

ISRAEL REPORT

To provide greater exposure to primary Israeli news sources and opinions in order to become better informed on the issues, and to gain a better understanding of the wide range of perspectives that exist in Israeli society and politics.

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ISRAEL SAYS HAMAS CURBED GAZA PROTESTS AFTER EGYPTIAN WARNING (JPost 5/17/18)

Palestinian protests on the Gaza-Israel border have dropped off over the past two days, amid reports that Egyptian officials intervened to restore calm.

Gaza's dominant Islamist Hamas movement denied that it was under pressure from neighboring Egypt to scale back the six-week-old demonstrations, and said they would continue, although fewer Palestinians were now gathering in protest tents.

Gaza medics said two Palestinians were shot dead during Tuesday's demonstrations along the 51 km (32 mile) border. On Monday, 60 were killed in a far greater turnout on the day that the United States relocated its Israel embassy to Jerusalem.

The bloodiest day for Palestinians in years has created a diplomatic crisis. The Palestinian Authority, which says Washington has abandoned its role as neutral arbiter in the 70-year-old conflict, withdrew its envoy from Washington. On Wednesday the Palestinian Foreign Ministry announced the recall of its envoys in Romania, Hungary, Austria and the Czech Republic because those countries participated in the reception for the U.S. delegation that inaugurated the embassy.

Pushing back against foreign censure of its army's actions, Israel has - with Washington's backing - accused Hamas of using civilians as cover for attacks across the frontier fence and to distract from Gaza's internal problems. Hamas denies this.

Violence along the border was very limited on Wednesday, and the Israeli army said a tank targeted two Hamas positions in the southern Gaza Strip after troops had been fired upon. No casualties were reported by either side.

Israeli aircraft hit four Hamas targets in the northern Gaza Strip after midnight in response to heavy machine gun fire that struck several houses earlier in the Israeli town of Sderot, an Israeli military statement said.

Gaza analyst Akram Attallah, pointing to the smaller number of protesters since Monday's deaths, said: "I can see there is a retreat because of the Israeli bloody response ... but Friday will represent an indicator to where things are going." Fridays normally see protesters turn out in larger numbers. The reports of Egyptian pressure on Hamas, the armed Islamist faction that controls the Gaza Strip, followed a visit by Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on Sunday to Egypt, which has sought to act as a broker between Hamas, Israel and other Palestinian factions.

Israeli Intelligence Minister Israel Katz said that an Egyptian intelligence chief, whom he did not name, "made unequivocally clear" to Haniyeh that Egypt would not help if Hamas continued to stoke the protests, and Israel responded with harsher measures.

Hamas leader in Gaza Yehya Sinwar denied that Egypt put pressure on Hamas to end the protests and said that instead, Haniyeh discussed what Cairo could do to ease hardship in Gaza.

"They were keen these marches do not slide into armed confrontations and we agree with the brothers in Egypt over that," Sinwar said in an interview on Al Jazeera television.

TURKEY AND ISRAEL EXPEL ENVOYS OVER GAZA DEATHS (Ha'aretz, 5/16/18)

Turkey and Israel expelled each other's envoys on Tuesday in an escalating diplomatic dispute over the killing by Israeli forces of 60 Palestinians a day during protests on the Gaza border.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry ordered Israeli Ambassador Eitan Naeh to leave

the country for consultations for an undetermined period of time. In response, Israel ordered the Turkish consul in Jerusalem, Husnu Gurcan Turkoglu, who is responsible for Turkey's relations with the Palestinians, to return home for consultations. Turkey's ambassador to Tel Aviv had already been recalled, as had Turkey's ambassador in Washington.

In response to Israel expelling the Turkish envoy, Turkey summoned Israel's consul general in Istanbul, Yossi Levi Safri, and also asked him to leave the country.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said Tuesday that "Netanyahu is the PM of an apartheid state. ... He has the blood of Palestinians on his hands and can't cover up crimes by attacking Turkey." Commenting on Twitter, the Turkish president said Israel has been occupying the land of defenseless people in violation of United Nations resolutions. He suggested that Netanyahu consult the Ten Commandments if he wants a lesson in humanity.

