

*Zvezda*, according to a transcript released by the Foreign Ministry. “His slogan is common sense. It means, as everyone can see, a shift to a different way of doing things.”

“But the goal is still MAGA (Make America Great Again),” Lavrov said, referring to Trump’s political slogan. “This gives a lively, human character to politics. That’s why it’s interesting to work with him.”

According to Ukrainian media sources, the Kyiv Post and UNITED24 Media, Lavrov said that Zelensky was a “pure Nazi” and a “traitor to the Jewish people.”

Further, he criticized Europe, saying that for the past 500 years, it had been the crucible of “all the tragedies of the world” including colonization, wars, crusaders, the Crimean War, Napoleon Bonaparte, World War I, and Adolf Hitler.

Lavrov also dismissed European ideas for sending in a contingent of European peacekeepers and said Russia had no trust in Ukraine after the collapse of the Minsk agreements, which were designed to end a separatist war by Russian speakers in eastern Ukraine.

*Jerusalem Post Staff contributed to this report.*

## One killed, 3 wounded by Russian attacks – Ukraine

• Reuters

Russian shelling overnight killed one person and injured two more in the eastern Ukrainian city of Kramatorsk, and Russian forces attacked Ukraine with 79 drones, Ukraine’s authorities said on Sunday.

“Kramatorsk was subjected to hostile shelling – residential district,” city Mayor Oleksandr Goncharenko wrote on the Telegram messaging app. “A boy born in 2006 was killed.”

Goncharenko added that two people, a man and a woman, were also injured.

Ukraine’s air defense units destroyed 63 of the 79 Russian drones that attacked overnight in several Ukrainian regions, the country’s air force said on Telegram.

A Russian drone attack on the city of Zaporizhzhia in southwestern Ukraine injured one civilian, the governor of the broader Zaporizhzhia region, of which the city is the administrative center, said on Telegram.



LOCAL RESIDENTS walk past destroyed houses in Kramatorsk, near the front line in eastern Ukraine, on Saturday. (Tetiana Dzhabarova/AFP via Getty Images)

The attack sparked a massive fire at a residential building, destroying its roof, causing it to partially collapse, and spreading over the area of 300 sq.m. (3,230 square feet), the governor, Ivan Fedorov, said.

Two people were rescued from underneath the collapsed parts of the building, Ukraine’s emergency service said on Telegram.

The service also said that

the blast wave damaged neighboring houses, leaving tens of people homeless.

There was no immediate comment from Russia.

Both sides deny targeting civilians in their attacks on each other in the war that Russia launched with its full-scale invasion on Ukraine three years ago. But thousands of civilians have died in the conflict, the vast majority of them Ukrainian.

## Breakaway Abkhazia’s acting leader elected president, state media says

• By FELIX LIGHT

TBILISI (Reuters) – The acting leader of Abkhazia has won a presidential election in the breakaway Georgian region, state media said on Sunday, months after his predecessor was driven from office following protests over an investment deal with Russia.

Acting President Badra Gunba took almost 55% of the vote in Saturday’s election in the Russia-backed territory, ahead of opposition leader Adgur Ardzinba on just under 42%, Abkhazian state news agency Apsnypress reported,

citing preliminary results from the electoral commission.

Georgia, of which Abkhazia is recognized as being part of by all but a handful of countries, called the election “another flagrant violation of Georgia’s sovereignty and territorial integrity.”

In footage published by state media, Gunba thanked voters and said he would work to make Abkhazia “independent, free, and prosperous.”

Abkhazia has in recent months been plagued by an electricity crisis, with blackouts blamed on low water levels at a key hydroelectric plant and

large-scale cryptocurrency mining, which requires large amounts of energy.

Gunba, Abkhazia’s vice president since 2020, took over as acting leader in November after his ally Aslan Bzhania resigned days after protesters seized government buildings and forced him to scrap an unpopular deal with Russia.

It was the third time since 2014 that an Abkhazian leader had been driven from office by mass protests.

A lush, Black Sea coastal territory of about 240,000 people, Abkhazia broke away from Georgia after a war in the early

1990s, with the support of Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin congratulated Gunba on the election win on Sunday, Russian media cited the Kremlin as saying.

Moscow recognized Abkhazia as independent after another war in 2008. Tens of thousands of ethnic Georgians were expelled from the region in successive conflicts.

Though the territory is politically and economically dependent on Russia, some Abkhazians have been critical of what they see as Moscow’s growing influence.

## US to probe FedEx plane engine fire

• By DAVID SHEPARDSON

A FedEx Boeing 767 cargo plane struck a bird while departing Newark Airport, New Jersey, on Saturday and made an emergency landing with one engine on fire.

FedEx Flight 3609, which was headed to Indianapolis,

landed safely nine minutes after takeoff at 7:58 a.m. The Federal Aviation Administration and National Transportation Safety Board will investigate.

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy said the strike caused one of the plane’s engines to burst into flames,

forcing the plane to quickly land.

“Video from the incident shows the quick-thinking pilots returning the plane to land safely while the engine is on fire,” Duffy said.

FedEx did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Duffy cited a US Department of Transportation report that said there were over 19,000 bird strikes in 2023, up 14% over 2022. The report found 65% of bird strikes occur during takeoff or landing and around 5% of strikes result in damage to an aircraft. (Reuters)

## Austria liberals hold crucial party vote

• By FRANCOIS MURPHY

VIENNA (Reuters) – Beate Meinel-Reisinger, leader of Austria’s small, liberal Neos party, called on party members to make history on Sunday and support what she sees as a move supporting liberal democracy as they voted on whether to join a proposed coalition government.

Neos members met on Sunday to vote on whether to join the coalition, the last obstacle to a planned alliance of three centrist parties without the far Right.

Two-thirds of Neos members taking part in the vote must back the coalition agreement negotiated with the conservative People’s Party (ÖVP) and Social Democrats (SPÖ) for Neos to formally join the alliance. If they do not, the ÖVP and SPÖ will be left with a majority of just one seat in the lower house.

The new government is due to be sworn in on Monday, ending the longest wait for one since World War II. The far-right Freedom Party, which came first in September’s parliamentary election with around 29% of the vote, failed to form a government last month after a centrist effort collapsed.

“I have asked myself what democracies are worth if no one can reach out their hand anymore,” Meinel-Reisinger said, referring to the months of negotiations and compromises made in different coalition talks.

The party’s priorities include cutting state spending and eliminating red tape,



AUSTRIA’S BEATE MEINEL-REISINGER, the leader of the Neos party, speaks to the media on Thursday. (Michael Gruber/Getty Images)

and the government program includes measures such as pension reform, long a top issue for Neos, a party that has never been in national government.

“We have a responsibility, each of us, [to build] a liberal democracy,” she said, ending her speech to the party meeting in Vienna with the call: “Let’s make history today.”

She received a standing ovation from the roughly 650 party members present, though they were only about a third of

those registered for the hybrid meeting, which was also online. The vote was due in the afternoon after opening the floor to speeches by members.

A majority of one seat in parliament would technically be enough to govern, but it would make the business of government far more difficult, since a single lawmaker’s absence through, say, illness could tip the balance. Neos would also give up the foreign and education ministries they are due to take over.

## Pope, still in hospital but stable, thanks supporters

• By JOSHUA MCELWEE

VATICAN CITY (Reuters) – Pope Francis, in a stable condition as he battles pneumonia in hospital for the 17th day, met two Vatican officials on Sunday and offered thanks to well-wishers for their prayers and support in a written message.

Francis, 88, was admitted to Rome’s Gemelli hospital on February 14 with respiratory problems that degenerated into double pneumonia – a serious infection in both lungs that can inflame and scar them, making it difficult to breathe.

The Vatican said on Saturday evening that the pontiff’s condition had stabilized, following an “isolated” breathing crisis a day earlier.

“I would like to thank you for the prayers,” Francis said in a note released by the Vatican in place of his usual Sunday prayer with pilgrims, which the pope was not able to lead for the third week running.

“I feel all your affection and closeness and... I feel as if I am ‘carried’ and supported by all

God’s people,” the message said.

Francis also met at the hospital on Sunday with Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican’s number-two official, and Parolin’s deputy, said Vatican spokesperson Matteo Bruni, without giving further details about the meeting.

The pope, who is known to work himself to exhaustion, has continued leading the Vatican during his hospital stay and last met Parolin and the deputy at the Gemelli on February 24.

Earlier on Sunday, the Vatican said in a one-line update that the pope had rested well overnight. A full medical update on his condition is expected on Sunday evening.

A Vatican official, who did not wish to be named because he was not authorized to discuss the pope’s health, said on Sunday that Francis was eating normally, moving about his hospital room, and continuing his treatment.

The pope suffered a constriction of his respiratory airways on Friday, akin to an

asthma attack. However, in a more upbeat tone on Saturday, the Vatican said the pope’s blood circulation remained stable and he did not have an increased white blood cell count, indicating his infection may be abating.

“The Holy Father’s clinical condition remained stable,” the Vatican said on Saturday, adding that the prognosis was still guarded, meaning he was not yet out of danger.

The Vatican added on Saturday that for a second day running the pope required non-invasive, mechanical ventilation, alternating between this and “long periods of high-flow oxygen therapy.”

