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Israel disabled Houthi Yemen fuel storages, a power station, sea ports & tug boats

12.18.24 – We- - - News – Wednesday
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 Hamas delegation to visit Cairo Sunday, negotiate prisoner release and deportation

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March recruits are the IDF in Jabaliya, clearing remaining Hamas in north Gaza

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12.18.24 – We- - - News – Wednesday
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IDF establishes five reserve brigades, aged 38-58 to bolster border & local defenses

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Turkey amasses force on Syrian border for imminent assault on Kurds

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IDF chopper lands near Damascus, troops on ground for 20 minutes

12.17.24 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday
Defense Minister Katz poses IDF to maintain freedom to operate in Gaza

12.17.24 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday
Syrian rebel supports 1974 Israel border; called for removal of Assad sanctions

12.17.24 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday
Smotrich push for WB annexation, demolished 1,000 PA structures this year

12.16.24 – Mo- - - News – Monday
Senior official: Hostage deal possible before Trump takes office

12.16.24 – Mo- - - News – Monday
Missile from Yemen intercepted over central Israel; 'Houthis will pay a heavy price'

12.16.24 – Mo- - - News Placed in December 16 spot – Monday
Recruits surpass projection for men & women; ultra-Orthodox low turnout

12.16.24 – Mo- - - News – Monday
Hostage release deal closer than ever, yet too soon to say what the outcome would be

12.16.24 – Mo- - - News – Monday
Irish PM supporting PA in UN court is respect for law; Israel closed embassy

12.15.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday
Massive Israeli airstrikes on Syria reportedly trigger a 3.0-magnitude earthquake

12.15.24 – Su- - - News Placed in December 15 spot – Sunday Full Moon 3:02am
Lebanon army deploys south, monitored by US; searches for Hezbollah weapons

12.15.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday
Cabinet to discuss WB terror surge & hostage deal with Trump adviser Boehler

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Coalitions debate renewing judicial reform & hostile attorney general's future

12.15.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday
Israel closes embassy in Ireland, citing hostility; opens new embassy in Moldova

12.15.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday
Manpower crunch forces IDF to rely on civilians using bulldozers in enemy territory

12.15.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday
Cabinet majority backs deal in hostage talks; Hamas could still derail it

12.15.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday
IDF hold talks with Syrian Druze residents in Golan 8 miles from the border

12.15.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday
US decisions to Iran; agreement or military action - will be made by Trump.

12.14.24 – Sa- - - News – Saturday
From Shiite to Sunni jihad; US & Turkey have completely opposing goals in Syria

12.14.24 – Sa- - - News – Saturday
Israeli leaders demand probe into ex-prosecutor calling for military disobedience

12.14.24 – Sa- - - News – Saturday
Rebel leader called UN to compel Israel, immediately stop attacks & leave Syria

12.14.24 – Sa- - - News Placed in December 14 spot – Saturday

Trump envoy to visit Israel Monday on Gaza deal; US military set for surgical raid

12.14.24 – Sa - - News – Saturday

West Bank PA security escalating clashes between terror groups to restore stability

12.14.24 – Sa - - News – Saturday

Israel 420 strikes on Syria since fall, Russians removing equipment from Syria

12.20.24 – Fr

October 7 probe impossible without Shin Bet intelligence portion in January deadline

12.20.24 – Fr

'Impossible without Shin Bet': IDF struggles to finalize probe into October 7 failures
Senior IDF officers review only intelligence portion of October 7 probe, with issues like
Air Force and Southern Command's roles pending; General Staff officials insist Shin Bet,
responsible for monitoring Hamas SIM cards, must be included
Yossi Yehoshua|13:04

The IDF General Staff convened Friday to review the most sensitive investigation into the failures surrounding the October 7 Hamas attacks, focusing on the night leading into the assault.

However, the presentation was only partially completed, addressing intelligence shortcomings but leaving operational issues—such as the actions of the Operations Directorate, Southern Command and the Air Force—unresolved.

Tensions surfaced during the session, with senior officers criticizing the exclusion of the Shin Bet security agency from the process. "It's impossible to investigate the events of October 7 without Shin Bet," a senior IDF official told Ynet.

Shin Bet is primarily responsible for intelligence in Gaza, including the Hamas SIM card monitoring project—a key warning system that failed to signal the impending assault. "We will not finalize this investigation without Shin Bet's input," the official added.

Key figures scrutinized include IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, Operations Directorate Head Maj. Gen. Oded Basiuk, Southern Command chief Maj. Gen. Yaron Finkelman and then-Military Intelligence chief Maj. Gen. Aharon Haliva, who resigned over the failures.

According to the IDF, responsibility for assessing the events fell largely to the Southern Command's intelligence officer, who underestimated the attack as a localized raid rather than a full-scale war.

Discussions also highlighted that Southern Command chief Finkelman arrived at the command center only an hour after the attack began at 6:30 a.m., following an intelligence assessment that did not warrant heightened alert levels.

Chief of Staff Halevi convened a situation assessment at 8 a.m., further delaying the involvement of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and then-defense minister Yoav Gallant until the attack was well underway.

The Shin Bet has yet to present its findings, despite holding critical intelligence on Hamas' shift to emergency protocols, as revealed through SIM card activity. This omission led to inadequate preparedness across IDF units, including Gaza Division forces. Concerns over revealing intelligence sources reportedly constrained Shin Bet's warnings. Adding to the challenges, the IDF faces mounting pressure to conclude its broader investigations, including assessments of Southern Command, Gaza Division and specific border communities.

Defense Minister Israel Katz had set a January deadline for completing the probes, but military officials now acknowledge they are unlikely to meet it.

12.20.24 – Fr

Syrians protest Israeli presence in buffer zone, IDF prepare for an extended stay

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Syrians protest Israeli presence in buffer zone, claim troops shot demonstrator
IDF says soldiers called on protesters to retreat from area and only opened fire after identifying 'threat that required action to neutralize,' resulting in leg injury to one protester

Lior Ben Ari|09:49

Residents in the village of Ma'araba in southwest Syria, near the tri-border area with Jordan and Israel, protested Friday against the presence of IDF forces in the buffer zone, demanding their withdrawal.

Syrian reports claim IDF troops fired at the demonstrators, injuring one person, though the extent of the injuries remains unclear.

Footage shared on Syrian social media showed demonstrators fleeing as gunfire was heard. One protester declared, "We are celebrating the fall of the regime and will not let it be spoiled," while another added, "We want the occupiers to leave our land. Syrian land is one."

In response to the reports, the IDF later said that soldiers called on protesters to retreat from the area during the demonstration and only opened fire after identifying "a threat that required action to neutralize."

According to the military, the troops "operated according to rules of engagement, resulting in a leg injury to one protester." The IDF emphasized that it does not interfere in events occurring in Syria and reiterated its commitment to protecting Israel and its citizens.

Israel established control over the buffer zone following the fall of Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime. The IDF took positions in the area to prevent the entry of armed groups and expanded control to include the Syrian side of Mount Hermon. This week, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited the region and emphasized its strategic importance. "We will remain here until an arrangement is reached that guarantees Israel's security," Netanyahu said. "This place's importance to our security has only increased, especially in light of the dramatic events unfolding below us in Syria."

Defense Minister Israel Katz, who accompanied Netanyahu, reinforced the need for the IDF's continued presence. "Based on my directives, the IDF must quickly complete fortifications, deploy defensive measures and ensure proper conditions for the troops to prepare for an extended stay," Katz said.

Katz highlighted the Hermon's strategic value for Israel's defense. "Our presence at the Hermon's peak strengthens security and adds a layer of observation and deterrence against Hezbollah strongholds in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley, as well as extremist rebel factions near Damascus," he said.

Katz also noted that despite advancements in long-range weaponry, "elevation and control of key observation points remain vital. We will not allow a return to the threats seen on October 7 along Israel's borders."

12.20.24 – Fr

Erdogan declares Turkey will restructure Syria; urges US to halt Israeli invasion

12.20.24 – Fr

Erdogan urges West, US to halt Israeli invasion of Syria

Speaking at Cairo summit of eight Muslim-majority nations in coalition's first meeting since fall of Assad, Turkish president declares Turkey has no intention of withdrawing from Syria

Lior Ben Ari, news agencies|09:34

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday that the U.S. and the West must prevent Israel from invading Syria. Erdogan was in Cairo for a summit of eight Muslim-majority countries, in their first sit-down since the fall of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

He said Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan would soon be visiting Syria to work on the "new structure" to be established in the country. "If Syria establishes a truly stable structure with this new formation, it will, in my view, hold a very strong position in the Islamic world," he said adding the Turkey will not leave Syria.

In an interview with the BBC on Thursday, Syria's rebel leader Ahmed al-Sharaa said his country was exhausted by war and posed no threats to the West or any of its neighbors. He claimed Israel should not be concerned over pro-Iran or Hezbollah militias on its borders. "those threats are a thing of the past," he said.

Meanwhile, two journalists working for Kurdish media outlets in Turkey were killed in northern Syria on Thursday after their vehicle was allegedly targeted by a Turkish drone, Turkish media and a pro-Kurdish party said.

Turkish media reports said Nazim Dastan and Cihan Bilgin were killed near the Tishrin Dam, about 90 km (56 miles) east of Aleppo, while covering fighting between Turkish-backed forces and a Syrian Kurdish militia which is central to the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF). In a speech in the Turkish parliament on Friday, Gulistan Kilib Kocyigit, co-chair of the DEM Party, condemned the killing of the journalists.

"This attack is a crime against humanity," she said. "We call on the Turkish government to immediately address the issue and ensure press protections are upheld." Turkish officials did not immediately comment on the incident.

The U.S. State Department said top U.S. diplomats were expected to hold Washington's first in-person official meetings with Syria's new de facto rulers led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham in Damascus on Friday, hoping to gauge what plans the former al Qaeda affiliate has for the country.

Middle East diplomat Barbara Leaf, Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs Roger Carstens and Senior Advisor Daniel Rubinstein, who is tasked with leading the Department's Syria engagement, are the first U.S. diplomats to travel to Damascus since Assad's rule collapsed.

"They will be engaging directly with the Syrian people, including members of civil society, activists, members of different communities, and other Syrian voices about their vision for the future of their country and how the United States can help support them," the State Department spokesperson said.

"They also plan to meet with representatives of HTS to discuss transition principles endorsed by the United States and regional partners in Aqaba, Jordan."

The delegation will also seek information about U.S. journalist Austin Tice, who was taken captive during a reporting trip to Syria in August 2012, and other American citizens who went missing under Assad.

12.20.24 – Fr

Netanyahu to skip 80th anniversary of Auschwitz liberation, to avoid ICC warrants

12.20.24 – Fr

Netanyahu to skip 80th anniversary of Auschwitz liberation fearing arrest, report

Polish deputy foreign minister tells daily newspaper his country is obliged to respect the rulings of the ICC which issued arrest warrants for Netanyahu and his then defense minister for alleged war crimes
Itamar Eichner|04:36

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will not attend the ceremony marking 80 years since the liberation of Auschwitz in Poland, out of concern he may be arrested after the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued a warrant for his arrest for alleged war crimes committed during the ongoing Gaza war, the Polish Rzeczpospolita daily newspaper reported on Friday.

The paper quoted deputy Polish foreign minister Władysław Bartoszewski, responsible for coordination of the ceremony scheduled to take place on January 27 with the participation of dozens of world leaders who said, "We are obliged to respect the decisions of the ICC."

Jews were the vast majority of victims in the largest of the Nazi death camps but despite that, the leader of the Jewish state will be absent from the ceremony, while dozens of other world leaders are expected to attend. The paper said Foreign Minister Gideon Saar would likely represent Israel on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, although some officials said Israel would be represented by Education Minister Yoav Kisch.

According to the Polish newspaper's report, Israeli authorities did not even request the prime minister's attendance in the ceremony. They knew what the response from Warsaw would be. President Issac Herzog is also expected to be absent, unlike the ceremony a decade ago that marked the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz camp, when then president Reuven Rivlin was in attendance.

Rzeczpospolita reported that French President Emmanuel Macron and the King of Spain have already confirmed that they would attend the ceremony. Britain's King Charles, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier are also expected to be present. The organizers issued an invitation to incoming U.S. president Donald Trump but expect that the United States would be represented by the Vice President J.D. Vance or Secretary of State Marco Rubio. Russian President Vladimir Putin was not invited.

12.20.24 – Fr

Sweden follows Israel on Gaza aid; no funds to UNRWA, other agencies approved

12.20.24 – Fr

Sweden will no longer fund UNRWA aid agency, minister says

Swedish Aid Minister, Benjamin Dousa says his country plans to increase its overall humanitarian assistance to Gaza next year via alternative agencies such as the World Food Program

Zeev Avrahami, Reuters |03:16

Sweden will no longer fund the U.N. refugee agency for Palestinians (UNRWA) but instead provide humanitarian assistance to Gaza via other channels, the Nordic country's aid minister, Benjamin Dousa, told Swedish broadcaster TV4 on Friday.

Israel, which will ban UNRWA's operations in the country from late January, has repeatedly accused the agency of being involved in the Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas-led attacks on Israel that triggered the ongoing war in Gaza.

Sweden's decision to end funding for UNRWA was in response to the Israeli ban, as it will make channeling aid to the Palestinians via the agency more difficult, Dousa said. Sweden plans to increase its overall humanitarian assistance to Gaza next year, he added.

"There are several other organizations in Gaza, I have just been there and met several of them," the minister said, naming the U.N. World Food Program as one potential recipient. Humanitarian aid enters Gaza

Israel's deputy foreign minister Sharren Haskel thanked Dousa for his decision and said she was pleased to find a way to cooperate with his country. "His decision highlights the importance of diplomatic dialogue between nations and our ability to change reality through meaningful conversation," Haskel said. "There are good and appropriate alternatives for humanitarian aid and I am pleased that he was willing to listen and work differently."

The United Nations General Assembly threw its support behind UNRWA this month, demanding that Israel respect the agency's mandate and "enable its operations to proceed without impediment or restriction".

12.20.24 – Fr

PA governor blames IDF protecting settlers; for West Bank mosque fire & graffiti

12.20.24 – Fr

Settlers set fire to West Bank mosque, Palestinians say

Flames cause damage to the mosque in the village of Marda where graffiti sprayed nearby reads 'revenge' and 'death to Arabs'; local governor says IDF to blame for protecting the settlers allowing them to carry out acts of vandalism in villages Einav Halabi|02:30

The Palestinian news agency Wafa reported on Friday that a mosque in the West Bank village of Marda was set on fire. The Palestinians claimed that settlers were behind the act.

Images from the scene showed graffiti sprayed on the walls nearby including 'revenge' and 'death to the Arabs' in Hebrew.

According to Wafa, local residents managed to put out the fire before he could burn down the building and damage was caused only to the entrance to the mosque.

The Palestinian governor of Salfit said the IDF was responsible because it protected violent settlers. "This would not have happened without the continued protection that the settlers receive from the Israeli military which allows them to enter villages and spray racial graffiti and carry out acts of vandalism," he said.

The Palestinians called on the international community to intervene.

Shin Bet and Israel police said in a statement that a joint investigation was underway in to the alleged arson attack and the inciteful graffiti. "We regard such events gravely and will work diligently to bring those responsible to justice."

12.20.24 – Fr

CIA chief leaves Doha, no progress in negotiations over disagreements

12.20.24 – Fr

CIA chief leaves Doha, no progress in negotiations, report

The obstacles to reaching a cease-fire and hostage release deal remain the identity of the hostages and Palestinian prisoners who would be freed, number of IDF troops to remain in Gaza, return of residents of the Strip to the north and control of borders

Daniel Edelson, New York|00:45

CIA chief William Burns has left Doha, the Washington Post reported on Friday after no progress has been made in the negotiations to reach a cease-fire and hostage exchange deal.

A source told the paper that there are disagreements still in place over which of the hostages and which of the Palestinian prisoners would be released, the number of IDF troops that would remain in the Strip, the right of displaced Gazan residents to return to the northern areas, who would administer the border passages and the end to the war.

The post spoke to a member of a diplomatic mission in the region who said Both Israel and Hamas as well as the Qatari and Egyptian mediators, "wanted to prepare the ground for [president-elect Donald] Trump," who will take office next month.

"They know that if they don't reach such an agreement it will not be a good thing for any of them, including the Israelis," the person told the paper. "I think this has resulted in a lot of developments. ... The question is whether they wait for Trump."

12.20.24 – Fr

Power in Yemeni capital hit, left without electricity, could turn the public into chaos

12.20.24 – Fr

The Iranian arm Israel is finding hard to cut off
Israeli strikes in the Yemeni capital mark the end of restraint against the Iran-backed Houthis that remain one of Tehran's final operating proxies; Power cuts make Yemeni citizens fear serious war against Israel
Lior Ben Ari | 17:02

When Israeli Air Force fighter jets were already in the air last night to strike 2,000 km (1243 miles) from Israel and end weeks of restraint in response to repeated Houthi attacks, it was another reminder that the war in this country has not disappeared. Meanwhile, millions of residents in central Israel were awakened in the middle of the night by sirens following the launch of a missile from Yemen.

The interception failed, and its warhead exploded on a school in the Ramat Ef'al neighborhood of Ramat Gan. An hour later, the Israeli Air Force bombed a series of strategic Houthi targets, including their stronghold in Sana'a for the first time.

However, an indication of the difficulty in inflicting significant damage from such a great distance came later that afternoon, when a drone launched from Yemen was intercepted off the coast of Tel Aviv.

In recent weeks, since the cease-fire with Hezbollah, which was battered in Lebanon and the subsequent collapse of Bashar Assad's regime in Syria, the Houthis have essentially become one of Iran's last remaining operational proxies. In fact, they've even intensified their attacks against Israel.

Wednesday's operation marked the third IDF strike against the Houthis, two and a half months after the previous one. As before, Israel claimed significant strategic damage was inflicted, but the Houthi attacks persist.

The IDF said that the new strikes aimed to disable Houthi-controlled ports, targeting eight tugboats. However, sources at the central port in Hodeidah countered that they still have additional vessels capable of towing ships.

Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi vowed in a televised speech on Thursday that the group's actions would continue as part of what it calls the "Gaza support campaign." "They keep escalating, and we don't care about their aggression," said al-Houthi, who leads a terrorist organization seemingly indifferent to the suffering of his people.

His terror group, which withstood years of Saudi bombings that resulted in mass civilian casualties, remains defiant. Al-Houthi declared that the strikes wouldn't affect the "escalation under phase five of support for Gaza."

Al-Houthi also claimed that his group launched 1,147 ballistic missiles, cruise missiles or drones, many of which targeted commercial ships, significantly disrupting a crucial trade route for the global economy in the Red Sea throughout the war.

