



Bring them home

Yarden Bibas, age 35, kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz

Holding pattern

Airlines not rushing back to Israel
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Exploring the absurd

Amos Gitai asks, 'Why War,' in his new film
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PAYING THEIR LAST RESPECTS

Family and friends attend the funeral of Rachel Cohen and Aliza Reyes at the Kedumim cemetery yesterday. The two friends were killed by Palestinian terrorists on a road in the northern West Bank on Monday, along with Israel Police St.-Sgt.-Maj. Elad Yaakov Winkelstein. (Text: Jerusalem Post Staff; Photo: Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

US, Israeli generals strategize next move against Houthis

Three soldiers killed • Kfir exits N. Gaza • Questions on Hamas comeback

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB, DARCIE GRUNBLATT and Jerusalem Post Staff

US Central Command (CENTCOM) Deputy Commander Vice Adm. Brad Cooper and Deputy IDF Chief of Staff Maj.-Gen. Amir Baram met in Israel on Tuesday to discuss future moves against the Houthi proxy group in Yemen.

According to a joint statement, they visited several air force bases, including Nevatim in the South – where a joint drill of Israeli F-35s and American F-15s took place in 2023 – and discussed countering terrorist threats in the region.

As recently as Sunday, the Houthis had fired a ballistic missile at Israel and have, in general, increased the frequency of such attacks for several weeks, without any significant breaks.

Many of these attacks have forced millions of Israelis in the Tel Aviv and central Israel regions to run into bomb shelters and safe rooms in the middle of the night. The last time a Houthi missile killed someone was in July.

And yet, a school in the Tel Aviv area suffered 11 million shekels in damages, while other sites suffered similar hits by pieces of falling shrapnel after air defense systems

shot down the missiles.

The Houthi attacks have continued, even after Israel launched four separate large-scale strikes on areas under Houthi control in Yemen, including on all of their main maritime ports multiple times and their international airport on December 25.

A December 31 CENTCOM strike on a key Houthi installation followed, but it also did not stop the Houthis, who to date have shot over 200 ballistic missiles, along with nearly 200 drones.

Israeli leaders have said they will target the Houthi's

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'I'M REALLY HOPEFUL':

Trump envoy Witkoff expects hostages update before inauguration

• By Reuters, AMICHAJ STEIN, and Jerusalem Post Staff

US President-elect Donald Trump's Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, said on Tuesday that he hopes to have good news to report about the hostages by the time Trump is sworn in as president on January 20.

Witkoff, at a press conference held by Trump in Palm Beach, Florida, said, "I'm really hopeful that by the inaugural we'll have some good things to announce on behalf of the president."

He also announced that he would leave for Doha to join the talks on the Gaza hostage deal. A working Israeli delegation departed for Qatar on Friday.

"If the hostages are not back by the time I'm in office, all hell will break out in the Middle East, and it will not be good for Hamas, and it will not be good, frankly, for anyone," Trump said on Tuesday.

Later asked about this warning on the *Hugh Hewitt Podcast*, Trump said, "That is exactly what I meant. If the hostages are not released by the time I

take office, there will be hell – no 'don't,' there will be hell. They need to be released now."

He continued, "I am Israel's best friend. I moved the embassy to Jerusalem – everything was good, including the Abraham Accords, and every major positive event in Israel recently was because of me. I must also note that I support peace – now is the time."

Trump's "don't" comment appeared to be a jab at US President Joe Biden, who warned other countries in the region who were thinking of attacking Israel shortly after October 7.

"To anyone thinking of taking advantage of the situation, I have one word: 'Don't,'" Biden said from Israel on October 10, 2023.

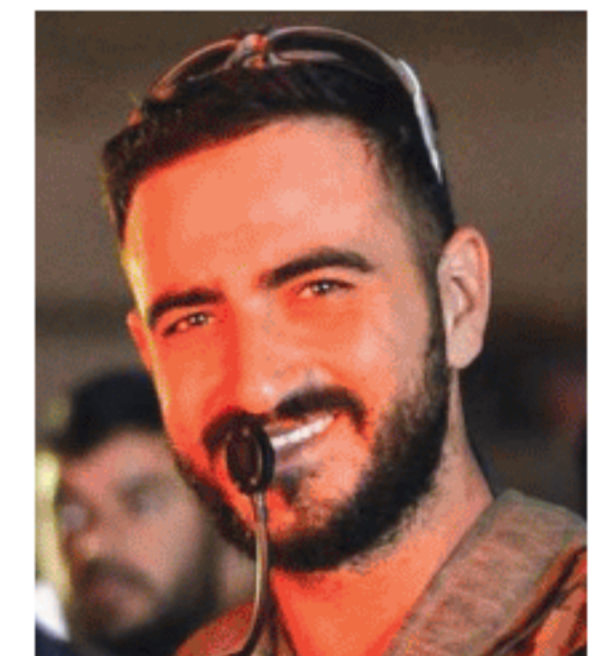
Trump appointed Witkoff, a close friend and confidant, as his administration's Middle East envoy with the goal of securing a peace deal between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

He reportedly also wants the deal to make progress toward resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, according to sources familiar with his views.

Walla contributed to this report.



CAPT. EITAN ISRAEL SHIKNAZI (IDF)



MAJ. DVIR ZION REVAH (IDF)



ST.-SGT. IDO SAMIACH (IDF)

SOURCE TO 'POST':

Biden admin: No need for IDF to stay if Lebanese Army deploys

• By AMICHAJ STEIN

The US believes if the deployment of the Lebanese Army to southern Lebanon continues as is, there will be no reason for the IDF to remain there or extend the 60-day stage of the ceasefire, a source told *The Jerusalem Post* on Tuesday.

US special envoy Amos Hochstein concluded a two-day visit to Lebanon on Tuesday. He met with senior Lebanese officials, including Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri. Berri is the person who has

been conducting the ceasefire talks as a representative for Hezbollah.

Sources with knowledge of the matter told the *Post* that the Biden administration believes the Lebanese Army has accelerated its deployment in southern Lebanon, specifically in areas south of the Litani River.

"The IDF implemented a withdrawal from the western sector yesterday, due to the Lebanese Army deployment in the area," explained the source, adding, "The US administration and other

regional players are now on getting the conditions right for the next withdrawal phase."

The ceasefire, which was signed on November 27, stated that during the first phase of 60 days, the Lebanese Army would deploy in the area south of the Litani River, which should lead to a full Israeli withdrawal from the area by the two-month mark.

This view stands in stark contrast to what Israeli officials have said in recent days.

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PROTESTERS IN Tel Aviv last night call for the return of the 100 hostages held by Hamas in Gaza, as families hope that the inauguration of US President-elect Donald Trump will move talks along. (Avshalom Sassoni/Maariv)

Hostage families petition court to step in on deal

• By EVE YOUNG

Family members of hostages and former hostages petitioned the High Court on Tuesday to intervene in a hostage deal.

The petition, published by Channel 13, asks for an urgent interlocutory injunction that would force the government to decide on the conditions for a hostage deal.

"This petition is a desperate cry of the hostages to this distinguished court, in a request to help realize the

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Court to hear petition today demanding haredi draft orders

• By ELIAV BREUER

The High Court of Justice will hear on Wednesday morning a petition by several NGOs demanding that the IDF immediately send out draft orders to the over 60,000 haredi (ultra-Orthodox) men eligible for service.

The petitioners – the Movement for Quality Government in Israel and Israel's Defensive Shield Forum – have argued that the IDF failed to fulfill its legal duty to send out these

draft orders after the legality of their exemption ended in June.

In a meeting in the Knesset State Control Committee on Tuesday, head of the IDF Personnel Planning Branch Brig.-Gen. Shay Taib said the military dispatched 10,000 draft orders so far for the 2024 draft year, which Taib explained began on July 1 and will end on June 30.

Taib said he sent out the number of orders based on directives by former defense minister Yoav Gallant.

Several MKs and other participants in the meeting argued that the IDF did not have the authority to refrain from sending out draft orders

to all eligible haredi soldiers – and that it was not dependent on the defense minister to do so.

Taib said the IDF can draft 4,800 haredim out of the 2024 18-year-old haredi cohort; approximately 5,700 of the 2025 cohort; and the entire cohort (over 13,000) from 2026 onwards.

These, however, are the numbers of actual inductees into the IDF, not the number of orders sent out. Speakers at the committee meeting pointed out there was no reason not to send out initial draft orders to all those who are eligible, since in any case,

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RAPE CRISIS CENTERS:

'Police gave Eyal Golan special treatment'

• By EVE YOUNG

The Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel (ARCCI) submitted to State Comptroller Matanyahu Englman a list of police actions in the investigation of singer Eyal Golan that it said could amount to obstruction of justice.

The points included in the list raise suspicions regarding the handling of the investigation of the case of organized sexual exploitation of minors carried out by Golan's father and other associates.

Police actions harmed the victims and the possibility of investigating and bringing those involved to justice, the ARCCI said.

Golan was given preferential treatment at the police



TAISIA ZAMOLOWSKI, one of the complainants in the 2013 sex scandal allegedly involving Eyal Golan, testifies yesterday at the Knesset Committee for the Advancement of the Status of Women in Jerusalem. (Shmulik Grossman/Knesset Spokesperson)

station, including from police investigators, the ARCCI added.

It said Golan's investigators helped him locate the camera recording the investiga-

tion and blocked it with their bodies.

Investigators also hinted to Golan to use the bathroom at a certain time, the ARCCI said, adding that it believed that this was to give Golan a chance to give them information off the record while in the bathroom.

The ARCCI also said there is documentation of a conversation Golan had with his lawyer on speakerphone in which she reassured him that the head of the investigation team would "take care" of him.

Golan was given favorable treatment during the investigation, including sandwiches and popcorn, the association said.

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Eulogizing the three fallen soldiers

Eitan 'was educated on dedication, love for people, land - so he lived and fell' • Dvir's family: 'We prayed and hoped we wouldn't eulogize you; We were waiting for you to finish your role'

FACES OF THE WAR

By DARCIE GRUNBLATT,
JOANIE MARGULIES

Late Monday night and throughout Tuesday, the IDF announced that three soldiers were killed: Capt. Eitan Israel Shiknazi, Maj. Dvir Zion Revah, and St.-Sgt. Ido Samiach.

Three more people were killed on Monday in a terrorist shooting attack in the northern West Bank: Rachel Cohen, 73, Aliza Reiss, 70, and Israel Police St.-Sgt.-Maj. Elad Yaakov Winkelstein, 35.

Shiknazi and Revah were buried yesterday, the former in the Hatzor Haglilit Military Cemetery and the latter at the Mount Herzl Military Cemetery in Jerusalem.

Both were killed in combat in northern Gaza. Samiach's funeral is set for today.

IDO SAMIACH

Samiach, 20, from Ganei Tikva, served in the Reconnaissance Battalion of the Nahal Brigade and was also killed in northern Gaza in a separate incident.

"Ido, the beloved son of Ofra and Uri, the devoted brother to Itai, Adi, and Omer, was the pride of his family and our community," the Ganei Tikva municipality said in a statement on Facebook.

"He fought bravely for the security of the State of Israel, and in his death, he left a void in the hearts of



MOURNERS CARRY the casket of IDF Capt. Eitan Israel Shiknazi, who was killed in northern Gaza, during his funeral in Hatzor HaGilit yesterday. (Shir Toren/Reuters)

all who knew him."

His funeral will take place on Wednesday at noon at the Savyon Cemetery, according to the Sayeret Nahal Association. Ahead of the funeral, a flag march will take place, accompanying the family "on their final journey," the municipality stated, adding that "A great mourning has fallen over Ganei Tikva."

EITAN ISRAEL SHIKNAZI

On Monday, Capt. Shiknazi and Maj. Revah were killed by an anti-

tank missile strike. Two soldiers from the same battalion were seriously wounded during the same incident.

Shiknazi's funeral was held on Tuesday at 1 p.m. at the Hatzor Haglilit cemetery.

The Hatzor Haglilit Local Council paid tribute to him: "Eitan grew up and was educated in Hatzor, and his family still lives in Hatzor. May we never know any more sorrow!"

The Binyamin Regional Council also paid tribute, saying Shiknazi



FAMILY AND friends of IDF Maj. Dvir Zion Revah attend his funeral at the Mount Herzl Military Cemetery in Jerusalem yesterday. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

was "a graduate of the 'Bnei David' preparatory school in the settlement and is the 10th person to fall in the war from the settlement of Eli in Binyamin. Professional teams from the Binyamin Council and Eli are accompanying the family at this time."