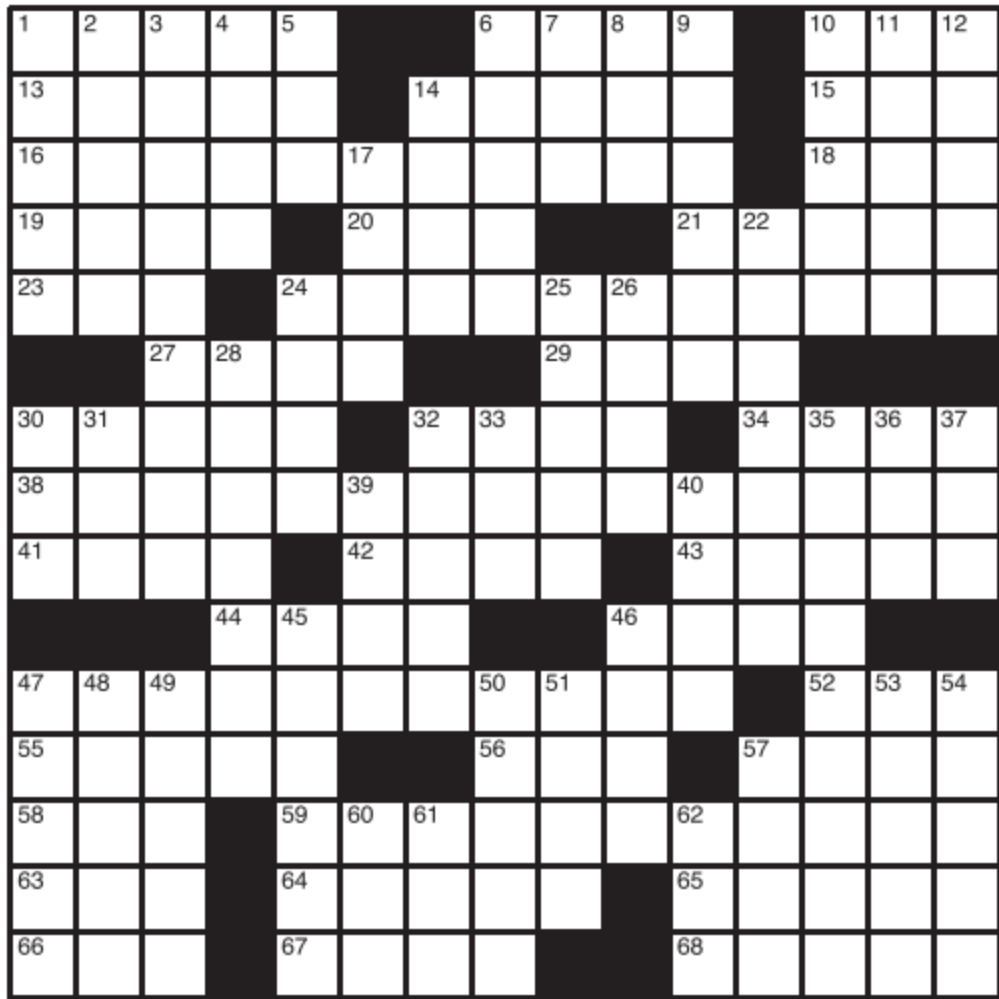
Francis has experienced several bouts of ill health over the last two years and is prone to lung infections because he had pleurisy as a young adult and had part of one lung removed.

The pope has not been seen in public since entering the hospital, his longest absence from view since his papacy started in March 2013, and his doctors have not said how long his treatment might last.



THE JERUSALEM POST

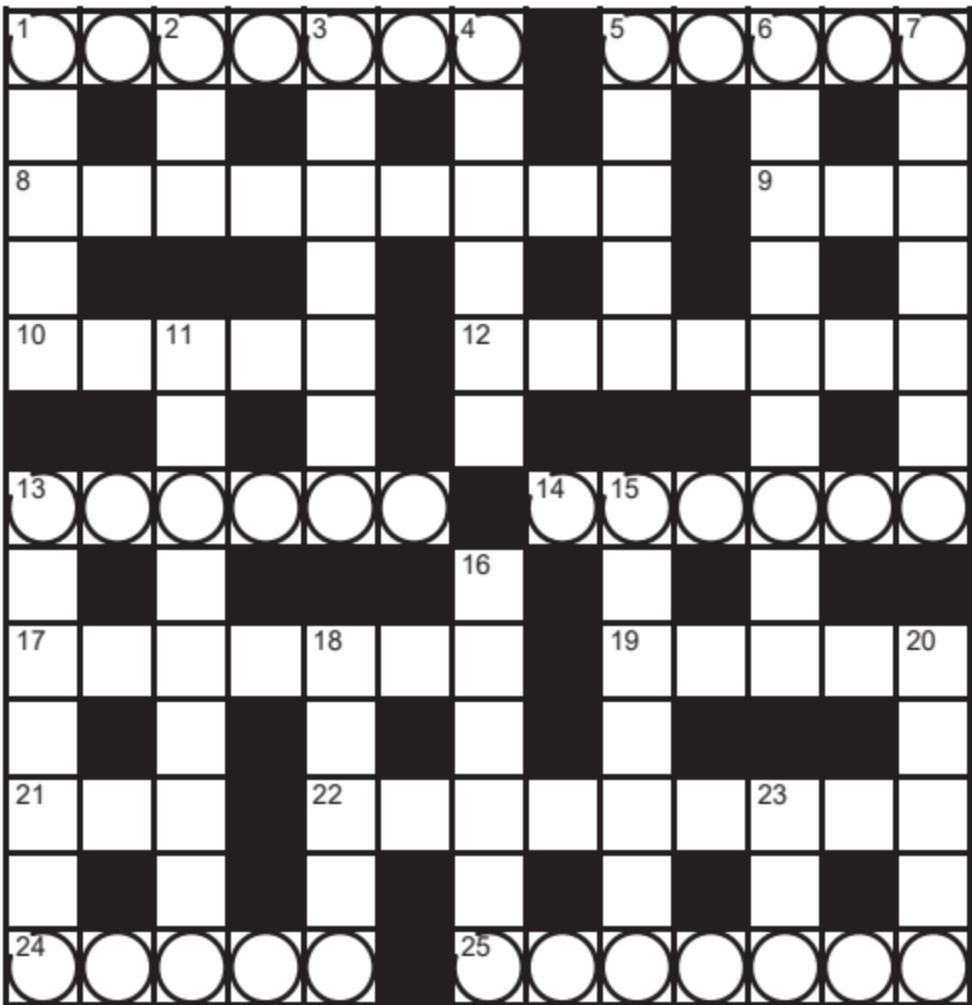
DAILY BRAIN TEASERS



**ACROSS**  
1 "Why \_\_\_ I think of that?"  
6 Word after folk or fairy  
10 PD alert  
13 Frozen drinks with spoon-straws  
14 \_\_\_ boom  
15 Big bucks or the Bucks, for short  
16 Choose as a live-in romantic partner  
18 Logger's tool  
19 New Year's popper  
20 Fashion designer Anna  
21 Desert watering hole  
23 Hosp. areas  
24 Loose frocks with wide bottoms  
27 Med. condition treated by Ritalin  
29 Board game played on a map  
30 Sleep study subject  
32 Foamy lather  
34 Winter flakes  
38 Count in a marching command  
41 Letter-shaped beam  
42 Flower holder  
43 Dorothy nickname  
44 Share a border with  
46 Taj Mahal city  
47 With 59-Across, what one might say when entering the starts of 16-, 24-, and 38-Across?  
52 Fall over  
55 Simply must  
56 Sundial numeral  
57 Short skirt  
58 "Kings & Queens" singer Max  
59 See 47-Across  
63 Replayed tennis serve  
64 Great Plains Natives  
65 "Zip your lip!"  
66 Mag staff managers  
67 Brewer's oven  
68 Book report, e.g.

**DOWN**  
1 1970s music genre  
2 Blood of the Greek gods  
3 Start of a letter to the North Pole  
4 Head twister  
5 Scolding sound  
6 "Namely ..."  
7 Singer DiFranco  
8 Like an amazing party, slangily  
9 Canyon comebacks  
10 Accumulate  
11 Playful sprite  
12 "\_\_\_ your heart"  
14 Like a spiderweb  
17 Like most donated clothing  
22 Requests  
24 Defrost  
25 Beats Electronics co-founder  
26 Get out of bed  
28 Take away (from)  
30 Tuna variety  
31 Alehouse  
32 Illinois or California  
33 Sounds of uncertainty  
35 Jottings in the margins  
36 No longer cool  
37 Dryly humorous  
39 Egg cell  
40 Jittery  
45 Sarcastic "So sad"  
46 Parisian friend  
47 Ocean giant  
48 Like a roof with an overhang  
49 Exams for future attys.  
50 Bhutan neighbor  
51 Spa supplies  
53 Bhutan neighbor  
54 Saintliness  
57 Degs. sometimes paid for by corps.  
60 Tony Award winner Hagen  
61 Mar. and Sept.  
62 Low card in gin rummy