Attacks on ships have also effectively shuttered Eilat's port, with a dramatic reduction in the number of vessels arriving and some workers being furloughed. According to the IDF,

the Houthis have fired over 200 missiles and 170 drones at Israel since October 7, 2023, most of which were intercepted or failed to penetrate Israeli territory.

Ynet's security analyst Ron Ben-Yishai assessed that the operation is unlikely to deter the Houthis or impair their ability and intent to continue launching missiles and UAVs at Israel. Worse, he noted, they'll continue targeting global commercial and military shipping in the Red Sea, causing significant economic disruption to energy transport – a campaign they've been waging for over a year.

His prediction was reinforced Thursday afternoon when the IDF announced it had intercepted a drone off the coast of Tel Aviv without triggering alarms, in accordance with policy. It's believed the UAV was launched from Yemen.

Ben-Yishai explained that the Houthis, a Shiite jihadist-ethnic group, are determined to demonstrate that, unlike Hezbollah, Hamas and the Iranians, they remain steadfast, fighting to support Gaza, which they perceive as under attack by Israel.

Alongside Shiite militias in Iraq, the Houthis likely anticipate that a cease-fire in Gaza is imminent as part of an emerging hostage deal. He added that the difficulty in targeting them also stems from a lack of intelligence capabilities, with Israel having limited resources to allocate for intelligence gathering at Yemen's distance.

The U.S. over the past also hoped year to deter the Houthis due to the severe disruptions in the Red Sea trade route. Still, outgoing U.S. President Joe Biden's administration has avoided targeting their strategic assets as Israel has, which has previously frustrated Jerusalem.

While the Americans and British conducted numerous strikes, these were relatively limited and aimed at intercepting missiles and drones about to be launched. Washington remains concerned about significant escalation that could ignite a regional war. Even the U.S. strike in Sana'a on Monday was effectively aimed at empty Houthi headquarters.

Will the Yemeni people turn on the terror group?

Still, the Israeli Air Force's strikes were extensive in scope despite the significant challenges with a source in Sana'a reporting that they caused panic in the city. For the first time, power plants in the Yemeni capital were hit and thousands of families were reportedly left without electricity.

"People woke up in shock. The capital of Yemen woke up in shock. I went to my neighbors, whose buildings depend on government electricity and they had no power," the source said. He noted that while more expensive private generators were more commonly used in the past, access to government-supplied electricity had recently expanded, with about 50% of residents relying on it.

"We're afraid of what's to come because it's the first time power stations have been targeted," the source added. "We've gotten used to the fact that hills and military sites are always attacked, whether empty or containing soldiers and equipment but this time it was directed at civilian-essential facilities."

"This could turn the public against the Sana'a regime, which has plunged the people into chaos and war with Israel. Many fear a repeat of the scenarios in Syria and Lebanon," he continued, referencing the fall of Assad's regime and the fighting against Hezbollah.

"However," the source stressed, "some people don't care about the incidents – they say this is an ideological and religious war with Israel and that it's an honor." Many Houthi supporters in the capital gather every Friday for massive rallies as part of their "Gaza support campaign."

In an interview with Reuters, a resident and Houthi supporter said he wasn't afraid. "We've been fighting their tails for more than 10 years," he said, referring to Saudi Arabia and the UAE. "So now, when we're fighting face-to-face with the Zionists and Americans? We're not scared at all.

Over 60 bombs were used in the operation according to the military, hitting "Houthi military targets along the western coastline and deep within Yemen."

The first wave of strikes began along Yemen's coastline at 3:15 a.m., followed by a second volley at 4:30 a.m. near Sana'a. The operation involved 14 fighter jets targeting ports at Ras Issa, Hodeidah and Salif, as well as fuel and oil tanks and a power station in Sana'a.

Defense Minister Israel Katz threatened to target Houthi leaders themselves, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu adding: "This morning, the Air Force attacked strategic targets of the Houthis in the port of Hodeidah and deep into Yemen. We did this in response to repeated Houthi attacks against civilian targets in Israel. Last night they attacked a school in Ramat Gan."

"After Hamas, Hezbollah and the Assad regime in Syria, the Houthis are almost the last arm of Iran's axis of evil. They are finding out, and will find out, the hard way that whoever harms Israel – will pay a very heavy price," he added.

12.20.24 – Fr

FBI foils ISIS attack planned on Israel New York Embassy; details under seal

12.20.24 – Fr

'Wrath of Allah': US indicts man who planned attack on Israeli Consulate in New York
FBI agent says he had conversations with Abdullah Ezzeldin Taha Mohamed Hassan from Virginia on social media and the Islamic State supporter shared his plan to join terror organization and carry out targeted attacks against Jews
Daniel Edelson, New York|16:00

The FBI arrested Virginia resident Abdullah Ezzeldin Taha Mohamed Hassan on suspicion of planning an attack against the Israeli Consulate General in New York. According to the charges listed in the indictment, Hassan was exposed after providing a covert agent with detailed instructions on building and planting a bomb.

The 14-page indictment which has been under seal outlines a network of well-planned actions, including detailed instructions for constructing explosive devices, purchasing weapons and tips for fleeing the U.S. after the attack.

The investigation began in May when Fairfax County Police in Virginia received an anonymous tip about an X account promoting terrorism and supporting the Islamic State terror group (ISIS). The account, managed by Hassan, included posts praising terrorists and advocating violence against Jews and Americans.

One post described Osama bin Laden as an "idol," declaring that "the struggle against Islam's enemies will continue forever."

The FBI recruited an undercover informant who approached Hassan via X. Posing as someone sharing his extremist beliefs, the informant engaged Hassan in months of conversations during which Hassan revealed his intentions and actions.

In November, Hassan sent the informant the address of the Israeli Consulate General in New York, suggesting it as a target for an attack, calling it a "symbol of world Jewry." Hassan also provided a text for a "martyrdom video" he planned to record before the attack, which included threats to Western countries and a declaration of the "Wrath of Allah."

He instructed the informant to say: "Your governments have been complicit in and utterly responsible for the deaths of millions of men, women and children across al-Sham, Iraq and our beloved Al Quds. Now the time has come for revenge."

Court documents revealed that Hassan instructed the informant on how to build a Triacetone Triperoxide (TATP) explosive device, one of the most potent and commonly used by terrorist organizations. He also shared links for purchasing assault rifles and ammunition, recommending a Zastava rifle.

During their exchanges, Hassan proposed various scenarios for the attack on the consulate and other locations, such as a mass shooting or detonating an explosive in a crowded area. He stressed the importance of live-streaming the event on social media as part of a "global terror campaign."

Hassan also planned for the aftermath, advising the informant on how to escape the U.S. post-attack. He suggested fleeing to ISIS-controlled areas in Africa or other regions without extradition agreements with the U.S., stating: "If you plan it right, you can evade authorities and find safe refuge."

The indictment against Hassan also included a history of social media posts praising al-Qaida leaders like bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri and celebrating attacks on Jewish targets worldwide. Hassan reportedly used multiple accounts to evade platform moderation.

The U.S. Department of Justice announced that Hassan will face charges including disseminating information on constructing explosives, aiding terrorism and planning an attack against foreign diplomats.

The district attorney's office handling the case said in a statement: "This is one of the most severe cases of attempted attacks on a Jewish target on U.S. soil." If convicted on all counts, Hassan faces a minimum of several decades in federal prison, with the possibility of life imprisonment without parole or even the death penalty, depending on the severity of the charges and the case's terrorist context.

"The State of Israel appreciates the swift action and cooperation with U.S. authorities in thwarting the attack on the consulate building," Israel's Consul General in New York Ofir Akunis said.

"This attempted act of terror is an attack on the entire State of Israel. It is further proof that international terrorism knows no borders and must be fought on every front and at all times. Its threats target the entire Western world and its values and the collaboration of all Western democracies against its dangers must be intensified."

12.19.24 – Th

Mossad to reveal Hezbollah pager plan on CBS '60 Minutes' - Sunday 6:30 central

12.19.24 – Th

Retired Mossad agents to reveal secrets of Hezbollah pager operation in US interview

Investigative program '60 Minutes' set to release special episode including exclusive interview on pager operation attributed to Israel

Ynet|15:35

American outlet CBS announced on Thursday that a special episode of the investigative program "60 Minutes" will air in the United States on Sunday, revealing behind-the-scenes secrets of the pager operation that launched Israel's intensified campaign against Hezbollah in Lebanon. While Israel has yet to officially claim responsibility for the operation, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has referred to it in the past.

According to the network, recently retired Mossad agents were interviewed for the program, speaking under condition of anonymity about how the covert operation was carried out and the decade-long preparations leading up to it. Instagram posts showed the agents and interviewer Lesley Stahl, who was reportedly holding one of the beepers allegedly prepared by Mossad.

The investigation is scheduled to air Sunday at 7:30 p.m. local time (2:30 a.m. Israel time, early Monday morning). Axios quoted one agent as saying they tested the devices "multiple times in order to make sure there is minimum damage. If we push the button the only one that will get injured is the terrorist himself. Even if his wife or his daughter will be just next to him, he's the only one that going to be harmed."

The pager operation was launched on September 17, following concerns that its execution was at risk of being uncovered. On the first day, Hezbollah operatives' pagers exploded in Lebanon and Syria. The following day, September 18, their walkie-talkies also exploded.

Hezbollah has not disclosed the exact number of casualties resulting from the incident. However, at least 59 individuals were reportedly killed in Lebanon and Syria, with approximately 4,500 injured, hundreds of them critically. Among the injured was Iran's ambassador to Lebanon, Mojtaba Amani.

12.19.24 – Th

Norway-UN resolution seeks Court opinion on Israel law banning UNRWA aid

12.19.24 – Th

UN votes to seek World Court opinion on Israeli law banning UNRWA activities
Norway-led resolution seeks International Court of Justice's opinion on Israeli legislation against the Palestinian aid agency and seeks to cement Israel's legal binding as a member state; Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon condemns move
Itamar Eichner, Reuters|13:47

The UN General Assembly on Thursday approved a resolution against Israel initiated by Norway in support of UNRWA, with 137 countries voting in favor and 12 against. The assembly approved the motion requesting an advisory opinion from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding Israeli legislation affecting UNRWA.

The move came in response to Israel's decision to ban the operation of the UN Palestinian refugee agency in the country from late January and obstacles faced by other UN agencies in their aid work in Gaza over the past year.

The ICJ, known as the World Court, is the United Nations' highest court and its advisory opinions carry legal and political weight although they are not binding. The Hague-based court has no enforcement powers if its opinions are ignored.

The resolution adopted on Thursday also expressed "grave concern about the dire humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory" and "calls upon Israel to uphold and comply with its obligations not to impede the Palestinian people from exercising its right to self-determination."

The new Israeli law does not directly ban UNRWA's operations in the West Bank and Gaza. However, it will severely impact UNRWA's ability to work. Top UN officials and the Security Council describe UNRWA as the backbone of Gaza's aid response.

In a letter to the 15-member Security Council on Wednesday, Israel's Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon said that "replacing UNRWA with relief schemes that will adequately provide essential assistance to Palestinian civilians is not at all impossible."

"Israel is willing and ready to work with international partners (and already does work tirelessly) so as to allow and facilitate the continued passage of humanitarian aid to civilians in Gaza, and to ensure the unhindered provision of these necessary basic services, in a way that does not undermine Israel's security," Danon wrote.

The UN has long complained of aid obstacles in Gaza since the war between Palestinian terror group Hamas and Israel began on October 7, 2023.

Danon spoke before the vote, saying: "We're repeating the same scenario where the priority is to attack Israel and undermine its right to defend its citizens. This time, the Palestinians are deploying a new tool in their diplomatic circus – the International Court of Justice."

“While they exploit your indifference and the court’s submission to their terror-supporting agendas, 100 innocent civilians are still held hostage in Gaza by Hamas and the Iranian regime is racing toward nuclear weapons,” he added.

“While you dwell on the past, Israel is focused on the future – one not dominated by the forces of Iranian evil,” Danon said. “Help us turn the Middle East into a place of peace and stability, not hatred and terror.”

The resolution initiated by Norway aims to clarify Israel’s legal obligations as a UN member state to allow the free operation of UN agencies in the Palestinian territories (Gaza and the West Bank), particularly humanitarian agencies like UNRWA. It also calls for immediate action to compel Israel to adhere to international law, cease the alleged obstruction of humanitarian aid delivery amid the enclave’s deteriorating conditions and enable UNRWA’s operations in the country.

12.19.24 – Th

Suspected terror attack in Jerusalem: Elderly woman stabbed outside her home

12.19.24 – Th

Suspected terror attack in Jerusalem: Elderly woman stabbed in her home

The 74-year-old woman called her daughter, and was taken to Shaare Zedek Hospital in Jerusalem, where she is reported to be in stable condition; Shin Bet is involved in the investigation, and suspicion has grown that this was a nationalist attack

Liran Tamari|11:14

A 74-year-old woman was stabbed Thursday morning in her home in Jerusalem by a suspect who apparently broke in. She was evacuated from the scene in moderate to serious condition. Hours later, Ynet learned that the General Security Service has been involved in investigating the case, and by evening suspicions grew that it was a nationalist attack.

The stabbed 74-year-old woman was taken to Shaarey Zedek hospital in Jerusalem. The police said the stabbing took place on a street in the city center. “Police forces, including the Jerusalem District Criminal Investigation Unit, closed off the scene and began collecting evidence,” the statement said. “The woman was evacuated by medical personnel, in serious condition as they described it, for further medical treatment. At this stage, the circumstances of the incident are unknown, and the police investigation is ongoing.”

The police later issued a gag order on the investigation, stating that “all avenues are being explored in order to reach the truth.” Forensic science lab personnel arrived at the apartment and began collecting evidence.

The report of the woman's **stabbing** was received by the **emergency 101 hotline** in the Jerusalem area at **11:47 a.m.**, after the victim called her daughter and told her what had happened. She was evacuated to Shaare Zedek **Hospital in Jerusalem in serious condition**. The scene on the **Jerusalem street outside the apartment where an elderly woman was stabbed**

"We were led to the woman, who was **lying at home, unconscious** and suffering from penetrating injuries (**stabbing**) **to her body**. We provided her with medical treatment and evacuated her in Magen David Adom intensive care unit to the hospital in serious and unstable condition."

The woman was **initially taken to the hospital in serious condition**, but her condition later improved slightly and is **now defined as moderate-serious**.

12.19.24 – Th

The Houthis will learn the hard way, Netanyahu warns

12.19.24 – Th

The Houthis 'will learn the hard way', Netanyahu warns

Prime minister refers to Israeli **attack on Houthi targets deep inside Yemen overnight** in a Hebrew video statement; 'When Israel takes action against the Houthis, it is acting on behalf of the entire international community'; Following statement, **Israeli Air Force intercepts drone from Yemen off coast of Tel Aviv**

Itamar Eichner, Yoav Zitun|08:52

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made his first **public statement** on **Thursday** afternoon about **Israel's overnight airstrikes on Houthi targets deep inside Yemen**, in an operation dubbed Operation White City.

The Houthis "are finding out, and will find out, the hard way that **whoever harms Israel will pay a very heavy price**," he said in a Hebrew-language video statement.

"This morning, the **Air Force attacked strategic targets of the Houthis** in the **port** of Hodeidah and **deep into Yemen**. We did this in response to repeated Houthi attacks against civilian targets in Israel. Last night they attacked a school in Ramat Gan," Netanyahu said in the statement.

"They are not attacking just us – they are attacking the entire world. **They are attacking the international shipping and commercial lanes**. Thus, when **Israel takes action against the Houthis**, it is acting on behalf of the entire international community. The Americans understand this very well, as do many others," he continued.

"After Hamas, Hezbollah and the Assad regime in Syria, the **Houthis are almost the last arm of Iran's axis of evil**. They are finding out, and will find out, the hard way that whoever harms Israel – will pay a very heavy price," he concluded.

Air raid sirens jolted central Israel overnight, stretching from the Shfela region to the Sharon area, as the Arrow missile defense system intercepted a ballistic missile launched from Yemen. Following the interception of the Houthi missile, Israeli fighter jets targeted military sites belonging to Yemen's Houthi forces along the western coast and inland regions of Yemen, the IDF announced early Thursday, marking its first operation in Yemen since September.

On Thursday afternoon, the IDF intercepted an unmanned drone off the coast of Tel Aviv over the Mediterranean Sea. No alerts were activated before its interception. The IDF determined that the drone had been launched from Yemen. It is the ninth missile or drone attack by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels against Israel this month, including the overnight attack and two on Monday.

The IDF said the overnight strikes on Yemen aimed to degrade Houthi military capabilities and prevent the use of targeted facilities for military operations, including the smuggling of Iranian weapons. The Houthis, aligned with Iran, have repeatedly launched UAVs and surface-to-surface missiles at Israel, most of which were successfully intercepted, according to the military.

Yemeni media reported that two major power stations near the capital of Sanaa, Haziz to the south and Dhahban to the north, were struck, leaving much of the surrounding area without electricity. In addition, the Houthi-affiliated Al-Masirah channel reported strikes on oil facilities in Ras Issa and the port of Hodeidah, where multiple locations were targeted.

The operation, planned over several weeks, took place approximately 2,000 kilometers (1,200 miles) from Israeli territory, deep within Yemen. Dozens of fighter jets and additional aircraft participated in the mission, with aerial refueling enabling the extended reach of the operation.

Following the reports of Israel's retaliatory strikes, senior Houthi official Hezam al-Asad posted a threat in Hebrew on X, reading, "Tel Aviv will not be safe as long as the siege and attacks on our people in Gaza continue." In a subsequent tweet, he added, "We will not abandon Gaza, even if we die."

12.19.24 – Th

Drone threat from Gaza neutralized by Israeli Air Force near border

12.19.24 – Th

Drone threat from Gaza neutralized by Israeli Air Force near border

Two drones launched from Gaza breached Israeli airspace, triggering sirens in the Gaza border region; One drone was intercepted by the Israeli Air Force, while the other crashed near Kibbutz Urim; Incident underscores ongoing tensions along Gaza border

Yoav Zitun, Roni Green Shaulov|08:01

The Israeli Air Force intercepted an unmanned aerial vehicle launched from the Gaza Strip over the border region in Israel on Thursday. This marks more than 14 months since the war began. No fatalities or injuries have been reported.

At 11:45 a.m., alarms were triggered in Kibbutz Magen and Moshav Ein HaBesor, located within the Eshkol Regional Council in the Gaza border region. Shortly after, the IDF announced it was investigating the incident, and footage of the event began circulating.

Incident resolved, residents informed

Approximately 40 minutes after the alarms sounded, the Home Front Command issued a statement declaring "the incident has ended." Similarly, the Eshkol Regional Council informed residents they could safely exit their protected areas.