Regional Council Head Benjamin Gantz eulogized, "Eitan, deputy company commander from the Egoz Unit, fought bravely and led his soldiers in the Nahal Brigade on the path to destroying the enemy

until he fell in battle.

"He grew up and was educated on dedication and love for the people and the land, and so he lived and fell. In this difficult hour, we embrace his dear wife, Hallel, his parents, and his entire family.

"The entire people of Israel are with you. Benjamin sends strength to the Eli community that is standing on the front lines of the war."

DVIR ZION REVAH

Revah's funeral was held at 12:30

p.m. on Tuesday at Mount Herzl Military Cemetery in Jerusalem.

"Givat Shmuel shares in the grief of educator Or Revach from the Amit Ulpana in the city upon receiving the devastating news of the death of her husband," Givat Shmuel's Mayor Yossi Brodny wrote in a Facebook post.

"Dear Or, we all embrace you during this difficult time. May his memory be a blessing," he concluded.

Mor, his younger sister, eulogized Revah on behalf of herself and their brothers. "We prayed and hoped so much that we wouldn't have to stand here and eulogize you. That knock on the door would never come.

"Just three months ago, we stood here and eulogized Netanel (our cousin). It seems that God wanted both of you up there," Ynet quoted her saying.

"You were the best brother in the world. You always made sure everything was done perfectly. You always gave your all to everyone. You always aspired to reach the highest places," she continued.

"You were the most humble person. You didn't speak much - everything was done quietly and with humility. We were just waiting for the moment you'd finish your role in the army. Send us strength from above. Rest in peace," she concluded.

Of 10,000 called to enlist, only 338 haredim join IDF

By YONAH JEREMY BOB

Some 338 eligible haredi (ultra-Orthodox) men joined the IDF's new special tracks tailored to their religious and cultural needs - out of the 10,000 who were sent summons since July, the IDF announced on Tuesday.

While each new draftee counts, the compliance rate for haredi summons - less than 3% - out of the most recent batch of draft orders numbering 7,000, is even lower than the original compliance rate, which was closer to 10% for 3,000 summons sent out over the summer.

The military's goal has been to increase the number of haredi draftees by around 3,000 this year, to bring the total number to around 4,800 per year.

Even this goal would have left an estimated between 60,000-80,000 eligible men undrafted from this year and recent years, but would have constituted a major jump in recruitment.

According to the IDF, the latest announcement came

as the process to send out the 10,000 summons concluded. They have been sent out on a rolling basis, first in the Summer and then in the Fall.

The IDF has given several reasons for the new programs' massive failures to date, but the largest ones are that the haredi community is pressuring the eligible young men not to join, as the government debates a new law that would either anchor status quo exemption, or delay any real sanctions against the community from kicking in for seven years.

Although the High Court of Justice in April nixed aspects of haredi yeshiva funds, due to non-compliance with the draft, and there is a threat to cancel subsidies for childcare from non-compliant families in late February, the government has advanced with funneling huge sums of money to the haredi communities in other ways, which may be indirectly used to fill any shortfalls caused by the High Court decisions.

The IDF has made it clear

that it is not going to, on a large scale, arrest haredim refusing their draft, and that enforcement has been very limited. The IDF regards enforcement as a broader social issue that the government must handle.

Of the 338 new haredi draftees, 211 are in combat units, while 127 are in units to support combat units. These recruits are part of the new Hasmonean Brigade, the new upkeep units in the North, and a second round of haredi border guard units.

More specifically, 70 draftees joined the Netzah Yehuda battalion of the Kfir Brigade, 19 joined the Tomer company in the Givati Brigade, 19 joined the Hetz company of the Paratroopers Brigade, and 11 joined the Negev company in the air force, along with other units.

The IDF has said that it expects other haredim to join over the course of January, but it is unclear how significant these numbers will be.

Amnesty Int'l suspends its Israel branch

EXCLUSIVE

By MICHAEL STARR

Amnesty's International Board has suspended Amnesty International (AI) Israel's membership with the non-governmental organization's network for two years, according to leaked internal memorandums issued on Monday.

The decision was allegedly taken after the Israeli branch criticized the international body's recent reports on it, including that it systematically excluded Palestinians.

Insiders said, however, that evidence of racism on Israel's part may have been orchestrated by AI leadership, and the international body has its obsessions and bias against Israel.

"We take this action in response to evidence of endemic anti-Palestinian racism within AI Israel, which violates core human rights principles and Amnesty values, and evidence of AI Israel's misalignment with and hostility to Amnesty positions," read a Monday email from the Amnesty International Board's interim chair Tiama Luauvala Peter Fa'afu.

Fa'afu asserted that Amnesty Israel had taken action against Amnesty International's research publicizing differing opinions against the 2022 report, "Israel's Apartheid Against Palestinians: Cruel System of Domination and Crime Against Humanity" and the 2023 report, "You Feel Like You Are Subhuman: Israel's Genocide Against Palestinians in Gaza."

"AI Israel has sought to publicly discredit Amnesty's human rights research and positions," said Fa'afu.

"Its efforts to publicly undermine the findings and recommendations of Amnesty's 2022 report on Israel's apartheid against Palestinians and, more recently, Amnesty's 2024 report on Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, have been deeply prejudicial to Amnesty's human rights mission, threatening our credibility, integrity and operational coherence."

AMNESTY ISRAEL in December had rejected AI's findings accusing the State of Israel of committing genocide during the war against Hamas in Gaza, arguing that the allegation of genocide had not been "sufficiently substantiated."

The local branch did say it believed that there were possible widespread interna-

tional law violations, crimes against humanity, and ethnic cleansing.

It added that a minority of its team agreed that there was enough information to establish that Israel had committed genocide in Gaza.

Fa'afu cited an article by former Amnesty Israel members Amal Ourabi and Muhammad Abdel Kader, who wrote in a December 16 Mekomit opinion piece that there was an internal crisis in the branch due to the report.

OTHER ISRAELI members reportedly expressed harsh criticism for investigations of racism in the local branch while turning a blind eye to antisemitism within the movement.

The whistle-blowers related that Israeli branch members also alleged that AI leadership was politicizing human rights discourse and promoting anti-Israel policies.

Amnesty Israel reportedly threatened to close their own branch if the global movement didn't take steps to improve.

Ourabi and Kader said that they left because Amnesty Israel supposedly ignored Israeli human rights violations, and was focused on the impact of the October 7 massacre when a year later the war barely impacted Israelis as Palestinians continued to suffer. Former Amnesty Israel director Yonatan Gher supported the article in a December 17 social media post, asserting that the Israeli branch served as "the guardian of the Israeli government against the human rights movement."

Amnesty Israel criticized the 2022 report for painting the country in broad strokes, ignoring the differences between different groups and exaggerating some of the framings, *The Times of Israel* reported.

Anonymous sources within Amnesty International disagreed with claims that the Israeli branch's characterization was "hostile" to criticism of the country, contending that the local group had been critical both of the Israeli government as well as Palestinian bodies, addressing human rights issues regardless of where they arose.

One source shared with *The Jerusalem Post* that AI didn't allow local branches to review the 2023 genocide allegation report, limiting access to the executive summary. This was reportedly a unique practice.

AI also said that it was suspending the Israeli branch

because of "endemic anti-Palestinian racism."

"AI Israel has failed to respond effectively to findings of endemic anti-Palestinian racism - a situation which led to complaints from Palestinian board members to the international board in 2022, and successive resignations in 2022, 2023, and 2024," said Fa'afu.

The international board shared a notice from then-Amnesty Israel chair Daniil Brodsky announcing his resignation on November 29, as well as the resignation of his vice chair and another board member ahead of the genocide allegation report.

"During the last members' assembly, it quickly became apparent that Palestinian voices were not just something low on the agenda, but that they were actively silenced," said Brodsky.

"One of the Palestinian board members was humiliated in a racist and disgusting way at the assembly. We could not respect the decisions made by the assembly, and certainly not represent them."

"We could not condone a space hostile to Palestinians, and a human rights space for Israeli Jews only is one that I can scarcely justify."

Brodsky claimed in the letter and a December 10 *The Forward* article that he had attempted to introduce more Palestinian representation in managerial roles, but to no avail.

According to him, not only did Amnesty Israel not have the legal experts to criticize the genocide report, but it didn't have Palestinian input in its analysis. This was part of an alleged systemic problem in the group in which Palestinians were ignored.

"Amnesty Israel finds itself in the awkward position of being neither a source of legal expertise nor providing a diverse human rights perspective of Israelis and Palestinians," wrote Brodsky.

"It is just another place for Israeli Jews to express themselves."

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL insiders told *The Post* that they didn't believe reports about anti-Palestinian racism in the Israel branch, noting its commitment to Palestinian human rights issues.

The sources were also suspicious about the proliferation of the allegation and material like Brodsky's article, with one source going so far as to assert that the AI leadership had laid the groundwork for the racism

allegation to justify the suspension.

The anonymous sources also expressed concern about Amnesty's own "obsession" with Israel, devoting significant portions of the organization's international, regional, and local resources to the Levantine conflict.

One source said that activists were using their positions to pursue personal campaigns against Israel, noting that one researcher in the 2022 apartheid report later transitioned to working in a BDS group.

Amnesty International Secretary General Agnes Callamard said in a leaked Monday email that the organization would discuss the suspension at a January 21 "cluster call," and Fa'afu said that a review committee would be mandated to "determine whether Amnesty International Israel has a future within the Amnesty movement" and what the process would be to address concerns with the branch.

One AI insider said that the Israeli branch hadn't been notified and consulted ahead of the suspension decision in a manner that allowed for meaningful appeal.

The source said that the suspension also came the same month that Amnesty International was supposed to issue its October 7 massacre report, bringing its development into question.

The document will reportedly not apply a genocide standard and focus on other crimes. The suspension of a local affiliate is reportedly of little direct impact on the operation of the Israeli branch, the source shared, as it largely acts autonomously - the matter was mostly about the AI brand.

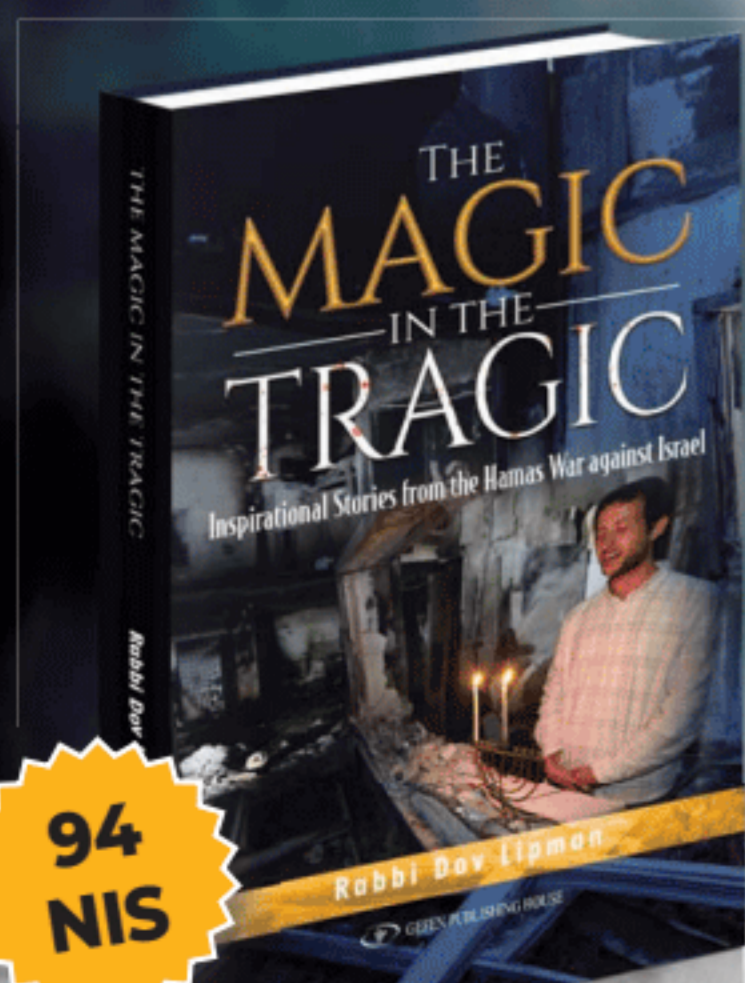
"This action is taken under the authority of Article 34 of the Statute of Amnesty International (POL 20/8464/2024) and is necessary to protect the reputation, integrity, and operational coherence of the Amnesty movement at large," Fa'afu said in the Monday email.