QUICK CROSSWORD



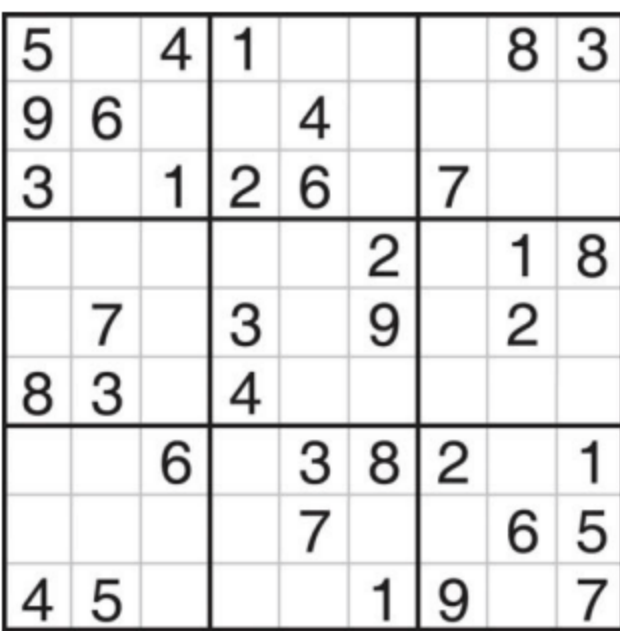
**Across**  
1 \_\_\_ Wall: The Kotel (7)  
5 The Temple \_\_\_: Future site of the Third Temple (5)  
8 Blunt, frank, not verbally reserved (9)  
9 Beatles' "\_\_\_ Loves You" (3)  
10 Rice cooked in broth (Var.) (5)  
12 Call out (7)  
13 Fortress overlooking the Dead Sea (6)  
14 Kever \_\_\_: Matriarch's tomb between Jerusalem and Bethlehem (6)  
17 Say again (7)  
19 Not affiliated with a



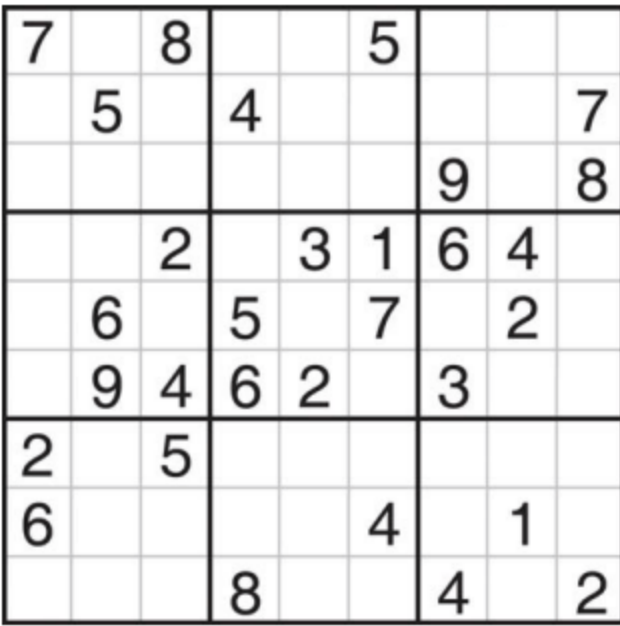
**QUICK SOLUTION**  
RESIGNADOPTS  
AIOAERL  
PHRASALNOOSE  
PENNUIGUMDROP  
REIGNGNOME  
ORBISONTUFTS  
CHOIRTABLOID  
MALIGNBYWORD  
SEWERAFBSAFAR  
ELOPEMOLESOLE  
ACREDERICTRIBE  
MAKESANENTRANCE  
MISERVISEOIL  
BINAIMETOOGAS  
INGASERFONNO  
DOUBLESOCOOPCONE  
PIESHAHEDAM  
RIATAELSA RVS  
AHS SPAM ABBEY  
PAWTERNITYLEAVE  
IDEAECCOEASEL  
ETALSHAD SLOTS  
ROTE SOLD TENSE

major record or film company (5)  
21 Irish Airline \_\_\_ Lingus (3)  
22 Australia or New Zealand, familiarly (4,5)  
24 \_\_\_ of David: Iconic Old City landmark (5)  
25 Machane \_\_\_ (the Jerusalem shuk) (7)  
**Down**  
1 Battle cry (or actress Goldberg, familiarly) (5)  
2 Army driller's designation: Abbr. (3)  
3 Explain (or expand upon) a theory or idea in detail (7)  
4 Japanese market index (6)  
5 US news cable inits. since 1996 (5)  
6 In one piece (DUNCE'S HAT anagram) (9)  
7 \_\_\_ underwear (winter wear) (7)  
11 That's the \_\_\_ (I will tolerate no more) (4,5)  
13 Cutting, trenchant, incisive (TOM RAND anagram) (7)  
15 Surveyor's reading (7)  
16 Ocean route (6)  
18 Birch family ember (5)  
20 Third rock from the sun (5)  
23 Joe, to Hunter (3)

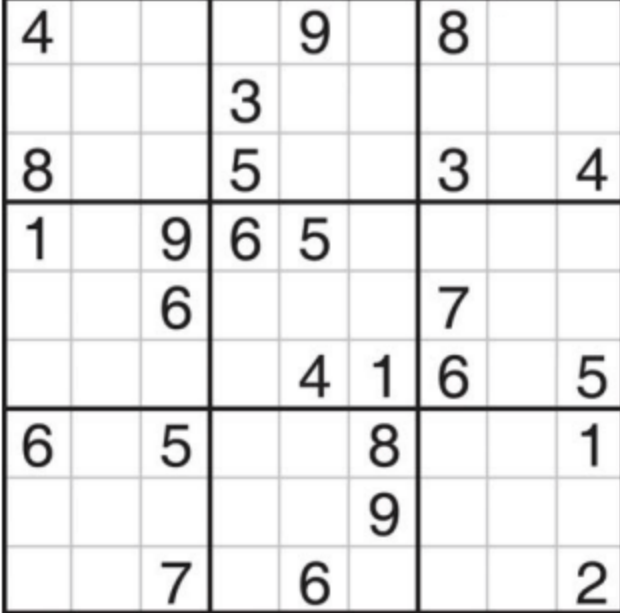
VERY EASY



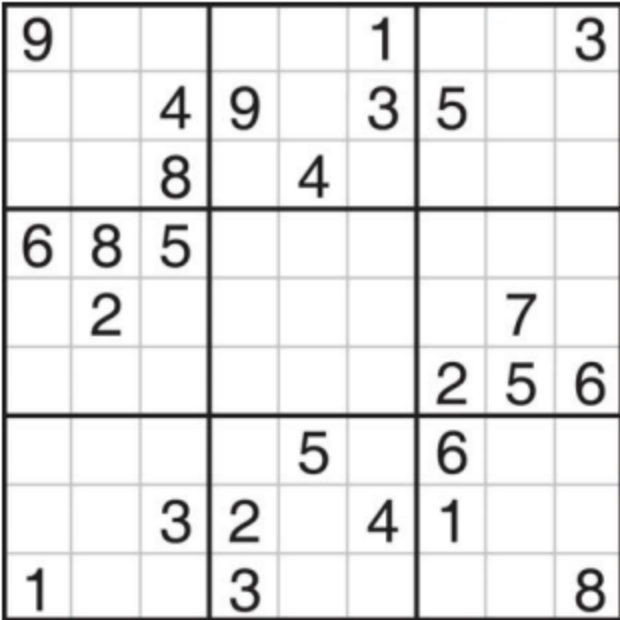
EASY



MEDIUM



HARD



5x5

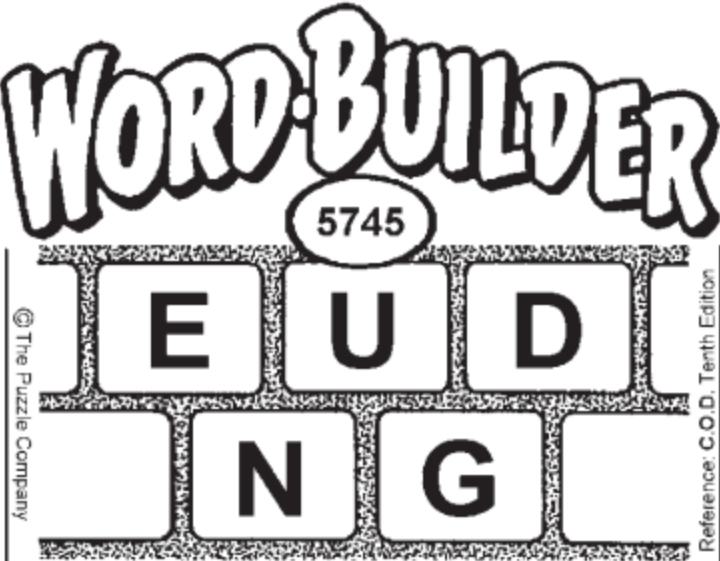
Insert the missing letters to complete ten words - five across the grid and five down.

5705



PREVIOUS SOLUTION (other combinations may be possible)

Reference: Concise Oxford 10th Edition



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 - 8 Excellent - 10 Amazing - 11  
**SOLUTION 5744:** die, dire, edh, heir, her, herd, hid, hide, hie, hied, hire, hired, ide, ire, red, rid, ride.