The drone identified in the Gaza border region had seemingly "disappeared," leaving the military uncertain about its location, intended target or entry point. Further updates from the Eshkol Regional Council later revealed that two UAVs had infiltrated the area, prompting the alarms.

Police subsequently closed Route 241 to traffic between Ma'on Junction and Urim to address one of the UAVs, which had crashed in the area. "One UAV exited the airspace of the council, while the second UAV crashed in the area between Ma'on and Urim and is currently being handled by the police," authorities confirmed.

The incident underscores the ongoing tensions along the Gaza border region, as security forces remain vigilant against aerial threats.

12.19.24 – Th

Hamas wants 7-day truce before hostage release; Israel demands soldiers in first phase

12.19.24 – Th

Hamas wants 7-day truce before hostage release; Israel demands soldiers in first phase
Sources tell Lebanon outlet that the terror group cannot compile a comprehensive list of living hostages without at least a week-without fighting; but expressed optimism, stating 'An agreement could be reached very soon'

Einav Halabi, Lior Ben Ari, Sharon Kidon|03:39

Hamas officials told the Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Akhbar newspaper in Lebanon that negotiations in Doha are progressing well, with most issues resolved. However, two critical sticking points remain, according to the report published Thursday.

The first dispute involves Israel's demand for a comprehensive list of all hostages—both alive and deceased—held by Hamas and other Palestinian factions. Hamas officials reportedly insist that verifying such a list is impossible without at least a week-long cease fire. Despite the impasse, sources suggest an agreement may be within reach "very soon."

The second disagreement centers on Israel's insistence that soldiers, including those injured, be prioritized in the initial phase of the humanitarian release deal. Hamas has reportedly rejected this, claiming it contradicts prior understandings of the release framework for Israeli hostages.

Ofir Angrest, whose brother, IDF soldier Matan Angrest, is among those held captive in Gaza, said that "toppling Hamas is not an option. We demand that soldiers be included in the deal."

Despite these differences, Palestinian factions reportedly believe that Israel's seriousness in pursuing an agreement could resolve the remaining issues.

Meanwhile, Sky News Arabia quoted a member of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's team as saying there has been "additional progress in recent days" toward a ceasefire in Gaza. Hamas reportedly informed mediators that it cannot provide an exact number of hostages it holds, which has delayed the release of further details.

The deal is expected to proceed in stages. The U.S. official noted that both Israel and Hamas appear more determined than ever to end the war.

Israeli officials are awaiting a formal list of living hostages from Hamas, emphasizing that their top priority is maximizing the number of living captives returned. Hamas has offered to include the bodies of deceased hostages to address any shortfall in living captives released during the first phase.

For now, the negotiations continue, with both sides under pressure to strike a deal amid ongoing international mediation.

12.19.24 – Th

Israel disabled Houthi Yemen fuel storages, a power station, sea ports & tug boats

12.19.24 – Th

Israel disabled Houthi ports, goes after rebels economy

Military says strikes on the Iran backed proxy is after weeks of planning and not an immediate response to the overnight ballistic missile fired by the Houthis on Israel
Yoav Zitun, Lior Ben Ari|00:08

The Israeli strike on the Houthi rebels in Yemen early on Thursday, disabled three sea ports, Yemen media affiliated with the rebels said. The purpose of the Israeli attacks was to deal a significant financial blow to the Yemeni rebel forces.

The strikes were weeks in the planning and were carried out by dozens of fighter jets who also bombed the tug boats that bring ships into the ports. The military said the timing of the attack on the Houthis was decided according to operational considerations and was not in direct response to the ballistic missile fired at Israel overnight.

In the Yemen capital of Sanaa, which came under Israeli attack for the first time, the planes targeted fuel storages and a power station.

At least nine people were killed at the Ras Issa oil facility and others were hurt in seven strikes on the ports, local media claimed and according to reports in the Saudi Arabian press, in all, there were 16 strikes in the Israeli attacks that included the port city of Hodeida and the capital Sanaa.

A senior official for the Houthis said that the strikes by Israel and the U.S. forces on civilian installations including power stations and ports, reveal the hypocrisy of the West and said attacks in support of Gaza would continue and escalate in response to the escalations of the Israeli strikes.

IDF spokesperson Daniel Hagai said that the strikes aimed to degrade Houthi military capabilities and prevent the use of targeted facilities for military operations, including the smuggling of Iranian weapons.

Defense Minister Israel Katz made explicit threats warning Houthi leaders that Israel's "long hand" would find them. "Anyone who lifts a hand against Israel, his hand will be cut off," he said.

12.18.24 – We

Court presses prosecutors over holes in Netanyahu corruption case

12.18.24 – We

Court presses prosecutors over holes in Netanyahu corruption case

Judges challenge prosecutors to clarify key claims Netanyahu traded regulatory benefits for favorable media coverage; with gaps in evidence regarding Netanyahu's direct involvement, case could be significantly weakened

Netael Bandell | 14:21

A dramatic turn unfolded Wednesday in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's ongoing corruption trial, as judges challenged prosecutors on key elements of the charges in the "Bezeq-Walla Affair," popularly known as Case 4000.

The case alleges that Netanyahu, during his time as prime minister, granted regulatory benefits to telecom giant Bezeq in exchange for favorable media coverage on the Walla news site, both owned by businessman Shaul Elovitch.

During the hearing, Netanyahu reiterated his claim that he was unaware of any specific requests for media coverage made by his associates. However, the judges pressed prosecutors to clarify allegations of Netanyahu's involvement or knowledge, with Presiding Judge Rivka Friedman-Feldman questioning inconsistencies in the indictment.

Prosecutors argued that Netanyahu was generally aware of a pattern of systematic requests, even if he was not involved in every specific instance, but judges demanded evidence to support this claim.

Judge Oded Shaham, considered more lenient toward the prosecution, expressed concern about the lack of explicit references to Netanyahu's awareness in parts of the indictment. Prosecutor Yehudit Tirosh requested time to review materials and potentially revise their approach.

The indictment includes a detailed appendix listing 315 instances of alleged media requests as the basis for the bribery and breach of trust charges. However, if prosecutors fail to establish Netanyahu's direct knowledge or involvement, as many as 80 to 140 instances could be removed from consideration, potentially undermining up to 50% of the case.

Adding complexity, Netanyahu's defense lawyer, Amit Hadad, announced that Sara Netanyahu, the prime minister's wife, would not testify as a defense witness. Her absence could impact both Case 4000 and another case involving allegations of accepting expensive gifts (Case 1000).

Sara Netanyahu's testimony could have bolstered the prosecution's claims regarding her communications with Elovitch's associates, but her testimony was also critical for the defense's argument that gifts received from businessman Arnon Milchan's wife, Amanda, were part of a reciprocal relationship.

Next week, the trial will continue with further discussions on Netanyahu's alleged awareness of media requests and preparations for defense witnesses. A canceled hearing has been rescheduled in Jerusalem without Netanyahu's attendance, focusing on procedural issues.

12.18.24 – We

Hamas delegation to visit Cairo Sunday, negotiate prisoner release and deportation

12.18.24 – We

Hamas signals major concessions as Israel negotiates prisoner release and deportation
 Terror group may show flexibility on terrorist release terms, with reports naming Tehran as potential exile destination; senior Hamas officials exploring Marwan Barghouti's acceptance of exile to Turkey and demanding mediator guarantees for Israeli compliance with deal

Einav Halabi, Itamar Eichner, Lior Ben Ari|07:40

Negotiations between Israel and Hamas, mediated by the U.S., Egypt and Qatar, are now in their final stages, the Palestinian newspaper Al-Quds reported Wednesday.

According to sources quoted in the newspaper, at this stage, discussions are underway regarding the identity of the Palestinian prisoners who will be released as part of the deal.

The report claims that "heavyweight" terrorists serving life sentences will probably be deported to Turkey, and also to Iran—a country whose name has not been mentioned so far as a possible destination for exile. The rest, according to the report, will be released to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

Saudi channel Al Hadath claimed that these are "crucial hours" following a significant breakthrough achieved on some issues, particularly after Hamas gave up its demand for a complete end to the war in the first phase of the cease-fire, and agreed to the deportation of senior prisoners to Turkey or Qatar. Iran was not mentioned in this report.

Ynet learned on Tuesday that Hamas might show some flexibility on the issue of releasing terrorists who have been convicted of murdering Israelis and is considering them being exiled to a third country such as Turkey, Qatar or another Muslim country. Inmates are reportedly reluctant to return to the Gaza Strip, which largely lies in ruins, and exile may buy them a new life.

Meanwhile, sources close to a senior Hamas official claimed that Marwan Barghouti, who is considered the most senior of the Palestinian prisoners, and Ahmed Saadat—secretary-general of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, who plotted the 2001 assassination of Israeli minister Rehavam Ze'evi—would agree to deportation abroad as part of a deal. According to the sources, senior figures in the terrorist organization contacted the wives of Barghouti and Saadat and consulted with them about whether to agree to their deportation to Turkey. The women reportedly did not object to the offer and suggested that the prisoners be asked whether this was an acceptable option.

Despite optimism, a Hamas source told Saudi channel Asharq News that "Israel has so far refused to the release of senior Palestinian prisoners and leaders. Israel insists on deporting all prisoners with lengthy sentences out of the Palestinian territories."

The source added that Hamas is demanding various guarantees for the deal. "Israel wants an agreement without a signature, similar to previous wars, and is content with a Qatari and Egyptian declaration. We want a written agreement and are asking the mediators for guarantees that Israel will be committed to implementing all of its stages," he said. Al Hadath claims Hamas is demanding "international guarantees for Israel's commitment to the three stages of the agreement" and opposes checkpoints for displaced Gazans returning to northern Gaza during the cease-fire.

Talks are currently being conducted with heightened intensity following the collapse of the previous round in August. Hamas has reportedly made key concessions, including agreeing not to end the war during the first phase and expressing willingness to accept a limited Israeli military presence on the Philadelphia and Netzarim corridors at the conclusion of this phase.

An Israeli negotiating delegation arrived in Qatar on Monday, where Hamas representatives are also present. CIA Director Bill Burns was expected to arrive in Doha on Wednesday to join the discussions.

On Tuesday night, a senior American official told Ynet that a deal is forthcoming. "It's just a matter of time," the official claimed. However, an Israeli official countered, stating that "things are not yet ripe" and that "significant gaps" remain.

The proposed framework reportedly follows the outline revealed by U.S. President Joe Biden in May. If fully implemented, it is expected to bring about an end to the war in three stages.

The first phase is expected to last six weeks and will reportedly include the partial release of "humanitarian" hostages, such as women, the elderly and the sick—along with the return of the bodies of deceased hostages—in exchange for the release of Palestinian prisoners, a partial withdrawal of IDF forces and the introduction of increased humanitarian aid into Gaza. This phase may also allow refugees to return to northern Gaza.

Earlier, UK-based Arabic newspaper Asharq Al-Awsat reported that negotiations between Israel and Hamas had entered a "crucial phase." Sources in Cairo told the newspaper that the agreement could be signed once final details, particularly concerning the names of living hostages and Palestinian prisoners, are finalized.

According to the report, the deal could soon be completed. The emerging agreement reportedly includes a cease-fire during the first phase, an IDF withdrawal from city centers while maintaining a partial presence in the Netzarim and Philadelphi corridors, and conditions permitting the return of women and children to northern Gaza.

In subsequent phases, the report states, "the return of the men will be carried out according to an agreed mechanism." During the first phase, which will last 45 to 60 days, Hamas is expected to release some 30 hostages, both living and deceased, in exchange for Palestinian prisoners, including dozens serving life sentences. The agreement also includes transferring control of the Rafah crossing to the Palestinian Authority within an Egyptian-supervised framework, though not immediately.

Al Arabiya cited sources saying that Hamas had agreed to release "sick, elderly and female soldiers" held captive during the first phase. Simultaneously, a Hamas source told The New Arab that the organization's leadership had held several meetings with Qatari and Turkish officials in recent hours.

"A leading delegation from the movement is scheduled to visit Cairo on Sunday," the source said. "We prefer not to discuss the details of the proposals currently on the table."

12.18.24 – We

March recruits are the IDF in Jabaliya, clearing remaining Hamas in north Gaza

12.18.24 – We

'We'll be the last battalion here': Ynet reporter embeds with IDF troops in Jabaliya

The IDF Combat Engineering Corps' 601st Battalion's troops and commanders say they still have work to do in Gaza and will leave only once peace can be fully restored;

'Finding the hostages is our top priority'

Roni Green Shaulov|03:43

Fighting in the northern Gaza Strip has renewed since the IDF resumed its operations in the area. Now, the IDF Combat Engineering Corps' 601st Battalion is acting against underground terror tunnels and working to separate the northern part of the Strip from Gaza City proper to clear out remaining Hamas terrorists in the area.

"We've made significant progress in the two months we've been here," said Lt. Col. Yisgav Israeli, commander of the 601st Battalion. "If you walk from here (the starting point of the refugee camp) to the sea, you'll be safe."

"Our goal is to be the last soldiers in this area. To enter the area for the last time, no matter how long it takes," he added. "We'll be the last battalion here if it were up to us and we're here to finish the job."

Another commander we met on the ground showed us a drone image of the densely packed Jabaliya refugee camp. He zoomed in on a central building about a kilometer away from us. Near the building, dozens of black dots are seen moving back and forth.

"Look," he pointed, "these are terrorists in buildings we still haven't destroyed. At first, our objective was to push forward quickly, but now our focus is advancing to the heart of the camp and addressing the remaining threats. This isn't simple combat. Everything is dense and there are many narrow corridors. We're fully aware of the risks."

The scale of destruction in the Gaza Strip is staggering. We didn't see a single intact structure from the moment we passed the Zikim checkpoint to about 10 kilometers inside the strip. The Combat Engineering Corps is working without pause.

At one point, we met soldiers from the March 2024 draft. Barely 19 years old, they enlisted only eight months ago. Having just graduated high school and completed their training, they're now serving in Gaza and taking part in demolishing buildings. Despite the constant danger, their spirits remain high.

When do you expect to leave here?

"I don't know when we're leaving," Lt. Col. Israeli answered. "We're not planning on leaving anytime soon. This is our main mission and we're doing it around the clock. We still have weeks, maybe months, ahead of us."

At the end of our time with him, Lt. Col. Israeli wanted to share a message. He led us to the building he uses as his headquarters. Pulling back the curtain at the entrance, he stepped into a room and sat on the couch. "I wish things worked like this outside," he said, with a hint of frustration.

"This is what I expect from civilians and everyone else. Your sons are risking their lives for an important mission, so there's no need to argue over petty things back home. We all get along here as people: religious, secular, women, Druze. But when you step outside, you just want to throw your phone away and shut yourself in a room to avoid seeing what's happening. I found it really hard to handle."

Is there any chance of finding the hostages?

"Finding the hostages is our top priority. We're here daily and every day they aren't with us twists the knife a little deeper. We'll stay here and do whatever it takes to bring them home."

12.18.24 – We

IDF destroy underground Hezbollah headquarters & another storehouse in a Mosque

12.18.24 – We

Footage from Lebanon: IDF destroys underground Hezbollah headquarters

Combat Engineering Brigade troops located a tunnel route a few dozen meters in length leading to a Hezbollah headquarters.

Yoni Kempinski Dec 18, 2024, 5:54 PM (GMT+2)

Troops from the IDF Combat Engineering Brigade in southern Lebanon located a tunnel route a few dozen meters in length leading to a Hezbollah headquarters from which terror activities and launches on Israeli communities were directed over the past year.

In the headquarters, the soldiers found weapons, surveillance systems, and other military equipment that was used by Hezbollah to direct terror operations in the area.

Near the headquarters, the troops found arms storehouses along with another storehouse in a Mosque consisting of hundreds of explosives, rifles, grenades, and other military equipment.

After Yahalom Unit soldiers inspected the site, the Engineering forces destroyed the headquarters and the tunnel route and seized all the weapons.

12.18.24 – We

Significant gaps in Hamas negotiations as CIA chief set to arrive in Qatar

12.18.24 – We

Still 'significant' gaps in cease-fire negotiations as CIA chief set to arrive in Qatar

Senior U.S. official asserts 'there will be a deal'; With Israeli delegation in Doha, Jerusalem keeping a cool head; First phase expected to include 7-week cease-fire while second phase 'won't be easy'

Itamar Eichner, Einav Halabi|16:19

As progress appears to be continuing in talks for a cease-fire and hostage deal with Hamas - and in light of Defense Minister Israel Katz's statement that such an agreement is "closer than ever," a senior U.S. official told Ynet Tuesday evening that there will be a deal. "It's just a matter of time," he claims.

However, an Israeli official estimated that "things are not yet ripe." This does not mean that a deal will not be implemented, but he noted that "there are significant gaps." At the

same time, the Reuters news agency reported that CIA Director Bill Burns will arrive in Qatar.

An Israeli delegation left for Doha, the capital of Qatar, Monday night, and the source said that "it is likely that, in order to close a deal, the senior officials will have to come to Cairo, with Hamas representatives in another room. In the meantime, there is a lot of inaccurate information reaching the media."

According to information obtained by Ynet, the first phase of the deal will include a seven-week cease-fire, during which women, children and elderly hostages will be released and negotiations will take place on the second phase - in which all the men, the soldiers, and the bodies of the killed hostages will be returned. In the second phase, it appears, Israel will be forced to release a very large number of terrorists. "It will not be easy to digest," they explained in Israel.

Degel Hatorah Party chairman Moshe Gafni, a member of Knesset, met Wednesday with families of hostages, amid criticism from some of them about the intention to advance a partial deal first. "I don't know what I'm doing in this coalition," he told relatives of the hostages. "The government is going for a phased deal. I want a comprehensive deal with all the hostages."

A source familiar with the details said that behind the scenes, as Haaretz first reported, talks are underway led by the Americans to bring a normalization deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia and other Muslim countries back to the table. Ron Dermer, the Minister of Strategic Affairs who is close to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has been working for a long time on a wording that would be acceptable to Saudi Arabia in the context of a vague commitment to a future Palestinian state.

Now, Israel understands, this is needed not only for an agreement to normalize relations, but also for Saudi Arabia to agree to finance the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip the day after the war. Both outgoing President Joe Biden's people and the staff of President-elect Donald Trump are involved in those negotiations with Saudi Arabia. The one pushing for this is Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, who is interested in bringing about a hostage deal during Biden's term - which will end in about a month with Trump's inauguration on January 20.

'Talks in Doha are almost at a final stage'

Palestinian sources claim that the talks on the hostage deal taking place in Doha have reached an "advanced, almost final stage," the Saudi-owned Al-Sharq channel reported. The report also revealed the deal that is apparently in the works. The first phase - humanitarian - will include bringing aid to the Gaza Strip and releasing all civilian Israeli hostages, and female soldiers, whether they are alive or their bodies are being held in Gaza.