One whistle-blower criticized the current financial troubles of Amnesty Israel, saying that there was no transparency about how the movement's reports and actions impacted membership.

The source pointed to management issues as being the main issue that led to finance crises, with interim leadership in key positions.

It was a point of criticism from the source that key roles were not yet finalized, but the organization had prioritized the suspension of one of its affiliates.

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Reservists on IDF duty at record levels, jobs slump

• By EVE YOUNG

Employment among Arab and haredi (ultra-Orthodox) men increased significantly during 2023, but this progress halted, and the trend reversed – for Arab men in the second half of 2023, and for haredi men following the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas War – according to a report by the Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel.

In the second quarter of 2024, the employment rates of Arab and haredi men were 74% and 54%, respectively, compared to 87% of non-haredi Jewish men.

The percentage of Arab women working reached its highest-ever level of 46%, the Sunday report said, noting that this is the third year running in which the rate of Arab women working has peaked.

Overall, during the war, the rate of women working was almost unaffected while the rate of Arab and haredi men working dropped, the report said.

“While the findings are promising from a sectoral perspective, the decline in employment among Arabs and haredim is concerning given the well-known challenges these populations face in the labor market,” the report noted.

“Added to this is the intensification of inter-sectoral tensions during the war, particularly regarding the issue of Arab citizens of Israel and the question of equality in bearing the burden [of IDF service].”

The report also looked at the impact of reserve duty on workplace attendance, noting that December 2023 was the period when reserve duty caused the most absences, with some 3.4% of employees drafted. This means that nearly 150,000 workers were drafted at this time.



TWO RESERVISTS check their weapons, after being called up, in the North in September. (IDF)

Looking at the sectors most heavily impacted, the study found that in the infrastructure sector, nearly one in six employees was out for reserve duty, while in management, support, and the hi-tech sectors, nearly one in 10 employees missed work for reserve duty.

The report also noted that an unprecedented 60,000 women were drafted to reserve duty during the Israel-Hamas War and that women made up 20% of reservists.

“It is important to note that these workers – many of whom are called for additional rounds of service – lose opportunities for professional advancement and development, which can harm their careers and earning potential,” said Prof. Gil Epstein, one of the researchers who compiled the report.

“Beyond this, absences from work on the scale we have seen have severe effects on the labor market as a whole. Considering all this, policymakers must act immediately to minimize the damage to the labor market

by increasing long-term investments in this area.”

Between the first half of 2023 and the first half of 2024, the number of jobs in the Israeli market grew by just 33,000, compared to 165,000 jobs in the same time frame in the two previous years.

The growth of the number of jobs varied by sector, the report added, explaining that in some fields, the number of jobs has grown while in others, it has dropped.

The sectors that grew included health, welfare, and care-taking, which grew by 34,000 employees, and education, which grew by 22,000.

The sectors that shrank the most included food and service, which shrank by 19,000 employees, and information and communications (excluding hi-tech), which shrank by 15,000.

The number of employees in the hi-tech sector grew by less than 2,000 compared to 14,000 in the same period in the two years prior.

The number of those not par-

ticipating in the labor market because they gave up on finding jobs, were fired, or their workplace closed has grown in comparison to recent years.

The report also looked at wages, finding that between January and May of 2024, wages for employees were 3% higher than in the previous year and 12% higher than in 2019. This comes after there was a near-zero change in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023.

Looking at sectors separately, there were significant wage decreases for employees in the education and health fields, the report found, adding that there were also wage drops for employees in local and public administration and security, among others.

The highest average wages for employees were in hi-tech services, hi-tech industry, and finance, the report added. The lowest average employee wages were in food and services, other services, and entertainment.

Wage inequality remained similar to levels from previous years.

Brazil not seeking soldier for alleged war crimes

Pro-Palestinian group now asking Argentina to act

• By MICHAEL STARR

An IDF reservist targeted by anti-Israel groups is not being sought by police for questioning, the Diaspora Ministry and media said on Tuesday, but legal activist group Hind Rajab Foundation (HRF) has filed new cases against him and another soldier in Argentina.

Metropoles reported on Monday that the Brazilian Federal Police filed a request to the Federal Court to reconsider a Sunday arrest warrant for a visiting IDF reservist for alleged war crimes.

The police chose to open a crime report instead of a formal investigation while awaiting the judicial process. They argued that the case required more detailed analysis before a formal investigation, and the issue generated internal debate about the legitimacy of an investigation and the relevance of Brazilian criminal law.

The reservist had been visiting Brazil when the HRF revealed information and legal filings, resulting in his flight to Argentina at the behest of Israel.

The HRF filed a new case against the reservist in Argentina on Tuesday, sharing a video of a civilian infrastructure demolition in Gaza that the activist group claimed served no military purpose.

“This move reinforces our commitment to ending impunity and holding perpetrators accountable,” the HRF said on social media. “Justice will prevail, no matter where they hide.”

Another case was filed by the HRF on Thursday against an officer who is visiting Argentina, saying he used human shields, engaged in forced displacement, and other war crimes.



TROOPS OPERATE in Beit Lahiya in the northern Gaza Strip, in November. (Oren Cohen/Flash90)

The Diaspora Ministry said the Brazilian police’s decision not to investigate the reservist was in part informed by public pressure and exposure of the HRF founder’s support for terrorism.

“We will continue to expose the ugly face of terrorist supporters and act against anyone who tries to harm IDF soldiers and the State of Israel. The truth is with us – and it will prevail,” Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism Minister Amichai Chikli said on Tuesday.

Chikli also credited the son of former president Jair Bolsonaro, Congressman Eduardo Bolsonaro, who on social media highlighted Chikli’s warnings that HRF founder Diab Abou Jahja said he had joined Hezbollah, underwent military training, and had supported various acts of terrorism and terrorist organizations during his career.

Abou Jahja and Chikli exchanged barbs on social media, with the HRF founder dismissing allegations that he was part of Hezbollah but part of a smaller group.

“I am honored by your accusation of me being Hezbollah.

I respect them for fighting against your invasion hordes in Lebanon, but I am simply not of that ideology,” said Abou Jahja.

“Accusing me of being part of their resistance is an honor I do not claim. I was part of a much smaller leftist group in Lebanon when I was 16, and yes, I am proud of that. As everyone defending their homeland should be.”

Abou Jahja reiterated claims that a photograph of him armed was taken when he was defending his home from Salafists and was taken by his wife because she found it attractive.

The activist threatened legal action against Chikli for comments about his record, as well as supposed threats by Chikli, who mocked him about watching his pager – referencing the operation in which Hezbollah pagers were detonated by the Mossad.

“The Israeli government minister Amichai Chikli openly threatened me. This is a blatant act of terrorism and incitement,” Abou Jahja wrote on X/Twitter on Monday. “I will be filing a lawsuit against him.”

Defense Min. secures deals with Elbit Systems to boost military self-sufficiency

• Jerusalem Post Staff

The Defense Ministry signed two major agreements with Elbit Systems on Tuesday, totaling approximately NIS 1 billion, as part of a strategic effort to strengthen the IDF’s self-sufficiency and operational readiness.

The deals, signed by Defense Ministry Director-General Maj.-Gen. (res.) Eyal Zamir and Elbit Systems CEO Bezahel Machlis are expected to bolster the country’s domestic defense manufacturing capabilities.

The agreements are part of an overarching initiative inspired by lessons learned from recent military conflicts, the ministry said.

It added that the contracts were the result of in-depth planning aimed at securing long-term supply stability for critical defense resources.

The first agreement, overseen by the ministry’s Department of Production and Procurement, focuses on the purchase of thousands of heavy air munitions to enhance the IDF’s strike capabilities.

This boost in locally sourced munitions is designed to support sustained military operations in all theaters of combat.

The second deal, developed in coordination with the Directorate of Defense Research & Development (DDR&D) and the ministry’s Planning Department, involves the construction of a national raw materials facility.

The new plant will produce materials that were previously imported and is expected to reduce reliance on foreign suppliers while strengthening the domestic supply chain.



DIRECTOR-GENERAL Maj.-Gen. (res.) Eyal Zamir (center) and Elbit Systems CEO Bezahel Machlis (far right) visit an Elbit factory yesterday. (Defense Ministry)

Equipped with advanced technology, the facility will play a critical role in reinforcing the defense industry.

Defense Ministry officials emphasized that the agreements reflected the government’s commitment to its “made in Israel” policy, which prioritizes home-grown production and partnerships with local defense companies.

The ministry highlighted that the initiative would not only secure vital defense assets but also stimulate economic growth and provide employment opportunities across the country.

Speaking at the signing ceremony, Zamir said the agreements represented a pivotal step toward securing the military’s autonomy.

“We are laying the foundations for greater manufacturing independence in two vital areas – heavy munitions production and the establishment of a raw materials plant.

“These efforts, which began before the war and accelerated during it, will ensure that

the IDF can operate decisively across all fronts. This is a key takeaway from recent events and a cornerstone of our national defense strategy,” he said.

Machlis underscored the company’s commitment to supporting the army’s evolving needs.

“We are honored to be a partner in strengthening Israel’s defense resilience through the ‘blue and white’ [made in Israel] policy.

“Elbit Systems is dedicated to ensuring the IDF’s independence in critical munitions and contributing to economic development and job creation for thousands of families,” Machlis said.

The ceremony was attended by senior officials, including Planning Department head Itamar Graff, Maj.-Gen. Eyal Harel of the IDF Planning and Force Build-Up Directorate, Zeev Landau, the Defense Ministry’s deputy director-general, Elbit Systems Land Division general manager Udi Vered, and DDR&D deputy director Dudi Ovadia.



Jewish Federations of North America
congratulates our Chair of the Board of Trustees

Julie Beren Platt
and the other honorees

on receiving the Presidential Medal of Honor,
Israel’s highest civilian award,
from President Isaac Herzog.



We salute and admire Julie’s decades of
service to Israel and the Jewish People
as we express our admiration
and send our love.

UAE in talks with US, Israel about provisional gov't for postwar Gaza

• By ALEXANDER CORNWELL

DUBAI (Reuters) – The United Arab Emirates has discussed with Israel and the United States participating in a provisional administration of postwar Gaza until a reformed Palestinian Authority (PA) is able to take charge, according to people familiar with the talks.

The behind-the-scenes discussions, reported by Reuters for the first time, included the possibility of the UAE and the US, along with other nations, temporarily overseeing the governance, security, and reconstruction of Gaza after the IDF withdraws – until a Palestinian administration is able to take over, a dozen foreign diplomats and Western officials said.

The UAE is a close security partner of the US and, unlike most Arab governments, has diplomatic ties with Israel. The diplomats and officials said this provides the Gulf state with some leverage over Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

After over a year of war, Israel remains reluctant to outline its vision for Gaza and the international community has struggled to formulate a viable plan, said the sources, who asked not to be identified because the conversations were private.

The diplomats and officials stressed the ideas that had emerged from the UAE talks lacked detail and had not been distilled into a formal, written plan nor adopted by any government.

In the behind-the-scenes talks, Abu Dhabi is advocating for a reformed PA to govern Gaza, the West Bank, and east Jerusalem under an independent Palestinian state, the sources said – something that Israel has publicly opposed.

"The UAE will not participate in any plan that fails to include significant reform of the PA, its empowerment, and the establishment of a credible road map toward a Palestinian state," a UAE official said in response to questions about the discussions.

"These elements – which are currently lacking – are essential for the success



FOREIGN MINISTER Gideon Sa'ar (left) shakes hands with UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayad, in his official palace in Abu Dhabi yesterday. (Foreign Ministry)

of any post-Gaza plan."

The PA was established three decades ago under the 1993-1995 Oslo Accords and given limited authority over the West Bank and Gaza. It still exercises some governance in the West Bank but was run out of Gaza in 2007 by Hamas after a brief civil war.

A US State Department spokesperson said there had been talks with several partners, including the UAE, on options for governance, security, and reconstruction, and that various draft proposals, plans, and ideas had been put forward by partners.

"These have been deliberative discussions that continue, as we seek the best way forward," the spokesperson said, declining to comment further on "private diplomatic conversations."

THE PRIME MINISTER'S Office declined to comment for this story. The PA did not respond to Reuters' questions.

In addition to reforming the PA, four of the diplomats and Western officials said that Emirati officials had suggested the use of private military contractors as part of a postwar peacekeeping force in Gaza.

The other sources confirmed they were briefed on what they described as Emirati postwar proposals, which included the possible use of such forces.

The diplomats and Western officials said any deployment of such contractors would spark concerns among Western nations. Private military contractors, hired by the US and other governments, have faced accusations of torture, human rights abuses, and use of excessive force, among other allegations, including in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The UAE official did not respond to questions about the use of military contractors.

