

# 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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## 45 ROCKETS, MORTARS FIRED TOWARD ISRAEL; IDF RETALIATES WITH 25 AIRSTRIKES (JPost 6/20/18)

Some 45 mortars and rockets were fired into southern Israel from the Gaza Strip early Wednesday, some exploding in Israeli communities, following IDF strikes against Hamas military targets.

In response to the rocket and mortar fire, Israeli jets struck over 25 Hamas targets - including an underground training area - in four military compounds in three waves of retaliatory strikes wounding at least three Palestinians.

On Wednesday afternoon an Israeli drone fired warning shots towards a group of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip launching incendiary aerial devices into southern Israel. There were no reported injuries in the incident which came just hours after numerous sirens sounded throughout the night in communities bordering the coastal enclave.

According to a statement released by the IDF, seven of the projectiles were intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system and another three fell inside the Strip.

The sirens, which began around 1.15 in the morning and continued until around 6 a.m. came shortly after IAF jets struck three targets in the Strip in response to incendiary kites and explosive balloons launched towards southern Israel.

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum praised the "courageous resistance that responded to the occupation's bombardment of its posts in Gaza. It's its legitimate right. The message of the bombardment confirmed that the resistance is the one who determines the rules of engagement and its way and will not allow the occupation to isolate our people or impose any new equations. If [it] tries [it] will bear the consequences," he wrote on Twitter.

Major Avichay Adraee, the IDF's Arabic Spokesman took to Facebook on Wednesday warning that Hamas was leading Gaza toward an escalation with Israel. "These were Hamas's achievements in the previous conflict: Destruction, destruction and destruction. The threats made by the organization's leaders won't conceal the bottom line: Hamas is causing the Gaza Strip to deteriorate to escalation against the strip residents' best interest. Hamas doesn't care about Gaza's residents."

While there were no injuries or casualties, the projectiles caused damage to cars and homes. Part of a mortar from Gaza was found next to a kindergarten in a community in the Eshkol Regional Council.

Despite the barrage, children went to schools as normal. "After evaluating the situation, it was decided that studies would be held as usual but will be adapted to the night's events," said Gadi Yarkoni, head of the Eshkol Regional Council, noting that residents had been kept all night by the barrage of projectiles. "We try to maintain a proper routine within the situation, because that is the best way for us. We support the IDF in its response to kite terrorism, which harms our routine and we expect that the IDF will continue to act to restore quiet, to end the firing at our settlements and homes and fires in our fields," he added.

Former head of the Eshkol Regional Council, MK Haim Yeilin of the Yesh Atid party called on the government and IDF to do more to counter the threat posed by incendiary devices launched from the Gaza Strip which have ravaged the south of the country.

"Hamas is trying to change the equation so that a kite and a balloon can be seen as a children's game, and we are over 80 days in which the cabinet does not order the IDF to respond accordingly. We must not surrender to Hamas's new equation and its attempt to show that over 30,000 dunams of land that were burned are not acts of terror. Now that the cabinet

understands, even Hamas must unequivocally understand: a kite is like a Qassam."

Members of the regional council's teams were present at the communities that had been hit by rockets, providing support to residents and officials.

## DISGRACED EX-MINISTER CHARGED WITH SPYING FOR IRAN (Israel Hayom 6/19/18)

Former Energy Minister Gonen Segev, once imprisoned for trying to smuggle illicit drugs into Israel, is back behind bars after being charged with spying for archenemy Iran, the Shin Bet security agency said Monday.

The Shin Bet said Segev, 62, was extradited from Equatorial Guinea in May and arrested upon arrival in Israel on suspicion of "committing offenses of assisting the enemy in war and spying against the State of Israel."

The agency said Segev had contacted officials at the Iranian Embassy in Nigeria in 2012 and visited Iran twice for meetings with his handlers.

He acted as an agent for Iranian intelligence and relayed information "connected to the energy market and security sites in Israel including buildings and officials in security organizations," the Shin Bet said.