In return, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu slammed Erdogan. "A man who sends thousands of Turkish soldiers to hold the occupation of northern Cyprus and invades Syria will not preach to us when we defend ourselves from an attempt by Hamas. A man whose hands are stained with the blood of countless Kurdish citizens in Turkey and Syria is the last person to preach to us about combat ethics."

The Irish government summoned the Israeli ambassador, Zeev Boker, over the Gaza killings. Ireland has called for an independent UN investigation.

On Monday, South Africa recalled its ambassador in Israel. "The South Africa government condemns in the strongest terms possible the latest act of violent aggression carried out by Israeli armed forces along the Gaza border," the Department of International Relations and Cooperation said. Other countries, including France and Germany, have condemned Israel's reaction to

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Monday's protests. Australia, on the other hand, has blamed Hamas for "confrontational" conduct.

In an unusual move, the United Nations Security Council held a moment of silence for "Palestinian and Israeli victims."

SISI: US EMBASSY RELOCATION WILL CAUSE 'INSTABILITY' (Arutz-7 5/17/18)

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi said on Wednesday that the move of the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem will cause "instability" in the region.

The comments, quoted by the Reuters news agency, were the Egyptian President's first on the issue of the embassy move.

"On the move of the U.S. Embassy, we have said this issue will have negative repercussions on Arab and Islamic public opinion and lead to a kind of dissatisfaction and some instability, and will have repercussions on the Palestinian cause," Sisi said in televised remarks at a youth conference.

Egypt, which has a peace treaty with Israel and is an ally of the United States, has condemned the deaths of Gazans in the clashes on the border with Israel, but avoided direct criticism of the United States following the opening of the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem on Monday.

"I urge the Israelis to understand that the reactions of Palestinians over this issue are legitimate and that (they) are dealt with in a way that takes great care for the lives of Palestinians," added Sisi, according to *Reuters*.

The violent riots on the Israel-Gaza border, dubbed the "March of the Return", started on March 30, before the embassy relocation, and have been openly encouraged by Hamas. In fact, on Wednesday a senior member of Hamas admitted that most of the 62 Gazans killed by Israeli fire during the border protests and clashes were members of the Islamist group.

While several world countries have pointed an accusing finger at Israel over the violent clashes, that has not been the case with the United States.

On Monday, the White House said that Hamas was to blame for the deaths of Gazans killed during the protests, noting that the group "is intentionally and cynically provoking this response."

On Tuesday, the U.S. Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said that the IDF acted with "restraint" in dealing with violent riots along the Gaza border.

GUATEMALA OPENS EMBASSY IN JERUSALEM WITH FESTIVE CEREMONY (Israel Hayom 5/16/18)

Guatemala has opened its new embassy in Jerusalem, the second country to open an embassy in the Israeli capital after the United States.

Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales dedicated the embassy Wednesday, two days after a high-powered American delegation marked the transfer of the U.S. Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said it was fitting for Guatemala to be one of the first countries to relocate its embassy since Guatemala also followed the U.S. to be the second country to recognize Israel 70 years ago.

"You were always among the first," he said. "We remember our friends and Guatemala is our friend, then and now."

Netanyahu said he was happy to welcome the Guatemalan delegation and said he wanted to discuss ways to promote bilateral ties. He also promised that he would kick off his next visit to Latin America in Guatemala City.

At Wednesday's ceremony, Morales said his country was bringing a message of "love, peace and fraternity" to Israel. The Guatemalan Congress recently passed a law designating May 14 "Israel-Guatemala Friendship Day."