Rebuilding Gaza, including its political institutions, is expected to take years and cost tens of billions of dollars, requiring substantial international support, following 15 months of Israel's military campaign.

While the UAE has criticized the conduct of Israel's military and Netanyahu himself, Israel still wants the oil-rich nation involved in a postwar Gaza, according to two former Israeli officials, who declined to be identified.

Like Israel, the Gulf state opposes Hamas, a US-designated terrorist group that led the October 7 massacre that sparked the war.

Abu Dhabi views Hamas and other Islamist groups as destabilizing forces.

UAE officials have also expressed concern publicly over the war's impact on stability in the Middle East and on efforts towards greater regional integration and economic development.

Asked whether Hamas was aware of proposals discussed by the UAE, Basem Naim, one of the organization's senior officials, said that after the war, Gaza must be "distinctly Palestinian" and without "foreign interventions."

Washington is pushing, alongside mediators Egypt and Qatar, for a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas in Gaza.

Both traded blame in late December for delays in reaching a ceasefire. Each side said last month it appeared to be close.

On Monday, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington wanted to see a ceasefire deal concluded in the next two weeks.

When asked about the future of Gaza, Brian Hughes, a spokesman for Donald Trump's transition team, said the US president-elect – who is due to take office on January 20 – would work in close coordination with Arab and Israeli partners "to ensure that Gaza can one day prosper."

The Gulf state has said it would only send troops to a postwar multinational mission at the invitation of the PA and with the involvement of the US.

Netanyahu, however, has said he is against the Palestinian Authority in its current form governing Gaza, citing his long-standing grievances over the PA's school syllabus, which he says fuels hatred of Israel, and its policy of giving salaries to families of Palestinians imprisoned in Israel.

The UAE has called for a new prime minister to lead the PA, which Emirati officials frequently criticized as corrupt and inept during the closed-door talks, the diplomats and officials said, without providing specifics.

Poll: Almost half of American Jews don't trust Trump on antisemitism

• By HANNAH SARISOHN
Jerusalem Post Correspondent

NEW YORK – Nearly half of American Jews lack confidence in US President-elect Donald Trump's ability to fight antisemitism, according to a survey administered to 582 American Jews by the Jewish People Policy Institute.

Of the 582 respondents, 420 identified with strong liberal, liberal-leaning, or centrist beliefs.

The survey asked respondents to rank their confidence in Trump's ability to do the right thing regarding Iran, the Palestinian issue, fighting antisemitism, and US-Israel relations.

However, the questions didn't define "the right thing," leaving that open to interpretation by respondents.

"The further one moves on the religious spectrum from liberal to conservative, the higher the confidence respondents have regarding Trump's future activities," the JPPI found.

Liberal respondents have little to no confidence across the board that Trump will "do the right thing" in any area of questioning.

"Among liberals, nearly all of whom voted for Kamala Harris, the lowest degree of confidence regarding Trump's upcoming term pertained to the fight against antisemitism, followed by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict," the JPPI wrote in the survey findings.

Reform and Conservative Jews are almost equally divided in their confidence in Trump to

handle the US-Israel relationship and the Palestinian conflict, with 49% of Reform and 42% of Conservative respondents having no confidence in Trump's ability to fight antisemitism.

Politically conservative and Modern- and Ultra-Orthodox Jews have high confidence that Trump will "do the right thing" in all areas concerning Iran, the Palestinian issue, fighting antisemitism, and US-Israel relations.

44% of Modern-Orthodox and Ultra-Orthodox Jews have strong confidence in Trump's handling of antisemitism, with 61% of ultra-Orthodox Jews expressing confidence in Trump's handling of US-Israel relations and 67% expressing confidence in his handling of Iran.

The JPPI also questioned respondents' confidence in Secretary of State-designate Marco Rubio's ability to "do the right thing" in dealing with Iran.

A majority of conservatives and 41% of centrists have confidence in Rubio "doing the right thing," with a majority of strong liberals and a quarter of liberal-leaning respondents reporting no confidence in Rubio at all.

Most survey respondents agreed with the statement that it's "legitimate for Israel to refuse a ceasefire in Gaza until all of the hostages are released," though only 52% of strong liberals agreed with the statement, whereas 99% of strong conservatives were in agreement.

Palestinian groups should contact Fatah before attacking Israel – official

• By OHAD MERLIN

Palestinian armed groups should coordinate their moves with Fatah, the main faction in the West Bank, before they take action against Israel in order to maintain a strong front in the fight for statehood, a senior Palestinian Authority official said in a TV interview last week.

"The battle in the 1967 occupied lands is open in all means... but not at the expense of the Palestinian Authority," said Jibril Rajoub, former head of the PA's preventive security forces and the president of the Palestine Football Association.

Rajoub spoke at the official PA TV channel on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the series of violent campaigns and terror attacks led by Fatah, which he dubbed the "Contemporary Palestinian Revolution."

During the interview, as reported by the organization Regavim, Rajoub was quoted as calling on Palestinian militant factions to coordinate their efforts with Fatah and not to undermine the PA.

"From the first moment, what we need is a meeting of [Palestinian] factions to affirm the conformity of the Authority, the conformity and legitimacy of weapons, and also the legitimacy of the resistance," Rajoub said.

"The PA and its security mechanisms are not the ones meant to shoot at the Israelis – that's not their mission. The [factions] are welcome to come and discuss [this issue] with us in Fatah; we're willing and we're open to this."

"The [Palestinian] policeman represents our people's pride and greatness," he continued, "but it's not his job to open fire [at Israelis]. Us, as factions, we're ready to discuss [this issue]; we're open. We say: the battle in the 1967 occupied lands is open in all means. So,



HEAD OF the Palestine Football Association Jibril Rajoub speaks during an event for athletes, who represented Palestine at the Paris 2024 Olympics, in Ramallah, in July. (Ammar Awad/Reuters)

they're welcome, but not at the expense of there being one authority, one weapon, and one law."

Rajoub also gave hinted criticism of rival faction Hamas, claiming that instances of great military force may have been used as part of the armed struggle against Israel, but that they failed to achieve the "common grounding" that he claimed Fatah did achieve.

"We don't forget what happened in 2006," he added, referring to the armed coup against Fatah forces in Gaza following that year's elections, the last time there were elections in the enclave.

Perhaps in the same context, Rajoub also stressed: "We will not have 'national unity' with any faction that serves in fact as a continuation of a foreign actor or country... What does Iran have to do with us, with all due respect? No Iran and no watermelon," he added, evoking a popular colloquial phrase.

The interview came against the backdrop of the PA's ongoing operation against armed militants affiliated with Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Jenin, which was met with much crit-

icism from Fatah opposers.

Rajoub spoke lengthily about Fatah's leading role in the Palestinian national endeavors. "For 60 years, Fatah remains the national decision-maker of this great nation... and is at the forefront of the national struggle," Rajoub said.

"We didn't manage to obtain independence, but we achieved this amazing steadfastness and wide international legitimacy for an independent state."

TIME TO START LISTENING TO FATAH

Naomi Linder Kahn, Director of the International Division of Regavim, who called public attention to Rajoub's remarks about the need to coordinate violent actions with Fatah, spoke with *The Jerusalem Post*.

"This statement is not at all a new one – what is new is the public, transparent declaration of principles from one of the highest-ranking Palestinian Authority figures. Since October 7, PA officials have not only applauded Hamas's massacre of Israelis but have even boasted about the participation of PA militants in the atrocities."

She continued, "The PA has

repeated, ad nauseam, that it will not cease to fund terrorists nor stop encouraging the murder of Israelis. In this context, Rajoub has laid things out clearly: the internal conflicts are not about whether or not Jews should be killed – but who gets the credit for the act of killing them. The struggle is for power, and power has only one purpose: to enable the murder of even more Jews.

"This is not new for Rajoub. As head of the "Palestinian Preventive Security Force," as Secretary General of the Fatah Central Committee, and even as head of the Palestinian Football League – the fact that he is now saying the same things in front of the cameras that he has been saying off-camera for years only means that he does not feel he needs to hide his intentions anymore.

"He's learned that Israeli and world governments continue to pretend that they don't hear these murderous statements. If there's anything to be learned from October 7, it is this: They mean what they say, they say what they mean – and it's time we start listening," she concluded.



PROTECT THE KURDS

People attend the funeral of two journalists working for Kurdish media outlets in Turkey who were killed in a suspected Turkish drone attack in Qamishli, northern Syria on Monday. "The international community must call on Turkey to stop these aggressions and killing," said Israel's Foreign Ministry Director-General Eden Bar Tal. "The Kurds must be protected by the international community." (Orhan Qereman/Reuters)

Hamas terrorist admits to embedding in hospital

• Jerusalem Post Staff

The IDF released new footage on Tuesday that shows the interrogation of a Hamas terrorist who was arrested at Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza.

Anas Muhammad Faiz al-Sharif was captured during an operation by the 401st Brigade and Unit 504 near the hospital and transferred to Israel for questioning. During his interrogation, Sharif outlined his role within Hamas and revealed how it uses the hospital as a base for operations.

He disclosed that hospital grounds were used to transport equipment and weapons for launching attacks against Israeli forces. Sharif, 21, who joined Hamas in 2021, is one of 240 terrorists who were apprehended in the area surrounding the hospital.

"Weapons were moved in and out of the hospital for ambushes and tunnels," he said. The IDF emphasized that intelligence from these arrests has proven critical for ongoing operations.

Sharif also said Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives believed the IDF would avoid targeting the hospital because of the presence of patients and civilians.

"They believe the army can't bomb the location, like with an F-16 missile, or destroy the building," he explained.

The operation, which took place on December 29, was targeted against Hamas's latest attempt to reconstitute itself in northern Gaza, largely embedded within the Kamal Adwan Hospital in Jabalya.

In the weeks prior, the IDF had already started clearing improvised explosive devices in the vicinity of the hospi-

tal as well as in most of the pathways and potential escape routes to and from it.

Moreover, the IDF engaged in three to four targeted attacks on smaller Hamas cells near the hospital but was careful to avoid attacking the hospital itself. This was all part of an IDF strategy to lure the terrorists hiding in the hospital into a false sense of security.

When the IDF finally attacked on Friday, it needed only an hour to surround all routes to and from the hospital to lock down and block any terrorist escape attempts.

There was a short initial battle between Hamas terrorists and IDF soldiers, but all terrorists were quickly killed. Two groups of terrorists also tried to escape in different directions but were killed by IDF forces surrounding them.

Yonah Jeremy Bob contributed to this report.

Canadian liberal strategist: Jews 'shifting en masse to Conservatives' after Trudeau

• By JUDE TARAGIN

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's announcement of his resignation occurred as Jews flocked in droves away from the Liberal Party, which, in an attempt to please everyone, managed to please no one, explained Andrew Perez, a Canadian liberal strategist specializing in domestic politics.

Despite not being Jewish, Perez maintains close ties with the Jewish-Canadian community and is a vocal supporter of Israel, having visited the country just a few months ago.

Perez revealed in an interview that Members of Parliament from the three central provinces in Trudeau's party reached a consensus that his leadership could no longer continue.

The Liberal Party has been losing Jewish community support quickly since October 7, 2023, although cracks in the relationship appeared earlier.

"Over the years, it was common for many Jews to support the Liberal Party," Perez explained. "But recently [since October 7 and even a bit before], these Jews have been rapidly and in large numbers shifting to support the Conservative Party."

"The Jewish community felt that Trudeau's response to the wild antisemitic demonstrations across Canada was too little, too late. Moreover, even when he did decide to respond, his reactions were perceived by Canadian Jews as words without actual actions."

Perez pointed out that Jews were upset at the party, and mainly Trudeau, for both not working to fight antisemitism in Canada and for his general behavior and attitude reflected in different statements, particularly when he said Canada would abide by the arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court against Prime Minister



PRO-PALESTINIAN PROTESTERS demonstrate outside the Liberal Party of Canada's holiday party in Ottawa last month. (Patrick Doyle/Reuters)

Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Trudeau ended up pleasing no one. Arab-Canadian voters felt he didn't do enough to stop the war in Gaza, and Jewish Canadians felt abandoned since he didn't give them the feeling that he was doing all possible to make them feel safe again in Canada, alongside him not taking a positive stance towards Israel during the ongoing war."

Perez emphasized that Canada's shifting demographics have significantly influenced the Liberal Party's changing priorities.