Segev's defense team, attorneys Eli Zohar and Moshe Mazur, issued a statement that neither accepted nor denied the charges, saying only that the indictment paints a different picture than the Shin Bet alleges.

"The details of the indictment are largely confidential at the request of the state," the statement said. "At this preliminary stage, all we can say is that the details that were permitted for publication make the [charges] appear more serious than they are." The attorneys said they had been advising Segev since he returned to Israel a month ago.

Segev, who was a minister under Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in the mid-1990s, was arrested in 2004 for attempting to smuggle 32,000 Ecstasy

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tablets from the Netherlands to Israel using an expired diplomatic passport, which he doctored to appear valid. In the wake of the affair, Segev, a trained pediatrician, had his license to practice medicine revoked.

Segev was released from prison in 2007 and has been living in Africa in recent years.

The Shin Bet said Segev met with his handlers twice in Iran, and also met with Iranian agents in hotels and apartments around the world. Segev was given a "secret system to encrypt messages" with his operators.

The statement said Segev maintained relationships with Israeli civilians who had ties to Israel's security and foreign relations. It said he acted to connect them with Iranian agents who posed as businessmen.

Israel Hayom has learned that Segev has been cooperating with the investigation. He confessed to engaging with the Iranians, but claimed he had no monetary or ideological motive, and that he was never in possession of any classified information to give the Iranians.

Initially, he also said he was trying to help Israel rather than harm its security, but a number of individuals in his camp refuted the claim.

An indictment was filed against Segev last week. A gag order was imposed on the case and no further details were available.

### **IDF TRYING TO ESTABLISH NEW STRIKE FOR KITE EQUATION IN GAZA** (JPost 6/20/18)

It's a simple equation. Kites versus strikes. And it's bringing Israel and Hamas towards yet another round of deadly conflict.

Like almost every day over the past three months, southern Israel was burning on Tuesday. Firefighters and reservists from the IDF's Homefront Command battled blazes sparked by incendiary aerial devices which continued to fly in and ravage the south.

Israel has threatened the ruling Hamas terror group in various ways in order to pressure them to reign in those who launch the kites, including firing warning shots and, more recently, carrying out airstrikes on Hamas military targets.

"The IDF views the use of incendiary kites and balloons with great severity and will operate to prevent their use," the military said in a statement adding that these simple children toys cause "acts of terror that endanger the lives of Israeli residents living in the south."

But the incendiary kites and explosive balloons keep flying into Israeli skies. They are such simple devices but they keep burning Israel.

Late Tuesday night in response to the close to 20 fires which burned throughout the day Israeli Air Force jets struck three targets in a Hamas military compound near Rafiah in the southern strip.

In the hours that followed terror groups in the coastal enclave launched some 45 mortars and rockets toward southern Israeli communities in a series of barrages.

It was the largest salvo of projectiles from the beleaguered coastal enclave since a de-facto ceasefire was put in place in late May following the launching of close to 150 mortars and rockets towards Israeli communities.

"Another sleepless night for the residents of Eshkol," said Gadi Yarkoni, the Head of the Eshkol Regional Council following the latest bombardment which saw some 200,000 Israelis spend the night bomb shelters. "We try to maintain a regular routine within the situation, because that is the best way for us."

Hamas has set its own equation and it won't let Israel set the new status quo without having a say.

For Israel it's strikes for kites. But for Hamas, its rockets for strikes.

"All hail to the valiant resistance that responded to the occupation's shelling of Gaza's positions and this is a legitimate right," said Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum on his Twitter account following the night's events. "The message of the bombardment confirmed that the resistance is the one who determines the rules of engagement and its way and will not allow the occupation to isolate our people or impose any new equations. If he tries he

will bear the consequences."

While there were no casualties on either side and, while neither Hamas nor Israel are wanting another round of conflict, the bad movie that we are left to watch is never ending.

It's kites versus strikes.