NEW YORK TIMES CROSSWORD

No. 0302

IN THE REARVIEW

BY DANIEL GRINBERG AND RAFAEL MUSA / EDITED BY WILL SHORTZ

Daniel Grinberg, of Philadelphia, researches user experience for an energy company. Rafael Musa, of San Francisco, is a software engineer at Airbnb. They met last year at a crossword tournament and hit it off. This is Daniel's seventh crossword for The Times and Rafael's 16th. Most of Rafael's puzzles here have been collaborations. He says co-constructing "is a great way to get to know someone." — W.S.

**ACROSS**  
1 Dazzling display  
6 Tech giant based in Cupertino, Calif.  
11 Plant with bugs?  
14 Formation of rugby players  
19 Queendom in the Bible  
20 Hint at L.G.B.T.Q.+ story lines to generate buzz  
22 Give an address  
23 What a tight deadline might require ... or what's found in 30-Across?  
25 Viennese "please"  
26 Attacked  
27 Do perfectly  
28 Hound or dog  
29 What's-\_\_\_-name  
30 Question when leaving a grocery store, perhaps  
34 Inaugural  
38 Unwanted event at a speakeasy  
39 Spot for a pin  
40 Lyricist Gershwin  
41 Halls that may have glass ceilings  
42 Improvise  
44 "Everything Changed" (Taylor Swift song)  
46 Scheme  
46 Tolerate misbehavior ... or what's found in 56-Across?  
49 Collectors of signatures?  
50 \_\_\_ of Cleves, wife of Henry VIII  
51 Newspaper section  
52 Tuna variety  
53 Word with lock or pocket  
54 Second printings, e.g.  
56 Source of some public funding  
62 Boiling state  
63 Author of the 1964 artist's book "Grapefruit"  
64 Legal tender  
65 When doubled, a dance  
66 Hume of the Sugarloaf Cable Car, informally  
67 Totally the wrong way ... or what's found in 79-Across?  
70 "Really! Check for yourself!"  
72 Radar gun inits.  
73 Philosophy  
74 It may be on the chopping block  
75 "Uh-huh, whatever you say!"  
76 Distorts  
79 "It'd be my pleasure"  
83 Mates  
84 1/96 of a pint: Abbr.  
85 It comes with a hefty bill  
86 Happen over and over  
87 Beehive State athlete  
88 Coalesce  
89 Il, literally  
90 Occasions for self-indulgence  
91 Completely change one's position ... or what's found in 104-Across?  
96 Intimidate  
97 Wild goats of the Alps  
98 Delta hub: Abbr.  
99 Reality competition show with quick-fire challenges  
103 Smidgen  
104 Gift-wrapping supplies  
109 Formal "you," in Uruguay  
110 Americans who live in their own time zone  
111 Many a piece of writing by Joan Didion  
112 In a bashful manner  
113 Sweetie  
114 Part of a wheel  
115 Detaches from a source of dependence  
**DOWN**  
1 Lawyer's title: Abbr.  
2 Fish bait  
3 Leader of filmdom's Rebel Alliance  
4 Options on some tests  
5 Receive severe criticism  
6 Blue-green shades  
7 Sound of a smooth-running engine  
8 Pig's digs  
9 Locale where clovers bloom  
10 Forget to finish writing a clue, mayb  
11 Secret  
12 Felt longing (for)  
13 Since Jan. 1  
14 "C'est la vie"  
15 Potato chip, to a Brit  
16 Coiffure parts that are sometimes braided  
17 Complete nonsense  
18 Small mongooses  
21 Creature that sounds like a snooze  
24 Scarlett Johansson, Rami Malek or Vin Diesel (did you know?)  
28 PalmPilots, e.g., for short  
30 Wish list items  
31 Like some heels and hopes  
32 Marriage equality activist Windsor, familiarly  
33 "Perhaps, That's something that interests me"  
34 Disease that was the subject of the second Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine (1902)  
35 Yom Kippur observers, e.g.  
36 Amusingly incongruous outcomes  
37 Flood preventers  
38 Hoots  
42 "Don't worry about us"  
43 Lines of work  
44 What locks are made of  
45 Catherine \_\_\_, wife of Henry VIII  
47 Horse's behind  
48 Protein powder ingredient  
49 Aetna alternative  
53 "Unfortunately, that's incorrect"  
55 Many long-running TV shows  
56 Word processing selection  
57 Close  
58 Director's directive  
59 Most common coffee bean variety  
60 Love interest in a Hallmark movie, maybe  
61 Walks unsteadily  
64 "Monster \_\_\_" (1962 No. 1 song)  
68 i5 and X5  
69 Fraidy-cat  
70 Soupcorns  
71 Organized in a cabinet, say  
74 School before l'universit   
76 Not to be relied upon  
77 Singer whose 1985 song "Running Up That Hill" became a Top 10 hit in 2022 after being featured on "Stranger Things"  
78 110, facetiously  
79 Barbuda or Barbados  
80 Shoddy  
81 Most dad jokes  
82 Nickname for Milwaukee's baseball team  
84 Ocean in "Ocean's Eleven"  
88 Like King Midas, notably  
90 Have a pity party  
92 Google Sheets alternative  
93 Supply at the Hershey Company  
94 City near Disney World, informally  
95 \_\_\_ Beauty  
96 Small wood  
99 Fail ignominiously, as at the box office  
100 Rip off  
101 "Lohengrin" soprano  
102 Custardy treat  
104 "Quiet!"  
105 Gender identity prefix  
106 With it  
107 Confucian concept  
108 Part of iOS: Abbr.

ANSWER TO PREVIOUS PUZZLE





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For Sale: House in Alon Shvut –Gush  
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Sales

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2 Apartments for Sale in Herzliya  
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Swimming Pool Located in a prime  
location with a view to the sea 2.5  
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the sea side Private parking Amazing  
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**THE JERUSALEM POST**



# ENTERTAINMENT BILLBOARD

## 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** Eating Plants 2 - 5. Canada  
**12:32** Rare Animals - Singing Birds  
**12:45** Fine Note 2 - Naomi Polani  
**13:17** Nature's Ultimate Survivors - Episode 1  
**14:00** News Flash  
**14:05** Nature's Ultimate Survivors - Episode 1  
**14:17** Come Dine with Me 8 - Week South 3  
**14:46** The Chase 8 - Episode 18  
**15:00** News Flash  
**15:05** The Chase 8 - Episode 18  
**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 Tali Moreno  
**21:30** The Russian Compound - Episode 3  
**22:00** Listen to This with Ben Shani - Episode  
**22:54** Through the Looking Glass - with Guy Zoh  
**23:07** Night News - with Akiva Novick  
**23:37** Bosch 2 - Episode 8

#### 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  
**11:45** Guy Pinnes  
**12:00** Special News Broadcast  
**15:00** Today's edition - With Ofir Hadad and Am  
**16:55** Five With Rafi Reshef  
**18:00** 6:00 P.M with...  
**19:00** The Early News Edition  
**19:55** Main Edition  
**21:30** Fact  
**22:50** Fact - Studio  
**22:55** Guy Pinnes  
**23:25** Avri and Sherki

#### RESHET HD (Y/H13)

**06:00** This Morning - Preview  
**07:00** This Morning - Orner 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 - Doron Herman  
**12:40** 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  
**16:55** Today's Talk - With Lucy Ahnash  
**17:55** The Six O'Clock News  
**18:59** War Zone - Raviv Druker  
**19:53** The Main News Edition  
**21:30** New Love - Episode 15  
**22:55** The Tube - Guy Lerer  
**23:26** The Sports Magazine  
**23:30** The Past Day - With Tal Ber-man  
**00:00** Naor's Friends 4 - No Prior Info

#### HOT CHANNEL 3 (H3)

**08:30** Matlock  
**09:13** A Million Little Things 3  
**09:56** ShabbaniKIM 2  
**10:37** Offspring 3  
**11:27** Matlock  
**12:11** Suits 4  
**12:54** Offspring 3  
**13:44** A Million Little Things 3  
**14:26** ShabbaniKIM 2  
**15:03** Days of Our Lives  
**15:41** The Young and the Restless, Yr. 46  
**16:18** The Bold and The Beautiful (2 eps)  
**17:02** Days of Our Lives  
**17:43** The Young and the Restless, Yr. 46  
**18:20** Suits 4  
**19:03** Matlock  
**19:47** Offspring 3  
**20:33** The Other Two 3  
**21:05** The Other Two 3  
**21:40** Suits 4  
**22:26** Zaguri 2  
**23:22** Bay of Fires  
**00:16** The Other Two 3  
**00:50** The Other Two 3

#### HOT ISRAELI ENTERTAINMENT

**06:00** Renewal of Broadcasts at 08:00  
**08:00** Small Talk  
**08:27** The Agents  
**08:56** The Countdown  
**09:22** Towers  
**09:47** Wine and Roses  
**10:35** Michaela  
**11:23** The Champ 3  
**11:51** My Sister Jackie  
**12:18** Full Moon 2  
**12:42** Towers  
**13:07** Wine and Roses  
**13:54** Michaela  
**14:42** The Champ 3  
**15:10** Small Talk  
**15:40** The Agents  
**16:09** The Countdown  
**16:34** Towers  
**16:59** Wine and Roses  
**17:47** Michaela  
**18:35** The Champ 3  
**19:03** My Sister Jackie  
**19:35** Towers  
**20:02** Wine and Roses  
**20:51** Michaela  
**21:33** The Champ 3  
**22:02** Towers  
**22:29** Full Moon 2  
**22:59** Wine and Roses  
**23:46** Michaela  
**00:30** The Champ 3  
**00:58** My Sister Jackie  
**01:30** Towers  
**01:57** Small Talk  
**02:27** The Agents  
**02:56** The Countdown  
**03:23** Full Moon 2  
**03:52** Renewal of Broadcasts at 08:00