"We are brothers," Morales said. "There has been an alliance between Israel and Guatemala for 70 years. We feel at home because we know that the Israeli people love the Guatemalan people. In generations to come, your children will remember that a brave country did brave things on your behalf because you hold a special place in our heart."

The Guatemalan Embassy move is the focus of much media attention in the Central American nation. Two weeks ago, a contingent of Guatemalan media representatives arrived in Israel to tour the new embassy headquarters,

located in the tech park across from the shopping mall in the Malha neighborhood.

Paraguay has also announced that it will soon be relocating its embassy to the capital.

NEW WEAPON AGAINST RIOTERS: 'THE CHOCO DRONE' (Arutz-7 5/16/18)

The Defense Ministry's directorate of research and development of weapons and technological infrastructure (Mafat) revealed Wednesday, in the context of disturbances on the Gaza border and in Judea and Samaria, a new development that will help IDF soldiers disperse rioters with nonviolent means.

The "Choco Drone" project was developed by Mafat and in cooperation with the Israeli defense industry, especially for the events of the current week, particularly "Nakba Day."

This week, the drone began its operational activity in the Gaza Strip, with its operation defined as successful. With the new development, IDF forces are not required to reach a point close to the border - all operations are carried out from the air according to the decision of the commanding officer in the field.

The drone is designed to carry heavy weights and is suitable for a variety of uses as well as for low-altitude flying. The ability to disperse rioters was not among its planned uses, but when the need arose, its designation was changed within a short period of time.

The drone was fitted with a shell capable of holding a large quantity of bags containing foul-smelling substance - known as "chocolate."

The drone has the ability to release, as needed, those bags from the air onto the ground below. The bags burst, the content disperses the rioters. It is important to note that this is a development that has been tested and is not harmful even in cases of direct contact.

HAREDI POPULATION PROJECTIONS TO BE LESS THAN PREVIOUS ESTIMATES (JPost 5/17/18)

The size of the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) population by 2059 will be significantly lower than previous forecasts have predicted, according to a new study by the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies released on Wednesday.

Although the Central Bureau of Statistics recently forecast that the haredi population would be 50% of the Jewish population by 2059, data from the haredi education system indicates it will be 35% of the population by then, the study by Prof. Alex Weinreb and Nachum Blass said.

The study showed that among pupils in the country's different education systems - state, state-religious and haredi - those in the haredi system increased at the fastest rate between 2001 and 2015.

But, from 2013 to 2015 the growth in the number of pupils in the haredi system was 7.5% lower than would otherwise be expected from data regarding the fertility rate in the haredi sector.

The study found that a significant cause behind this lower growth was changes in the religious orientation of students and their families, reflected in student transfers between education streams.

Of haredi pupils born between 1992 and 2003 who started school in the haredi system, some 11% of girls and 13% of boys left the system by eighth grade, with 6.5% transferring to the state-religious system and 4.5% transferring to the general state system.

At the same time, about 20% of girls and 25% of boys in the state-religious system left, most of them to the general state system and a small number to haredi schools.

Almost 98% of the students who attended general state schools in first grade remained there in eighth grade. The vast majority of those who left the stream transferred to a state-religious school, while only 0.4% transferred to a haredi school.

"The movement between the streams indicates a significant slowdown in the

growth rate of the religious population, a slight slowdown in the growth of the haredi population and an end to the decline, and even a slight increase, in the growth rate of the secular population," Weinreb said in the report.

"It seems that large segments of the religious and haredi populations are experiencing a decline, to various degrees, in the level of religious commitment," they said, noting that fertility rates among haredim are still much higher than in the other population groups, so the share of the haredi population is expected to continue to rise.

According to the researches, previous studies have shown that trends of decreased religiosity continue until 12th grade, and about 15% of haredim in each generation are expected to leave the sector.

"Forecasts based on natural growth rates, which do not take other factors into account, should be treated cautiously," Taub Center executive director Prof. Avi Weiss said. "In addition to movement between the sectors, we must take into account that level of religiosity doesn't necessarily reflect a particular stance on participation in the labor market, for example, and the data show that more and more haredim are joining the labor force without rejecting their way of life."