### **NETANYAHU: ISRAEL ONE OF 5 LEADING COUNTRIES IN CYBERSECURITY** (YNet 6/20/18)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday addressed the 8th Annual International Cybersecurity Conference at Tel Aviv University, which is being attended by cyber experts, diplomats and security officials.

"We have unbelievable opportunities and we're realizing them, and at the same time we have unbelievable challenges and we must confront them," the prime minister told the audience. "There will be no silver bullet. It doesn't exist. There will be no solution that stops hermetically any country or even the majority of attacks. It's not going to happen.

"We monitor the attacks on Be'er Sheva. You should go and see the CERT center. We can monitor quite a bit. We can stop quite a bit. But the only way we can address this enormous challenge to enormous opportunities is to keep running ahead, to be ahead faster and faster and faster. This is a supreme test for our civilization. It is going to be tested not only by criminal organizations, by terrorist, but by other states.

### **HAMAS PAID FAMILY TO SAY IDF KILLED 8-MONTHS-OLD BABY WITH TEAR GAS** (JPost 6/21/18)

Hamas Chief Yehia Sinwar paid the al-Ghandour family to say that their 8-month-old baby Leila died of gas inhalation from tear gas used by the IDF during the recent violent protests along the Gaza border, the testimony in an indictment document of their relative Mahmoud Omar revealed on Thursday.

According to the document which was filed by the southern district prosecution to the Beersheba District Court, Omar heard of his cousin Leila's death when he was attending the protests near to the fence.

When he arrived home, he learnt that the baby died of a blood disease - which was similar to the disease his brother died of in 2017, according to his testimony.

"Later the accused [Omer] learnt that his aunt Mariam and her husband Anwar told the media that Leila died of inhaling tear gas that was shot by the IDF during the protest near the fence - a thing that is not true..." the document explains further. "Hamas senior official Yehia Sinwar paid them to claim that Leila died while inhaling tear gas during the riots."

### **ISRAEL TO SPEND 1 BILLION SHEKELS TO UPGRADE DEAD SEA RESORT AREA** (Ha'aretz 6/21/18)

Long neglected, Israel's Dead Sea resort area will undergo a major expansion and upgrade to turn it into what the Dead Sea Preservation Government Company called "one of the world's top tourism destinations."

Under the plan, which was approved this week by the District Planning Committee for the south, the government will spend 1 billion shekels (\$276 million) upgrade the two main hotel zones at Ein Bokek and Hamei Zohar and create a new area that will join them into a single attraction.

The Dead Sea has long been a draw for foreign and Israeli tourists alike mainly because of the unusual and health-enhancing properties of its extremely saline water. However, even though the area hosts about one million tourists annually it has never lived up to its potential and in recent years the number of Israeli visitors has declined.

The Dead Sea's hotels are aging, there are few restaurants and most of them belong to international fast-food chains. Entertainment and shopping opportunities are few. One hotel industry source told TheMarker that many visitors are surprised after hearing so much about the area to find how underdeveloped the Dead Sea is.

The centerpiece of the new zone will be an upgraded beachside promenade

that links all the area's attractions and services, and will include a bicycle path. The plans also include a central spa available for all visitors as well as a visitors center and convention center that can also serve as a venue for concerts and cultural events.

Some 5,000 hotel rooms will be added, 3,500 of them in 15 new hotels slated for the new area and the rest for Ein Bokek and Hamei Zohar.

The upgraded area will also include three new hotels located on land that will be recovered from the Dead Sea on artificial promontories – a first for Israel. Overall, the plan calls for low-rise construction that will fit the contours of the region's geography.

### **THE PRAYER OF THE HAREDI SOLDIERS (Arutz-7 6/20/18)**

The "Path of Lions" march of the Kfir Brigade, which includes the haredi battalion Netzah Yehuda, took place recently.

The brigade marked the end of the journey with a brigade heritage evening at the Western Wall in the presence of the commander of the Central Command, Major General Nadav Padan.