"Thirty or forty years ago, Canada's Arab population was much smaller, while the Jewish community – though also small – held substantial political influence. Today, there are approximately two million Arab-Canadians compared to 400,000 Jews. As a center-left party, the Liberals try to be everything to everyone, but in

practice, the larger Arab-Canadian population often takes precedence. That's left many Jewish voters feeling overlooked."

The Liberal Party of Canada, once seen as the nation's "natural governing party," was on the brink of collapse in 2013. The party had just 35 seats in Parliament, making it the third-largest party, and many believed its days of dominance were over.

Then Justin Trudeau, son of former prime minister Pierre Trudeau, took the reins.

With a campaign rooted in optimism and renewal, Trudeau led the party to a historic victory in the 2015 elections, winning 184 seats. His charisma and forward-looking message resonated with Canadians disillusioned by the previous government.

HOWEVER, after a strong first term, cracks began to show in

Trudeau's leadership following the COVID-19 pandemic.

His government struggled to handle economic challenges such as inflation and a worsening housing crisis. Public frustration grew as Canadians, emerging from pandemic lockdowns, faced rising food prices, housing shortages, a surge in homelessness, and an unpopular carbon tax that sparked nationwide protests.

Efforts to correct course in 2022, including cabinet reshuffles and improved public messaging, proved ineffective. By June 2023, the Liberals had lost control of key strongholds like Toronto and Montreal to the Conservatives.

The situation worsened in December 2023 when former finance minister Chrystia Freeland publicly criticized Trudeau after being dismissed via Zoom.

Freeland, once one of Trudeau's closest allies and a

key negotiator during talks with the Trump administration, wrote an open letter expressing her loss of faith in his leadership.

The fallout was swift. Secret meetings among Liberal MPs from Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic Canada during the holiday recess led to a unified call for Trudeau's resignation.

A late-December poll revealed historic lows: Liberal Party support had dropped to 16%, compared to the Conservatives' 45%.

For many, this marked the end of Trudeau's political career. The writing was on the wall, and Trudeau announced his resignation immediately after Parliament returned from its holiday break.

Perez described the decision to suspend Parliament until March 24 as unprecedented and indicative of the party's turmoil.

"This isn't just a leadership

crisis for the liberal party – it's a leadership vacuum on a national level," he said.

The timing is especially concerning, given US President-elect Donald Trump's public threat to impose 25% tariffs on Canadian imports.

"If that happens, Canada could face its most severe economic crisis since World War II and a strong blow to Canada's autonomy," warned Perez.

During this interim period, Trudeau will serve as caretaker prime minister until a new leader is chosen. However, this new leader will immediately face a vote of no confidence. The Conservative Party, the Bloc Québécois, and the New Democratic Party have all signaled their intent to back the vote, making the Liberals' position even more precarious.

Perez also voiced concern over the potential impact of new Liberal Party members, particularly those from the Arab community, on the upcoming leadership contest.

Since party membership is free and open to anyone over 14, including non-citizens, some worry that new members could push candidates to adopt anti-Israel stances.

"In trying to secure votes, leadership hopefuls might take positions that further alienate Jewish Canadians," Perez explained.

Despite the uncertainty, Perez remains hopeful that the Liberal Party can rebuild trust post-Trudeau.

"The next three months are just the beginning. It will take time, but I hope the Liberal Party can rebuild its relationship with the Jewish community, alongside other social groups that lost their faith in the liberal party: business leaders, younger voters, et al. In the next upcoming months, I hope to see a beginning of small but meaningful steps."

Mass. man arrested for incitement to shoot up synagogue

• By MICHAEL STARR

A Massachusetts man was arrested for inciting others to shoot worshippers outside synagogues and for multiple firearms violations, the Beverly Police Department said.

Matthew Scouras, 34, was arraigned Monday for allegedly posting, on an online image board, threats against Jewish people, threats to rape Jewish women, and for encouraging other users to shoot people outside of synagogues.

The suspect was taken into custody for a mental health evaluation, and a search of his home recovered a Nazi flag, a 9 mm. Glock ghost gun with no serial number, six boxes of ammunition, \$70,000 in cash, and various firearm parts and accessories, including stocks, scopes, pistol frames, and rifle lower receivers.

According to police, under Massachusetts firearms laws, each lower receiver is legally considered to be a different gun, leading to 12 charges of possession of a firearm without a license. Other charges included illegal possession of a large-capacity feeding device, improper firearm storage, threats to destroy a place of worship, communication of a threat with a firearm, and making a firearm without a serial number.

The police reportedly operated off of a tip from federal law enforcement.

Scouras is being held without bail, pending a January 13 detention hearing.

A December 30 report from the Massachusetts Executive Office of Public Safety and Security warned that antisemitic crimes have risen by 70% in the state.

Schechter Queens becomes first in system to go Orthodox

• By JACKIE HAJDENBERG/JTA

(New York Jewish Week) – The first sign that things were changing at Schechter Queens came when the school began receiving requests from parents to let students hold an Orthodox prayer service.

As the first Jewish day school named for Solomon Schechter, an influential rabbi in Conservative Judaism, Schechter Queens only offered egalitarian prayer, where boys and girls prayed together. However, families at the school pressed for students to have the option to choose a non-egalitarian option.

That was seven years ago. After the Orthodox *minyan* (prayer service) launched, it became so popular that only two students continued going to the traditional one, recalled the school's principal, Dr. Rafi Kalman. It ended entirely.

Now, Schechter Queens has voted to rename itself, completely dropping the appellation associated with what was once the largest Jewish denomination in the United States. It will now be known as Queens Hebrew Academy, families were told last month.

"We've changed so much of what we do in the building that it's confusing to still be called Schechter," said Karen Chazan, a member of the board of trustees. "Parents who are looking for Schechter come to us, and they're not finding Schechter, and parents who think Schechter is not religious enough or not traditional enough for them are turning away because they think it's too liberal for them."

The changes at Schechter Queens reflect both demographic shifts in the school's neighborhood and the diminishing potency of the Schechter brand, once synonymous with a thriving network of day schools.

About 465 students are enrolled at the school, Kalman said. He estimates that 90% of

the students or more identify as Orthodox – in keeping with the school's location in Kew Gardens Hills, a heart of Orthodoxy in New York City. Many of them come from the local Bukharian Jewish community, centered in the nearby neighborhoods of Forest Hills, Rego Park, and Little Neck.

Around 50,000 Bukharian Jews, many from the former Soviet Union, live in New York City. Unlike Ashkenazi Jews who faced religious persecution and forced secularization during the Soviet era, Bukharian Jews, whose ancestry comes from the Bukhara region of Uzbekistan and incorporates some Persian Jewish traditions, were able to somewhat maintain their Jewish practice during the Soviet era. Their institutions tend to reflect Orthodox practice today.

"WE DON'T identify with denominations. We have people who [are] less observant [and] more observant," said Manashe Khaimov, an adjunct professor of Bukharian history at Queens College and the CEO of the Sephardi American Mizrahi Initiative. "But yet we are all – if we ever decide to go to synagogue or decide to do any Jewish ceremonies, there's going to be an Orthodox standard."

He added that some of the religious practices that have animated Conservative Judaism do not resonate with most Bukharians in the United States.

"A typical Bukharian... on the street, you ask them, 'How do you feel about egalitarianism?' They don't even know what you mean," Khaimov said. "But if you ask them, without using that terminology, saying, 'Would you be OK [with] men and women to be praying together in the synagogue and counting for the minyan?' the answer would be – it would be a foreign concept for them."

Yet many of the Orthodox yeshivas in the area have faced



STUDENTS AT Schechter Queens/Queens Hebrew Academy participate in school activities. (Courtesy Schechter Queens/Queens Hebrew Academy)

criticism for prioritizing Jewish learning at the expense of English and math. "We lack good schools," Khaimov said about Queens. "And Schechter is known for having very robust, at least, secular studies, and I think that's why some Bukharians were attracted to that school in the first place."

The school, originally called the Solomon Schechter School of Queens, opened in 1956, near the peak of Conservative Judaism in America. It boasted two separate buildings and eventually consolidated into one building in 1965, a brochure for the school's annual dinner in 2014 said. It was the first school to take on the name of Schechter, the second president of the Jewish Theological Seminary and founder of the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism, but hardly the last.

By the 1970s, there were dozens of schools named for Schechter across the United States. Over time, some disaffiliated with the Conservative movement and became community day schools, serving students from across the denominational spectrum. Others retained their religious

orientation but changed their names to reflect donors and shed associations with a diminished brand. Last year, Schechter Manhattan shut down entirely after facing years of declining enrollment.

A decade ago, the attenuated Schechter organization folded into Prizmah, a network that supports Jewish day schools across North America. (Chazan boasted at the time that Schechter Queens was a proud outlier to the trend of disaffiliation.) Its CEO, Paul Bernstein, said the changes underway in Queens were notable.

"Schechter Queens is certainly among the oldest [of the Conservative schools], so this is indeed a significant move," he wrote in an email.

But he said he was optimistic about the school's future. "Prizmah supports schools in their decisions as to how best to serve the local community – which does indeed include at times a shift in the religious composition of the community," Bernstein said. "We hope that Schechter Queens continues to thrive and serve its community in the best possible way as the Queens Hebrew Academy."

Some in the Queens Bukharian community have taken the renaming of the school as a sort of triumph over non-Orthodox religious ideology. Inaccurately saying that the school had been associated with Reform Judaism, an anonymous Instagram account that posts about happenings in the community posted, "The school is once again on the right path and the only way."

The post garnered dozens of likes. But some responded, lamenting the change.

"Especially in these times, it is honestly beyond upsetting to see so many members of the Jewish community excited that anyone who isn't Orthodox no longer has somewhere to send their kids in Queens," wrote Sarah Schraeter, a Queens artist who said she had been considering the school for her 3-year-old child amid concerns about antisemitism in public schools.

Chazan emphasized that the school would continue to call itself a "day school," which is used across Orthodoxy, rather than a "yeshiva." She also said the school's pivot toward Orthodoxy and away from Conservative Judaism

shouldn't be cause for a "victory lap" for anyone.

"The only reason [we are here today] is because of the success of the school for the first 68 years of its life and because of the Conservative Jewish lay leaders and rabbis that felt they saw the need to have this school that was not a strictly Orthodox yeshiva, that was a day school that was more accepting of different religious practices," Chazan said.

"We want it to be a smooth transition and evolution, rather than, 'Goodbye, and here we are as a new entity,'" she added. "It's important to me that the future generations of this school know the history and know why there's a school there."

FOR SOME observers of American Judaism, Schechter Queens' renaming was in some ways inevitable.

"American Jewry is diversifying demographically. It's no longer the overwhelmingly Democratic and Eastern European community of my youth. Just look how many Queens Jews voted [US President-elect Donald] Trump," Gil Troy, a Schechter graduate and American presidential historian, wrote in an essay about the school's renaming. The Republican presidential candidate drew more than 75% of the vote in the districts immediately surrounding the school in November's election.

Troy recalled portraying Haym Salomon, the Sephardic Jewish merchant who financed the Continental Congress during the Revolutionary War, in a fourth-grade play. He described a feeling of both Jewish and American identity and a commitment to Zionist ideals, which he suggested are harder to come by in liberal Jewish denominations today.

"Today, Conservative Judaism, which thrived in a middle-class-oriented, temperamentally-moderate

America, faces severe ideological, demographic, and institutional challenges," wrote Troy, who now lives in Israel and recently published a book called *To Resist the Academic Intifada: Letters to My Students on Defending the Zionist Dream*.

Chazan said the changes at the school were more practical than ideological.

"We had a choice," she said. "We could either close or we could evolve to meet the needs of the changing Jewish community. And we decided that it's more important to provide a solid Jewish education to families in the area than to just stand on our laurels and say, 'But we are a Conservative school.'"

Chazan is herself the parent of two Schechter graduates, the younger of whom finished eighth grade in 2013 and has long prayed in egalitarian synagogues in the area.

"It was very difficult for us to accept the fact that our community is no longer providing the students for the school," she said. "We just needed to make these changes so that the community that makes up the vast majority of our families feels that they're getting an authentic minyan – something that is meaningful to them – and that they're in a school that makes sense to them."

In Hollis Hills, where Chazan lives, her Bukharian neighbors have raised children who have now established their own families in the neighborhood.

"I realized that for years, white Ashkenazi Jews like me have been the majority and that other people have had to try to fit into our mold – and now I have to fit into another mold," Chazan said. "That's just the way it goes: Evolve or die. I don't think it's a bad thing. I think this is the community of Jews that is thriving right now in this location."