The first phase will reportedly last at least six weeks, and the Israeli civilian hostages will be released in exchange for the release of hundreds of terrorists from Israeli prisons. The aid to Gaza will come immediately after the start of the cease-fire - and will also be accompanied by an Israeli withdrawal from the Philadelphi corridor. The forces will

remain on the eastern side of the Rafah crossing - and will partially and gradually withdraw from the Netzarim corridor.

The Washington Post reported earlier Tuesday that Hamas insists on the return of the displaced to the north of the Gaza Strip, and the Saudi report also claims that they will be allowed to return to Gaza City and the northern Gaza Strip, with an IDF supervision mechanism that will ensure that Hamas terrorists and factions of other terrorist organizations do not take over the area.

The Palestinian authorities, the report noted, did not reveal further details regarding that mechanism, and it is still unclear how it will operate. In the second phase of the agreement, the remaining Israeli hostages, including soldiers and officers, also will be released in exchange for the release of terrorists - the number of whom has not yet been finally agreed upon. Among other things, dozens of terrorists who have been sentenced to long prison terms are also expected to be released.

The sources noted that this list does not currently include prisoners considered terror "leaders", such as Marwan Barghouti. Israel, it is claimed, insists on deporting these terrorists. At this stage, Israel will also complete its withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, with forces being allowed to remain in the eastern and northern border areas. After that, the end of the war will be declared and the blockade on the Gaza Strip will be lifted, including the opening of the crossings.

And who will manage those crossings? According to the sources, the Palestinian Authority, in coordination with Egypt and the European Union, will be responsible for supervising the Rafah crossing. The crossing will be activated gradually with the entry of aid and the transfer of the wounded and sick from Gaza.

There has also been discussion about the "day after" the war. The identity of the administrator of the Gaza Strip will be agreed upon at the end of the war, according to the report. The one who will decide on this will be a committee with "independent powers," which will operate in cooperation with the Palestinian Authority. This, however, requires a presidential decree from Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.

12.18.24 – We

IDF establishes five reserve brigades, aged 38-58 to bolster border & local defenses

12.18.24 – We

IDF establishes a reserve division for troops aged 38-58 to bolster border defense

The David Brigades was created to prevent enemy infiltrations like the one on October 7; It consists of five reserve brigades, and is set to strengthen border defenses and respond rapidly to threats, with operational readiness targeted for 2025; 'Struggling to meet recruitment targets'

Yoav Zitun|15:23

The IDF announced the establishment of five new reserve brigades on Tuesday, known as the "David Brigades," to enhance defensive capabilities along Israel's borders in response

to evolving operational needs and lessons learned from the ongoing war and the October 7 terror attack.

The brigades – Negev (“Negba”), Shephelah (“Yonatan”), Valleys (“Yizraeli”), Jerusalem (“Ari”), and Galilee-Golan – will be tasked with providing a rapid defensive response to sudden events. Recruitment will be based on soldiers’ residential areas, enabling a more immediate and effective initial response.

The units will primarily consist of reserve soldiers aged 38-58, most of whom are volunteers with extensive experience gained during both their military service and civilian lives.

IDF Chief of the General Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi emphasized the need to expand the military’s capabilities.

"In this war, we have learned that the IDF needs to be larger and broader to face difficult situations and prolonged wars," Halevi said. "Over these months, we are establishing new brigades of reservists comprised mostly of individuals who are already over the exemption age and have shown a willingness, recognizing the urgency of the moment, to step up and say we are returning to serve, returning to the reserves. Although we are not at the official age for reserve duty, we come with the right spirit and an understanding of the necessity."

Halevi highlighted the importance of easing the current strain on Israel’s reserve forces, who have faced an unprecedented operational load. "When they carry out operational duties, we will be able to alleviate the burden on the reserves, which has been so heavy over the past year and three months. I must salute the reservists who have handled this burden with exceptional quality and great honor," he added.

Maj. Gen. (res.) Moti Baruch, the founder of the new brigades, underscored the need to adapt to the changing security environment.

"We all understand that the security reality has changed, and we must adapt accordingly. These are people who are ready to volunteer and play a central role in strengthening security, and we view this as a significant operational advantage," Baruch said.

The division will include approximately 15,000 infantry reservists, equipped with personal weapons, marksmen, grenade launchers, snipers and drone teams for reconnaissance and attack missions. The units will not operate armored vehicles but are designed for swift, flexible deployments.

Over the past nine months since the ambitious plan was launched, the IDF has managed to recruit around 3,000 soldiers, including 100 company commanders out of the 130 required. "We are struggling to meet recruitment targets," the IDF admitted.

"We are currently in contact with another 6,000 individuals who are in the process of enlisting, but there is a strong willingness among many people, even those in their 40s and 50s, to serve. Many recruits will be veterans of combat engineering and similar units."

Reservists in the new division will be on high alert and able to mobilize rapidly from their homes during emergencies. As a result, they will keep their personal weapons and uniforms at home, despite the associated risks of theft or safety incidents.

The IDF also plans for one of the division's battalions to be composed of Bedouin soldiers, featuring four combat companies from the Galilee and one company from the Negev.

To join the new division, soldiers must complete a thorough bureaucratic process, including providing a clean criminal record, documentation verifying their mental and physical health and other approvals.

The initiative reflects the IDF's shift toward bolstering defense capabilities and readiness amid changing security threats, relying on experienced reservists and volunteers committed to safeguarding the nation.

12.17.24 – Tu

PM visits troops on Mount Hermon: will remain awaiting other arrangements

12.17.24 – Tu

Netanyahu visits Syrian side of Mount Hermon: Israel will remain 'until another arrangement is found'

Prime minister visits site taken over by IDF with heads of the defense establishment; 'We are here at a crossroads to decide on Israel's preparedness in this important place'
Itamar Eichner|13:00

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said during his visit to the Syrian side of Mount Hermon on Tuesday that Israel and Israeli troops will remain at the site "until another arrangement is found that guarantees Israel's security."

Netanyahu made the statement alongside the heads of the defense establishment. "The events in Syria are happening at a dizzying pace, and their consequences could determine fates," he said.

Netanyahu held a briefing Tuesday on the site over the Syrian border, together with Defense Minister Israel Katz, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, Northern Command Commander Gen. Ori Gordin, and Shin Bet head Ronen Bar. According to a statement from his office: "The Prime Minister reviewed the IDF deployment in the area and set guidelines for the future."

"I am here on the summit of Mt. Hermon with the Defense Minister, the IDF Chief-of-Staff, the Head of Northern Command, the Director of the ISA and senior commanders. We are holding this assessment in order to decide on the deployment of the IDF in this important place until another arrangement is found that ensures Israel's security," he says.

"This is nostalgic for me; I was here 53 years ago with my soldiers on a Sayeret Matkal patrol," he says. "The place hasn't changed, it's the same place, but its importance to

Israel's security has only been reinforced in recent years, and especially in recent weeks with the dramatic events taking place here below us in Syria. We will determine the best arrangement that will ensure our security.”

Syrian rebel leader Ahmad al-Sharaa (formerly Abu Mohammed al-Golani), addressed Israel for the first time over the weekend and said that Syria will continue to adhere to the disengagement agreement signed in 1974 following the Yom Kippur War. He called on the international community to ensure that Israel remained committed to the agreement.

In a conversation he held on Monday with a small group of journalists, al-Sharaa sharply criticized Israel's "military advances" into Syrian territory beyond the Golan Heights and into the buffer zone declared by the UN under the agreement, which is considered disputed according to international consensus.

Israel has described its advances into Syrian territory as defensive measures aimed at preventing armed groups from seizing positions near the border and ensuring the security of communities in the Golan Heights.

12.17.24 – Tu

Turkey amasses force on Syrian border for imminent assault on Kurds

12.17.24 – Tu

Turkey amasses force on Syrian border for 'imminent' assault on Kurds

American officials say Ankara is set to launch offensive against US-backed Kurdish territories in country in a bid to shape Syria's future; Trump calls Erdogan a 'smart guy' Ynet|05:11

Senior U.S. officials told the Wall Street Journal on Tuesday that Turkey and allied militias are amassing forces along the Syrian border, raising concerns that Ankara was planning a large-scale invasion of the country's Kurdish-held territory backed by the United States.

The forces include militias and Turkish commanders in civilian clothing, along with significant artillery units concentrated near Kobani, a key Kurdish city in Syria close to the Turkish border.

According to the officials — one of whom noted that an “imminent” Turkish assault could take place — within hours or days, the troop buildup began after the fall of Bashar Assad's regime in early December.

The current buildup resembles Turkey's preparations for its 2019 incursion into northeastern Syria. "We are focused on it and pressing for restraint," one U.S. official said.

In a press conference held on Monday, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump addressed the turmoil in Syria, saying that the rebels who overthrew Assad's regime were "controlled" by Turkey.

Trump, who had previously declared that the U.S. should avoid involvement in Syria, signaled his intent to maintain minimal engagement in the newly established rebel-led country. He also praised Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who reportedly supported the rebels' surprise offensive and is now working to strengthen Turkey's influence in the new Damascus regime.

"Nobody knows who the other side is, but I do!," Trump said, likely referring to the widespread uncertainty about the true nature of the jihadist Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham rebels, whose leader, Ahmad al-Sharaa, (formerly Abu Mohammed al-Golani), is currently attempting to present a more moderate image to the West.

"Nobody knows who will rule in the final. I believe it is Turkey. Turkey is very smart, he (Erdogan) is a very smart guy and he's very tough. Turkey did an unfriendly takeover without a lot of lives being lost," Trump added, stressing that Turkey would now be a key player in shaping Syria's future.

12.17.24 – Tu

IDF chopper lands near Damascus, troops on ground for 20 minutes

12.17.24 – Tu

IDF chopper lands near Damascus, troops on ground for 20 minutes - report

In the out of the ordinary incident, Israeli forces said to enter military facility in the area of the Syrian capital; at the same time Israel strikes Damascus suburbs

Lior Ben Ari|04:11

An Israeli helicopter landed Monday overnight near one of the military sites in the Damascus area, sources told the Russian news agency Sputnik on Tuesday. "Soldiers entered the site and left after about 20 minutes, heading toward southern Syria," the report claimed. Reports of Israeli strikes in the Sitt Zaynab area on the outskirts of Damascus arrived shortly after.

Hezbollah-affiliated outlet Al-Mayadeen reported on Tuesday on additional IDF advances in the buffer zone area in Syria. According to the report, Israeli forces "entered the front neighborhoods of the town of Hader."

Israeli officers have already met with local village leaders and elders in the area, following a video showing Druze residents in Hader requesting that Israel annex the area. Tribal sources in Syria told Lebanon's Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Akhbar that some view a temporary Israeli presence in Druze villages as a preferable alternative to a takeover by rebel group Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham in those areas until minority protection mechanisms in the country are established.

However, the report noted that village heads rejected the annexation angle, stressing their connection to Syria in their statements.

12.17.24 – Tu

Defense Minister Katz poses IDF to maintain freedom to operate in Gaza

12.17.24 – Tu

Israel to maintain freedom to operate in Gaza, Katz says

Defense Minister says Israel will not allow Hamas to reorganize and rebuild and to pose a threat to communities; IDF prepares to cut off northern areas and prevent return of displaced civilians

Yoav Zitun|03:41

Defense Minister Israel Katz said on Monday that Israel will have security control over Gaza with full freedom to operate in the Strip, after defeating Hamas in the enclave.

"We will not allow any terrorists to organize and attack Israeli communities and citizens from Gaza," Katz said. "We will not allow the return to the reality of before the Oct. 7 massacre."

One of the central questions still undetermined for the day after the war remains whether the IDF would allow the tens of thousands of displaced Gazans to return to the area of Jabaliya which has been mostly destroyed in the fighting, or whether they would be prevented from returning, a millions of displaced Gazans who have moved south, have been.

The military said that the northern third of the Strip would be cut off and remain mainly unpopulated, according to the decision of the government.

Ynet has learned that the IDF's Southern Command intends to leave infrastructure established in recent months, in Gaza that would spread from the border with Israel all the way to the Mediterranean coast. The purpose is to prevent the return of civilians to areas that are close to the Israeli border communities.

If that scenario plays out, it would mean that Israel had adopted the so called "Generals' Plan" calling for the area or northern Gaza to remain unpopulated and under IDF security control to prevent the ability of Hamas to rehabilitate itself as a ruling force.

According to the authors of the plan, Hamas can only enforce its rule if it can control the civilian population, primarily by the provision of humanitarian aid. If there is no alternative to Hamas as a governing body, it will once again survive. Israel has thus far refused to allow the Palestinian Authority to take over civilian governance of the strip, leaving the IDF military control the only option to ensure security along the border. The military estimates there are still some 100 Hamas terrorists in the Jabaliya and surrounding areas of northern Gaza. Israel also believes there will be a few civilians who will remain there, mostly under the protection of humanitarian zones.

12.17.24 – Tu

Syrian rebel supports 1974 Israel border; called for removal of Assad sanctions

12.17.24 – Tu

Syrian rebel leader says will uphold 1974 cease-fire agreement with Israel
Ahmad al-Sharaa addresses Israel for the 1st time, criticized IDF advance into Syrian territory but says agreement with Israel following the Yom Kippur war to hold
Ynet|01:27

Syrian rebel leader Ahmad al-Sharaa (formerly Abu Mohammed al-Golani), addressed Israel for the first time on Saturday and said that Syria will continue to adhere to the disengagement agreement signed in 1974 following the Yom Kippur War. He called on the international community to ensure that Israel remained committed to the agreement.

In a conversation he held on Monday with a small group of journalists, al-Sharaa sharply criticized Israel's "military advances" into Syrian territory beyond the Golan Heights and into the buffer zone declared by the UN under the agreement, which is considered disputed according to international consensus.

Israel described its advances into Syrian territory as defensive measures aimed at preventing armed groups from seizing positions near the border and ensuring the security of communities in the Golan Heights.

Al-Sharaa, who is seeking to rebrand himself from a terrorist to a political leader, responded to the claim, arguing that Israel no longer needs to maintain these positions as the threat from Hezbollah and other Iran-backed militias has been removed with the fall of Bashar Assad's regime.

"Syria's priority now should be building a state and creating public institutions that serve all Syrians," he said and declared he would run for president if he gains sufficient support. He urged countries such as the U.S. to remove his organization, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, from their lists of terrorist organizations, claiming that all restrictions on it should be lifted to enable Syria's reconstruction.

Al-Sharaa also called for the removal of all sanctions imposed on Assad's regime, saying that they were imposed on "the executioner," referring to Bashar al-Assad, who is no longer in power. Regarding his designation as a "terrorist" by the U.S. and other nations, he added, "It doesn't matter much to me."

12.17.24 – Tu

Smotrich push for WB annexation, demolished 1,000 PA structures this year

12.17.24 – Tu

Smotrich pushes ahead with plans for West Bank annexation

Far-right minister says is working to disrupt plans by the Palestinian Authority to create continuity of Palestinian population in an area that would cut Gush Etzion off from Jerusalem and bring about a Palestinian State

Elisha Ben Kimon|00:36

Far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich was racing ahead with his plans to annex the West Bank and establish new settlements that would ensure a continuation of Jewish controlled territory. The civil administration has doubled its enforcement of violations by Palestinian of building permits, demolishing illegally built structures.

According to figures obtained by Ynet, since January 2024, 642 cases of illegal building in Palestinian areas were prosecuted. In some cases, multiple structures were demolished. In 2023, the civil administration enforced 306 cases only. An official said that 1,000 illegally built structure of Palestinians were demolished this year.

The accelerated efforts could be in order to create facts on the ground before U.S. president-elect Donald Trump takes office. In November, Smotrich, who also holds a ministerial position in the Defense Ministry, charged with the administration of the West Bank, emphasized the plan to create Jewish settlement continuity connecting Gush Etzion, in the southern part of the West Bank, to Jerusalem.

"Trump's victory also brings with it an important opportunity for the State of Israel. We were a step away from applying sovereignty to the settlements in Judea and Samaria, and now is the time to do it," he said.

The head of the far-right Religious Zionism Party said his efforts were to prevent plans by the Palestinian Authority (PA) to cut Gush Etzion off from the capital and create a continuity of Palestinian residents. "We will not allow violations of law that would bring about the establishment of a Palestinian state and endanger the security of settlers," he said. "We will act resolutely to protect the state of Israel and the security of its citizens."

12.16.24 – Mo

Senior official: Hostage deal possible before Trump takes office

12.16.24 – Mo

Senior official: Hostage deal possible before Trump takes office

Official says 'Most details agreed upon' but primary dispute 'centers on number of hostages to be released in first stage'; Israeli delegation departs for Qatar to advance talks
Moran Azulay, Yuval Karni|13:25

A senior Israeli official said on Monday negotiations for a hostage deal with Hamas are ongoing, with hopes of reaching an agreement before Donald Trump is sworn in as U.S. president on January 20.

“The goal is to finalize a deal by the end of the month,” the official told Ynet. “Most details have been agreed upon, but the primary dispute centers on the number of hostages to be released in the first stage.”

The official explained that Hamas has proposed releasing a smaller group of hostages, while Israel is pushing for nearly double that number. “Right now, the focus of negotiations is on the number of hostages and their identities,” the source added. Meanwhile, an Israeli delegation departed for Qatar on Monday evening to advance talks.

Nasrallah's daughter: 'Israeli perception that my father spent his life in bunker is wrong'
Meanwhile, Trump said on Monday he had a "very good talk" with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu about the war in Gaza and reiterated his threat that "all hell is going to break out" if Hamas does not release its hostages by Jan. 20, the day Trump takes office.

Trump described it as a "recap call" during a press conference at his resort in Palm Beach, Florida.

"As you know, I gave a warning that if these hostages aren't back home by that date, all hell is going to break out," he said.

Hamas-led terrorists killed 1,200 people and abducted more than 250, including Israeli-American dual nationals, during their Oct. 7, 2023 attack on Israel, according to Israeli tallies.

Trump: 'Working hard to get the hostages back'

More than 100 hostages have been freed through negotiations or Israeli military rescue operations. Of the 100 still held in Gaza, roughly half are believed to be alive.

U.S. President Joe Biden recently dispatched more senior aides to the region to try and secure a long-sought cease-fire deal.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar and Defense Minister Israel Katz held private meetings with Adam Bohler, Trump's point man on hostage affairs. The meetings were attended by Gal Hirsch, Israel's coordinator for prisoners and missing persons. The American envoy requested complete discretion during the discussions with the ministers. Earlier, Katz said that negotiations for a hostage deal with Hamas were at their peak and described the talks as "closer than ever" to reaching an agreement.

Speaking to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Katz noted that Hamas had shown flexibility on key points, including the Philadelphi and Netzarim corridors, which he said would not be obstacles to finalizing the deal.