The haredi battalion held a special prayer before the ceremony in which they said a unique form of the "For the sake of the unification" prayer ("L'shem Yichud"), which is often recited before the performance of mitzvot (commandments).

"For the sake of the unification of the Holy One and his Manifestation, with fear and love, I hereby qualify my body to be brave and strong for the nation and to merit the aspect of the resurrection of the dead with a return to a holy body no less than to divine inspiration. May it be your will, Hashem our G-d and G-d of our forefathers, that every drop of sweat and toil and effort that I do with my spirit and body be elevated to your will and with pleasure before you, and may we merit to do this with truth and a full heart."

The march manifests a special educational project of the brigade. The brigade commanders led the march, over the course of which they presented the soldiers with the legacy of the brigade, from Operation Defensive Shield, through Operation Return Brothers to the events of the hour. The marchers were also presented with copies of the "Legacy of Brigade Combat," which reflects the brigade's spirit and values.

Rabbis of the Netzah Yehuda association said, "It is a great honor for our soldiers to take part in the Path of Lions parade of the Kfir Brigade. Haredi soldiers serving in the IDF while maintaining strict adherence to a haredi lifestyle are proof of the spiritual victory of the Jewish people."

### **PRINCE WILLIAM'S ITINERARY LISTING JERUSALEM AS 'OCCUPIED' SPARKS IRE (Israel Hayom 6/19/18)**

The status of Jerusalem in the official itinerary for Prince William's upcoming visit to Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority has angered Jerusalem Affairs and Heritage Minister Zeev Elkin.

Prince William, the Duke of Cambridge and second in line to the British throne, is scheduled to visit Israel next week in the first-ever state visit by a member of the British royal family.

His official itinerary, released by the Foreign Office, states that he will visit "Jordan, Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories." The itinerary includes Jerusalem in the last category, saying that during his time in the "Occupied Palestinian Territories" he will visit the Mount of Olives and the tomb of his great-grandmother Princess Alice in the Church of St. Mary Magdalene.

Elkin wrote on his Facebook page Monday that the terminology is a "distortion" and that it cannot "change reality."

William will meet Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas during the landmark trip.

Since the establishment of Israel, the British royal family has not made any official visit, although senior members, including William's father, Prince Charles, and grandfather, Prince Philip, have traveled to Israel in unofficial capacities.

### **NINE REASONS THE ISRAEL-PALESTINE STRUGGLE CANNOT BE SOLVED (Bradley Burston, Ha'aretz 6/20/18)**

Why can't we, the intelligent, resourceful and historically knowledgeable peoples of Israel and Palestine, manage to resolve our excruciating conflict, a struggle now much older than any Israeli or Palestinian alive?

To begin to address the question, let's look at just one theater of war, the area of Gaza and the Western Negev.

We know that a catastrophe of untold consequence is taking place there. An unaddressed humanitarian disaster rages in Gaza, the water undrinkable, the electricity supply largely unavailable, sewage open and seeping, housing inadequate, unemployment astronomical.

We know, also, that an ecological calamity has ensued in Israeli areas bordering the Strip.

It was a catastrophe entirely foretold. But it was, indeed, preventable. Early this year, Israel and Hamas could have held back-channel talks, leveraging ties with Washington, Gulf States, the EU and others to initiate a program of economic development for the Strip, whatever Hamas' rival the Palestinian Authority might have said in opposition.

And yet, to the monstrously mutual benefit of both Gaza's Hamas rulers and the hardliners of the Netanyahu government – both of whom exploit high Palestinian casualty counts to inflame their base – the crisis steamed right ahead.

In Gaza, Hamas hijacked what grass-roots activists had initially planned as a campaign of non-violent protest. Coupled with Israel's longtime failure to prepare for border unrest with engineering works and non-lethal means, Hamas's actions triggered a response by Israeli troops firing live ammunition at unarmed protesters.