#### HOT HBO (H4)

**08:00** Renewal of Broadcasts at 10:05  
**10:05** Far North  
**11:01** Blinded  
**11:49** Tulsa King 2  
**12:30** Ludwig  
**13:33** Curb Your Enthusiasm 10  
**14:59** Blinded  
**15:09** Blinded  
**15:54** Tulsa King 2  
**16:35** Ludwig  
**17:38** Curb Your Enthusiasm 10  
**18:17** Tulsa King 2

**18:58** Fallen  
**19:44** Curb Your Enthusiasm 10  
**20:30** Fleishman Is in Trouble  
**21:15** Blinded  
**22:00** The White Lotus 3  
**23:00** In Memoriam  
**23:48** Winning Time  
**00:47** Insecure  
**HOT ZONE (HS)**  
**07:32** NCIS LA 14  
**08:13** FBI 5  
**08:52** Chicago PD 9  
**09:34** S.W.A.T 8  
**10:16** CSI: Vegas 3  
**10:58** FBI: International, S. 4  
**11:40** FBI 5  
**12:19** NCIS 21  
**13:02** NCIS LA 14  
**13:43** S.W.A.T 8  
**14:25** Chicago PD 9  
**15:07** Law & Order: SVU 25  
**15:48** FBI 5  
**16:27** NCIS 21  
**17:10** CSI: Vegas 3  
**17:52** NCIS LA 14  
**18:33** Chicago PD 9  
**19:15** Law & Order: SVU 25  
**19:56** S.W.A.T 8  
**20:38** FBI: International, S. 4  
**21:21** FBI 5  
**22:00** Chicago PD 9  
**22:42** NCIS 22  
**23:25** NCIS LA 14

#### YES TV DRAMA

**06:00** Accused  
**06:50** Suits 3  
**07:40** Berlin Bluz  
**08:17** Maxima  
**09:10** Accused  
**10:00** The Bold And The Beautiful 2020-2021  
**10:25** The Young And The Restless 50  
**11:10** Elsbeth 2  
**11:55** Matlock  
**12:39** Suits 3  
**13:23** Berlin Bluz  
**14:00** Maxima  
**14:51** Accused  
**15:36** Suits 3  
**16:20** The Bold And The Beautiful 2020-2021  
**16:45** The Young And The Restless 50  
**17:30** Maxima  
**18:21** Elsbeth 2  
**19:06** Matlock  
**19:55** The Bold And The Beautiful 2020-2021  
**20:20** The Young And The Restless 50  
**21:00** Miss Fallaci  
**21:56** Chicken Sisters  
**22:45** Minx 2  
**23:13** Billions 4  
**00:05** Outlander 7  
**01:03** Minx 2  
**01:34** Billions 4  
**02:33** Outlander 7

#### YES TV ACTION

**06:00** 9-1-1 Season 6  
**06:45** 9-1-1 Season 6  
**07:30** Trigger Point  
**08:22** Law & Order: Criminal Intent Toronto  
**09:07** Law & Order: SvU 24  
**09:52** Ncis 22  
**10:37** Ncis: La 14  
**11:22** 9-1-1 Season 6  
**12:07** 9-1-1 Season 6  
**12:52** Fbi: International 2  
**13:37** Law & Order: Criminal Intent Toronto  
**14:22** Law & Order: SvU 24  
**15:07** Trigger Point  
**16:00** 9-1-1 Season 6  
**16:45** 9-1-1 Season 6  
**17:30** Ncis 22  
**18:15** Ncis: La 14  
**19:00** Fbi: International 2  
**19:45** Law & Order: SvU 24  
**20:30** Law & Order: SvU 24  
**21:15** F.B.I 7  
**22:00** Fbi: International 4  
**22:45** Fbi: Most Wanted 6  
**23:30** The Responder 2  
**00:20** True Blood Season 1 - VOD  
**01:20** True Blood Season 1 - VOD  
**02:15** House Of The Dragon

#### YES TV COMEDY

**06:14** The Neighborhood 6  
**06:39** The Neighborhood 6  
**07:04** Hot In Cleveland 6  
**07:30** Hot In Cleveland 6  
**07:56** Avenue 5  
**08:30** Avenue 5  
**09:05** Kid Sister  
**09:34** Kid Sister  
**10:02** The Office 5  
**10:27** The Office 5  
**10:52** The Nanny 4  
**11:20** The Nanny 4  
**11:48** Married With Children 7  
**12:16** Married With Children 7  
**12:44** Avenue 5  
**13:17** Avenue 5  
**13:51** The Neighborhood 6  
**14:16** The Neighborhood 6  
**14:41** Hot In Cleveland 6  
**15:06** Hot In Cleveland 6  
**15:31** Kid Sister  
**16:00** Kid Sister  
**16:27** The Office 5  
**16:52** The Office 5  
**17:17** The Nanny 4  
**17:44** The Nanny 4  
**18:10** Married With Children 7  
**18:37** Married With Children 7  
**19:04** Avenue 5  
**19:37** Avenue 5  
**20:10** Kid Sister  
**20:35** Kid Sister 2  
**21:00** The Office 5  
**21:25** The Office 5  
**21:50** The Nanny 4  
**22:15** The Nanny 4  
**22:40** Married With Children 7  
**23:05** Married With Children 7  
**23:30** Curb Your Enthusiasm 6  
**00:00** Curb Your Enthusiasm 5  
**00:45** Entourage 7  
**01:12** Entourage 7  
**01:38** The Neighborhood 6

#### 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** Gunsnoke  
**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** It's Supernatural  
**21:30** Israel Daily  
**22:00** One America News Network  
**23:00** Manna Fest 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** American Pickers 19 - Ep. 35  
**06:44** The Mega Brands that Built America 2 - E  
**07:26** History's Greatest Mysteries 5 - Ep. 9  
**08:08** Ancient Aliens 15 - Ep. 18  
**08:50** Toys that Built the World 3 - Ep. 3  
**09:34** Pawn Stars 24 - Ep. 27  
**10:15** American Pickers 21 - Ep. 9  
**10:59** Toys that Built the World 3 - Ep. 7  
**11:41** American Pickers 19 - Ep. 35

**12:25** The Mega Brands that Built America 2 - E  
**13:07** The Iran-Israel War - Ep. 1  
**14:04** History's Greatest Mysteries 5 - Ep. 7  
**14:46** Ancient Aliens 15 - Ep. 16  
**15:30** Proof Is Out There: Military Mysteries -  
**16:11** Pawn Stars 24 - Ep. 27  
**16:52** American Pickers 21 - Ep. 9  
**17:36** Toys that Built the World 3 - Ep. 3  
**18:20** The Mega Brands that Built America 2 - E  
**19:02** Dark Marvels - Ep. 1  
**19:44** History's Greatest Mysteries 5 - Ep. 10  
**20:25** Ancient Aliens 15 - Ep. 19  
**21:07** Dark Marvels - Ep. 5  
**21:48** History's Greatest Heists - Ep. 8  
**22:30** Great Escapes with Morgan Freeman 2 - Ep  
**23:13** Toys that Built the World 3 - Ep. 11  
**23:35** Toys that Built the World 3 - Ep. 12  
**23:55** Alone 10 - Ep. 2  
**00:41** History's Greatest Mysteries 5 - Ep. 9  
**01:13** Ancient Aliens 15 - Ep. 18  
**02:05** Dark Marvels - Ep. 4  
**02:46** Pawn Stars 24 - Ep. 27  
**03:27** American Pickers 21 - Ep. 9  
**04:11** Toys that Built the World 3 - Ep. 9  
**04:33** Toys that Built the World 3 - Ep. 10  
**04:55** Alone 10 - Ep. 1

#### CLASSICA HD

**06:10** Semi-Finals: Schubert, Ullmann et al.  
**06:39** Schubert: Four Impromptus, Op. 90  
**07:00** Mozart: String Quartet No. 21  
**07:26** Gyorgy Ligeti: Concert Romanesc  
**07:42** Von Biber: Missa Salisburgensis  
**09:12** Semi-final: Meredith Wohl-gemuth  
**09:40** Modena - City of Belcanto  
**10:05** Rachmaninoff: Piano Concerto No. 4  
**10:33** Classica Spotlight  
**11:03** England, My England. Part 2  
**11:24** Rina Sala Gallo Piano Competition 2022  
**12:27** Schonberg: Pelles and Melisande, Op. 5  
**13:07** Choral Music by Bach, Schutz et al.  
**14:21** Chopin: Piano Sonata No. 2, Op. 35  
**14:44** Classica Spotlight  
**15:01** Britten: War Requiem (McCreesh)  
**16:36** Stravinsky: Symphony in Three Movements  
**16:59** Dance: La Belle  
**18:33** Shusha Renaissance (2023)  
**19:25** IPO: 70th Anniversary Gala  
**21:02** Discovering Masterpieces  
**21:30** Semi Final II: Jan Hugo  
**22:00** Verdi: Nabucco (Oren)  
**00:12** Brahms: Tragic Overture, Op. 8  
**00:16** Villa-Lobos: String Quartet No. 13  
**01:00** Tchaikovsky: Iolanta (2012)  
**02:48** J. S. Bach: Mass in B minor, BWV 232  
**04:45** Music of Naples  
**04:58** Beethoven: Piano Concerto No. 3 (2021)