Airlines not rushing back to Israel despite impending easing of law

• By STAV LIVNE

After nine months and five sessions on the matter, last week the Knesset Economic Affairs Committee voted in favor of an amendment to the Aviation Services Law, which protects travelers' rights in the event that a flight is delayed or canceled.

The amendment eases the terms for compensation that airlines must provide to passengers whose flights are canceled. Foreign airlines have been demanding the change because of the frequent need to cancel flights during the war and the high cost of providing passengers with alternative flights on different airlines.

Despite the positive signal to the foreign airlines that their demands are being met, there has been little response on their part so far. Aviation industry sources say there has been almost no contact with foreign airlines concerning the resuming of flights to Israel.

At the same time, the pace of events in Israel, especially the missile attacks from Yemen, creates a new-old challenge for the airlines. A Greek airline Aegean plane had to make a stop in Larnaca on its way to Israel because of sirens warning of an incoming missile.

At any rate, foreign airlines are not rushing to resume services to Israel, despite many stating that the amendment to the law was their condition for doing



PASSENGERS LOOK at a departure board at Ben-Gurion Airport near Tel Aviv on October 7, 2023, as flights were canceled because of the Hamas attacks. (Gil Cohen-Magen/AFP via Getty Images)

so. Air France, for example, one of the airlines that openly backed the amendment, announced that its flights to Israel would be suspended for a further week.

Adv. Shirley Kazir, who heads the Aviation & Maritime and Hotels & Tourism practices at law firm FBC and who represents several airlines, among them British Airways, said that 50,000 seats could be added as soon as this month if the amendment finally became legislated.

The test for the airlines should come very soon, after the amendment is given second and third readings in the Knesset, generally a technical procedure.

Ryanair, which openly supported the amendment after revealing it had to pay passengers compensation amounting to almost €4 mil-

lion, has said the amendment will not be enough to ensure its return to Israel without the reopening of Terminal 1 at Ben-Gurion Airport to international flights.

Before the war, some 90 foreign airlines operated at Ben-Gurion Airport, but currently there are only 26. After the ceasefire in Lebanon came into force, Air Seychelles announced that it would be returning, and by the end of this week it will become airline number 27.

While its return is welcome, Air Seychelles operates only a few flights to a small number of destinations, so the effect on the sector is minimal.

If the airlines do not return, passengers may find themselves in a situation in which flights are canceled or substantially delayed, but they are not entitled to any finan-

cial compensation beyond the cost of their tickets.

They will then have to bear the probable high costs arising from the cancellation of their flights, without any increase in competition that might bring down fares.

No date for a vote on the amendment to the Aviation Services Law in the Knesset plenum has yet been set, but in any case, whether or not the amendment leads to all the foreign airlines returning will depend on the security situation.

In any event, the US airlines, or at least some of them, are not expected to return to Israel any time soon. In the case of long-haul flights, such as between Israel and North America, changes in schedules and diverting planes from one route to another are complex matters that take time.

Economic Affairs Committee chairperson MK David Bitan said he would bring the bill forward for final approval by the Knesset plenum only after ensuring the government was abiding by its commitment to indemnify airlines that raised the number of their flights to North America by adding two weekly flights.

This mainly refers to Arkia and Israir, for which the move involves considerable risk.

The bill provides for the state to cover 50% of operational losses to airlines in the event of flight cancellations for security reasons. (Globes)



HONESTREPORTING EXECUTIVE director Gil Hoffman (left) stands with Likud MK Dan Illouz at the 'Voices of Iron Ceremony' and his award at the Knesset yesterday. (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

Knesset honors advocates for Israel

• By ERIC LENEFSKY

Influencer Lizzy Savetsky and HonestReporting executive director Gil Hoffman were among the 50 awardees at the Knesset's "Voices of Iron Ceremony" on Tuesday, hosted by Likud MK Dan Illouz.

The ceremony, organized in honor of advocates who defended and continue to defend Israel during the Israel-Hamas War, featured honorees from Israel and abroad. It was attended by members of the coalition and opposition, including Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana.

Ohana opened the ceremony by praising and thanking "the online dream team and our enemies' ultimate nightmare" for their efforts on the country's eighth front: global antisemitism.

He was followed by Illouz, who emphasized the broad spectrum of Israel advocates in the room.

"Supporting Israel is not about Left or Right. It's not about political ideology. It's about truth. It's about justice; it's about the fundamental right of a nation to defend its people against slaughter," Illouz said.

"What unites us is not politics but principle: the unwavering belief that terror must never be rewarded, evil must never be justified, and Israel, the home-

land of the Jewish people, will never be alone."

Opposition MK Shelly Tal Meron (Yesh Atid) then expressed her gratitude to the civilians who support the Jewish state "from the bottom of your hearts," telling them, "We need you."

In a panel discussion with other pro-Israel stalwarts, Savetsky shared that she was on vacation with her family in Israel on October 7, when she woke up to the sirens. She had already advocated for Israel beforehand, but as she sat in the bomb shelter, she turned to her husband and said, "I'm going to be really busy."

Savetsky wasn't surprised by the social media response and knew she had to do more.

"I never, in a million years, thought that this is what I would be doing with my life... but I really just felt this urgent need and sacred responsibility to my ancestors and to my children."

When asked what her goal is, she said she wants people to have one-on-one conversations in the real world and hopes her content helps to break down the facts when going into these conversations.

Savetsky encouraged everyone, "Don't fear what you may lose, because it's not worth it. If you have to fear losing something in order to stand up for your values, then what was the

point of having it in the first place?"

Hoffman, HonestReporting's executive director and former chief political correspondent at *The Jerusalem Post*, told the *Post*, "It's very important that the Knesset is recognizing the accomplishments of those who fought for Israel on the digital battlefield."

"I'm proud that HonestReporting is being honored because the team has been in the trenches this entire war, fighting against the biased coverage of Israel in the international media. Winning on the media battlefield is the key to winning on the military battlefield and that has been proven time and time again in this war."

"Unfortunately, this war needed time to achieve its military accomplishments, and if it wasn't for the work that organizations like HonestReporting and others being honored here today, there's no way there would have been the international legitimacy required to give the time to accomplish what needed to be done," he said.

Illouz told the *Post* that the goal of the ceremony was to show that "Here, in Israel, there are people who recognize this [their battles and sacrifice], and we as the Knesset - coalition and opposition - recognize their important contributions and want to say 'thank you.'"

Ministry pushes bill to offer surrogacy to bereaved four-child families

• By AVICHAH HAIM

Health Minister Uriel Busso has submitted a bill that would allow bereaved families who had four children and lost one of their offspring during the war to pursue surrogacy, even if they do not meet current eligibility criteria due to them still having three children, the Health Ministry said this week.

Busso introduced a temporary regulation for one year,

allowing such families to pursue surrogacy for an additional child. The regulation will be submitted for approval by the Knesset Health Committee after a public comment period.

The decision was made in light of many families' losses in the Hamas massacre and wars in the past year.

Under the proposed change, bereaved parents with three living children could pursue surrogacy for one more child.

According to Busso, "In these difficult days, as many families grapple with unimaginable loss after the tragic events of October 7 and the ongoing war, we must provide bereaved parents the opportunity to expand their families and begin a new chapter in their lives."

"The heroism of the fallen - our sons and daughters who sacrificed their lives for us all - is the legacy we stand upon. It is also our duty to care for their

families," he added.

"This step, taken with deep sensitivity to the parents' pain and in response to their requests, reflects our commitment to helping them move forward while honoring and commemorating the heroes we have lost."

"The hope of bringing new life out of such grief is a powerful message of resilience, renewal, and the triumph of the human spirit," Busso said.

Karhi says won't heed court ruling after it bars disbanding of KAN

• By YUVAL BARNEA

The High Court of Justice issued an interim order extending the office terms of two members of the Israel Public Broadcasting Corporation's (KAN) board.

The order, issued as part of a petition by the Success Association, will remain in effect until the petition is decided or new council members are elected.

The petition is intended to prevent the two council members from ending their duties, thereby paralyzing the council.

Communications Minister Shlomo Karhi (Likud) made it clear that he would not comply with the court order, saying, "This interim order was issued without authority and [is] contrary to the law."

He also claimed the order was unconstitutional based on his own assessment. He does not hold a law degree.

Karhi was attempting to prevent the appointment of new KAN board members, which would leave the board incapable of functioning and, thus, legally non-existent in his own legal opinion.

"The corporation's council is left with only five members and, therefore, does not exist according to the law, and,



SHLOMO KARHI (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

therefore, I do not have the authority to appoint a deputy chairman of the council, and I will not appoint one," Karhi said recently.

The High Court's extension allowed KAN's board to meet for the first time in months.

Karhi has repeatedly stated his wish to dismantle KAN and either shift funding to Channel 14 or block the creation of

another public broadcaster.

MK Benny Gantz, head of National Unity, said law enforcement agencies "must bring [Karhi] to justice with the utmost severity and speed. Otherwise, we will descend into anarchy."

"Rebellion against court rulings is the dismantling of Israeli democracy, and this is a line that must not be crossed in any way and at any cost."

Group wants criminal probe of minister over alleged fraud

• The Media Line Staff

The Movement for Quality Government in Israel has called for a criminal investigation into Social Equality Minister May Golan, following allegations of corruption and misconduct within her ministry.

The watchdog group on Monday submitted formal requests to the attorney-general, police commissioner, and the Civil Service Commission's legal adviser, citing an investigative report that detailed questionable practices in Golan's ministry.

These allegations include providing fictitious jobs to close associates, falsifying meeting records, submitting false affidavits, and misusing public funds.

According to the movement, the findings suggest Golan allegedly used her authority and state resources to serve her political and personal interests, compromising public trust and potentially committing crimes such as bribery, fraud, and breach of trust.

The organization also raised concerns about Civil Service Commission employees who approved dubious contracts, suggesting their involvement in fraudulent activities.

"The findings paint a very worrying picture, in which a government minister devotes most of her energy and the public's money to feathering her and her associates' nest," said Adv. Tomer



MAY GOLAN

(Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

Naor, head of the legal department at the Movement for Quality Government.

"We demand a fast and exhaustive investigation to root out the rotten norms that have taken hold among the government."

Bank of Jerusalem renews bid for Isracard credit card group

• By HEZI STERNLICHT

Although it has signed a new investment agreement with the Delek Group and canceled its previous agreement signed in October with insurance company Menora Mivtachim, credit card company Isracard still has another suitor that has

not given up hope: Bank of Jerusalem.

On Sunday, the bank, headed by Yair Kaplan, sent an improved offer for a takeover of Isracard, even though the Isracard board examined its previous offer against that of Menora Mivtachim and preferred the latter.

Bank of Jerusalem is proposing a takeover in a different format from the bids of Menora Mivtachim and Delek Group, namely a share-swap deal. Its latest offer improves the ratio in the share swap to 1.15:1.

In the offer, after Isracard is merged into the bank, Isracard's shareholders will hold

60.1% of the merged company (versus 59% in the previous bid). According to Bank of Jerusalem, its offer is 10% better than Delek Group's and 28% better than Menora Mivtachim's.

As in its previous bid, Bank of Jerusalem has published a

table showing the value per share that Isracard shareholders should receive, with the addition of a dividend that will be distributed in the framework of the deal.

The value is now estimated at NIS 16.2-17.4, an improvement on the NIS 16-17.1 value in the previous bid from

December 27. This compares with a value of NIS 14.8 per share in Menora Mivtachim's bid and NIS 15.6 per share in the agreement with the Delek Group, according to Bank of Jerusalem.

Isracard's board of directors will probably have to consider Bank of Jerusalem's latest

offer, but it is not clear that it is sufficient to lead it to cancel the agreement with the Delek Group.

If Isracard decides to proceed with the Delek Group, Bank of Jerusalem could resort to legal proceedings or give up on its intention of taking over the company. (Globes/TNS)

Three stranded Israelis rescued from Japanese peak

• Jerusalem Post Staff

Three young Israeli snowboarders were rescued on Tuesday after being stranded in the Hakuba Mountain range in central Japan while suffering from hypothermia, Israel's Embassy in Japan confirmed.

They had been stuck there for around 24 hours due to severe weather conditions and were trapped in sub-zero temperatures in a state of hypothermia. The trio are reservists aged 27-28 and were trapped after straying from the marked snowboarding trail.

During the rescue operations, Israel's ambassador to Japan, Gilad Cohen, spoke with US Ambassador Rahm Emanuel, who instructed US military forces in Japan to

stand by to assist, Ynet reported.

After the rescue, Cohen said, "Throughout the night and morning, we worked around the clock at the embassy along with all relevant parties in Japan and with the US ambassador."