“In my view, we are closer than ever to securing an additional hostage-release deal,” Katz said. He added that the process would occur in gradual phases and expressed confidence that the agreement would receive Cabinet approval. “It is best to speak as little as possible about it in public,” Katz cautioned.

Meanwhile, the Jerusalem District Court announced Monday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would not be required to testify in his criminal trial as scheduled on Tuesday. The court provided no public explanation for the decision, stating only, “After hearing both sides and considering special circumstances, we have decided not to hold a court session tomorrow.”

Earlier Monday, a senior Hamas official told Saudi Arabia's Asharq News that the group believed a deal involving "the exchange of prisoners and a cease-fire" was within reach, provided Netanyahu did not "disrupt the agreement." The official claimed that Hamas and other Palestinian factions had demonstrated significant flexibility, agreeing to a phased end to the fighting and the withdrawal of Israeli forces according to a set timetable.

"The Gaza factions insist on a final end to the war, a full withdrawal of IDF forces from the Strip, the return of displaced Gazans to their homes and a respectful exchange of prisoners," the official said. He emphasized that international mediators had advised keeping the details of the talks confidential to prevent Netanyahu from using them as a pretext to derail negotiations.

A source close to the discussions indicated that both the U.S. administration and President-elect Donald Trump were pressuring for a swift resolution, with hopes of reaching an agreement by the end of the year. "The factions are ready; the main issue is the Israeli position," the source said.

Mohammad Nazzal, a member of Hamas's political bureau, confirmed ongoing negotiations but warned it was too early to predict the outcome. He framed Hamas' efforts as an attempt to overcome obstacles and end the fighting in Gaza.

Nazzal mocked President-elect Trump's reported threats to intensify pressure if hostages were not released by January 20, the day of his inauguration. "Is there anything worse than the hell Gaza has experienced for over a year?" Nazzal said. He accused Israel of failing to secure significant results in prior hostage rescues, adding, "They recovered only a few bodies after they killed them."

He insisted that both the outgoing Biden administration and the incoming Trump administration must recognize the demands of the Palestinian people and the "brave resistance."

12.16.24 – Mo

Missile from Yemen intercepted over central Israel; 'Houthis will pay a heavy price'

12.16.24 – Mo

Missile from Yemen intercepted over central Israel; 'Houthis will pay a heavy price'

Emergency medical service report no injuries or damage; operations at Ben Gurion Airport temporarily halted; senior Israeli official warns of significant retaliatory strike on Houthis

Ynet correspondents|08:23

Air raid sirens blared across central Israel Monday afternoon, stretching from the Shfela region to the Sharon area, as the Israeli Air Force intercepted a missile launched from Yemen. The alarms were triggered due to concerns over falling interceptor debris.

Following the alerts, operations at Ben Gurion Airport were temporarily halted, including all takeoffs and landings. Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency medical service, reported no injuries or damage as of yet.

The missile launch coincided with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's testimony at the Tel Aviv District Court, which continued uninterrupted as the courtroom is located in a protected space. Netanyahu's scheduled court appearance on Tuesday has been canceled, citing "security matters."

This incident marks the latest in a series of escalating threats from Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels. Israeli officials are reportedly considering a stronger response to the Houthis, who have continued their hostile activities despite a cease-fire agreement in Lebanon with Hezbollah.

"The Houthis will pay a heavy price," a senior Israeli official warned, suggesting the possibility of a more significant retaliatory strike than the last Israeli action against Yemen in September. The official acknowledged the challenges of striking Yemen, citing the logistical and operational complexities involved.

In recent weeks, Houthi drones have also targeted southern Israel. Last Thursday, air raid sirens were triggered near Eilat and Ashdod due to suspected drone incursions. An interceptor was launched near Eilat, while in Ashdod, the military pursued what was initially thought to be a drone entering from Gaza's perimeter. The IDF later said the alarms may have been caused by a false detection.

Earlier this month, a drone launched from Yemen caused extensive damage when it exploded on a penthouse balcony in a 16th-floor apartment building in Yavne. The unmanned aerial vehicle approached from the Mediterranean, entered Israeli airspace near Sderot, and traveled northward toward Ashdod.

Despite being detected and targeted with electronic warfare measures, the drone evaded interception and ultimately exploded, causing significant property damage but no injuries.

12.16.24 – Mo

Recruits surpass projection for men & women; ultra-Orthodox low turnout

12.16.24 – Mo

More recruits enlisting in combat units, IDF figures show

Military highlights high motivation among recruits, with turnout surpassing projections and reinforcing readiness of various units; IDF emphasizes that this cycle's success enhances its preparedness for upcoming challenges

Yoav Zitun|07:39

The IDF announced Monday the November-December enlistment figures for combat roles, revealing a recruitment rate that exceeded expectations.

According to the IDF, this recruitment cycle included the launch of a new combat engineering battalion, resulting in a 120% increase in overall enlistment compared to the same period in 2023. Notably, there was a 28% rise in the number of women joining combat roles, attributed in part to pilot programs such as a gender-specific unit in field intelligence and a new infantry mobility training track for female combat soldiers.

"This recruitment cycle reflects the growing willingness of young people to step up and play an active, meaningful role in the challenges facing the IDF as combat soldiers in various units," the IDF Spokesperson's Unit said. "The high recruitment rates relative to our planning strengthen our units and enhance the IDF's preparedness for the missions ahead."

As debates over legislation to exempt ultra-Orthodox men from military service loom, the IDF also reported the first round of recruits joining the new Hashmonayim Brigade, part of its framework for ultra-Orthodox enlistees. However, frustration remains over the low turnout, with only 200 ultra-Orthodox men enlisting so far from the thousands who received draft notices.

Recruitment for combat-support roles is still ongoing and will continue in the coming weeks, the IDF added. These roles, critical for operational success, provide essential support to soldiers in the field.

Enlistment rates by unit:

Men (actual enlistment vs. initial projections):

Golani Brigade: 109%
Givati Brigade: 108%
Kfir Brigade: 106%
Nahal Brigade: 109%
Paratroopers: 100%
Armored Corps: 108%
Combat Engineering Corps: 108%
Artillery Corps: 109%
Field Intelligence: 106%
Border Infantry: 120%
Border Police: 103%
Air Defense Command: 108%
Search and Rescue: 108%

Women:

Border Infantry: 134%
Field Intelligence: 186%
Artillery Corps: 183%
Air Defense Command: 144%
Search and Rescue: 157%
Border Police: 129%

12.16.24 – Mo

Hostage release deal closer than ever, yet too soon to say what the outcome would be

12.16.24 – Mo

Hostage release deal closer than ever, defense minister says; Netanyahu testimony postponed

Israel Katz tells Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee that Philadelphi and Netzarim corridors would not be an obstacle in achieving a deal; Hamas official says Palestinian factions show flexibility in agreeing to gradual end of war and troop withdrawal

ynet correspondents|07:31

Defense Minister Israel Katz said on Monday that negotiations for a hostage-release deal are at their peak. Speaking to the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee, Katz said the Philadelphi and Netzarim corridors would not be obstacles in order to agree to a deal, and that Hamas has shown flexibility on these matters.

"In my view, we are closer than ever to securing an additional hostage-release deal," Katz said. "It is best to speak as little as possible about it in public, he said, adding that the release will be in gradual phases. He also said that there would be a majority in favor of the deal in the cabinet.

The Jerusalem District Court on Monday afternoon agreed to excuse Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from testifying as scheduled on Tuesday, although no reason was given publicly. "After hearing the sides, and amid special circumstances we've decided not to hold a court session tomorrow," the judges in Netanyahu's criminal trial said after a closed-door consultation.

Earlier on Monday a senior member of Hamas told Saudi Arabia's Asharq News that a deal for "the exchange of prisoners and a cease-fire," was closer than ever, "if Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu does not disrupt the agreement." He said Hamas and the other Palestinian factions showed great flexibility when they agreed to a gradual ending of the war and the withdrawal of IDF troops according to an agreed schedule and called on the U.S. administration to pressure Netanyahu to see the deal through.

"The Gaza factions insist on a final end to the war, a full withdrawal of IDF forces from the strip, the return of displaced Gazans to their homes and a respectful exchange of prisoners," the Hamas official said adding that international mediators were working toward an agreement but had recommended that its details not be made public at this stage so as "not to provide Netanyahu with reasons to avoid making the deal."

A source close to the negotiations said that the U.S. administration and president-elect Donald Trump want a deal made as quickly as possible, even before the end of the year. "The factions are ready, the main issue is the Israeli position," the source said.

Mohammad Nazzal, a member of the Hamas political bureau confirmed that negotiations were underway and said it was too soon to say what the outcome would be. He described the efforts of the Gaza ruling terror group as an attempt to overcome obstacles and bring about an end to the fighting in the Strip.

He mocked Trump's threats to turn the Middle East into a hell if the hostages are not released by January 20, when he assumes office. "Is there anything worse than the hell Gaza has experienced for over a year? Israel has failed to free its hostages but for a few bodies after it killed them," he said.

Nazzal insisted that both the outgoing Biden administration and Trump's incoming one, must accept the demands of the Palestinian people and the "brave resistance."

12.16.24 – Mo

Irish PM supporting PA in UN court is respect for law; Israel closed embassy

12.16.24 – Mo

Ireland rejects Israeli claims of bias; Jewish leader: 'dialogue being replaced by disengagement'

Foreign Minister Micheal Martin says Dublin's decision to join the ICJ case accusing Israel of genocide is motivated by respect for international law; Israeli ambassador says decision to close embassy does not mean diplomatic ties are severed

Alexandra Lukash, ynet correspondents|06:09

Irish Foreign Minister Micheal Martin said on Monday that Ireland's intervention at the ICJ and its previous recognition of the "state of Palestine" is motivated by "respect for international humanitarian law" and added that supporting the ICJ and the International Criminal Court (ICC), which has issued arrest warrants for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, should not be viewed as a hostile act.

Martin spoke in Brussels a day after Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar announced the closure of the Israeli embassy in Dublin.

Sa'ar on Sunday cited Ireland's hostility to Israel as the reason for his decision. "Ireland's actions and rhetoric are rooted in delegitimization and demonization of the Jewish state, accompanied by blatant double standards," Sa'ar said. "Ireland has crossed every red line in its treatment of Israel. We will redirect our resources toward strengthening ties with nations that respect Israel."

"We've consistently called for an immediate cease-fire, release of all hostages, and a massive surge of humanitarian aid," the Irish minister said, adding that there must be "full accountability for the destruction of much of Gaza by the IDF in the war as well as accountability for Hamas militants who had controlled the Palestinian enclave, and Hezbollah in Lebanon."

Martin also called on Israel to "open up" Gaza to the international community and the media, so that they could "bear witness" to what is happening.

Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris reacts to the Israeli closure of the Dublin embassy

Chairman of the Irish Jewish Representative Council Maurice Cohen expressed his concern over the deterioration of Israeli-Irish diplomatic relations and said that the closure of the embassy "has caused distress" for Israelis in Ireland.

"The closure of the embassy represents not only a symbolic blow but also a practical disadvantage," Cohen said. "Consular services provided by the embassy are vital for those maintaining connections with family, culture, and heritage in Israel," he added. He said that losing this resource would leave many feeling unsupported and aggrieved, according to Cohen.

"Closing the embassy risks alienating a significant segment of Irish society and sends a message that dialogue is being replaced by disengagement," he added.

Cohen said that Ireland's decision to join the case against Israel in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing Israel of committing genocide in Gaza, is a overly simplistic interpretation of a complex and tragic dispute "unfairly isolating Israel, and undermining the integrity of the term 'genocide'."

He said that the Jewish Representative Council of Ireland reaffirmed its commitment to peace and the protection of innocent lives "on all sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," while also supporting Israel's right to defend itself from "terrorism and existential threats."

Cohen called on both the Irish and Israeli governments to seek pathways to rebuild trust and to ensure avenues for diplomatic engagement remain open.

In an interview with Ynet, Israeli ambassador to Ireland, Dana Erlich, said that diplomatic ties between the two countries have not been severed by the Foreign Minister's decision, but after some consideration the ministry in Jerusalem decided to allocate resources elsewhere amid the blatant anti-Israel policies of the current government in Dublin. She said that there is support for Israel among the Irish people but that is not expressed or heard enough.

12.15.24 – Su

Massive Israeli airstrikes on Syria reportedly trigger a 3.0-magnitude earthquake

12.15.24 – Su

Massive Israeli airstrikes on Syria reportedly trigger earthquake

Jets target weapons storage facilities housing surface-to-surface missiles, among other assets, Hezbollah-affiliated media reports; overnight strikes hit locations in Aleppo,

Hama and Tartus

Lior Ben Ari | 23:16

Israeli airstrikes overnight in Syria's Aleppo, Hama and Tartus reportedly caused a 3.0-magnitude earthquake, the Russian Sputnik news agency said Monday.

Hezbollah-affiliated network Al Mayadeen claimed the strikes in Tartus targeted arms depots, triggering tremors as warehouses went up in flames.

The attacks are part of Israel's ongoing campaign to dismantle the Assad military's arms storage facilities, including those housing surface-to-surface missiles and air defense systems.

Israel has also intensified operations against remnants of pro-Iranian militias in Syria following the collapse of Bashar Assad's regime earlier this month. The expanded strikes underline Israel's continued focus on countering Iran's influence and neutralizing potential threats from Syria.

12.15.24 – Su

Lebanon army deploys south, monitored by US; searches for Hezbollah weapons

12.15.24 – Su

Lebanon army deploys to the south of the country, searches for Hezbollah launchers
Troops scanning areas near the Litani and Saluki rivers as implementation of the cease-fire deal progresses at a slow pace; U.S.-led international monitoring commission also begins work although it is still in early stages
Yoav Zitun|11:57

The Lebanese army began deploying to the south of the country, nearly three weeks after the cease-fire in the war between Israel and Hezbollah came into effect. IDF troops were still operating in the areas close to the border and planned to remain there until their scheduled withdrawal four weeks away.

The Lebanese military that entered the region and according to the IDF, were launching their own operations to find Hezbollah weapons including rockets and launchers near the Litani and Saluki rivers.

The U.S.-led international commission assembled to monitor the situation on the ground has also begun its work, but it is in the early stages. "UNIFIL is also still here and we are exercising our right to attack against any violation of the cease-fire," the military said.

The IDF did not operate in most of Hezbollah's villages in South Lebanon, despite eliminating much of its leadership and destroying more than two-thirds of its fire power and its anti-aircraft systems. Hezbollah's ability to rearm has also been disrupted after the fall of the Assad regime in Syria.

The forces operating in Lebanon have said that they have observed operatives of the terror group in villages further away from the border, but they do not come under attack unless they are seen with weapons and munitions that can be used against the troops. IDF troops operating in South Lebanon

"We are still scanning the area and finding more attack tunnels, some dozens of meters long," said Lt. Col. Zohar Yaakovi an IDF commander. "The implementation of the cease-fire deal is slow and is one step at a time and we are initiating actions to secure the residents of the Galilee.

12.15.24 – Su

Cabinet to discuss WB terror surge & hostage deal with Trump adviser Boehler

12.15.24 – Su

Cabinet convenes to discussions West Bank, hostage deal

Jerusalem is concerned terror activity would spread into Israeli territory following a step up of operations by Palestinian security forces in the West Bank over the past week

Moran Azulay, Yuval Karni|10:48

The Security Cabinet is set to convey on Sunday at the IDF Central Command to discuss the recent surge in terror incidents in the West Bank, and the potential hostage deal to release 100 hostages who have been held in Gaza by Hamas for 436 days.

According to reports, the deal is expected to proceed in stages, beginning under the Biden administration and continuing under a potential future Trump administration. The initial phase would be humanitarian, involving the release of hostages in exchange for a seven-week ceasefire.

A senior source noted that the talks currently focus on a humanitarian exchange of an unspecified number of hostages, including women, children, and elderly individuals, with both sides reserving the option to resume hostilities afterward.

Over the past week, Palestinian security forces have intensified operations against terror groups in refugee camps across the West Bank. On Saturday, exchanges of gunfire erupted in Tulkarm between armed groups and Palestinian forces. Meanwhile, both Tulkarm and Jenin saw protests supporting terror organizations, accompanied by tire burnings and demonstrations against the Palestinian Authority's security actions.

Israeli officials fear the growing unrest could destabilize the Palestinian Authority. The security establishment is closely monitoring the impact of these security measures on the ground. However, cabinet member Bezalel Smotrich has taken steps to counter efforts to maintain PA stability. Smotrich has repeatedly imposed sanctions on Palestinian Authority officials, withheld clearance funds, and threatened to cease financial and legal protections for Israeli banks facilitating transactions with Palestinian institutions.

Although his latest move was blocked under U.S. pressure, Smotrich continues to advance settlement expansion policies. Notably, this month, he enforced building violations in Area B, a first in the Etzion Bloc's designated reserve under the Oslo Accords.

Meanwhile, Adam Boehler, a former adviser to then-President Donald Trump on prisoner and hostage issues, is expected to visit Israel this week. While sources described the visit as private, Ynet has learned that Boehler will hold consultations on a potential hostage deal in Gaza. The Defense Ministry has also received a request to coordinate a meeting with him, possibly as early as Monday.

12.15.24 – Su

Coalitions debate renewing judicial reform & hostile attorney general's future

12.15.24 – Su

Coalition leaders debate controversial judicial reform and attorney general's future
Lawmakers deliberate dismissal of Baharav-Miara and revival of judicial reforms, facing resistance from Haredi leaders; FM Sa'ar urges caution, while Justice Minister Levin slams Supreme Court for rejecting compromise efforts
Moran Azulay, Tova Zimuky|07:33

Coalition leaders met Sunday to discuss a contentious bill to overhaul the judicial appointments committee and a proposal to dismiss Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara, a polarizing figure among government officials.

The push to revive the divisive legislation is spearheaded by Justice Minister Yariv Levin as part of long-standing tensions between the government and the Supreme Court, with critics from both sides accusing each other of eroding Israel's democracy.

The meeting, which ended without decisions, saw hardline National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir raising the issue of Baharav-Miara's dismissal. Ultra-Orthodox parties, however, made clear they would not support any initiatives, including judicial reforms, until a draft exemption law for yeshiva students is passed.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is barred from direct involvement in judicial matters due to a conflict of interest stemming from his ongoing corruption trial, emphasized coalition stability, saying, "We must pass the budget and project stability, even if disagreements remain."

Ben-Gvir argued for initiating the process to dismiss Baharav-Miara, claiming she obstructs government operations. Levin outlined the formal steps required, including presenting the issue to the Cabinet, involving a special review committee, and returning the matter to the Cabinet for a final decision. Coalition leaders expressed no overt opposition to the proposal, though progress remains uncertain.