BACK IN ISRAEL, EUROVISION WINNER GLAD 'WE GAVE A REASON FOR COUNTRY TO REJOICE' (Times of Israel 5/14/18)

Israel's Eurovision Song Contest winner Netta Barzilai touched down in Israel early Monday morning and told reporters she was delighted to have given the country a reason to rejoice.

"We are all hoarse, we've been celebrating all night and we haven't really slept," she said as she disembarked at Ben Gurion Airport.

Israel won the Eurovision Song Contest for the first time in two decades Saturday as Barzilai clucked and bucked her way to the top of the international competition with the women's empowerment anthem "Toy."

"This is a great moment for me, for us as a delegation, and for us as a country that has so few reasons to rejoice at the moment," she said. "It makes me happy to know that we have given such a reason to rejoice."

Barzilai landed as the country was ending its celebrations of Jerusalem Day, marking the anniversary of Israel taking control of East Jerusalem and the West Bank in the 1967 Six Day War, and a few hours before the official opening ceremony of the United States embassy in Jerusalem, seen as a great diplomatic achievement for the country.

"Thought creates the reality," Barzilai said, thanking her team who worked with her for the past half year, "and that is what I learned from this journey."

Barzilai's win means Israel will host next year's Eurovision competition — probably in Jerusalem — an event expected to bring thousands of fans and worldwide exposure to the Jewish state. "I want to say a lot of good luck to the State of Israel that Eurovision will be here next year," she said. "It's such a pleasure that such an event will take place here."

Barzilai performed her song on the plane back to Israel for the rest of the passengers, who all celebrated her win with her.

With three backing singers and her trademark side buns featuring stripes of pink-dyed hair to match her pink-and-black outfit, Barzilai busted her way through "Toy" on stage in Lisbon, Portugal, punctuating her singing with her trademark eye rolls and chicken dance moves.

She will perform a victory concert in Tel Aviv's iconic Rabin Square on Monday night for her many fans, thousands of whom celebrated into the small hours of Sunday morning in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem as the results of the competition were announced.

The free concert in the heart of Tel Aviv will also feature previous Israeli Eurovision representatives, including Shiri Maimon, Orna and Moshe Datz, Gali Atari and Dana International, Israel's most recent winner.

INTEL TO INVEST ADDITIONAL \$5 BILLION IN ISRAELI OPERATIONS (Israel Hayom 5/16/18)

Multinational technology giant Intel announced Tuesday that it plans to

increase its investment in Israel by an additional 18 billion shekels (\$5 billion). This follows the company's announcement in February that it will invest \$4.5 billion in its Israeli ventures in 2018.

Intel Israel currently employs 11,000 people. According to the company's website, Intel has bought goods and services from local Israeli suppliers to the tune of \$10 billion over the past decade, with exports amounting to \$50 billion. The company's exports for 2017 totaled \$3.6 billion.

The additional funds have been earmarked for the company's flagship facility in the southern city of Kiryat Gat.

Intel is expected to receive a host of tax breaks and other state incentives for its investment, which the government is expected to approve in the coming weeks.

The company said that as part of its investment, it will offer 250 new jobs as well as undertake the technological upgrade of the Kiryat Gat facility, which Intel officials say has a "significant advantage" over the company's other sites worldwide.

An inter-ministerial team tasked with offering incentives to foreign investors has recommended giving Intel a grant of NIS 700 million (\$195 million), contingent on its commitment to making a strategic investment in its Israeli operations.

"I have just heard from Intel CEO [in Israel] Yaniv Garty that after two years of intensive work, Intel's global management has accepted our proposal to invest another NIS 18 billion and expand its activity in Israel," Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon said.

"We were in competition with several countries for Intel's investment and I worked on getting them to choose us for two years, with the vice president of Intel International. In a week of Israeli successes, we are again making strides in the global economy."