#### YES DOCU (Y8)

**09:15** Small Town News: Kpmv Pahrum-1 Documentary series pulls back the curtain on life at a privately owned TV station in the small desert town of Pahrum, Nevada, revealing a colorful cast of characters in front of and behind the cameras. 2021.  
**09:45** How Do You Measure A Year? From the time she was two years old and until she turned 18, they had a ritual: Dad asked (and filmed), and Ella answered. Dir. Jay Rosenblatt. 2021  
**10:15** The Truth About Killer Robots Robots are great... except when they kill people and steal jobs. Exploring provocative viewpoints from engineers, factory workers, journalists, philosophers and science fiction writers. Dir. Maxim Pozdorovkin. 2018.  
**11:35** One Nation Under Stress Filmmaker Marc Levin follows Dr. Sanjay Gupta as he tries to uncover the root causes of why American life expectancy is falling and is now shorter than all other major developed countries. 2019.  
**12:45** Cocaine Bae: The True Story The story of Kentucky cop Drew Thornton, his infamous drug run, and bizarre actual events behind the hit Hollywood movie Cocaine Bae. Dir: Robert Palumbo,Tom Pollock. 2023.  
**13:40** Mama's Boy The true story of Dustin Lance Black - an account of growing up poor and gay with a thrice married, physically disabled, Mormon mother, and the imprint this woman made on his character . Dir. Laurent Bouzereau. 2022  
**15:20** Last Flight Home Ondi Timoner follows her desperately ill father, and his family, after he decides to exercise his right under Californian law. Film shares a stunning account of a courageous family confronting life and death. 2022.  
**17:05** Small Town News: Kpmv Pahrum-2 Documentary series pulls back the curtain on life at a privately owned TV station in the small desert town of Pahrum, Nevada, revealing a colorful cast of characters in front of and behind the cameras. 2021.  
**17:35** Kareem: Minority Of One This documentary charts the legendary career and influence of basketball great Kareem Abdul-Jabbar - a sports trailblazer both on and off the court. Dir. Aaron Cohen. 2014.  
**19:00** The Telemarketers Ep.1 Three-part documentary. The young telemarketing clerk and his co-worker, realized that a huge billion-dollar fraud was being perpetrated, a fraud carried out by an organization related to the police. 2023  
**20:00** Clinica de Migrantes An unprecedented look into the workings of one of the only health clinics that serves America's untouchable class: undocumented immigrants. Dir. Maxim Pozdorovkin. 2016.  
**20:40** Open Your Eyes We follow an elderly blind couple from Nepal on their extraordinary journey to far-away hospital in Kathmandu and an unbelievable chance to see again... Dir. Irene Taylor Brodsky. 2015.  
**21:15** The Americas - 3 An 11-episode docu-series exploring the wonders, mysteries, and fragilities of the wildlife in the Americas, the largest landmass on Earth, with the narration of Tom Hanks and a score by Hans Zimmer. 2025.  
**22:00** A Dangerous Dynasty: House of Assad - 1 A three-part series delving into the story of the Assad family dynasty, exploring Bashar and Asma Assad's journey to absolute power in Syria - from apparent modernisers to a regime accused of war crimes. 2018.  
**22:50** Monster of Jerusalem - 1

2011. Large Orthodox families from Jerusalem discover that their children have been sexually assaulted. The number of victims has grown to three-digit numbers, and the police are at a loss ... Dir. Limor Pinkhasov. 2021.  
**23:45** How To With John Wilson 3 - 1 Third season of series from documentary filmmaker and self-described "anxious New Yorker" John Wilson, who attempts to give everyday advice while dealing with his own personal issues. 2021.

#### CHANNEL 8 (H8)

**06:02** Better Days: Ze'ev Revach  
**07:20** TMZ INVESTIGATES: MAT-THIEV PERRY  
**08:05** HAGASHASH  
**09:02** House of Kardashian  
**09:57** Year on Planet Earth  
**10:47** No Chin Spread  
**12:02** HAGASHASH  
**12:01** House of Kardashian  
**13:52** Year on Planet Earth  
**14:42** No Child Spread  
**15:57** Better Days: Ze'ev Revach  
**17:14** Year on Planet Earth  
**18:06** House of Kardashian  
**19:01** No Child Spread  
**20:16** HAGASHASH  
**21:15** Queen Camilla  
**22:05** My so called selfish life  
**23:25** The Syringe Killer  
**00:18** Queen Camilla  
**01:10** My so called selfish life  
**02:30** The Syringe Killer  
**03:23** Queen Camilla

#### NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC (Y41/H46)

**06:37** Abandoned - 7. Blue Ribbon Factory  
**07:02** Abandoned - 8. Oil City, Pennsylvania Ba  
**07:28** The Story Of God with Morgan Freeman - 3  
**08:21** Air Crash Investigation 10 - 1. Disaster  
**09:09** Air Crash Investigation 10 - 2. The Plan  
**09:57** Drain the Oceans Compilations 5 - 2. Bat  
**10:45** Ice Road Rescue 6 - 5. Pressure Pile-Up  
**11:31** Abandoned - 9. Connecticut Ghost Town  
**11:55** Abandoned - 10. New York Masonic Lodge  
**12:20** The Story Of God with Morgan Freeman - 4  
**13:12** None of the Above 2 - 3. Positively Shoc  
**13:36** None of the Above 2 - 4. Shock and Awe  
**14:00** Genius By Stephen Hawking - 2. What Am I  
**14:46** One Strange Rock - 2. Storm  
**15:35** Air Crash Investigation 10 - 3. Split  
**16:22** Air Crash Investigation 10 - 4. Break-Up  
**17:09** Car S.O.S. 7 - 8. Lamborghini Espada  
**17:56** Science of Stupid 4 - Episode 14  
**18:20** Science of Stupid 4 - Episode 12  
**18:44** Drain the Oceans Compilations 5 - 3. Hol  
**19:30** Food Factory USA - 3. Minty Cheesy Taffy  
**19:53** Food Factory USA - 4. Fishy Nuddy Soda  
**20:16** Taste Like Home with Antoni Porowski  
**21:00** Mysterious Islands - 6. Lost Colony of R  
**21:41** Mutant Weather - 3. Melt  
**22:25** UFOs: Investigating the Unknown 2 - 6.Ci  
**23:10** No Taste Like Home with Antoni Porowski  
**23:54** Mysterious Islands - 6. Lost Colony of R  
**00:00** No Taste Like Home with Antoni Porowski  
**00:44** Gordon Ramsay: Uncharted: Season 4 - 6  
**01:28** Lost Treasures of Egypt 3 - 7. Pyramid T

#### MEZZO FULL (H195)

**10:20** InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artmusic - enjoy a variety of genres from Jazz to Classical music.  
**11:00** Keith Jarrett - Lugano Jazz. Festival jazz concert from 1986, with Keith Jarrett, Gary Peacock (bass) and Jack DeJohnette (drums).  
**11:54** Sokolov: Schubert, Beethoven, Rameau Grigory Sokolov (piano) performs works by Franz Schubert, Ludwig van Beethoven, Jean-Philippe Rameau, and Johannes Brahms. The Philharmonie, Berlin, 2013  
**14:17** InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artmusic - enjoy a variety of genres from Jazz to Classical music.  
**14:30** Strauss: Salome Opera in one act. Orchestre de l'Opera national de Paris led by Simone Young. Soloists: Elza van den Heever (Salome), Iain Paterson (Iochanaan), John Daszak (Herodes). Opera national de Paris, 2022.  
**16:19** InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artmusic - enjoy a variety of genres from Jazz to Classical music.  
**16:25** Gergely Madaras: Ravel, Jon-gene Orchestre Philharmonique Royal de Liege and Iveta Apkalna (organ) led by Gergely Madaras perform Jongen's Concertante symphony for organ and orchestra and Ravel's Mother goose, complete bal-et. 2023.  
**17:34** Sergiu Celibidache: Ravel's Alborada... Munich Philharmonic led by Sergiu Celibidache performs Maurice Ravel's Alborada del gracioso. Philharmonie, Cologne, 1994.  
**17:46** Sergiu Celibidache: Ravel's Bolero Munich Philharmonic led by Sergiu Celibidache performs Maurice Ravel's Bolero. Philharmonie, Cologne, 1994.  
**18:21** Daniele Gatti: Stravinsky, Shostakovich Vienna Philharmonic led by Daniele Gatti performs Igor Stravinsky's Apollon Musagete, ballet suite, and Dmitri Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10 in E minor, Op. 93. Musikverein, Vienna, 2024.  
**19:51** Daniele Gatti: Mendelssohn, Debussy Orchestre de la Suisse Romande led by Daniele Gatti performs Mendelssohn's Calm sea and prosperous voyage, op. 27.  
**20:55** Debussy's La Mer, and Beethoven's Symphony no. 6 in F major Op. 68, "Pastoral". 2023.  
**22:10** InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artmusic - enjoy a variety of genres from Jazz to Classical music.  
**21:30** Monteverdi from Mantua to Venice Documentary. An exceptional musical journey by John Eliot Gardiner and the Monteverdi Choir in Italy at the Palazzo Ducale in Mantua and in Venice. Dir.: Sebastian Glas. 2023.  
**23:43** Michel Dalberto: Schubert Classical concert. Michel Dalberto (piano) performs Schubert's piano sonata no. 19 in C minor, D. 958, and piano sonata no. 21 in B flat major, D. 960. Somets Muscaux de Gstaad, 2021.  
**01:00** Suite Flamenca - Antonio Gades Company Suite Flamenca from "Bodas de Sangre" (Blood Wed-