Baharav-Miara has faced criticism for opposing government decisions and refusing to defend controversial policies in court. Critics accuse her of aligning with judicial overreach, while supporters see her as a vital check on executive power. Levin also addressed his escalating confrontation with the Supreme Court, which recently blocked his refusal to convene the judicial appointments committee. “They rejected every compromise we proposed,” Levin said, describing the court’s orders as “outrageous.” Coalition whip MK Ofir Katz added, “The judges threw every compromise out the window—it seems they want to crush us.” Some coalition leaders, including Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Shas Party head Aryeh Deri, expressed reservations about reintroducing the 2023 judicial reform proposal, warning it could deepen public tensions. Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar, while supporting measured reforms, cautioned against further polarization and urged responsibility given Israel’s significant security and diplomatic challenges.

The push to dismiss Baharav-Miara requires complex steps, including reconstituting the Grunis Committee, gathering complaints from ministers about her performance and holding hearings. These actions, if pursued, would likely face scrutiny from the Supreme Court, adding another layer of tension.

Senior coalition figures suggested Levin would proceed with Baharav-Miara’s dismissal only if there is a majority consensus among coalition leaders. Levin has hesitated to act unilaterally, fearing accusations of implementing a “judicial overhaul on steroids.” Instead, Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi has been circulating a public petition to gauge support for the move.

Meanwhile, Religious Zionist Party Minister Orit Strock, a member of the judicial appointments committee, proposed direct negotiations between Levin and Supreme Court Deputy Chief Justice Yitzhak Amit to resolve the standoff. In a letter to committee members, Strock emphasized the importance of returning to consensus-based decision-making, noting that under previous agreements, the committee had appointed 162 judges in less than a year.

“Recent Supreme Court rulings have derailed the committee from its cooperative path to one of confrontation,” she wrote. “We can return to fair compromises on appointments, including for the president and deputy president of the Supreme Court, new justices and other key positions.”

12.15.24 – Su

Israel closes embassy in Ireland, citing hostility; opens new embassy in Moldova

12.15.24 – Su

Israel closes embassy in Ireland, citing hostility; opens new embassy in Moldova
Sa’ar announces unprecedented move, citing Dublin’s ‘extreme anti-Israel policies’;
‘Ireland has crossed every red line in its treatment of Israel,’ he says as Israel pivots toward friendly countries

Yuval Karni|07:12

In an unprecedented move, Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar announced on Sunday the closure of Israel's embassy in Dublin, citing Ireland's "extreme anti-Israel policies."

The decision follows escalating tensions, including Ireland's recent decision to join South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), accusing the state of genocide.

"Ireland's actions and rhetoric are rooted in delegitimization and demonization of the Jewish state, accompanied by blatant double standards," Sa'ar said. "Ireland has crossed every red line in its treatment of Israel. We will redirect our resources toward strengthening ties with nations that respect Israel."

Tensions between Israel and Ireland have been simmering for years. In May 2024, Ireland unilaterally recognized a Palestinian state, prompting Israel to recall its ambassador to Dublin, Dana Erlich, for consultations. Calls for Erlich's expulsion in Ireland intensified after Hamas' October 7 massacre, and last week, Dublin formally joined the ICJ case against Israel.

Erlich, a highly regarded diplomat, has continued to manage Israel-Ireland relations from abroad, first from London and later from the ambassador's residence in Madrid. According to Foreign Ministry sources, this arrangement was necessary after the Finance Ministry refused to fund returned ambassadors' salaries. Despite the challenging circumstances, Erlich has been praised for her steadfast defense of Israel in one of Europe's most hostile environments.

The diplomatic rift deepened further in October when Irish UNIFIL troops in Lebanon refused Israel's demand to relocate five kilometers northward. Ireland's President Michael Higgins strongly criticized the Israeli request, calling it "outrageous," escalating a war of words between Dublin and Jerusalem.

While announcing the Dublin embassy closure, Sa'ar revealed plans to open a new embassy in Moldova. "The relationship between Israel and Moldova is friendly, and both nations seek to deepen ties. Moldova already has an embassy in Israel, and it is time for Israel to reciprocate," Sa'ar said. He emphasized that Israel's diplomatic network would be adjusted to prioritize nations willing to strengthen ties with the Jewish state.

The move reflects a broader policy shift in Israel's foreign strategy, focusing resources on countries with a more cooperative stance toward Jerusalem while reducing engagement with adversarial nations.

Ireland's relationship with Israel has long been fraught. In September, President Higgins accused Israel's Dublin embassy of leaking his congratulatory message to Iran's president, a claim dismissed by Israeli officials who pointed out that Iran's embassy had publicly posted the message on social media.

12.15.24 – Su

Manpower crunch forces IDF to rely on civilians using bulldozers in enemy territory

12.15.24 – Su

Manpower crunch forces IDF to rely on civilians in enemy territory

Facing soldier shortages, worn-out bulldozers and delayed US delivery of D9s, military employs civilians for high-risk missions: leveling buildings in Gaza, building embankments in Syria and clearing thickets in Lebanon; Here's how the system works
Yoav Zitun, Roni Green Shaulov|03:19

"Combat engineering, combat engineering and more combat engineering of all kinds. If we could double the Combat Engineering Corps, not just Yahalom, we'd have done it by now," a senior IDF officer told Ynet, highlighting the growing demand for engineering capabilities amid prolonged fighting across multiple arenas.

To address these challenges, the IDF plans to establish an additional regular combat engineering battalion in the coming months, adding to the existing three. However, this move is only a partial solution. Ynet has learned that, in recent months, the IDF has increasingly relied on civilian contractors for operational missions in combat zones, under the command of IDF officers. Initially limited in scope, this practice has grown significantly.

Civilian contractors, using large orange bulldozers, have been deployed to level hundreds of buildings in the Netzarim Corridor in northern Gaza, drill for Hamas tunnels in areas like the Philadelphi Corridor in southern Gaza and clear space for safer IDF operations. The Philadelphi Corridor itself has been expanded to a width of 3-4 kilometers, providing a buffer for IDF forces.

This trend has extended beyond Gaza. In Lebanon, contractors have crossed the border to clear vast thickets where Hezbollah has hidden military infrastructure, including observation posts, underground firing ranges and bunkers.

Since the collapse of the Assad regime, contractors in bright yellow vests have also been active along the Syrian border, working on five major sites. Their tasks include blasting basalt cliffs, digging deep trenches and building embankments to secure the border with a disintegrating Syria teeming with armed militias

While the IDF has historically employed civilian contractors for border fortifications during peacetime, their current use in active combat zones and beyond Israeli territory marks a significant shift, reflecting the demands of ongoing multi-front operations.

The urgent needs of the IDF

"Hundreds of IDF bulldozers and tractors were worn out during the operation in the Gaza Strip, including D9 bulldozers, so the need arose to lease or mobilize equipment from civilians. Later, we realized that we would also need operators and contractors due to the enormous number of engineering missions, and not just in the Gaza arena," according to the IDF.

"The use of civilian contractors creates flexibility: The heavy mechanical equipment companies in the engineering battalions operate in the most advanced and dangerous missions on the attack lines, for example now in Jabaliya or alongside tanks on the most advanced lines of the operation in the Syrian Golan, and behind them, in 'safer' missions,

the contractors are deployed after we take operational control of the area. Hundreds of our engineering soldiers were injured and killed throughout the long fighting, this is not an infinite resource. That is why we turned to civilian contractors through regular procedures carried out by the Defense Ministry."

"We are briefed by the officers before each work day and are warned about how to behave in the event of an operational incident. It is clear that this is dangerous work"

Compounding the IDF's shortage of engineering personnel is the delay of a shipment of 132 D9 bulldozers ordered from the U.S. months ago. The delivery has been stalled due to a silent embargo by the U.S. State Department, as reported by Ynet and its sister publication Yedioth Ahronoth last month.

'Workday' in the Gaza Strip

This is how the method works: The IDF defines a specific, time-bound task, for example, the demolition of 20 buildings in a Gaza neighborhood in which the forces have finished fighting; a request is issued for a civilian contractor who shows up with his workers and large equipment to operate in daylight, under the protection of soldiers and the supervision of IDF engineering units. In the evening, the civilian workers leave the area, and return the next day to continue the work.

"We are looking for operators of excavators and bulldozers and we don't stop on Saturdays, and it's usually for two months, five days a week, from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Sometimes we also destroy terrorist infrastructure for the army that they take out, such as lathes, factories, etc.," one of the labor managers described to Ynet, noting several types of payment.

"A private individual who has an excavator and brings it with him receives the highest payment, it's the best money; an operator under a company is paid hourly, also respectably, well above minimum wage; and someone who served in the IDF and wants to do so as a reservist enjoys all the grants and benefits for reserve personnel."

'It's obviously a dangerous job'

Some civilian engineering missions in Gaza have reached the front lines, with battalion commanders deploying teams to demolish buildings used to fire on IDF forces. In several recent cases, contractors were spotted working without protective gear such as helmets, overalls or uniforms.

One of them described that "even if they ask us to protect ourselves, it is not comfortable to drill or dig under the sun for hours with a helmet on. We are briefed by the officers before each workday and are warned about how to behave in the event of an operational incident. It is clear that this is dangerous work."

last May, Liron Yitzhak, a 30-year-old contractor from Kfar Saba, was killed by mortar fire in the Gaza Strip. His family continues to fight for his recognition as an IDF casualty. Their struggle gained renewed attention after the IDF recently recognized historian Ze'ev "Jabo" Erlich as a casualty, despite his status as a civilian accompanying Golani Brigade forces in Lebanon, where he was killed in a clash with Hezbollah terrorists.

Addressing the growing use of civilian contractors in combat zones, the IDF said: "The contractors understand the risks and sign off on them. We provide them with protection, but this isn't construction work in Netanya. They only operate during the day, as they

aren't trained to work with IDF commandos at night. They give us breathing space and bring engineering expertise, like drilling, that is nearly nonexistent in the IDF."

12.15.24 – Su

Cabinet majority backs deal in hostage talks; Hamas could still derail it

12.15.24 – Su

'Significant progress in hostage talks; majority in government supports deal'

Senior official says agreement will not include release of all hostages, leaving room for both sides to return to fighting; while majority of Cabinet backs deal, concerns linger
Hamas could still derail it

Itamar Eichner|01:42

There is "significant progress" in talks on a hostage deal that would bring many of them home from Gaza, the main points of which are currently being kept under the radar in order to prevent political interference that would thwart it, a senior Israeli official told Ynet Saturday night.

"The head of the Mossad and the head of the Shin Bet reported to the cabinet that Hamas is showing a willingness to reach a deal that has not existed before," the senior Israeli official explained, "and the assessment is that an agreement can be reached within a few weeks." This runs contrary to Arab reports of major difficulties in the negotiations.

The senior official claimed that what caused the change in the terrorist organization's position was "the blows they suffered" and the fact that Donald Trump will enter the White House in about a month. In the past, such events - and identical interpretations attached to them by political and security elements in Israel - have come to nothing. The deal is reportedly expected to be implemented in phases, starting with the Biden administration and continuing into the Trump administration. The first phase will be humanitarian and will include the release of hostages in exchange for a seven-week cease-fire. The official explained that the parties currently are talking about a humanitarian deal for "an unknown number of kidnapped women, children and adults, in which each side reserves the option to return to fighting."

On Saturday, several of the families of hostages being held in Gaza protested this, claiming that such a "partial deal" would mean a death sentence for those who would be left behind. Einav Zangauker, mother of hostage Matan Zangauker, even claimed that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lied to her in their conversation last week, and that after speaking with members of the negotiation team, she realized that "he has no intention of returning Matan, but only a few hostages."

Such a deal could pave the way for both a deal that would end the war and a normalization deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia. However, at this stage, it is not yet clear whether Hamas will agree to a limited deal without ending the war, and there are

several conflicting reports about it. On the one hand, there are reports of Hamas' flexibility and readiness for a limited IDF presence in Gaza, and on the other hand, there are reports that Israel has agreed to a temporary withdrawal from the Philadelphi Corridor, but these have not been confirmed. In Israel, they estimated last week that a deal could be reached within two weeks.

According to the senior official: "If Netanyahu brings a reasonable deal, he will have a majority in the government and the cabinet, even if (Public Security Minister Itamar) Ben-Gvir and (Finance Minister Bezale) Smotrich oppose it and it is doubtful that they will support it. The right has many achievements, and this will make it possible to pass a deal. The problem is that this is Hamas, and we were at a similar point in the past, and in the end they torpedoed it then. That's why it's not over until it's over."

Meanwhile, U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's adviser on hostages and missing persons, Adam Bohler, 45, is expected to visit Israel this week. A source familiar with the details of the visit said that it was a private visit by Bohler, who is Jewish, to Israel, but Ynet learned that he will also hold meetings and consultations regarding the hostage deal in the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, the Defense Minister's office has received a request to coordinate a meeting with Bohler, which will likely take place as early as Monday.

Opportunities in Lebanon and Syria

The Israeli official also referred to Israel's take over of the buffer zone on the Syrian border, explaining that Israel "will remain in the areas it has captured until the rebels stabilize the country." He said that "it does not appear that the rebels have any interest in entering into a conflict with Israel, but in the coming weeks and months we will see how they stabilize Syria. This is something big that holds a positive opportunity."

On Saturday, rebel leader Ahmad al-Sharaa, formerly known as Abu Mohammed al-Golani, addressed Israel for the first time, saying that they were not seeking conflict - and also claimed that Israel no longer had a reason to interfere in what was happening in Syria. Shortly afterward, IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi said that the IDF had no intention of intervening in Syria except to protect the border from extremist rebels. In the meantime, Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem admitted that his organization had "lost its supply route from Syria," and at the same time called on the rebels "to see Israel as an enemy and not to normalize relations with it."

In this context, the Israeli official also referred to Lebanon, saying that "the cease-fire is holding, and Hezbollah is left without a supply of weapons. Here too, there is an opportunity for Lebanon to regain control of the country."

Qassem also noted in his speech that one of Hezbollah's goals is to "strengthen the Lebanese army," but this is a smokescreen: in reality, the West sees the local army as an alternative to the military power of the terrorist organization, which has grown in recent years to enormous proportions that terrorized the towns and cities of the north for most of the months of the war. Now, the intention is to work to push Hezbollah further away from the Litani River, as far as possible from the border with Israel, so that the only armed forces in the border area will be the Lebanese security forces.

12.15.24 – Su

IDF hold talks with Syrian Druze residents in Golan 8 miles from the border

12.15.24 – Su

IDF officers hold first talks with Syrian leaders in Golan

As Syrian Golan Druze call for annexation to Israel, IDF officers meet openly with Syrian village elders, assuring them their daily lives would continue undisturbed; officer says asked village leader to collect weapons taken from abandoned Syrian outposts
Yoav Zitun|01:13

In recent days, Israeli military officers have held their first meetings with leaders of Syrian villages captured in the Golan Heights following the collapse of Bashar Assad's regime last week. The officers met openly with village elders in their homes to reassure them that no harm would come to residents and that their daily lives would continue undisturbed.

Capt. Omer, a company commander from the 77th Battalion of the 7th Armored Brigade, reached the deepest point of the IDF's advance in Syria so far, the village of Umm Batnah, located approximately 12 kilometers (8 miles) from the border. "I asked the village elder to collect weapons from residents after they had taken rifles from abandoned Syrian military outposts," the officer said. According to the IDF, the residents have complied, and no unusual incidents have been reported.

The IDF is currently operating in seven villages in the Syrian Golan, some beyond Quneitra. Over the weekend, troops reportedly reached abandoned Assad regime military outposts near the town of Khan Arnabah. The IDF intends to remain in the area until the territory can be handed over to an "established and defined state entity" to prevent terrorist groups from seizing control.

In videos circulated online over the weekend, Druze residents in the village of Hader, near the Israeli border in southern Syria, were heard calling on Israel to annex them. "What is our fate?" one speaker asked, prompting the crowd to respond, "Israel."

The speaker continued, "On behalf of everyone in Hader, if we must choose, we choose the lesser evil. We want to be annexed to the Israeli Golan to preserve our dignity. This applies to all villages in the area because the fate of Hader is the fate of the entire region. We ask to join our people in the Golan and live in freedom and dignity."

Ahmad al-Sharaa, the Syrian rebel leader formerly known by his call sign Abu Mohammed al-Golani, addressed Israel for the first time on Saturday, rejecting the country's involvement in Syria.

Speaking in a televised statement in the wake of Israel's series of strikes on Syrian territory and its occupation of the buffer zone near the Golan Heights, Sharaa said, "Syria needs laws and state institutions. We have a plan to address all the crises, and we are gathering information. We are not entering into conflict with Israel."

Sharaa claimed Israel has no justification for involvement in Syria following the departure of Iranian forces. "What happened is a victory over the Iranian plan, which threatened the entire region," he said.

Sharaa also suggested his faction could have targeted Russian bases in Syria but opted instead to "build good relations."

Despite his criticism of the Iranian regime, Sharaa emphasized, "We have entered our cities—not Tehran. We have no issue with the Iranian people."

Shortly later, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi dismissed Sharaa's claims that Israel has no justification for its involvement in Syria, saying that the IDF's actions along the border are solely to ensure Israel's security.

Halevi, speaking during a situational assessment on the Golan Heights with senior military officials, said, "We are not interfering in what is happening inside Syria, nor do we intend to govern it. However, we are unequivocally involved in ensuring the security of Israeli citizens living in communities behind us in the Golan Heights. This is something we are handling with professionalism, determination and precision.

"Syria was once an enemy state; its army has collapsed, and there is a real threat that terrorist elements will try to establish themselves near our border. We have acted decisively to prevent extremist groups from settling right next to us."

Halevi also praised the IDF's preparations along the border, which stretch from Mount Hermon to the Israel-Syria-Jordan tri-border area. "The readiness here is solid and effective," he said, urging commanders to continue adapting to emerging threats. "Make the necessary changes—you have all the IDF resources and an excellent force at your disposal."

Meanwhile, Syria's interim government called on the UN Security Council to take action to compel Israel to immediately stop its attacks on Syrian territory and withdraw from areas it has penetrated in the north "in violation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement."

12.15.24 – Su

US decisions to Iran; agreement or military action - will be made by Trump.

12.15.24 – Su

Iran is at the 'most precarious moment in its modern history'

Islamic Republic has gone from being able to produce two new ballistic missiles a day to one a week, but may rush to produce nuclear weapons to fill the gap, senior Washington Post columnist reports; Looming confrontation between Israel and Iran is 'most urgent and dangerous'

Ynet|00:07

"Iran appears to be at the most precarious moment in its modern history," Washington Post senior columnist David Ignatius wrote late Saturday. In his latest column, in which he interviewed former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, who is currently in the United States, Ignatius exposed the Israeli moves that damaged Tehran's strategic assets, which, along with the collapse of the Assad regime, has brought it to unprecedented weakness.

