



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

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Headlines:

- **Military Court Acquits Palestinian of Terror Charge**
- **Israel Demolishes One West Bank Outpost, Stalls on Another**
- **US Jews Moved to Settlements at Record Rate in 2021**
- **Gantz: Iran Gives Millions to PIJ to Attack Israel**
- **Top Official Ousted as Palestinian Succession Battle Begins**
- **Israeli Charged with Spying for Iran in Critical Condition**
- **Israel Rejects Lebanese Proposal on Border Demarcation**
- **Egypt to Ration Electricity to Boost Gas Exports**

Commentary:

- **Yedioth Ahronoth: “ Hamas is Also Working to Separate Gaza From the West Bank, Just Differently”**
 - By Avi Issacharoff
- **Yedioth Ahronoth: “In His Image, for His Sake”**
 - By Nadav Eyal

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News Excerpts

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Ynet News

Military Court Acquits Palestinian of Terror Charge

An Israeli military court acquitted a Palestinian West Bank resident of terror charges after he was accused of attempting to kill Jews in 2020. Moataz Bari was arrested by the police in the city of Rosh Haayin with a pistol after he allegedly attempted to find potential victims to kill. In his ruling, the military judge hailed the Shin Bet agent involved, whom he said had provided the defendant with the opportunity to change the course of his life. "I believe the message to all other Palestinian residents in the area who for some reason chose to hurt innocent people, that there is a way to turn back and avoid being convicted of the most serious crimes," the judge said in his ruling. "This is not only the right thing to do under the law but also according to the Muslim faith," he said. [Dig Deeper "Condition of Hunger-Striking Palestinian Prisoner Deteriorates to 'Life-Threatening'" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Al-Monitor

Israel Demolishes One West Bank Outpost, Stalls on Another

IDF troops and police officers demolished the [Ramat Migron](#) outpost in the West Bank. The security forces reportedly tore down four buildings, including the homes of three families and a makeshift yeshiva. Settlers in the place complained of police brutality, but the police spokesperson rejected the claims, arguing that the evacuation was orderly and conducted according to the law. Ramat Migron is not far from the relocated site of the original Migron outpost, north of Jerusalem and near the Palestinian city of Ramallah. Both outposts have been the scenes of controversies and legal disputes. The evacuation of Ramat Migron comes on the backdrop of another ongoing controversy over the dismantlement of the Homesh outpost. Several right-wing Knesset members asked Supreme Court President Esther Hayut to postpone any decision on Homesh until after the Nov. 1 elections.

I24 News

US Jews Moved to Settlements at Record Rate in 2021

More Jews moved from the United States to West Bank settlements in 2021 than in any other year in the past decade, according to data compiled by Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS). CBS figures revealed that more than 40% of all immigrants who moved to West Bank settlements in 2021 came from the US. Among new immigrants, Americans show the greatest preference for living in the West Bank. Russians and Ukrainians account for the majority of Israel's immigrants, but less than 2% of them live in the West Bank. Most US Jews who made Aliyah in recent decades are also Orthodox Jewish, usually aligning themselves with the settler movement. Another factor is the greater availability of affordable housing. Among the settlements popular among US immigrants were Efrat and Ma'aleh Adumim, close to Jerusalem.

Gantz: Iran Gives Millions to PIJ to Attack Israel

Defense Minister Benny Gantz accused Iran of funding Palestinian Islamic Jihad to the tune of tens of millions of dollars a year, a week after Israel fought a three-day battle with the terror group in the [Gaza Strip](#). PIJ launched 1,175 rockets and mortars at Israel between Friday and Sunday. According to the Israel Defense Forces, some 200 rockets of them fell short inside the Gaza Strip. In several cases, [failed rocket launches](#) killed Palestinian civilians. Throughout the round of fighting, the PIJ's secretary general, Ziad Nakhleh, was in Iran for meetings with the terror group's main backers. During the battle, Gantz and military chief Aviv Kohavi threatened to act against the terror group's leadership, who are located abroad. [Dig Deeper "Military Court Extends Detention of PIJ Leader That Sparked Gaza Conflict"](#) (Times of Israel)