Vast areas of nature reserves, animal habitat, and farmland across the border in Israel have since been incinerated into smoking ash by Gazan helium balloons and kites bearing incendiary materials and devices.

Once again, the prospect of open war is in the air. Children on both sides are suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. Their parents as well. Many have trouble sleeping, concentrating, staying calm. All too often, their lives are a waking nightmare of war's terrors, running at bare seconds' notice to escape missiles, finding overnight that areas they played in and loved, had been destroyed.

So what are the people in charge are doing about it?

In Jerusalem, the Netanyahu government is holding a discussion on the structure of two television channels and the future of the Eurovision song contest. In Gaza, encouraged by Hamas, kite and balloon flyers are working on ways to increase range and boost destructive potential.

Okay, so what can this tell us about the reasons the Israel-Palestine morass can't find a solution? Here are nine:

1. Both sides swallow whole the same lies about the other. And the lies don't change. The following is a list from a dozen years ago. Since then there have been four major wars and untold political upheavals. The lies remain unchanged. They include:

- We were here first. The Holy Land belongs to us. All of it. Who says? God says.
- They are as bad as the Nazis.
- The only language they understand is force.
- We are the true victims. Our retaliatory revenge is wholly justified. Theirs is not. Theirs is terrorism.
- Our will is stronger than theirs. We will make them suffer like we suffer. We will achieve ultimate and eternal victory.

2. Pretending to be tough, our leaders loudly, proudly refuse to negotiate. Until, that is, the refusal turns into a war. Then, after the war that could have been forestalled, and the tragedy of the killings on both sides which could have been avoided, a truce is signed.

3. As soon as a truce is signed, extremists on both sides go to work, finding new and effective ways to erode the truce and prod the sides into fresh cycles of escalation, mistrust, and cries for vengeance.
4. The armchair activists of social media have a telling impact in making sure that contacts between the sides are obscenely counter-productive. The narratives presented, no less than the schoolyard-level expletives, personal insults, and threats, help assure that anyone who brings civil and sincerely well-meaning discourse to the online table will swiftly, even permanently, regret it.
5. As a corollary to the previous, the destructive intent of social media warriors increases in direct proportion to their distance from the Holy Land. That is, expect the worst from online fanatics in places like Brooklyn, Detroit, Boca Raton.
6. Rampant, institutionalized official corruption on both sides makes it all too attractive for leaders to divert the attention of the people away from the workings of government, and squarely on the perceived crimes, villainy, and irredeemable moral bankruptcy of the Enemy. Racism – as expressed as anti-Semitism on the part of Hamas and the Palestinian Authority, and as anti-Arab bigotry by Netanyahu and his colleagues – has become an increasingly helpful tool in this regard.
7. In Israel, Gaza and in the West Bank, leaders and officials are doing everything they can to cement the positions of the current leadership into as permanent a condition as possible. They hope to benefit, as well, from the perceived rightward bent of young people.
8. Leaders of both sides exploit the same one-sided UN decisions to inflame their base – the Palestinians as proof that the whole world agrees with them, and the Israelis as proof that the whole world is against them – so Israel might as well do as it damn pleases.
9. Leaders of both sides take advantage of the statements and actions of the Trump administration in a slightly different way. Netanyahu and those farther to the right see Trump's support as releasing Israel from any constraints. Oddly, Palestinians see Trump's support of Netanyahu as, yes, releasing them from any constraints as well.

#### **FOLLOWING MINISTERS' DEMANDS, IDF STEPS UP RESPONSE TO KITE TERRORISM** (Ron Ben-Yishai, YNet 6/18/18)

On Sunday night, the IDF moved from concrete deterrence of terrorists dispatching incendiary kites and balloons from Gaza to general deterrence against the government responsible for this activity in the Hamas-ruled strip.

Not only did the army step up the severity and extent of its response, it basically adopted a demand made by some cabinet ministers to treat the kite terrorism as the high-trajectory terrorism of rockets and mortar shells fired from the strip by the Palestinian organizations.