According to Ignatius, Iran's "proxy armies have been crushed in Gaza, Lebanon and Syria. And it appears to be nearly naked to attack after a wave of pinpoint Israeli airstrikes on its air defense system in October."

Gallant told Ignatius that "we showed that Iran is vulnerable," and that the Israeli strikes on October 26 created "a window to act against Iran" before it produces a nuclear weapon. Ignatius wrote that U.S. decisions on how to exploit Iran's weakness - whether in negotiations for a nuclear agreement or in decisive military action - will be made by the next president, Donald Trump. He, for his part, told Time magazine that "anything can happen."

According to Ignatius, senior Biden administration officials are now seeing an opportunity for "coercive diplomacy" on the nuclear issue, with a weakened Iran. He noted that while Israel "played the decisive role in humbling Iran," President Joe Biden has provided an important deterrent to it by deploying aircraft carriers, submarines and other U.S. military forces throughout the Middle East.

The aim of the attack on October 26 was to leave Iran defenseless against a future attack on its territory; Some 120 fighter jets participated in the raid, Ignatius reported, citing an Israeli military source, striking air defense radars and antiaircraft batteries that protect Tehran, as well as important factories for producing fuel for Iranian ballistic missiles. Although the attack was carried out in retaliation for the Iranian attack on October 1, the planning began many months before that, Ignatius wrote.

Gallant told Ignatius that the mission, in simple terms, was to ensure that after the attacks "Iran is weaker and Israel is stronger," so that Tehran will not be able to respond with force to future attacks. According to Ignatius, Israeli sources believe that in the next two years Iran will not be able to add a significant number of ballistic missiles to its arsenal, which remains large, and in the meantime its air defense has also been significantly damaged.

"Israel appears to have created a corridor into Iran, providing a clear path for its aircraft to strike Tehran," he wrote. "This is a new level of operational freedom, allowing Israel to attack targets in Iran nearly as easily as it did in Gaza and Lebanon."

The former defense minister also referred to Israel's first attack on Iran, on April 15, when the war cabinet chose to respond in a limited manner with a targeted strike on a Russian-made S-300 battery near Isfahan, in order to send a message that would deter Tehran. "We hit them precisely, but it wasn't enough to deter them," Gallant said.

In the October attack, Israeli planes had already hit four such batteries around Tehran, even though their radars are supposed - in theory - to detect attacks from a distance of about 300 kilometers. Gallant emphasized that currently "there is no strategic defense around Tehran."

Along with this, key components of Iran's ballistic missile production capabilities were also reportedly damaged. The fighter jets hit all the mixers that produce solid fuel for these missiles, and the acquisition of new facilities "may take at least a year" - according to the Institute for the Study of War. Thus, the IDF strikes have halted, at least temporarily, the progress of Iran's ballistic missile program.

An Israeli military source estimated to Ignatius that, before the October attack, Iran was able to produce enough solid fuel for two new ballistic missiles a day, and now its output is limited to one missile a week. This shortage, he said, will last for at least a year. But Ignatius notes that, paradoxically, Iran's vulnerability could drive it to acquire a nuclear arsenal to deter its adversaries. Iran has enough fuel for a bomb, but estimates suggest it is many months away from being able to build a warhead that could be mounted on a long-range ballistic missile.

Now, if "coercive diplomacy" cannot prevent Iran from moving forward with its nuclear program, Israel and the United States may consider military action. Iran's nuclear facilities are buried deep in the ground, and estimates are that only the U.S. military has conventional weapons large enough to breach these bunkers. However, Gallant emphasized to Ignatius that although he hopes the U.S. and Israel will work together, "Israel has the means to strike Iranian assets in a precise, forceful and sophisticated manner. If needed, we will not hesitate to act." Ignatius concluded by calling the "looming standoff between Israel and Iran" as Trump's "most urgent and dangerous" challenge.

12.14.24 – Sa

From Shiite to Sunni jihad; US & Turkey have completely opposing goals in Syria

12.14.24 – Sa

Israel's new fear: From Shiite to Sunni jihad

Commentary: Assad's regime collapse marks a rare moment, but Syria's new leadership may eventually demand the return of the Golan Heights; in his final hours in power, Assad raged, attempted bribery and accused his generals of corruption before fleeing Nadav Eyal|15:43

The Middle East often brings prolonged and grinding tragedy for all of us. Yet there are very few historic moments—those that change everything. One such moment was October 7. Another occurred this week when Damascus fell.

The Iranian axis no longer exists. Until just a few weeks ago, the regime in Tehran could send a truck from southern Iran, travel north through mullah-friendly Iraq, cross into Syria's eastern border—where it would be welcomed by a regime that served them—and proceed via Damascus all the way to Hezbollah on the Mediterranean coast in Beirut. With Syria's collapse and the severe blows to Hezbollah, that is no longer possible. Decades of investment and hundreds of billions of petro-dollars by the Iranians have gone down the drain.

Iran's proxy strategy—the network of operatives it built against Israel—once seemed effective and intimidating. But it turns out that slain Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah's "spiderweb" metaphor wasn't about Israel, but rather Iran's network.

Iran's proxies were supposed to protect it, but in the end, it was dragged into defending them—and failed. This week, Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was filled with accusations. His bitterness will bring satisfaction to anyone seeking peace in the region.

That said, there are no illusions about Damascus. Even there, we will be on our own. "The rebels have won," an Israeli security official told his American counterpart, who immediately corrected him: "Don't say rebels, they're jihadists. Terrorists." The Israeli official didn't need the reminder; he was overseeing an IDF operation to eliminate Syrian army capabilities.

The prevailing view in Israel's security establishment is that Shiite jihadism has been replaced by Sunni jihadism. For now, the new regime will persuade the world it isn't al-Qaida and will attempt to take control of the entire state and restore order. But in a year or two, it will begin framing the return of the Golan Heights as a sacred Islamic mission. Even before addressing the dire predictions—realistic as they may be—it must be said outright: Syria has been freed. From the depths of the Syrian desert to Idlib province, from the torture chambers of Saydnaya prison to the markets of Aleppo, from the streets of Beirut to the borders of Iraq, and across the entire Middle East, this is a revolutionary reality.

The Assad dynasty was not only, or even primarily, a link in the so-called "axis of resistance"; it was a symbol of a stagnant, dictatorial regime akin only to North Korea—a place frozen in time.

For Syrians themselves, the fall of Damascus was less significant than the liberation of Saydnaya prison—the site where tens of thousands were executed and countless others vanished.

Videos emerging from the prison this week revealed the sheer magnitude of the horror: the gallows, the bodies dissolved in acid, the prisoners forgotten in underground cells, the execution lists. Some prisoners had been there for decades, knowing nothing of the outside world. Stories even surfaced of children born inside the prison. Saydnaya was the ultimate symbol of the regime's boundless brutality. This week, families from across the country flocked to the prison, searching for loved ones who had disappeared. In nearly every case, they found nothing. The regime had erased its opponents—and any trace of their existence.

The Syrian butterfly effect

There is a lesson here. No building on any Western university campus was seized in solidarity with the Syrian people. No fiery protests were held at prestigious campuses while hundreds of thousands were being slaughtered. Unlike the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, this war lacked a simplistic, false narrative of "white oppressors" and "indigenous victims." As a result, Syrian blood was deemed expendable. The war was treated as an unfortunate but immutable reality—and then forgotten.

The Syrian refugees I've spoken to in Europe were filled with boundless disappointment at the West, which they felt had abandoned them. And it must be said: they were undoubtedly abandoned.

The key moment came in 2012, when U.S. President Barack Obama issued a "red line" warning to the Assad regime, demanding it refrain from using chemical weapons against

its own people. Assad ignored the warning and massacred scores with nerve gas. The U.S. and Britain prepared a response—limited airstrikes. The rebels believed such action could topple Assad's faltering regime.

But then came a turning point of weakness. The American public, scarred by Iraq, was so averse to further Middle Eastern conflicts that it opposed even airstrikes. In other words, Syrians were left to choke.

Obama's resolve collapsed in record time. His administration briefed that he reversed course after a contemplative "walk" with his chief of staff across the White House lawn. A romantic and vivid image: a stroll on Washington's tranquil grass while Syrians suffocated.

The consequences were catastrophic. Obama accepted a proposal from Russian President Vladimir Putin, a cunning initiative from Moscow's czar. Syria's chemical weapons would be removed, and in return, the West would refrain from striking. But several things happened: Russia entered Syria with overwhelming force while the U.S. barely reacted.

The disarmament process dragged on, and it became clear not all chemical weapons had been removed. Moreover, the relevant conventions didn't classify chlorine as a chemical weapon, allowing Assad to use it freely in the years that followed.

Like a nuclear reactor meltdown, Syria became increasingly toxic. ISIS took control of 40% of the country and declared an Islamic Caliphate. This hardly disturbed the West until the group began beheading foreigners and Christians. We live in a world where the image of a single beheading carries more weight than the deaths of thousands who were simply shot.

Meanwhile, the refugee crisis in Europe erupted after Assad, encouraged by the Russians, began pushing his own people out of Syria. Syrians crossed the sea from Turkey to Greece, some perishing along the way, and hundreds of thousands arrived in Europe. Refugees are rarely welcomed, and Germany reached an agreement with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan to stem the flow of Syrians into the continent. But it was too late; the Syrian civil war—a conflict few paid attention to, in a remote country with no vast oil reserves—had already played a decisive role in Brexit. Brexit (along with the refugee crisis and its images) then contributed to Donald Trump's rise in 2016.

Would all this have happened without the Syrian war? Perhaps. But it played a crucial role. The butterfly effect of Syrian suffering unleashed hurricanes—not one, but many. The tragedy lies in the persistence of this situation: the slow, grinding history of suffering. Assad's regime was weak from the start of the war but managed to maneuver its way forward. Hezbollah saved him, followed by the Revolutionary Guards and Iran, and then the Russians. The Americans eventually entered Syria, primarily to fight ISIS. Yet the prevailing perception was that Assad couldn't be toppled, with Russia and Iran backing him.

As reported earlier this week by Ynet's sister publication Yedioth Ahronoth, Israeli Military Intelligence (Aman) had assessed that the Syrian army was gradually recovering. This assessment, though grounded in material terms—acquisition of weaponry, training and improved command and control—proved to be a mistake. As history has shown, regimes don't collapse solely due to material factors.

A Syrian Army drill

In his final hours before fleeing to Moscow, the sanctuary for deposed dictators, Assad still didn't grasp his reality. Western intelligence sources observed astonishing scenes in real time: the dictator raged uncontrollably. He accused his generals of corruption and blamed the army for its failures. He tried every trick in the book—offering last-minute proposals to the West and Gulf states, issuing threats and attempting bribes. He was even convinced that he had another division at his disposal, only to discover it had vanished. None of it worked.

Therefore, it is essential not to dismiss the pure joy of Syrians at the fall of their oppressive regime or underestimate their desire to build a new state. Assad's supporters in the West mourned the dictator's downfall this week, labeling his successors as "Woke Al-Qaida." Many of these figures, like George Galloway and Max Blumenthal, are among the most vocal anti-Israel voices. It was a delight to witness their profound frustration and the disarray of anonymous social media accounts, likely managed from Russia, as they scrambled for explanations.

The Russians, who poured a fortune into Syria, were quick to search for scapegoats this week—blaming Assad himself, and, when desperate, even pointing fingers at Israel's "imperialism." Assad is now a guest-prisoner in Russia, where Moscow is already considering the next dictator. Assad should know that the empire won't abandon him, even if the masses demand his hanging.

The blow to Moscow is severe and could deepen if Russia is forced to vacate its naval base on the Mediterranean coast in Tartus. In this sense, what happened in Syria stands out amid global trends of recent years: consider where, in recent memory, Iran and Russia have retreated, or where people have freed themselves from an iron grip.

Who's next on the chopping block?

Official and unofficial Israel celebrated the fall of Assad's regime this week and the dramatic shift—largely credited to the actions of the IDF and the defense establishment—since October 7. These celebrations are entirely understandable. It's no coincidence that U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan is visiting the country. Beyond urgent matters, there's a legacy at stake. In its final moments, the Biden administration is attempting to claim credit for the dismantling of the so-called "axis of resistance." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attributed the success entirely to himself, and not even the opening of his trial dampened his euphoric mood. Mistakes, as usual, were quick to follow. Perhaps there was significant strategic value in seizing the Syrian Golan Heights and taking control of the buffer zone. But it's doubtful Israel gained anything from the boastful declarations and high-profile visits by the prime minister and defense minister to the Golan Heights.

Golani's announcement of a free-market economy and a ban on acts of revenge was interpreted in the West as a serious gesture toward the future. Simultaneously, his men executed one of Assad's relatives by hanging him from a crane, filming the act and posting it on Telegram

Israel said it all this week: it threatened Syria, bragged about bombings there, expressed interest in "relations" as Netanyahu put it and issued further warnings about Iranian involvement. For the first two days, the world remained silent about Israel's incursion into Syria, but at some point, the noise from public declarations became deafening.

I can only commend the military press corps for securing a tour across the Syrian border. They did their job diligently. But what exactly is the point of presenting a temporary occupation—as described in the Cabinet meeting—as some sort of achievement, especially when it was accomplished without a fight?

The Israeli establishment, jubilant, was swept into an internal competition over credit. The result: within a short time, the Middle East—and even European nations—woke up and began demanding an Israeli withdrawal. Israel injected itself into the narrative and, in doing so, became the story.

Following Defense Minister Israel Katz's statement—where he threatened that anyone following Assad's path "will end like Assad"—military historian Prof. Danny Orbach wrote on his Facebook page: "There is a new regime in Syria. Its leaders barely talk about us. Even if they are deeply hostile to Israel, they are even more hostile to Iran. This creates an opportunity to build bridges for cooperation, even after Assad's arsenal is destroyed. Why, for heaven's sake, send them every possible signal that 'Israel is your enemy'?"

Silent amidst this was Abu Mohammed al-Golani, Syria's new ruler. A shrewd and ruthless leader, he seems to have learned lessons from the fall of ISIS—his sworn enemy—and the crushing of al-Qaida, his former roots. Despite Israel's devastating strikes on Syria's military infrastructure and its entry into the Syrian Golan, Golani refrained from issuing threats against Israel or the West. His announcement of a free-market economy and a ban on acts of revenge was interpreted in the West as a serious gesture toward the future.

The West, however, takes such declarations far too seriously. Simultaneously with these signals of goodwill, Golani's men executed one of Assad's relatives by hanging him from a crane, filming the act and posting it on Telegram. Across Damascus, arrests and purges have begun. Assad's father's grave was torched.

This isn't the end. Western intelligence is closely monitoring developments in Lebanon, where Sunni and Christian elements are likely to seize the opportunity to move against Hezbollah. It is not unthinkable that Israel is waiting for this scenario to unfold. The final neutralization of Hezbollah can only occur through a united Lebanese effort to strip it of its weapons. If this doesn't happen now, in the wake of Assad's flight, it is doubtful the Lebanese will ever be able to free themselves from Hezbollah's grip.

Another critical issue for Israel and the United States is the Kurds. Western intelligence agencies are still trying to discern the nature of the relationship between Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), its leader Golani and Turkish President Erdoğan. There is no doubt about their cooperation in intelligence sharing, weapons transfers and long-term strategic goals. The question, however, is whether Turkey merely influences the new Syrian regime or exercises full control over it.

A clue came shortly after the takeover of Damascus: Erdoğan reportedly asked HTS to address the Kurdish issue. Despite HTS's ongoing conflict with another pro-Turkish opposition force, the Syrian National Army (SNA), Golani quickly complied. The Kurds are historic allies of Israel, serving as a counterweight to countless groups in Syria and Iraq that seek Israel's destruction. The United States has stepped in to halt the assault on the Kurds, a move likely influenced by Israel, which has reportedly leveraged its sway in Washington—under both Biden and Trump—to protect Kurdish autonomy.

The concern was a swift dismantling of Kurdish self-rule and a dramatic rise in Turkey's power in the region. This has left the U.S. in a peculiar position: two NATO allies, the U.S. and Turkey, are pursuing completely opposing goals in Syria. Turkey is waging a determined campaign to dismantle the Kurdish administration, while the U.S.—at least the current administration—is committed to defending it. About 1,000 American troops are stationed alongside Kurdish forces, and as long as they remain, Erdoğan and pro-Turkish forces are unlikely to push for a decisive victory. However, on January 20, Trump will be inaugurated as president of the United States. A battle is now unfolding in Washington: pro-Israel advocates are working to preserve Kurdish interests, while Turkey's supporters—less visible but not insignificant in D.C.—are lobbying for the opposite. The “new Syria” is bound to bring many more upheavals. Damascus has fallen, but it remains unclear what will rise in its place.

12.14.24 – Sa

Israeli leaders demand probe into ex-prosecutor calling for military disobedience

12.14.24 – Sa

Israeli leaders demand probe into ex-prosecutor calling for military disobedience
Former state prosecutor Moshe Lador urges voluntary pilots to refuse service if Israel 'becomes a dictatorship' as government reintroduces some parts of plan to reform judiciary, sparking condemnation from across political spectrum
Moran Azulay, Yoav Zimuky, Yoav Zitun | 14:30

Israeli leaders across the political spectrum have condemned former state prosecutor Moshe Lador for remarks perceived as endorsing military disobedience, with several calling for legal action.

Lador had said that "pilots whose service is voluntary must tell the state that if it becomes a dictatorship, they will not enter the cockpit."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu described the comments as "a red line that endangers democracy and undermines our future," and called on Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara to act against "this dangerous phenomenon." Defense Minister Israel Katz echoed the prime minister, saying, "Disobedience of any kind cannot be accepted under any circumstances."

Justice Minister Yariv Levin formally requested an investigation, asserting that "calls for disobedience, whether in peacetime or wartime, constitute a clear and severe violation of the law." Levin warned that failure to take decisive legal action could embolden further incidents of incitement.

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir criticized Lador's comments as "a stab in the back to the nation and IDF soldiers," adding that "we saw on October 7 the heavy price of disobedience in human lives." He accused the attorney general of granting "automatic backing to any action against the government."

President Isaac Herzog also condemned the remarks, saying, "In a democracy, everyone has the full right to express opinions and protest, but disobedience is off-limits. Anyone who says otherwise harms Israel's security." Herzog warned against returning to the "divisive and dangerous rhetoric of pre-October 7."

IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi issued a rare public statement, calling for an end to any talk of disobedience or refusal to serve. "The Israel Defense Forces must remain outside of political disputes, especially at a time when security challenges are so pressing," the military said in a statement on his behalf.