Economy and Industry Minister Eli Cohen said, "Intel's choice to continue significantly investing in Israel is an important expression of confidence in the State of Israel and its economy. Intel's advanced activities in Israel support our policy of increasing exports and creating quality jobs in general and in the periphery in particular."

NO JOY FROM THE US MEDIA ON JERUSALEM'S BIG DAY (Jack Engelhard, Arutz-7 5/15/18)

The Trump administration gets it and blames Hamas fully for the casualties in Gaza, and separating itself from ALL previous administrations, asks for no "restraint" under the circumstances. That is something entirely new. But then comes *The New York Times* with the same old grudge and runs its top story like this -- "Israel kills dozens and injures 2,400 at Gaza border."

Kills? That is pure yellow journalism using the active voice to spread a big lie. The passive voice works like this -- "Gas pipelines in Gaza were seriously damaged during Palestinian protests."

Why so dubious? We know the Islamic terrorists did it to themselves, and Hamas provoked it, but the media would rather you didn't know as the *Times*, on the other hand, wants no equivocating and no context as it thrills at any chance to blood libel the Jewish State.

Not a chance to let Israel enjoy the moment; give her a breather for 70 years of success against all odds. No chance at all to blame the other side for anything.

But the *Times* wasn't alone acting resentful and gloomy the day after Israelis celebrated the inauguration of the US Embassy in Jerusalem.

Coverage was all over the place but without much nuance and the New York Daily News was singularly hateful with its headline of Ivanka as "Daddy's Little Ghoul."

Further along, we catch CNN's Wolf Blitzer serenade some PLO/PA "ambassador" who was given non-stop privilege to sound off. Blitzer never challenged the man about those "peaceful demonstrators." No kites flying in with firebombs? No infants being used as human shields and is rock throwing now an accepted form of non-violence?

Then we hear, as always, that they WANT Jerusalem as their own capital and heard it, we did, from one network to another, but nobody, certainly not Richard Engel for *NBC Nightly News*, asking by what rights do they make this claim. Jerusalem was never their capital, but it was Israel's capital for 3,000 years, thanks to King David.

From *CNN* all the way to the *BBC* there was handwringing that Trump's fait accompli dashed "the peace process."

Hello? From the day Ishmael was born, there has never been a peace process – other than to hoodwink Israel into making concessions.

We kept hearing that the Gazans are hemmed in with no place to go, which makes them angry. Is there no one around to explain that the Israelis gave them Gaza to give peace a chance?

Instead, the Israelis got rockets and terror tunnels coming their way. Some people are always angry and the more you give them the more they want.

Only *Fox News* gave it relatively fair and square. Harris Faulkner was on site, offering Israelis a chance to express their joy at Jerusalem, and their thanks to President Trump.

But even *Fox News* has its odd couple, namely Shepard Smith, who, like Geraldo, bristles whenever good things happen to the Jewish people.

Still at *Fox News*, we found Judith Miller, once a top reporter, asking if Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will ever compromise enough to give the "Palestinians" some hope.

To which we can only say, "Are you kidding?" Miller, who prides herself in knowing the Middle East, which for years she covered for the *Times* – surely she knows that before Netanyahu came along one Israeli prime minister after another offered them nearly everything, including the kitchen sink. But from Yasser Arafat to Mahmoud Abbas, no takers.

Throughout the day, petulant Palestinian Arab leaders approached the cameras to denounce President Trump, vowing that they will never go along with the United States ever again.

Gee, that's too bad.

THE PALESTINIANS' SELF-MADE NAKBA (Ben-Dror Yemini, YNet 5/16/18)

Every Palestinian death is a pity, including those who were killed on Monday. Those were unnecessary deaths, part of the Nakba culture the Palestinians have been adopting for 70 years now.

