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Israel and Middle East News Update

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Ynet News

Missile fired by Houthi rebels triggers sirens in Haifa, Western Galilee

The IDF said its aerial defenses likely thwarted the attack. No injuries or damage were reported. "An interceptor was launched toward the missile, and the missile was most likely successfully intercepted," the military said. Those in the area could hear booms in the predawn darkness. The Houthis did not immediately claim the attack, though it can take them hours or even days to acknowledge their assaults.

i24 News

Israel intensifies its strikes on Gaza; polio vaccination campaign suspended

The Israeli army launched on Tuesday one of the largest series of strikes on the Gaza Strip in several weeks, according to resident testimonies. The massive bombings occur as Palestinian health authorities warn of the imminent collapse of the health system. The Hamas-run Gazan Health Ministry announced the suspension of a UN-backed polio vaccination campaign, which was supposed to protect more than 600,000 children from the disease. "Without the immediate arrival of vaccines, we anticipate a real catastrophe. Children and patients should not be used as political bargaining chips," said Khalil Deqran, spokesperson for the ministry.

Arutz Sheva

Trump clarifies: No role for Hamas in Gaza's future governance

US President Donald Trump made clear on Tuesday that the United States would not allow Hamas to play a role in governing the Gaza Strip after the war. "We're

not going to let Hamas do that, and we're going to see what happens with Gaza,” Trump said in response to a question from a reporter on the issue. “We’ve made a lot of progress in the Middle East. Tremendous. That date, that very special date, October 7th, should have never happened. It would have never happened if I were president,” he added.

Times of Israel

Trump after call with Netanyahu: ‘We’re on the same side of every issue’

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke via phone on Tuesday with US President Donald Trump, the American leader said, declaring that the pair “are on the same side of every issue.” The call covered “numerous subjects including Trade, Iran, etc.,” Trump wrote on his social media platform, Truth Social, adding that the conversation went “very well.” Notably, Trump did not include Gaza or the 59 hostages being held there in his list of topics discussed amid the ongoing impasse in ceasefire negotiations between Israel and Hamas. However, according to a report in Axios, the pair did talk about efforts to reach a hostage release deal, with the Trump administration pushing for a breakthrough and Israel wary of any agreement that would end the war.

Al-Monitor

Trump set to visit Saudi Arabia, Qatar, UAE May 13-16: White House

The White House on Tuesday publicly confirmed President Donald Trump will visit Saudi Arabia, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates next month on the first foreign trip of his second term. Trump's visit to the Gulf countries will span May 13-16, White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters during a briefing. The upcoming visit comes as the Trump administration pursues a

diplomatic reset with Iran over its nuclear program. US officials have sent mixed signals on their objectives, but most recently have underscored that the minimum goal is to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon — an objective backed up by the threat of military force.

Ynet News

Israel fails to block PA president's meeting with Syrian president

Israeli officials are increasingly concerned that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas is leveraging shifting regional dynamics to boost the PA's international legitimacy and lay the groundwork for a renewed push toward statehood—an outcome Israel appears reluctant to confront. Those fears intensified on Friday, when Abbas visited Syria for the first time in over a decade, in a trip Israel tried but failed to block.

Commentary:

Channel 13 News

Criminal Allegations and Netanyahu's Next Move After Bar's Affidavit

By Aviad Glickman, Baruch Kra, Alon Ben David and Moriah Asraf

- Yesterday morning, GSS Director Ronen Bar submitted a dramatic affidavit to the High Court of Justice regarding the petitions that were filed asking the court to prevent Bar's removal from office from going into effect.
- Justice Ministry officials are expected to meet soon to review the affidavit and to determine whether it establishes grounds to suspect that criminal action was taken, such as Prime Minister Netanyahu's attempt to get Bar to sign a security document that he did not write.

- For the time being, Netanyahu is disinclined to submit an affidavit of his own to counter Bar's affidavit, since Bar's affidavit was substantiated by evidence, documents and testimony that the prime minister will be hard put contradicting.
- Netanyahu tried to prevent Bar from submitting his affidavit and wanted to come to an agreement with him about the date on which Bar would step down. However, GSS Director Bar and Attorney General Baharav-Miara want the court to overrule the cabinet decision to fire Bar on the grounds of illegality.
- Baharav-Miara also wants clarification from the prime minister that [he recognizes that] the director of the GSS is not a fiduciary who is loyal to the prime minister. For the time being, the option of declaring Netanyahu incapacitated is not on the agenda.
- As Channel 13 News reported yesterday evening, the prime minister's military secretary, Maj. Gen. Roman Gofman, was involved in drafting a document that was designed to push off Netanyahu's need to testify in his trial—a document cited by Bar in his affidavit. According to several sources, Gofman personally delivered the document that he wrote to the GSS.
- Officials who work with the Prime Minister's Bureau told Channel 13 News: "Recently, the military secretary has repeatedly blurred the boundaries between security and political." When asked to comment, the Prime Minister's Bureau responded: "Absolute fake news. That never happened. the prime minister did not ask for any opinion to postpone the trial."
- Bar wrote in his affidavit, "Netanyahu asked for the GSS to operate against demonstrators protesting against the government. I was asked to provide details about the identities of protest activists. It was made clear to me that the expectation was for supervision over 'protest funders.'"
- Bar added: "It was made clear to me that in the event of a constitutional crisis—I was to obey the prime minister and not the High Court of Justice."
- Bar also wrote: "Netanyahu asked his military secretary and the stenographer to leave the room on quite a few occasions—so that nothing would be documented and recorded. I refused."
- When addressing the investigations into alleged ties between workers in the Prime Minister's Bureau and Qatar, Bar wrote about the emergence of "serious suspicion of egregious damage to state security, the negotiations to free the hostages and relations with Egypt."