The IDF responded to the launch of dozens of kites and 17 fires sparked by incendiary kites and balloons on Sunday just like it responds to the rocket fire by rebel organizations. In this case too, the idea is to target military “assets” of the strip’s sovereign and ruling force, although the kite terrorism isn’t operated by Hamas. It is mostly performed by “rebel” children and youth.

If Hamas is the strip’s sovereign power, it must also take responsibility for the actions of children and youth who are allegedly unrelated to the terror organization but receive encouragement from Hamas. Their activities cause damage and, in some cases, could even threaten lives in Israel.

The Palestinian Islamic Jihad fought back with measured and intentionally inaccurate rocket fire. At the moment, both Hamas and the other Palestinian organizations have an interest in containing the event. So does the IDF. The army doesn’t want to bring about an escalation that would eventually force it to launch a major battle in Gaza. Hamas and Islamic Jihad, in their current situation, have no incentive to enter a battle from which they will emerge with no achievement and with major destruction in the strip and might even lose control of Gaza. The IDF has no interest in assuming responsibility for the welfare and public administration of two million Palestinians in this case.

The Israeli government is facing quite a difficult problem right now. The public pressure is increasing, and although the real damage caused by the kite terrorism is still relatively small and there have been no casualties so far, the Israeli public is mostly the electorate of the coalition parties. That same public basically accepts Ministers Naftali Bennett and Gilad Erdan’s claim that the kite terrorism has a dangerous potential of deteriorating and eventually leading to fatalities as a result of fires that will spin out of control, as well as small explosive devices that are occasionally attached to the incendiary kites and balloons.

The gradually escalating retaliation policy adopted by the defense establishment, led by Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman and IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot, isn’t enough as far as they are concerned. The IDF responded to the kite terrorism by sending warplanes to carry out an airstrike just like it responds to the firing of rockets or mortar shells from the strip, but the hawkish ministers won’t settle for that.

Minister Bennett, for example, is rightly saying that if the IDF detected a group of 16-year-olds planning to fire a Qassam rocket at Sderot, it would immediately attack them from the air and from the ground with the purpose of killing them. The education minister is demanding an identical policy towards kite launchers. To clarify this point, it’s important to distinguish between the IDF’s response policy, which began with concrete deterring fire, and escalated on Sunday night to airstrikes against Hamas’ military facilities.

Later on, if the kite terrorism continues, the IDF will move to a more serious retaliation policy, in which key kite terrorism and Hamas operatives will pay with their lives for this terrorism, which is seriously affecting the economic security and the Gaza vicinity residents’ sense of security.

But this policy, which is accepted by Defense Minister Lieberman, fails to satisfy Ministers Bennett and Erdan. They are demanding a change in the rules of engagement against the balloon and kite launching cells, and not just an overall deterrence policy in the strip which is supposed to make Hamas catch the kite launchers and stop them from carrying on instead of encouraging them, as Hamas and Islamic Jihad are doing right now.

Hamas is definitely capable of doing so, and Israel is specifically saying to the organization: You must prevent the kite launches just like you gained control over the rebels firing rockets. Otherwise, we may deteriorate into a comprehensive battle which you, Hamas, stand to lose.

As we all know, the IDF doesn’t want to kill children who are participating in the kite launches for moral humanitarian reasons and because it is banned by international law. Those who kill children could be sued in the International Criminal Court in The Hague for war crimes.

The IDF’s intelligence measures, mainly unmanned aerial vehicles, have the ability to detect who is about to dispatch a kite or who is holding onto a string of a gas balloon attached to an explosive device, and selectively hit them.

There is no doubt that intentionally targeting the young Gazans who are inciting the children and providing them with material to build the kites will eventually achieve the required deterrence, but that will all happen down the road. At this time,

we must wait and see whether the change in the IDF’s response will make Hamas prevent the launching of incendiary kites and balloons. If that doesn’t happen, people will start being targeted in the strip.