Top Official Ousted as Palestinian Succession Battle Begins

Tawfik Tirawi, a former head of the Palestinian Authority (PA) General Intelligence Service, has been removed from his job as chairman of the board of trustees of Al-Istiqlal (*Independence*) University in the latest sign of mounting tensions among the top brass of the Palestinian leadership. Tirawi, a senior member of the ruling Fatah faction's Central Committee, was dismissed by PA President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) days after he reportedly bad-mouthed PLO Secretary-General Hussein al-Sheikh in an audiotape leaked to social media platforms. The 61-year-old Sheikh is seen by many Palestinians as a leading candidate to succeed Abbas. Tirawi, too, is seen by his supporters as a suitable candidate to step into Abbas's shoes. Abbas, 87, also ordered the withdrawal of the security guards stationed outside Tirawi's residence for his protection, Palestinian sources said. [Dig Deeper "Could Continuous IDF Activity in West Bank Turn Palestinians Against Abbas?"](#) (Israel Hayom)

Israeli Charged with Spying for Iran in Critical Condition

An Israeli woman of Iranian heritage who was charged with spying for Iran has attempted suicide and is in critical condition. Her arrest occurred in January, and she was under house arrest when she attempted to take her own life. London-based Iran International, an opposition-affiliated TV network, first reported about the incident but did not immediately publish any further details concerning the case. She is one of four women, all of Iranian heritage, who were accused of providing photos of sites in Israel to an Iranian intelligence operative who contacted them on Facebook and WhatsApp. All four women denied any intention to harm Israel's security and said they didn't know the person they were talking to is an Iranian agent. Their handler asked them for photos of the prime minister's official residence in Jerusalem, the US embassy, and other locations. If convicted of contact with a foreign agent, the Israeli women face up to 15 years behind bars. Three of them were also charged with providing information that could harm Israel's security, which carries a maximum sentence of three years. [Dig Deeper "Iran Rejects 'Ridiculous' US Accusation of Plot to Kill John Bolton"](#) (Al-Monitor)

Israel Rejects Lebanese Proposal on Border Demarcation

Israel has rejected the Lebanese proposal in the maritime border demarcation talks between the two countries after holding meetings with American mediator Amos Hochstein, the Lebanese El-Nashra (*Column*) newspaper reported. The same day, Deputy Speaker of Parliament Elias Bou Saab rejected reports in Lebanese media concerning the talks, saying they "contradict the official position that Lebanon communicates on the matter." The deputy speaker of parliament added that Operation Breaking Dawn in Gaza had delayed progress on the matter on Israel's part and stressed that "we do not have the luxury of time." Lebanese reports from the past week have indicated that Lebanon's latest proposal includes the waters up to Line 23 and the Qana gas field, some of which go over that line. Line 23 is slightly north of the Karish gas field. Hezbollah Secretary-General [Hassan Nasrallah](#) stressed that the movement was waiting in the coming days for Israel's response to Lebanon's demands regarding the border demarcation. [Dig Deeper "Maritime Compromise Not a Solution for Hezbollah" \(Israel Hayom\)](#)

Egypt to Ration Electricity to Boost Gas Exports

Egypt's cabinet has approved a plan to ration electricity to save natural gas that it will instead divert to the export market to generate foreign currency, it said. Egypt has suffered from an acute foreign currency shortage since Russia's February invasion of Ukraine, which pushed up global commodity prices, led to the collapse of tourism in the two countries, and drove up the cost of borrowing. Under the draft plan, shops and malls will have to limit their use of strong lights and keep their air conditioning at no cooler than 25 degrees Celsius. Ministries and government facilities will have to turn off lighting at the end of working hours, the statement added. Street lighting will also be reduced. The government last month postponed a planned increase in electricity prices by six months. The higher prices would have been intensely unpopular among a population that, over the last few years, has endured a series of harsh austerity measures. Europe has been seeking alternative sources of gas to cut its reliance on Russian gas as the war in Ukraine escalates. Rapid growth in Egypt's natural gas supplies, boosted by the discovery of the Mediterranean's largest field, turned it from a net importer to an exporter in late 2018. [Dig Deeper "Saudi Arabia Secures Funding for Electricity Interconnection with Egypt" \(Al-Monitor\)](#)