ding) by Antonio Gades. Stella Arauz, Miguel Lara, & Compania Antonio Gades. Choreography: Cristina Hoyos. Teatro Real, Madrid, 2011  
**02:08** Claudio Abbado: Wagner, Debussy Lucerne Festival Orchestra, Schweizer Kammerchor, Bryn Terfel (baritone), Rachel Harnisch (soprano), and Eteri Gvazava (soprano) led by Claudio Abbado perform works by Wagner and Debussy. 2003.  
**03:33** InterMezzo A selection of short musical clips and artmusic - enjoy a variety of genres from Jazz to Classical music.  
**04:00** Mozart: Piano Concerto No. 22 The Berliner Philharmoniker led by Daniel Barenboim performs Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's Piano Concerto No. 22 in E-flat major K. 482. Siemens-Villa, Berlin, 1989.  
**04:36** Bachar Mar-Khalife & Bojan Z - Jazz jazz. Performance of Bachar Mar-Khalife (piano) & Bojan Z (piano), at Jazz a la Villette Festival. Grand Hotel de la Villette, Paris, 2021  
**05:26** Carla Bley Sextet - Lugano Jazz Festival Carla Bley (clavier), Steve Swallow (bass), Wayne Krantz (guitar), Victor Lewis (drums), Larry Willis (piano), Dion Anis (drums) perform at Lugano Jazz Festival, 1986

### MOVIES

#### HOT CINEMA 1 (H16)

**08:00** Pele Pele's meteoric rise from the slums of Sao Paulo to leading Brazil to its first World Cup victory. Cast: Vincent D'Onofrio, Adriano Aragon. Dir.: Jeff Zimbalist (USA, 2016).  
**09:47** Lara Croft: Tomb Raider Action. Lara Croft, the noble adventures, goes looking for an ancient device that can control time and death. Cast: Angelina Jolie, Jon Voight. Dir.: Simon West (USA, 2001).  
**11:28** Unknown Thriller. A man wakes up from a coma to discover someone has stolen his identity and no one believes him. Cast: Liam Neeson, Diane Kruger. Dir.: Jaume Collet-Serra (USA, 2011).  
**13:21** Any Given Sunday Drama. An ambitious young woman who inherits a professional football team is willing to do anything to glorify the team and herself. With Al Pacino, Cameron Diaz. Dir: Oliver Stone (1999)  
**16:03** RED 2 Retired CIA agent reunites his team of elite operatives for a global quest to track down a portable nuclear device. With Bruce Willis, Catherine Zeta Jones (2013)  
**17:58** Duplicité A pair of corporate spies who share a steamy past hook up to pull off the ultimate con job on their respective bosses. With Cline Owen, Julia Roberts. (2009)  
**20:02** Dead Man Down In New York, a crime lord's right-hand man who is seduced by a beautiful woman seeking retribution helps her with her revenge plan. With Colin Farrell, Naomi Rapace, Terence Howard (2013)  
**22:00** Rambo: First Blood Action. Rambo, a Vietnam veteran, wanders America in search of his friends. A run in with a local sheriff starts a war. Cast: Brian Dennehy, Sylvester Stallone. Dir.: Ted Kotcheff (USA, 1982).  
**23:34** Hunter Killer An untested American submarine captain teams with U.S. Navy Seals to rescue the Russian president, who has been kidnapped. Cast: Gerard Butler, Gary Oldman. Dir.: Donovan Marsh (USA, 2018).  
**01:35** The Black Dahlia Thriller. In an environment of secrets and lies, two detectives disclose hidden truths about the murder of a beautiful woman. Cast: Josh Hartnett, Scarlett Johansson. Dir: Brian De Palma (USA, 2007).

#### HOT CINEMA 2 (H17)

**06:24** Broadcasts will Resume Shortly Broadcasts will Resume Shortly.  
**06:27** 13 Minutes Drama. Families in a Heartland town are tested in a single day when a tornado hits, forcing paths to cross and redefining the meaning of survival. Cast: Thora Birch. Dir.: Lindsay Gossling (USA 2021).  
**08:15** The Forger A thief works with his father and son to forge a Monet painting and steal the original. Together, they plan the heist of their lives. With John Travolta, Christopher Plummer (2014)  
**09:51** The 33 Drama. True story of miners who were trapped for months in a gold mine in Chile and succeeded to escape. France, 2017  
**20:26** The Benefactor Drama. A philanthropist meddles in the lives of newly-married couples in an attempt to relive his past. Cast: Richard Gere, Dakota Fanning. Dir.: Andrew Renzi (USA, 2016).  
**22:00** To Leslie Inspired by true



## 'NO OTHER LAND':

## The Israeli-Palestinian documentary at the Oscars

• By HANNAH ROZENBLAT

The award-winning documentary film *No Other Land*, focusing on Palestinians living in the Masafer Yatta region of the West Bank, finally made its Jerusalem debut this month – a full year after its February 2024 world premiere at the 74th Berlin International Film Festival.

Cinema Spiegel, part of Jerusalem's Sam Spiegel Film and Television School, hosted a screening of the documentary on February 20, followed by a conversation with director and filmmaker Yuval Abraham.

The film has already won numerous awards worldwide, including the Berlinale Documentary Film Award, and it was nominated for Best Documentary Feature Film at this year's Oscars, which took place on Sunday night. The filmmakers independently released *No Other Land* in a number of cities across the US, including a one-week run at New York's Film at Lincoln Center that qualified the film for an Oscar nomination.

Codirected by an Israeli-Palestinian filmmaking collective that includes Abraham, Basel Adra, Hamdan Ballal, and Rachel Szor, the film was shot over the course of four years, between 2019 and October 2023, and also incorporates archival footage filmed by Adra's family and community, as well as news segments reporting on Masafer Yatta.

The film is mostly in Arabic, with Hebrew subtitles, and focuses on the perspective of the Palestinian residents of Masafer Yatta.

It opens with Adra, a young

Palestinian activist, narrating events from his childhood in Masafer Yatta, beginning with his father's arrest for political activism and followed two years later by the first protest he joined with his mother, at the age of seven. Bringing the viewer into this world through a combination of personal footage and news clips, Adra depicts life in Masafer Yatta as it fights for survival.

MASAFER YATTA, which comprises a number of Palestinian villages in the South Hebron Hills in the West Bank, was declared a closed military zone by the Israeli army in the 1980s to allow – according to recently revealed government documents from the time, including the transcript of a meeting between Ariel Sharon and army representatives – for the expulsion of its Palestinian residents.

Twelve villages received eviction orders in 1999, and hundreds of residents were forcibly evicted that same year. Israeli lawyers and human rights organizations representing the residents appealed to the High Court of Justice, leading to two decades of litigation that ultimately failed to protect the community and culminated in a 2022 Supreme Court ruling that opened the door to more evictions. The Court, including its President Isaac Amit, ruled that there were no permanent dwellings in Masafer Yatta before the year 2000, just shepherds.

*No Other Land* presents archival footage from these years, as Adra narrates how he observed his father's activism throughout his childhood. As the documentary unfolds and



FILMMAKER YUVAL ABRAHAM talks about 'No Other Land' with moderator Idit Avrahami at Cinema Spiegel in Jerusalem in February. (Hannah Rozenblat)

we watch Adra's own development as an activist, filming daily life and ongoing demolitions in an attempt to bring attention to the plight of Masafer Yatta's residents, it is clear he is following in his father's footsteps. Adra, whose camera is his primary tool of resistance, seeks to raise awareness of Masafer Yatta's destruction in the hope that international pressure might save the community.

The film follows a relatively chronological format, starting with the summer of 2019 and the expulsion of Palestinian families in the village. As people desperately carry belongings out of their homes, a bulldozer arrives and begins demolishing the homes as families watch. After the noise

of the destruction, a deafening quiet settles.

In the aftermath of this event, Jewish Israeli journalist and activist Yuval Abraham comes to document what is happening in Masafer Yatta and meets with Adra, who introduces him to the community. The trauma is still fresh and raw when Abraham, who speaks Arabic fluently, begins interviewing the families.

Traveling back and forth between his home in Jerusalem and Masafer Yatta, Abraham spends an increasing amount of time there and continues recording the results of subsequent rounds of demolitions alongside Adra, even joining in the efforts to help families rebuild their homes

under the cover of night.

It is in the tense moments following yet another demolition that the inspiration for the documentary's title is born. A reporter asks a woman whose house had just been destroyed if she has someplace else to go. "We have no other land," she replies simply, in a poignant parallel to the well-known Hebrew line.