"We are happy that our three young men were rescued safely," he continued.

The Foreign Ministry announced they had been working with local authorities on trying to rescue the three individuals.

"Consul Avinoam Mizrahi went to the area where the incident took place, and the Magnus rescue company was working to rescue them," the ministry announced.

Rescue teams were initially unable to reach the young men because they were

located near a river, which made the situation more complex.

With their phone batteries only at 15%, the three remained in contact with Magnus, and received instructions on how to stay warm and survive the night. The young men reported they were "freezing cold" and that their phone batteries were running low before a local team of 11 rescuers finally managed to reach them during the night.

One rescue vehicle drove to the police station in the area, while another part of the team went directly to the site, according to Ynet. The three men were rescued in good health.

Amichai Stein contributed to this report.

The Hill: Congress could vote on ICC sanctions bill

• By HANNAH SARISOHN
Jerusalem Post Correspondent

NEW YORK – The Illegitimate Court Counteraction Act, which would impose visa and property sanctions against certain members of the International Criminal Court for investigating protected US officials or allies, could come to a vote in the US Congress as early as Thursday, according to a report from *The Hill*.

House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Brian Mast (R-FL) and Rep. Chip Roy (R-TX) reintroduced

the bill on Monday after it failed to pass the Senate in a companion bill introduced by Sen. Tom Cotton (R-AR). Republicans included the bill in the 119th House rules package.

Mast said the bill sends a "clear message" to the ICC.

"We may not recognize you, but you sure as hell will recognize what happens when you target America or its allies," Mast said. "The ICC's attempt to obstruct Israel's right to defend itself has only prolonged the war and prevented the release of American hostages by boost-

ing Hamas's morale."

Roy described the ICC as an "illegitimate body" that is engaged in a "shameful lawfare campaign" against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Roy said he has full confidence that US President-elect Donald Trump will stand for Israel, as the legislation ensures no future administration will be able to "give the ICC a free pass to attack our allies like this."

The Jerusalem Post has asked Mast's office for further information on when the vote will occur.

NYPD: Jews target of majority of hate crimes in NYC last year

• By BEN SALES/JTA

Jews were the target of the majority of hate crimes in New York last year, according to statistics reported by the NYPD.

Data compiled by the department showed there were 345 anti-Jewish hate crimes across the city in 2024, which is nearly 54% of the 641 total hate crimes tallied. The next-largest category of hate crimes was those related to sexual orientation, at 78.

The number of antisemitic hate crimes in 2024 was slightly larger than in

2023, when police recorded 323 total anti-Jewish crimes. 2023's total was driven by a recorded surge in antisemitism following Hamas's invasion of Israel and the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas War on October 7.

While antisemitism increases each year, the total number of hate crimes in New York decreased slightly from 2023 to 2024.

High-profile antisemitic incidents occurred last year across the city, which has the largest Jewish population in the country. These ranged from graffiti on the

home of the director of the Brooklyn Museum to a protest outside an exhibit commemorating the Nova music festival massacre to an anti-Israel protester accused of threatening "Zionists" in a subway car.

On Monday, protesters outside NYU's Tisch Hospital chanted, "We don't want no Zionists here," which Borough President Mark Levine called "clear antisemitism."

The NYPD data are preliminary figures and are subject to change. Not every recorded hate crime leads to an arrest or prosecution.



A CLOSE up of the NYPD logo is seen on a police car. (Tim Drivas/Getty)

HOUTHIS

Continued from Page 1

leaders, but perhaps Israel and the US must work together to improve intelligence on targets in such a way that will pertinently end the attacks.

The deputy chiefs also attended a strategic briefing led by Israel Air Force Chief of Staff Brig.-Gen. Omer Tishler, the Nevatim base commander, and other senior officers. They then visited Division 80 and the Northern Command, where they were briefed on operational activities and "enemy tactics."

The military stated, "The IDF will continue to strengthen its ties with the US military, demonstrating a commitment to enhancing regional stability and coordination between the armies." Meanwhile, over Monday night and Tuesday, the IDF announced the deaths of three personnel – two officers and one soldier, all of whom were killed in northern Gaza.

St.-Sgt. Ido Samiach, 20, from Ganei Tikva, served in the Reconnaissance Battalion of the Nahal Brigade. During an operation in Beit Hanun in northern Gaza, terrorists opened fire, and Samiach was killed. The IDF has launched an investigation into the incident. His funeral is set to take place on Wednesday at the Savyon Cemetery.

Maj. Dvir Zion Revah and Capt. Eitan Israel Shiknazi both served in the 932nd Battalion in the Nahal Brigade. Revah, 28, from Jerusalem, and Shiknazi, 24, from Eli, were killed on Monday when an anti-tank missile was fired at a building where the IDF was operating.

The military said that during its combat operation in northern Gaza, which has gone on intensively for about three months, the Kfir Brigade, under the command of Division 162, destroyed tunnels, located weapons, and killed Hamas fighters, including some who partook in the October 7 massacre.

The IDF announced on Tuesday that Kfir had concluded its operations in the area.

Kfir soldiers killed the terrorists both in close-quarter combat encounters and in strikes conducted in coordination with the IAF. They mainly operated in Beit Lahiya and Beit Hanun, destroying Hamas's Beit Lahiya Battalion.

Sources in the brigade said, "We operated for 64 days in northern Gaza; sixty-four days of operating without breaks or rotations. We worked to destroy Hamas above and

below ground. We eliminated over 300 terrorists, including senior operatives who caused a lot of trouble."

"We paid a very heavy price in the fighting. In six incidents, we lost 12 soldiers and commanders. We had dozens of wounded, some of whom have already returned to fight."

In late December, Kfir destroyed three tunnel routes in Beit Lahiya that, combined, ran a length of 7.5 kilometers. Within these tunnels, troops found military equipment that Hamas terrorists captured on October 7, along with maps of Gaza border communities.

In November alone, the brigade neutralized dozens of terrorists and dismantled over a hundred Hamas structures.

Despite these successes, IDF sources could not deflect questions about Hamas reconstituting its forces or account for the recent increase in rocket fire from Gaza into Israel.

On Monday, a rocket struck Sderot, marking an end to an extended period in which there were either no rockets or where rockets failed to strike anything substantial that wasn't an open field.

Military sources had no clear path to solve these two problems and noted that the government handles broader policy issues.

BIDEN

Continued from Page 1

On Sunday, officials told the *Post* that if the current phase of Lebanese deployment continues, Israel will have no other option but to stay for another 30 to 60 days in southern Lebanon.

Defense Minister Israel Katz warned, "If this condition is not met, there will be no agreement, and Israel will be forced to act independently to ensure the safe return of the residents of the North to their homes."

Some 60,000 people evacuated their homes in the North in October 2023 and have been living in hotels or other arrangements, as their homes were exposed to Hezbollah missiles. The government listed at the start of the war one of its stated goals to be to return the residents to their homes.

A source familiar with the subject said the Biden administration, in power until January 20, has conveyed a message to Israeli officials regarding the implementation of the deal: "It's very important for Israel not to have the reputation that they don't live up to the commitments."

The source added that the warning extends to "other



DEMONSTRATORS PROTEST in Tel Aviv last night, calling for the release of hostages held in the Gaza Strip by Hamas, outside the Kirya military headquarters. The sign held reads, in Hebrew, 'Without them, there is no home.' (Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90)



SMOKE BILLOWS as buildings lie in ruin in Beit Hanun in the Gaza Strip, as seen from southern Israel yesterday. (Kai Pfaffenbach/Reuters)

negotiations" that could be "damaged," possibly hinting to the fact that the ceasefire deal in Lebanon might have an effect on Hamas's willingness to commit to a Gaza ceasefire and hostage deal.

After January 20, President-elect Donald Trump's team will supervise the ceasefire deals.

POLICE

Continued from Page 1

Explaining that they have accompanied Taisia Zamolowski, the primary plaintiff in the case, for years, the ARCCI included a statement by her: "They committed a crime."

In the interrogations, even in Eyal's interrogations, in the disk," there were crimes involved.

If the people of Israel were to see this – it would truly be an earthquake," Zamolowski's statement read.

"You can see the head of the

investigation team hiding the camera and that they're hiding the camera together, and then Eyal found it. At a certain point, Eyal asked, 'Should I go out to pee now?' which means the entire interrogation took place in the bathroom."

The ARCCI also highlighted in its complaint to the comptroller the treatment of the victims by the police – saying that the girls were investigated as if they were criminals instead of victims of offenses.

They were investigated in handcuffs and threatened with legal action in order to prevent them from revealing the whole truth, the ARCCI said.

The submission of the information to the comptroller follows a first public interview by Zamolowski.

Now 29, Zamolowski revealed her identity for the first time in an interview she had with investigative journalists Omri Assenheim and Roni Kuban on KAN 11, shedding light on her interactions with Golan and

his father, Daniel Biton.

She accused Golan, his father, and their associates of acts of sexual assault committed against underage girls as part of a scheme to force minors into sexual acts through their connection to the famous singer.

Biton was convicted as part of a plea bargain in the case, dubbed the Social Game, and was sentenced to two years in prison.

He was also found guilty of paying the underage girls, giving them presents in exchange for sex, and obstruction of justice. In 2021, he died of COVID-19. The case against Golan was closed in May 2023 due to lack of evidence.

The police responded, saying that "this was a professional and thorough investigation conducted covertly in 2013, during which the police carried out a wide range of investigative actions, including arrests, collecting testimonies, and confrontations between the complain-

ants and the suspects."

"Contrary to the claims made, we emphasize that the investigation was conducted with sensitivity, and all the rights of those who made the complaints were preserved."

"After the investigation, which was accompanied by a supervising prosecutor, the case was transferred for review and a decision by the prosecution, which filed a serious indictment against one of the individuals involved," they added.

Tal Spungin contributed to this report.

DEAL

Continued from Page 1

government's obligation to work to free them," the 112-signature petition read.

Gil Dickmann, whose cousin Carmel Gat was murdered in captivity with five other hostages after they survived nearly 11 months in Gaza, explained to *The Jerusalem Post* why he signed the petition.

"The petition comes after 15 months in which 100 men and women remain held hostage in Gaza. In Israel, there is a Basic Law that guarantees every person basic rights – dignity and freedom. In recent months, there is growing suspicion that the Israeli government is prioritizing other interests over the dignity and freedom of the hostages, and even over their very lives," he said.

"If indeed the government prefers to continue the war and sacrifice the lives of civilians who could be saved through a political agreement, it is blatantly violating the rights of our family members and those of every citizen in Israel," he added. "Today, it sacrifices 100 hostages, and tomorrow, it could sacrifice any one of us."

Gat's rights have already been violated in the most horrific way imaginable, he said.

"Instead of reaching a deal to bring her back, continued military operations led to her murder," he said. "We are petitioning the High Court of Justice because it is the last recourse left to us after being silenced in the Knesset and ignored by the government. We will not allow the government to decide the fate of 100 hostages in violation of the law, values, and mutual responsibility on which our nation is founded."

"They missed the opportunity to bring Carmel back. We will not let them miss the chance to save hostages again."

Prof. Barak Medina, one of the lawyers who submitted the petition on behalf of hostage families said human rights laws

are designed, first and foremost, to protect hostages.

"The government is not permitted to consider only the interest of security and ignore the necessity of rescuing the hostages," he said. "Judicial oversight is needed to ensure that the government gives appropriate weight to the fate of the hostages."

The petition also requested the court order the government and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to address "why should it not be determined that the refusal of the Israeli government to agree to a deal for the release of the hostages held in the Gaza Strip by the Hamas terrorist organization unlawfully violates the constitutional rights of the hostages to life, bodily integrity, and human dignity?"

It further asks the court to address the question, "Why should it not be determined that Israel's government must decide without delay on conditions for a deal to release the hostages?"

The petitioners asked that the High Court set a date to discuss the petition "due to the unbearably difficult reality the hostages and their families face, and due to the incredibly difficult reality faced by all Israeli citizens."

One of the characteristics of the situation is the "accumulation of data that shows that the government has not made a decision but is avoiding exercising its authority," which the petition said amounts to a failure to protect the hostages right to life.

The petition said the court has a role in ensuring the government's decisions are made through worthy processes.

TODAY

Continued from Page 1

it is unlikely that all of them will respect the orders.