Hamas is Also Working to Separate Gaza From the West Bank, Just Differently

By Avi Issacharoff

- A short time after the news broke about three Palestinians, including Ibrahim al-Nabulsi, who had been killed in Nablus from IDF and Yamam gunfire, Hamas Spokesman Hazem Qasem said, “Clearly, we are in a new stage of the conflict with the occupation, the title of which is ongoing fighting in the West Bank cities.” That statement isn’t particularly surprising. It is no secret that Hamas has been trying by a diverse range of means to set Judea and Samaria (West Bank) on fire and to incite the Palestinian public in the West Bank cities to commit terror attacks against Israeli targets. What was slightly more surprising was the fact that a day and a bit after the ceasefire between Israel and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) in Gaza went into effect, Hamas’s spokesperson made no mention of either “Gaza” or the “Gaza Strip” in the course of his lengthy statement.
- The overall stance that Hamas has come to take is quite similar to the policy that Israel has taken for more than a decade to separate the Gaza Strip from the West Bank, just the other way around. Hamas’s policy is to keep Gaza quiet and to stir up as much violence and terrorism in the West Bank as possible so as to weaken the Palestinian Authority (PA) and Fatah with a view to the “day after”—once PA Chairman Abu Mazen is no longer around. Effectively, Hamas has presented its strategic set of priorities for the near future, and Israel is not at the top of those priorities. Hamas’s primary goal at present is to weaken the PA and Fatah and to boost popular support for Hamas in every city, village, and refugee camp in the West Bank. During the most recent military conflagration between PIJ and Israel in the Gaza Strip, Hamas was perceived as having opted to sit on the sidelines, but that is somewhat of a misperception.
- Palestinian sources in Gaza told Yedioth Ahronoth, “There was pressure, even intense pressure, from Hamas on PIJ to stop the shooting. Otherwise, why would they have stopped?” The Palestinian sources said that pressure did not take the form of either violent coercion or arrests; rather, it took the form of talk, which became increasingly steely after rockets that had been fired by PIJ killed and injured residents of the Gaza Strip. The first incident killed six people, four of whom were children when a rocket struck a group of people in the Jabalya refugee camp. The next day another rocket killed five children and teenagers in the same area. A third incident, which apparently was the “straw that broke Hamas’s back,” occurred when a PIJ rocket struck and killed a Hamas police officer and three of his children in el-Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. “That’s where the messages became even insistent, including to PIJ’s leadership overseas, that they have got to stop.” That pressure, as well as Hamas’s decision not to join in the fighting in the last round of violence, coupled with the 14,000 Gazan day laborers who work in Israel (most of whom sleep over in Israel), raises a lot of questions about whether Hamas is quickly evolving into a partner for keeping the peace and quiet.