- Bar's affidavit, which includes 31 classified pages, also addressed the GSS's role in the intelligence failure on October 7. He wrote: "Regarding the allegation about alleged prior knowledge that was in the service's possession regarding the October 7 massacre, and the subsequent assertion about the alleged failure to inform the prime minister—those allegations are lies and constitute nothing short of institutional incitement against me and against the organization. In 2023 the GSS powerfully warned the political echelon about the worsening security situation, and in particular that 'the enemies see an hour of opportunity' amid the rift in Israeli society and we are liable to find ourselves in a 'perfect storm.'
- "Accordingly, in April 2023 the recommendation was made to execute a firm and focused move to curb the erosion in the balance of deterrence. Subsequently, in July 2023, on the eve of the vote to cancel the grounds of reasonableness, I told the prime minister that I am obliged to reflect to him the severity of the security situation, and that is the equivalent of a 'warning about war'—an unprecedented and highly unusual statement when made by the GSS director."

Israel Hayom

Netanyahu: Bar's Affidavit "Full of Lies"

By Shirit Avitan Cohen

- The Prime Minister's Bureau responded to the affidavit that Ronen Bar submitted to the High Court of Justice with the following statement: "Ronen Bar's affidavit is full of lies and exposes his failures."
- "Ronen Bar states that on the night of October 7 he woke up the entire system. He just forgot to mention that he did not wake up the system's leaders—the prime minister and the defense minister. Had he done so, the massacre would have been averted."
- The statement added: "Ronen Bar states that he instructed to wake the prime minister's military secretary at 5:15 a.m. In reality, his bureau chief contacted the military secretary only at 6:13 a.m.—only a few short minutes before the Hamas attack began, while the information regarding the suspicion of an attack had been in Ronen Bar's possession for over three hours."
- Yesterday afternoon, GSS director Ronen Bar submitted his affidavit to the High Court of Justice. The affidavit includes weighty accusations, chiefly expressed in the sentence, "It was made clear to me that in the

event of a constitutional crisis—I was to obey the prime minister and not the High Court of Justice.”

- Bar also said, “On more than one occasion, Netanyahu asked me to have the GSS operate against citizens involved in protest activity and demonstrations. I was asked to convey details regarding their identities, and it was made clear to me that the expectation was to monitor [the people] funding the protests.”
- Netanyahu’s statement said, “Bar confirms the assertion made by all the cabinet ministers that he failed disgracefully on October 7. This reason alone demands the termination of his tenure. Unwittingly, in the affidavit Ronen Bar confirms the government and the prime minister’s argument that by November 2024 the intention to fire him had already been publicized. This contradicts the attorney general’s claim that Bar’s dismissal came about in February amid opening the investigation into the Qatar issue.”
- “The dismissal was not designed to prevent the investigation, but rather the investigation was designed to prevent the dismissal.”
- Netanyahu also wrote, “Contrary to Bar’s false statement, the prime minister never asked to delay his trial. On the contrary—the prime minister insisted on holding his trial without delay. The GSS director failed miserably in addressing incitement against the political echelon, including the calls to murder the prime minister and incitement against ministers.”
- “Bar failed to prevent the firing of flares by violent protestors at the prime minister’s home in Caesarea, which almost burned to death a security guard and set fire to the house. The prime minister and cabinet ministers stated repeatedly in government and security cabinet meetings that no enforcement measures were being taken against the wild and violent incitement against them and their families. Neither they nor the prime minister ever requested illegal action against the demonstrators, but rather demanded equal enforcement, which is yet to materialize.”
- National Unity Party Chairman, MK Benny Gantz responded to Ronen Bar’s affidavit: “The GSS director’s courageous affidavit, which also clarifies honestly the GSS director’s the responsibility for the events of October 7, exposes anti-democratic and dark conduct and stresses the importance of the ethical backbone of our security service leaders and the independence of the State of Israel’s gatekeepers.”
- “As I have stated repeatedly, sadly, in a time of war, personal considerations have infiltrated the holy of holies of Israel’s security and decision-making. After learning the details, the court will face a serious

decision with tremendous implications for Israeli democracy and the rule of law.”

- **“The current situation only highlights the urgency to form a state commission of inquiry and call elections as soon as possible to halt this deterioration. The madness must stop!”**
- **Opposition Chairman Yair Lapid, responded to the affidavit Bar submitted to the High Court of Justice: “The GSS director’s affidavit proves that Netanyahu is a danger to Israel’s security and cannot continue to serve as prime minister.” [...]**