Opposition leader Yair Lapid also weighed in, condemning Lador's statement and emphasizing, "I oppose all forms of disobedience and evasion of service in the IDF." Lador's comments come against the backdrop of a contentious political debate over the government's renewed push for judicial reform. The proposed legislation, championed by Prime Minister Netanyahu's right-wing coalition, seeks to limit the authority of the Supreme Court, reduce judicial oversight of government decisions and grant the coalition greater influence over judicial appointments.

Supporters of the reforms argue they are necessary to restore the balance of power between the judiciary and the legislature, which they claim has been eroded over time. Critics, however, view the reforms as a threat to Israeli democracy, warning that they could undermine judicial independence and erode checks and balances in the political system.

The revival of the reform drive has reignited mass protests across Israel, with opponents expressing fears that the changes would consolidate power in the hands of the ruling coalition.

These tensions have spilled over into the military, where voluntary reservists, including elite pilots, have issued warnings of potential refusal to serve if the reforms are enacted.

12.14.24 – Sa

Rebel leader called UN to compel Israel, immediately stop attacks & leave Syria

12.14.24 – Sa

IDF chief responds to Syrian rebel leader: 'Our focus is Israel's security, not interference in Syria'

Herzl Halevi dismisses Golani's claim Israeli actions in Syria lack justification, saying IDF solely focused on securing Israeli Golan Heights communities from extremist threats; 'We are not interfering in what is happening inside Syria, nor do we intend to govern it'
Yoav Zitun|13:36

IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzl Halevi dismissed on Saturday claims by Syrian rebel leader Abu Mohammed al-Golani that Israel has no justification for its involvement in Syria, saying that the IDF's actions along the border are solely to ensure Israel's security.

Halevi, speaking during a situational assessment on the Golan Heights with senior military officials, said, “We are not interfering in what is happening inside Syria, nor do we intend to govern it. However, we are unequivocally involved in ensuring the security of Israeli citizens living in communities behind us in the Golan Heights. This is something we are handling with professionalism, determination and precision.”

Halevi’s comments follow statements made by Golani in which he claimed that Israel no longer has justification for its involvement in Syria following the withdrawal of Iranian forces. Golani also said that his forces had no intention of entering into conflict with Israel.

“We are here primarily for the security of the state,” Halevi said, referring to the IDF’s ongoing presence near the border. “We are here to protect the Golan Heights, northern Golan and Mount Hermon. Syria was once an enemy state; its army has collapsed, and there is a real threat that terrorist elements will try to establish themselves near our border. We have acted decisively to prevent extremist groups from settling right next to us.”

Halevi also praised the IDF’s preparations along the border, which stretch from Mount Hermon to the Israel-Syria-Jordan tri-border area. “The readiness here is solid and effective,” he said, urging commanders to continue adapting to emerging threats. “Make the necessary changes—you have all the IDF resources and an excellent force at your disposal.”

Meanwhile, Syria’s interim government called on the UN Security Council to take action to compel Israel to immediately stop its attacks on Syrian territory and withdraw from areas it has penetrated in the north “in violation of the 1974 Disengagement Agreement.”

In identical letters to the council and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres obtained Friday by The Associated Press, Syria’s UN Ambassador Koussay Aldahhak said he was acting “on instructions from my government” in making the demands. It appeared to be the first letter to the UN from Syria’s new interim government. The letters are dated Dec. 9, days after rebels ousted Assad and ended his family’s more than 50-year authoritarian rule of Syria.

“At a time when the Syrian Arab Republic is witnessing a new phase in its history in which its people aspire to establish a state of freedom, equality and the rule of law and to achieve their hopes for prosperity and stability, the Israeli occupation army has penetrated additional areas of Syrian territory in Mount Hermon and Quneitra Governorate,” ambassador Aldahhak wrote.

Israel still controls the Golan Heights that it captured from Syria during the 1967 Six-Day War. The Disengagement Agreement ending the 1973 war between Israel and Syria established a demilitarized buffer zone between the two countries, monitored by a UN peacekeeping force known as UNDOF.

In a letter to the Security Council circulated Friday which was also written on Dec. 9, Israel’s UN Ambassador Danny Danon said his country had taken “limited and temporary measures,” deploying troops temporarily in the separation area “to prevent armed groups from threatening Israeli territory.”

12.14.24 – Sa

Trump envoy to visit Israel Monday on Gaza deal; US military set for surgical raid

12.14.24 – Sa

Trump envoy on hostages to visit Israel for consultations on Gaza deal

Adam Boehler to meet with Katz and discuss potential hostage deal; Netanyahu calls Hamas videos 'cruel psychological warfare'

Yuval Karni|13:16

Adam Boehler, an advisor to U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on hostages and missing persons, is set to visit Israel in the coming days, Ynet learned on Saturday.

While sources familiar with the visit describe it as private, ynet has learned that Boehler, 45, will hold meetings and consultations regarding a potential hostage deal involving captives held by Hamas in Gaza.

The Defense Ministry has reportedly received a request to arrange a meeting with Boehler, likely to take place on Monday. Both Israeli and U.S. officials have kept the visit under wraps.

Trump, who has already warned Hamas to release hostages before his inauguration on January 20 or face severe consequences, has adopted an aggressive stance on the issue. "There will be ALL HELL TO PAY in the Middle East," he said in a post on his Truth Social platform.

Boehler, a Jewish-American known for his hardline approach toward Hamas, echoed this sentiment last week, saying, "Anyone holding hostages should think carefully about what could happen to them."

Boehler served as Trump's envoy during the Abraham Accords negotiations and was recently appointed "Special Presidential Envoy for American Hostage Affairs" following Trump's reelection. In a statement announcing Boehler's appointment, Trump said, "Adam knows that NO ONE is tougher than the United States of America... Adam will work tirelessly to bring our Great American Citizens HOME."

In the past, Boehler has called for stronger U.S. action in retrieving hostages. In an op-ed for The Hill, he advocated for military operations, including commando raids, to rescue American hostages held by Hamas in Gaza. "The Biden administration has reverted to a philosophy of hostage rescues that sees a military operation as a last resort," Boehler wrote. "This approach cedes the upper hand to hostage takers, who feel emboldened to capture Americans with little fear of paying for it with their lives."

He added, "American servicemembers are more than equipped to pull off a rescue. In the wake of the failed mission to rescue Americans held hostage by Iran in 1980, U.S. Special Operations teams were rebuilt to achieve what President Jimmy Carter's aborted raid could not.

"Today, U.S. special operators have a strong track record of successfully infiltrating hostile environments to rescue hostages. Those averse to an American military presence inside Gaza must remember that a single, surgical raid is not the same thing as a protracted U.S. military presence."

The emerging deal

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Saturday, " Hamas' barrage of propaganda videos is cruel and malicious psychological warfare. I am in constant contact with the families of the hostages, who are enduring a terrible and prolonged nightmare. I have said and will repeat: anyone who harms our hostages will bear full responsibility. We will continue working tirelessly to bring all the hostages home—both the living and the deceased."

According to reports, the emerging deal is expected to unfold in stages, beginning under the Biden administration and continuing into the Trump administration. The first stage would be humanitarian, involving the release of hostages in exchange for a seven-week cease-fire. Such an agreement could also pave the way for a broader deal, potentially ending the war and facilitating normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

An Israeli official likened the negotiations to a pregnancy, saying, "The assumption is that the 'pregnancy' will continue after a humanitarian release. The key is to get both sides committed."

Earlier Saturday, Arab media reported difficulties in the negotiations due to Hamas' demands to release high-profile prisoners. However, Israeli sources, maintaining strict confidentiality in recent weeks to avoid jeopardizing the talks, dismissed these claims as "untrue."

These developments come amidst a week of cautious optimism regarding a possible deal. On Thursday, U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan and President Joe Biden's special envoy, Brett McGurk, met with Netanyahu and senior Israeli officials to discuss the hostage negotiations. Mossad chief David Barnea and Shin Bet head Ronen Bar also attended the meeting.

On Wednesday, Barnea met with Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed Al Thani in Doha, following a secret meeting held two weeks earlier in Vienna. Qatar currently serves as the central mediator for the deal, and the outgoing U.S. administration is cooperating fully with the incoming administration in a shared effort to finalize an agreement before Trump's inauguration.

However, it remains unclear whether Hamas will agree to a limited deal without ending the war entirely. Conflicting reports have emerged: some suggest Hamas is showing flexibility, including a willingness to accept a limited IDF presence in Gaza, while others claim Israel has agreed to a temporary withdrawal from the Philadelphi Corridor which borders Egypt, though these reports remain unconfirmed.

For now, Israeli officials estimate that a deal could be reached within two weeks.

12.14.24 – Sa

West Bank PA security escalating clashes between terror groups to restore stability

12.14.24 – Sa

'Traitors': Clashes between terror groups and Palestinian security forces escalating
PA forces intensify terror crackdown in West Bank's Jenin and Tulkarm camps; senior
PA official tells Ynet operations to continue, Israeli interference will hinder efforts;
terrorists warn: 'The struggle will continue'
Einav Halabi | 11:32

The Palestinian Preventive Security forces launched a large-scale counterterror
crackdown in the West Bank's Jenin, Tulkarm and Nablus refugee camps last Sunday,
marking the most extensive action against Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad
operatives in years.

The operation, escalating Saturday, included a foiled car bomb attack targeting
Palestinian security personnel in Jenin and clashes in multiple locations.
Fire exchange between Palestinian security forces and terrorists in West Bank's Jenin and
Tulkarm

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Mustafa, visiting Jenin on Saturday, praised the
security efforts, saying that "Jenin and other camps are symbols of national pride. The
residents must live in peace." Mustafa emphasized the importance of restoring stability,
calling it "essential for achieving development and paving the way to establishing an
independent state."

The operation, dubbed "Homeland Protection," expanded overnight to Jericho's Aqabat
Jaber refugee camp, where no significant incidents were reported. Jericho Governor
Hussein Hamayel addressed the security forces, saying, "90% of our people want to see
you on the streets, protecting them. Those who don't are traitors."

In Jenin, Palestinian security forces reportedly encountered 20 gunmen accused of
smuggling weapons and receiving foreign funds. Security officials vowed to intensify the
crackdown, cut off financial support for "outlaws" and pursue legal action. "There will be
no retreat," said Anwar Rajab, a spokesperson for the security forces.

The operation sparked fierce criticism from terrorist groups. A commander of the Jenin
Brigades accused the Palestinian Authority (PA) of attempting to end the "national jihad"
and vowed continued resistance. "We will die with honor," he said in a video, adding that
the fight against Israel would persist with or without the PA.

For the first time, heavy exchanges of fire were documented Saturday in Tulkarm's
refugee camp. Terrorist groups there issued a statement warning Palestinian security
personnel: "This is our final message to the security forces: No traitor is born a traitor,
but it is easy to become one. You will die for your betrayal, and the idea of resistance will
remain alive and clear. The [Palestinian] Authority must reverse its unpatriotic decisions,
which only serve the occupation. You will not break our resolve or disarm us. The
struggle will continue, and our weapons are ready on all fronts. The blood of our martyrs
is on your hands."

The IDF confirmed witnessing clashes between Palestinian security forces and terrorists
in Tulkarm, noting that terrorists had thrown explosives and fired at the PA headquarters

in Jenin. However, according to the IDF, Palestinian forces have so far refrained from entering the refugee camps directly, responding instead from a distance.

In Gaza, Fatah spokesperson Mundar Hayek warned of parallels to the 2007 Hamas takeover in the enclave. “Our people must unite behind the security forces to block anyone attempting to distort our national compass,” he said.

A senior Palestinian security official told Ynet that the forces aim to conclude their operation swiftly and without external interference, saying, “Foreign intervention, including by Israel, would complicate our efforts.” He estimated that around 20 armed terrorists in Jenin are involved in arms trafficking and financing operations.

Palestinian security forces in West Bank's Jenin

The PA has expressed strong support for the operation, with officials calling it essential to remove the influence of Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which they claim undermine life in the camps and disrupt social cohesion.

Israel, meanwhile, has conducted frequent targeted operations in West Bank refugee camps, particularly since October 7, resulting in the deaths of 812 Palestinians and the arrests of approximately 10,000 others.

In the wake of the operation: Abbas' support base revives

The fall of the Bashar Assad regime has also resonated on the Palestinian street, where there was widespread celebration over the ousting of the Syrian dictator. However, this development is not expected to impact the rule of Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, 89, who has already designated a temporary successor for the day after his departure.

In the Palestinian territories, no movements or organizations have actively sought to overthrow Abbas' leadership, partly due to the PA's already dire economic situation. The strain on cooperation with Israel—apart from security coordination—has further destabilized the PA in multiple areas.

Until recently, Abbas was not widely popular among Palestinians. However, amid the ongoing war in Gaza, many are now beginning to see his policies as a safeguard against a devastating and destructive war.

In 2015, responding to a question about why he doesn't ignite the West Bank in resistance against Israel, Abbas said, “Hamas' involvement in the 2014 campaign resulted in devastating outcomes for Gaza, and I am not willing to destroy my people just to say that I raised the flag of resistance.” His popularity declined further after that remark, but the narrative has shifted. Abbas is now regaining support among Palestinians, including in Gaza.

12.14.24 – Sa

Israel 420 strikes on Syria since fall, Russians removing equipment from Syria

12.14.24 – Sa

Israel conducts 420 strikes on Syria targets since fall of Assad, rights group says

UK-based Observatory for Human Rights says Israeli jets struck 17 times in Damascus area overnight, targeting missile storage facilities; IDF says targeted electronic warfare systems

Yoav Zitun, Lior Ben Ari|04:31

Israel has carried out 420 airstrikes in Syria since the collapse of the Assad regime, the UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported Saturday.

Overnight, the Israeli Air Force conducted at least 17 air raids on targets near Damascus, including the airport in Qalamoun and missile storage facilities in Aleppo, according to Hezbollah-affiliated Al Mayadeen. The report also claimed an attack on a scientific research institute.

According to Israeli military officials, the strikes targeted communication systems used in electronic warfare to prevent them from falling into "hostile" hands.

Al Mayadeen further alleged that Israeli forces advanced deeper into Syrian territory on the Golan Heights, a claim that Israeli officials have not commented on.

Meanwhile, a Syrian security source told Reuters that Russian forces have begun removing military equipment from Syria.

The source reported that a Russian cargo plane departed from the Khmeimim Air Base in Latakia, with additional flights expected in the coming days. Russian forces were reportedly seen moving equipment toward two large cargo planes stationed on the tarmac.

Separately, the IDF confirmed that its jets struck rocket launchers in Lebanon that were loaded and ready to fire on Israeli territory, which it described as a violation of the cease-fire agreement.

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Ynet-News, December 13, 2024 – Friday 9th Month

12.13.24 – Fr- - - News – Friday

Series of Israel attacks on Syria radar, warehouses, & research center in Damascus

12.13.24 – Fr- - - News – Friday

Jordan border residents on edge, vulnerable to terrorism and smuggling

12.13.24 – Fr- - - News Placed in December 13 spot – Friday

Two rockets intercept from Central Gaza School; 8 Hamas eliminated in IDF strike

12.13.24 – Fr- - - News – Friday

Greece to buy rocket systems from Israel & drones from US over odds with Turkey

12.13.24 – Fr- - - News – Friday

Blinken visits Iraq Prime Minister, urging Syrian rebels to establish contacts

12.12.24 – Th- - - News – Thursday

Qatar, Hamas hostage deal talks in near-total secrecy over 7-week cease-fire

12.12.24 – Th- - - News – Thursday

Netanyahu video to Iranian people, posted in English with Arabic subtitles

12.12.24 – Th- - - News Placed in December 12 spot – Thursday

IAF concludes Lebanon operations, preparing for Iran nuclear program

12.12.24 – Th- - - News – Thursday

Haredi Torah scholar volunteers at police station near Nazareth Arab town

12.12.24 – Th- - - News – Thursday

Drone swarm from the east suspect Yemen: 2 downed near southern border

12.12.24 – Th- - - News – Thursday

German quiet embargo on Israel nixes pavilion at Frankfurt 60th Book Fair

12.12.24 – Th- - - News – Thursday

Terrorist vehicle fires on bus near Jerusalem, 12-year-old critically wounded

12.11.24 – We- - - News Placed in December 11 spot – Wednesday

IDF in Syria: near Seven villages, preparing for winter 1-15 kilometers east of border

12.11.24 – We- - - News – Wednesday

Spy message to Assad before his fall; smuggling weapons will bring Israel airstrikes

12.11.24 – We- - - News – Wednesday

Israeli Jews who spied for Iran are biggest infiltration in decades

12.10.24 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday

World Central Kitchen fires 62 employees in Gaza deemed security threats

12.10.24 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday

Syrian military 80% destroyed, Netanyahu reaches out to new regime

12.10.24 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday

Israel ranks at bottom in reading and math, disparity between Jews and Arabs

12.10.24 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday

Israel delegates leave for Cairo this week for Egypt proposed Hostage deal

12.10.24 – Tu- - - News Placed in December 10 spot – Tuesday

Arab states oppose IDF destroying Syrian regime's Air Force & naval fleet

12.10.24 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday

Ministers support Netanyahu in deep sense of injustice, years of legal harassment

12.09.24 – Mo- - - News – Monday

IDF destroyed military sites in Syria, with around 250 air strikes

12.09.24 – Mo- - - News – Monday

Israel strikes Syrian air bases, strategic military targets as preventive self-defense

12.09.24 – Mo- - - News – Monday

Collapse of Syrian regime from severe blows inflicted on Hamas, Hezbollah & Iran

12.09.24 – Mo- - - News – Monday

Israel cautiously optimistic for hostage deal within 'a week or two'

12.09.24 – Mo- - - News – Monday

Drone strike on central Israel apartment, IDF considers retaliation against Houthis

12.09.24 – Mo- - - News Placed in December 09 spot – Monday

IDF bulldozers poised to move the Syrian border fence, established in 1916

12.09.24 – Mo- - - News – Monday

Fall of Assad regime sparks hope for return of Israeli missing persons in Syria

12.08.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday Q1 Moon 9:27am

Northern Gaza sees fewer clashes as IDF tightens grip on Jabaliya

12.08.24 – Su- - - News Placed in December 08 spot – Sunday Q1 Moon 9:27am

Israel captures Syrian peak of Mount Hermon, to bolster control of border area

12.08.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday Q1 Moon 9:27am

Assad family 54 year-regime of terror has just ended as rebels take Damascus

12.08.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday Q1 Moon 9:27am

IDF moves tanks, troops into enforce Golan Heights border from Syrian rebels

12.08.24 – Su- - - News – Sunday Q1 Moon 9:27am

Pentagon October leak, delayed Israeli strike on Iran, court documents confirm

12.07.24 – Sa- - - News Placed in December 07 spot – Saturday

Israel assists UN repelling rebels from borders, as they topple the Syrian Assad regime

12.07.24 – Sa- - - News – Saturday

Hamas publishes propaganda video of Israeli hostage Matan Zangauker