- Some Israeli officials have already spoken about reaching a political arrangement with Hamas. But it is important to understand: that Hamas has not changed its overarching objective, which is to attack Israel and destroy it; Hamas has only changed its priorities. Hamas officials feel that they now have an exceptional opportunity at hand to reach economic understandings with Israel without making any political concession while, at the same time, the PA has failed to do the very same thing in the West Bank in a huge way. Essentially, Hamas can “smell the blood”: the PA has grown weaker everywhere across the West Bank; wars of succession between top Fatah officials have already begun; the pervasive corruption; and so much more.
- Hamas has enjoyed sitting back and watching gunfights between armed men from a range of organizations and IDF troops erupt in places such as the Nablus casbah and the Jenin refugee camp. Those are pockets of anarchy (or *fauda* in Arabic) that have developed in places where the PA and its security forces do not operate. Hamas’s goal is to expand those areas and to precipitate the PA’s collapse, capitalizing on the vacuum that is expected to follow the demise of the 86-year-old *Rais* (*President*). But Hamas is not alone in contributing to the current reigning reality. The Israeli policy to improve relations with Hamas in Gaza (indirectly) while simultaneously maintaining a complete lack of any political horizon for the PA in the West Bank is only likely to exacerbate the situation in the West Bank. Ibrahim al-Nabulsi and his cohorts are just the tip of the iceberg, so it would seem, in terms of what is likely to lie in store for us all on the proverbial “day after.”
- We can already say with a fair degree of confidence that that escalation [in violence and bloodshed] is already at our doorstep. We aren’t talking about yet another “wave of terrorism”; instead, we are talking about a worrisome trend that is gaining increasing traction and momentum with every passing day. According to security establishment data, 104 major terror attacks were recorded in 2021. In the first half of 2022 alone, no fewer than 97 major terror attacks were recorded. If we were to add in the incidents of this past month, the number of significant attacks by August would have exceeded the total in all of 2021. In 2015, which saw a record number of major attacks recorded (216), only 12 shooting attacks were recorded in the West Bank. All of the others were stabbing attacks, vehicular attacks, and so on. Conversely, 41 shooting attacks in the West Bank were recorded in the first six months of 2022. The unavoidable conclusion from the data is that armed men from the full range of Palestinian organizations, who had disappeared from the streets of the Palestinian cities for several years, are now back in large numbers. Those same armed men produced the governmental chaos that reigned [in the Palestinian territories] between 2001 and 2007, when there was no functioning PA and when hundreds of bloody terror attacks were committed. We seem now to be seeing a resurgence of that *fauda*.

In His Image, for His Sake

By Nadav Eyal

- **The list elected by the Likud represents what it has come to be. It is not a party that expresses conservatism but rather a party that desires a revolution in the system of government. It is based on the idea that “the people” do not rule, not really. There are dark forces that pull invisible strings, and they are the ones who run Israel’s affairs, from Netanyahu’s trial to the media. In order for this distortion to end, they are demanding radical steps. The old banners have been dropped. Who in the first group of ten is known for their devoutness to Greater Israel? Perhaps Yariv Levin. Certainly not Miri Regev, the spritely, cheerful disengagement spokesperson, nor Eli Cohen from Kahlon’s Kulanu party, or Avi Dichter, a classic Mapainik security wonk, and Yoav Galant, Ariel Sharon’s beloved military secretary. It’s unlikely you’ve ever heard David Amsalem or Amir Ohana talking much about the settlements.**
- **This group is relatively moderate. If we look at the election of Tally Gotliv, for example, we can see the change in the Likud’s character. It is no longer a liberal center-right party but rather a party that talks about the deep state and plots of persecution. All the candidates who refrained from swearing allegiance to the anti-constitutional revolution were ousted. The previous generation of the Likud, whose last representatives were Yuli Edelstein and Yisrael Katz were in practice, tossed out. Tzahi Hanegbi was finished. The first two, with their rich experience, are no longer considered realistic candidates to succeed Netanyahu. We’ve skipped over a generation to Yariv Levin and Nir Barkat.**
- **Gideon Saar was the first to realize this: he knew what he was doing when he left. The upcoming elections will depend entirely on the votes of the moderate right-wing. Binyamin Netanyahu can do what he did in the past: he can take the moderates, the centrists, even if they were elected to the bottom of the list, and highlight them. He can be tough about comments from members of the list and hide whoever needs to be hidden. In any case, the center-left’s hopes that the list that was elected will damage the Likud are groundless. Simply put, the list represents the voice of the party in the last two years. The public has a very good evaluation of what the new Likud is. There are no surprises. There is one important and essential matter: the change that the most important party in Israel is undergoing is not related just to Netanyahu’s trial. Like in the US, where Donald Trump destroyed the old conservatism, leaving behind him a wave of copycats, some more successful and some less, Netanyahu has also forever changed the genetic code of his party.**