IN THE conversation following the documentary's screening at Cinema Spiegel, Abraham noted that while journalists generally arrive after something occurs to observe the results and gather interviews, his continued involvement in Masafer Yatta's community and his presence on location meant that he was capturing

everything in real time.

Abraham also addressed the film's limited perspective, explaining that he focused on the emotionally compelling human element of the story, rather than going into the intricacies of the legal context surrounding Masafer Yatta or being overly didactic. Additionally, the footage is limited to Masafer Yatta, mirroring the limitations of Adra's own camera, and the narrative follows his experience, rather than attempting to report on all the events in the area.

For this reason, the film does not address other confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians, whether in the West Bank or in Israel, and omits any mention of terrorist attacks perpetrated by Palestinians on Jewish residents in the West Bank or the experiences of Palestinians in other parts of the West Bank.

And though the documentary's conclusion notes that filming ended in October 2023, with a radio broadcast reporting in Arabic that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to avenge the October 7 massacre and that Israel was conducting airstrikes on the Gaza Strip as Israeli hostages were being held in tunnels, the film does not otherwise address the Israel-Hamas War.

INTERTWINED WITH the documentation of Masafer Yatta's struggle for survival is the story of the friendship between Adra and Abraham, as they work together to expose what is happening in an effort to rally international pressure, both against the army's displacement of Palestinian families and the

increasingly frequent attacks on the village by armed settlers.

Some of the film's most touching scenes are the quiet moments at night, with Adra and Abraham sitting in the dark while everyone else is asleep, smoking as they share what they want in life and brainstorm how to effectively create change. In the fusion of despair over the present and yearning for a better future, there is a spark of hope born of this partnership between an Israeli and a Palestinian that turns into a deep friendship. When one of them is discouraged by the lack of progress, the other strives to uplift him, and this mutual support runs a consistent thread through the film.

"You need to be patient," Adra tells a distressed Abraham as they are driving together, and he jokes about Abraham wanting to solve everything in 10 days and go home.

"It'll be so good here one day," Abraham remarks during one of their nighttime chats toward the end of the film, "and then you can visit me – not me always visiting you."

Though this moment of optimism forms a stark contrast to the reality in which the two of them are working, as they risk their very lives in the filming process, it also allows both of them (and the viewer) to catch a glimpse of a better future, even as the documentary closes on a tragic note.

*No Other Land* is available to stream for free for residents of Israel and the Palestinian territories: nootherland.mekomit.co.il

## CONCERT REVIEW



HANAN BEN ARI and his band onstage at the Pais Arena in Jerusalem on Thursday night. (David Brinn)

## Hanan Ben Ari as the great unifier

HANAN BEN ARI  
Pais Arena, Jerusalem  
February 27

• By DAVID BRINN

I had no expectations heading into Thursday night's sold-out Hanan Ben Ari concert in Jerusalem.

Besides having heard and enjoyed a couple of songs by him (one about nothing being important besides soccer and another a beautiful ballad – "Yesh Kan Yoter Mizeh" – about there being more to life than meets the eye), and a buzz that his shows are an "event" sparked by his spiritual connection with his fans, I was a clean slate going in.

The first eye-opener was the audience, as diverse as I've ever seen at a "rock" show – the usual hip concert-goers in their 20s and 30s mingling with dati leumi fans of all ages, no shortage of hilltop youth types, grandparents, and small children.

The next surprise was, after nearly an hour delay in the starting time, Ben Ari emerged with the house lights fully up, did a lap around the whole arena, shaking hands, making eye contact with fans in the balconies, and receiving the adoration from the crowd.

I've been to a few shows in my years but have never seen a victory lap before the show started. It turned out that it wasn't bravado on his part, just confidence that he was going to deliver what the audience came for. And he did, in spades.

Fronting an energetic, tight seven-piece rock & roll band featuring Yaakov Asraf, a has-

sidic lead guitarist who would make Slash sit up and take notice, Ben Ari immediately took control of the arena and performed as if he was in everyone's living room.

Spirited rockers, heartfelt ballads (some featuring Ben Ari's piano skills on a stage set up in the back of the arena), and moments of post-October 7 inspirational verbal interludes all integrated together in the big picture of Ben Ari as the great unifier.

One attendee compared the show to a cross between a Bruce Springsteen concert and a Jewish spiritual revival tent. Singing along with every song, the crowd could be going wild at one minute, joining the raucous E Street-style band in dancing up a storm with fervent glee, and then go so quiet the next minute that you could hear a pin drop.

Like the Boss, Ben Ari held them rapt in his monologues (which seemed off the cuff but were probably well rehearsed) about the country, the heroes of October 7, and the overriding takeaway that "It ain't so sin to be glad you're alive."

It was no small accomplishment after the 16 months the country and the fans in attendance have endured. That joie de vivre carried over to the show's end, when after the last song, Ben Ari and the band in a line bow, broke spontaneously into an a capella version of the joyous "Mishenichnas Adar."

After a couple of minutes of celebration like that following nearly two hours of music and hope (but, regrettably, no "Yesh Kan Yoter Mizeh"), nobody even complained about the lack of an encore. Instead, they filed out of Pais Arena with smiles on their faces.

## Proto-punk rocker and NY Dolls founder David Johansen dead at 75

• By AUGUST BROWN

LOS ANGELES – David Johansen, the frontman and last surviving member of the flamboyantly gritty proto-punk band New York Dolls, has died. He was 75.

Johansen died at his home in Staten Island, New York, as confirmed by his daughter Leah Hennessy to multiple outlets. Johansen had suffered from Stage 4 cancer and a broken back in recent years, according to Johansen's fundraiser on Sweet Relief, a music charity.

In the New York Dolls, Johansen defined an era when '70s glam rock was getting leaner and meaner as the seeds of punk rock began to sow. With a transgressive gender-bending style – lipstick and eyeliner, skin-tight leather, and pinup-worthy hair – the Dolls were under-heralded in an era still dominated by arena-rock giants.

But amid a wave of acts like MCS, T. Rex, and Suicide, they recast rock & roll Americana and British Invasion panache for a new era of decadent, insistent, and streetwise music that would become punk.

"Brimming with a sloppy insouciance, their debut album often is cited as one of the building blocks of the late '70s punk movement," the *Los Angeles Times* wrote in an early review. "There's no denying David Johansen's bratty vocalizing... But unlike the MCS – fellow revolutionaries who more directly presaged the hard-core aspects of the coming punk rebellion – the Dolls had clearer roots in the rock mainstream."

Johansen, a Staten Island native, joined the Dolls in 1971, playing an auspicious early gig at a local homeless shelter. Their instantly arresting look pulled from David Bowie's androgyny and the drag culture underground in



DAVID JOHANSEN performs in Los Angeles in 2009. (Frazer Harrison/Getty Images/TNS)

New York. Johansen had the sharp, pouty features of Mick Jagger but the sneer and savvy of his hometown.

"All the record companies have been to see us," Johansen told *Rolling Stone* in 1972. "They think we're too outrageous. They know we're real, and we'll stop at nothing, and it scares the s\*\*\* outta them."

The group's self-titled 1973 debut LP – featuring the members in full regalia on the cover – had the bones of a future rock classic. Produced by Todd Rundgren, the LP sported tracks like "Personality Crisis," "Bad Girl," and "Trash" that packed tons of girl-group melody and grimy, loose-limbed riffing (courtesy of guitarist Johnny Thunders) into a few short minutes.

"Lonely Planet Boy," a more somber acoustic ballad, and bluesy "Looking For A Kiss" showed a genuine range and close study of rock history.

Their follow-up, 1974's *Too Much Too Soon*, didn't make much commercial impact either.

Addiction issues sidelined much of the band, and despite a late-career management shift to the Sex Pistols' svengali Malcolm McLaren, the Dolls broke up in 1976.

Johansen reemerged as a solo act indebted to the Dolls' catalog, often playing with former bandmate Sylvain Sylvain. Yet he had an unexpected pop resurgence in the '80s after re-inventing himself as Buster Poindexter, a louche lounge-lizard persona that scored an unlikely Hot 100 hit and MTV fixture with a cover of the calypso staple "Hot Hot Hot" (even if, as he later claimed, the song was "the bane of my existence").

The novelty hit also attracted attention from Hollywood. Johansen made his TV debut in a 1985 episode of *Miami Vice* and won roles as the Ghost of Christmas Past in the beloved Bill Murray 1988 holiday staple *Scrooged* and as a priest in *Married to the Mob*. That kicked off a busy career as a character actor in the '80s and '90s in films including

*Let it Ride* and *Mr. Nanny*.

In 2020, director Martin Scorsese – a '70s New York peer and Dolls devotee – teamed with David Tedeschi to film a Johansen solo set at New York's Café Carlyle. They used it as the backbone of the 2022 documentary *Personality Crisis: One Night Only*, tracing Johansen's life and immeasurable impact on an era of rock.

"Over the years, in the history books...[it] would always say, 'They were trashy. They were flashy. They were drug addicts. They were drag queens,'" Johansen told Terry Gross in 2004.

"That whole kind of trashy blah, blah, blah thing over the years kind of settled in my mind as, oh, yeah, that's what it was, you know? And then by going back to it and deconstructing it, and then putting it back together again, I realized that, you know, it really is art."

Johansen's survivors include his wife, Mara Hennessey, and daughter, Leah Hennessey. (Los Angeles Times/TNS)