There was a Nakba. Palestine's Arabs underwent an expulsion. Tens of millions around the world, including Jews, went through a similar expulsion. But the Palestinians are the only ones who have adopted an ethos of rejectionism, self-victimization, suffering and death. They aren't looking for their own good. They have become addicted to a Nakba which is fully self-made, from its inception to this very day.

Monday's protest was dedicated to Jerusalem. That's interesting. Since the occupation in the year 638, Jerusalem was—most of the time—under Muslim rule. They never built a capital there. They never celebrated the city. Nothing. Jerusalem remained under Arab rule from 1949 to 1967. There was no occupation. But they didn't establish the state of Palestine, and so they didn't establish a capital either. They left Jerusalem as a marginal, neglected and forsaken city. Until Israel arrived. And then, only then, they remembered how much they care about Jerusalem.

It didn't start on Monday. Musa Alami was one of the most important leaders of the Arabs of Palestine under the British Mandate. He studied in Britain, was a senior commander in the British Mandate, held talks with David Ben-Gurion, was close to the Nazi Haj Amin al-Husseini and was a member of the Arab Higher Committee. Like all other members of the leadership, Alami was against the Partition Plan. He invited the Jordanian army to invade Israel to thwart the existence of a Jewish state. When the Arab plot failed and the refugee problem was created, Alami called on the Arab world to start preparations for a war on the 'Jewish entity.'

Alami, who came from a rich aristocratic family, also tried to build an

agricultural farm near Jericho to help the desperate refugees somehow. King Abdullah allotted about 5,000 acres for the project. Alami began digging and was joined by several people. They found wells.

Alami raised funds and the initiative began taking shape. Refugees found work and a livelihood, and the agricultural crops fed the hungry. The farm began thriving. On the premises, they built a swimming pool, a clinic, a school and accommodation for hundreds of orphans who found refuge from their distress. It was meant to be a wonderful rehabilitation model, in accordance with the international community's mandate and the mission the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) was assigned with.

The thriving farm infuriated the refugees' public activists and the leaders of the Arab world, apart from Abdullah. Despite Alami's radical views, they launched a propaganda campaign against him, turning him into a traitor who cooperates with Zionist. Rehabilitating refugees was perceived, even back then, as treason.

In the end of 1995, following ongoing incitement, hundreds of rioters invaded Alami's farm, leaving it in ruins. The arrival of Jordanian policemen prevented murder and rape.

If we want to understand why the Palestinian refugees' descendants have remained in a state of distress, and why Hamas rioters vandalized the strip's gas supply pipes, and why the Arab world hasn't bothered to rehabilitate for 70 years now, and why the Palestinians failed to establish a state and had no concern for Jerusalem, we should go back to the Alami farm rioters. It's the same logic. For 70 years now, the Nakba isn't just a memory. The Nakba is the ethos. It's the identity. It's the lifetime achievement.

The Alami story, as part of the refugee saga, appears in Adi Schwartz and Einat Wilf's new book "The Right of Return War," which is being published these days. The book is an indictment, not just against the international community, not just against Arab states, but against Israel as well. Because all of them together have made it possible for the monster known as the refugee problem to reach shocking dimensions.

In the exact same years that Alami's farm was active, from 1951 to 1955, \$200 million (the equivalent of nearly \$2 billion those days) were allotted for refugee development and rehabilitation projects. Only \$7 million were used—3.5 percent. They weren't interested in rehabilitation. UNRWA, which was created to solve the refugee problem, has turned into an agency for the perpetuation of refugeeism.

Monday's dead are the product of payments from Iran, an addiction to the self-victimization and self-deception ethos, and the fostering of the return fantasy, by UNRWA as well.

The bloodshed and the suffering can be stopped. The free world should make it clear to the Palestinians: Peace, welfare and prosperity will arrive

when you stop dreaming about ruin, destruction and return. But the free world is "condemning both sides," encouraged by part of the Left. And the Palestinians are paying the price.

