



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
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Israel and Middle East News Update

Thursday, April 24

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Reuters

Palestinian president urges Hamas to lay down arms

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas called on Hamas on Wednesday to lay down arms and hand the running of Gaza to his Palestinian Authority, part of efforts to answer international doubts over the authority's role at a key moment for the region. Abbas was speaking at a leadership council where he is expected this week to name a successor amid pressure from Western and Arab powers concerned about the PA's ability to play a viable-long term role in peace efforts.

Jerusalem Post

Israeli delegation departing for more hostage negotiations, sources tell 'Post'

An Israeli delegation is expected to depart in the coming days for talks aimed at advancing a hostage deal, a source familiar with the details told The Jerusalem Post Wednesday. Sources informed on the matter told the Post that there has been no change in Hamas's position regarding the deal. Hamas has made it clear to mediators from Egypt and Qatar that "we will not agree to a deal that includes a temporary ceasefire."

Times of Israel

Hamas delegation heads to Cairo as Egypt takes mediation lead in hostage talks

With Israeli and Hamas delegations both in Cairo this week, an official familiar with the Gaza hostage talks told The Times of Israel on Tuesday that Egypt has taken the lead in the negotiations with a new ceasefire proposal reportedly put forward. Both Israel and the Trump administration pushed for Egypt to take the

reins instead of Qatar, said the source, believing that Cairo can more effectively pressure Hamas to agree to a deal.

Times of Israel

As Iran fortifies nuke sites, US says it can have civilian nuclear program if no enrichment

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Wednesday that US President Donald Trump is determined to prevent Iran from attaining a nuclear weapon, and would prefer to do that by negotiations as opposed to military means. However, he said the US would be willing to see Tehran have a civilian nuclear program as long as it was not enriching uranium.

Al-Monitor

US floats imported fuel solution for Iran ahead of third round nuclear talks

The Trump administration said on Wednesday that Iran can maintain a civilian nuclear program to produce energy under a future deal but must purchase its nuclear fuel from abroad. “There’s a pathway to a civil, peaceful nuclear program if they want one,” Secretary of State Marco Rubio said in a podcast interview with The Free Press. “If Iran wants a civil nuclear program, they can have one just like many other countries in the world have one, and that is, they import enriched material,” Rubio said.

Al-Monitor

Jordan bans Muslim Brotherhood

Jordan banned the Muslim Brotherhood on Wednesday, throwing the future of the largest opposition bloc in the Hashemite Kingdom into question and joining a

host of Arab countries that have outlawed the Islamist group. Interior Minister Mazin Al-Farrayeh announced a ban on the Muslim Brotherhood's activities, adding that membership in the organization and promoting its ideas are likewise prohibited. Jordanian police raided premises used by the Brotherhood on Wednesday in accordance with the ruling, state media reported.

Commentary:

Israel Hayom

Israel is Demanding the Release of 11 Living Hostages in Exchange for a Brief Ceasefire

By Shirit Avitan Cohen and Danny Zaken

- One source close to the negotiations said that the only proposal that is on the table from Israel's perspective is the improved version of the proposal that was put forward by Steve Witkoff, the United States Special Envoy to the Middle East, and not a new Egyptian and/or Qatari proposal.
- Meanwhile, Egypt and the Palestinian Authority have been trying to pressure Hamas into laying down its arms.
- Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, who is responsible for overseeing the negotiations, briefed the security cabinet ministers yesterday evening on the progress in the talks to secure the hostages' release. Dermer told the ministers that the negotiations with the mediators have remained ongoing. He said that despite Khalil al-Hayya's public statement, in which he announced Hamas's rejection of the Israeli proposal, Hamas had not yet submitted its formal response to that proposal.
- Furthermore, an Israeli official denied the reports about a new deal that Qatar and Egypt have proposed, and said that the proposal that was on the table at present was the Egyptian proposal that resembles the one put forward by Witkoff, with certain changes. Israel has demanded to reduce the number of days over the course of which the hostages are to be released from 50 to a smaller number.
- While the Religious Zionist Party ministers have demanded to increase the pressure on Hamas and to resume high-intensity combat, an Israeli official said that no decision to do so has been made so far, adding that

the negotiations have remained ongoing, contrary to other reports. Netanyahu's stance is to try to get as many hostages released before any resumption of a full-scale war.

- The Religious Zionist Party has demanded that the IDF begin a large ground maneuver to conquer the Gaza Strip and to topple Hamas from power, amid a massive call-up of the reserves. But Netanyahu, Defense Minister Katz, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir and other top defense officials believe that Israel should first exhaust the [potential of the] current military pressure, which can be gradually dialed up but still remain limited, and not to begin a large-scale ground maneuver to conquer the entire Gaza Strip and topple Hamas, in a bid to secure the release of another group of hostages.
- Prime Minister Netanyahu spoke on the telephone yesterday with US President Trump. This was their first conversation since the summit meeting they held in Washington two weeks ago. Trump posted: "I've just spoken to Prime Minister of Israel, Bibi Netanyahu, relative to numerous subjects including Trade, Iran, etc. The call went very well—We are on the same side of every issue." [...]

Yediot Ahronot

Increase in Security Incidents at Border Crossings

By Elisha Ben Kimon

- According to data obtained by Yedioth Ahronoth, an 8% rise was recorded in security incidents and infiltrations at the border crossings in Judea and Samaria in 2024 relative to 2023. According to the data, 5,042 security incidents were recorded in 2024, compared to 4,643 in 2023. A 17% increase was recorded in attempts to smuggle Palestinians illegally into Israel—from 1,300 in 2023 to 1,523 in 2024. The number of live weapons confiscated rose from 157 to 161.
- According to the data, the number incidents in which shots were fired and bomb were thrown at the crossings also rose from 78 in 2023 to 83 in 2024. Most of the incidents took place in northern Samaria, where the terrorists have made the crossings a target.
- So far in 2025, a total of 1,386 security incidents have been recorded, as have 260 attempted infiltration by Palestinians and 258 weapons seizures. Most of the incidents this past year were recorded at the crossings in northern Samaria. In March last year, in the course of a

routine inspection of a car at the crossing, two Palestinians without permits were found in the trunk of a car driven by an Israeli driver. In June 2024, a Kalashnikov and three magazines were found at the crossing. Two months earlier, in April 2024, an Israeli Arab committed a ramming attack at the Kochav Yair intersection at a police roadblock, hitting four police. He then drove toward the crossing and tried to commit a stabbing attack. He was shot and neutralized.

- A ramming attack was carried out in January this year at the same crossing, in which a car quickly veered and hit a guard, who sustained light injuries. These are only a few of the incidents that were recorded at the crossings in the last year and a half.
- [...] The Crossing Authority operates 14 crossings in Judea and Samaria and two crossings in the Gaza Strip. It employs 1,200 people. [...]