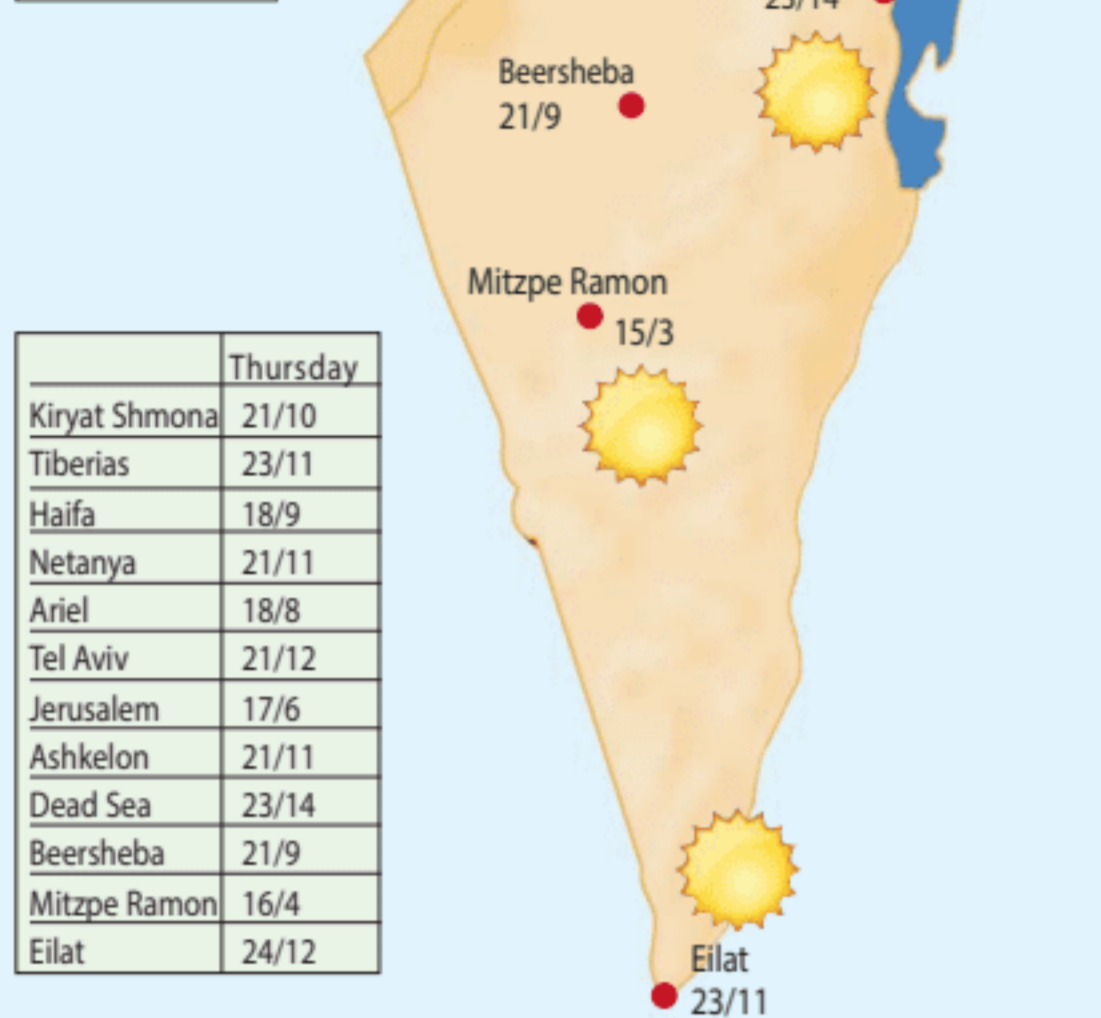
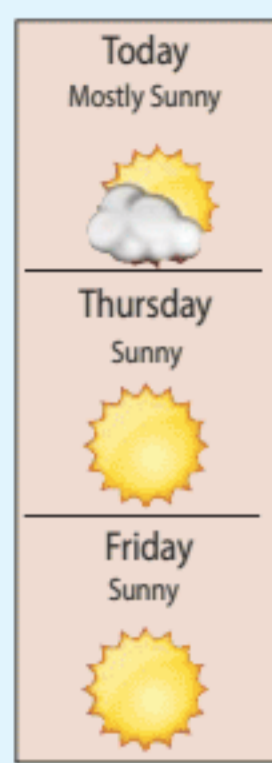
Movement for Quality Government chairman Eliad Shraga said the IDF was caving to "political pressures" by not presenting the real numbers that it really needs and that the military had yet to file relevant numbers ahead of today's hearing.

According to Shraga, the IDF is engaging in "three cycles of deception" – the real numbers of combat soldiers the IDF needs; the number of haredim the IDF is capable of drafting; and the actual draft numbers.

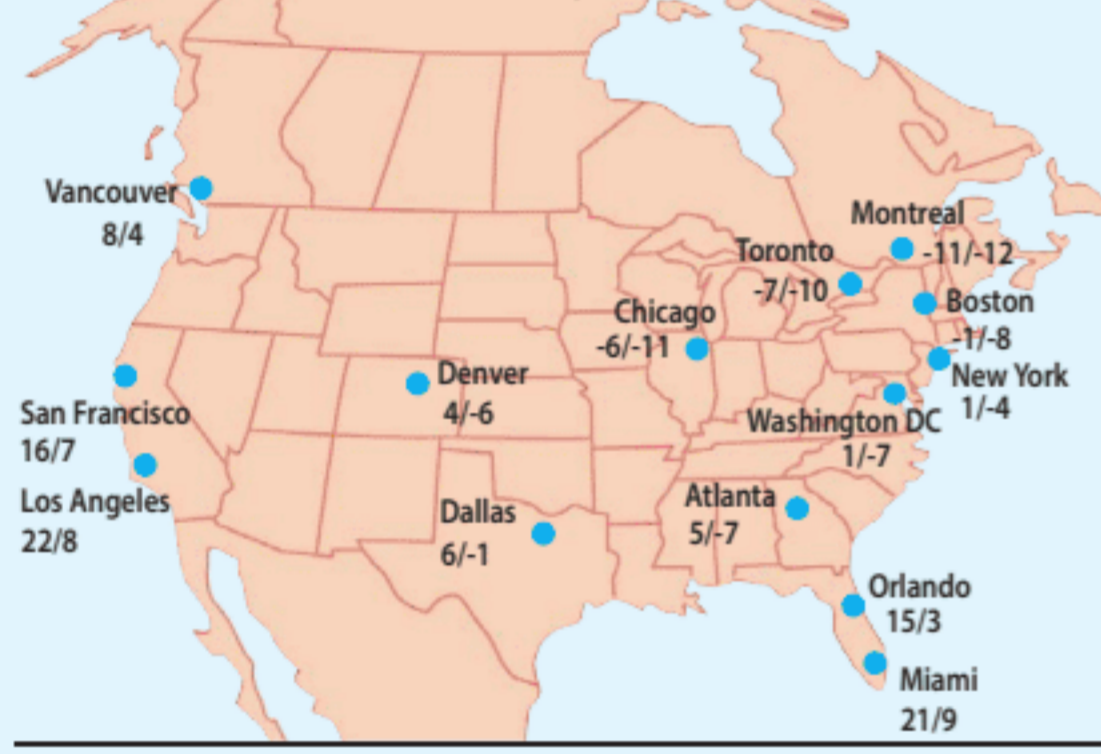
Shraga said the number of haredim actually being drafted were in fact not haredim, but rather people who grew up in haredi society but no longer belonged to it.

• Sports Editor: URIEL STURM
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Weather



North America Weather Today



Jewish, Israeli leaders propose North America venue for hockey tourney after Aussies cancel

• Jerusalem Post Sports Staff

Amid challenges in hosting the 2025 IIHF World Championship Division IIA, Jewish and Israeli hockey leaders have united to propose relocating the tournament to a premier venue in North America.

This move comes after Australia's ice hockey federation recently canceled the planned international tournament, alluding to safety concerns linked to the participation of the Israeli national team. The cancellation highlights broader issues faced by Israeli athletes on the global stage.

Ice Hockey Australia (IHA) announced on Tuesday that the event, scheduled to take place in Melbourne in April, was canceled following consultations with local police and participating venues. Although the IHA's statement did not explicitly mention Israel, local media reported that safety concerns over Team Israel's attendance were central to the decision.

"The decision was primarily made to ensure the safety and security of athletes, volunteers, spectators, and other participants," the IHA stated.

For weeks, rumors have circulated that European teams have been delaying their flight bookings to attend the championship. However, it was the Israeli national team's general manager, Felix Kozak, who first addressed the players' safety concerns.

"Australia is generally a safe country," Kozak noted. "There was zero security in Croatia when we last competed in the World Championship, and minimal security in Serbia last year – we had just one Serbian guard with a pistol," he said.

The development follows a rise in antisemitic incidents across Australia, prompting the creation of a national antisemitism task force. Among other occurrences of antisemitism, the December arson terrorist attack at the Adass Israel Synagogue of Melbourne in Ripponlea, a suburb of Melbourne, stands out.

Beyond sports, numerous plans and events in Australia – affecting both Arab



ISRAEL'S NATIONAL team hopes to compete at the Division IIA World Championships, though the location of the tournament is still up in the air after Australia backed out of hosting, reportedly related to the blue-and-white's participation. (Serya Alman/Courtesy)

and Jewish communities – have been canceled, highlighting the region's sensitivity to protests.

"The protests and anti-Israel activities in Melbourne have escalated significantly since we won the bid to host the championship, raising serious concerns about the safety and security of the event," stated Ryan O'Handley, President of the Ice Hockey Australia, in an email sent to his board on December 28. "Victoria Police has informed us that there is a high likelihood of an incident occurring during the championship due to the growing anti-Israel sentiment in Melbourne," the email read.

The newly formed Organizing Committee in North America aims to provide a solution for the 2025 championship by hosting the event at a world-class venue on the Eastern Coast of the United States. Mikhael Horowitz, former CEO of the Ice Hockey Federation of Israel, emphasized the importance of this effort.

"We see this as an opportunity to take a lower-level championship, typically held in small venues, and bring it to a grand stage in North America. This isn't just about solving a problem; it's about inspiring players and growing the sport globally," he said.

The committee's proposal leverages its extensive experience, including the upcoming Israel Elite Hockey League (IEHL) showcase game at UBS Arena in New York this March between teams from Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The proposed venue offers top-tier facilities and easy access for teams and fans, ensuring an exceptional environment for international hockey. To address travel concerns, the committee and sponsors also plan to subsidize transportation costs for participating teams, removing financial barriers and ensuring full participation.

"The Jewish and Israeli hockey community has always been driven by a spirit of collaboration and innovation," said a press release from Israel Hock-

ey this week. "This proposal reflects a unified effort to not only address the immediate challenges of hosting the 2025 World Championship but to elevate the tournament to new heights by expanding its global reach."

The challenges faced by Israeli hockey extend beyond logistics. In recent months, antisemitic incidents have increased globally, creating additional hurdles for Israeli athletes. Australia's decision to cancel the Melbourne tournament underscores the broader security concerns tied to hosting events involving Israeli teams. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese described the cancellation as "unfortunate" but emphasized that the decision was made independently by Ice Hockey Australia.

"We're addressing in every single way possible these issues because we understand that antisemitism is very hurtful for the Jewish community," Albanese said.

As the hockey world awaits a decision, the Organizing Committee remains optimistic.

"We have reached out directly to the president of the International Ice Hockey Federation and are hopeful that the council will discuss and vote to approve our proposal. We have approximately four months to finalize the plan," Horowitz noted. "With cooperation and commitment, we can provide an unforgettable experience for players and fans."

Despite these challenges, Israeli hockey continues to achieve milestones. The U20 team will compete in Serbia this January after winning gold last year, moving up to a higher division. The women's national team is also set to compete in February, reflecting the country's growing presence in international hockey.

Horowitz noted that these accomplishments underscore the resilience of the Israeli hockey community.

"This isn't just about Israel hosting in North America; it's about creating a shared vision to overcome obstacles and elevate the tournament's stature," he said.

The Jewish and Israeli hockey communities are ready to rise to the occasion, turning challenges into opportunities to grow the sport and celebrate its unifying spirit.

Beitar's upset, Mac TA's rout, Melamed's masterclass

LOCAL SOCCER

• By JOSHUA HALICKMAN

Beitar Jerusalem shocked Maccabi Haifa with a thrilling 3-1 Israel Premier League victory on Monday night at Sammy Ofer Stadium.

After a mostly uneventful first half, the game erupted into action just before half-time. Deep into first-half stoppage time, Yarden Shua's cross, intended for Mayron George, struck Ilay Feingold's hand in the box, earning Beitar a penalty. Shua's initial spot kick was saved by Sharif Kaiuf, but the forward buried the rebound to give the visitors a 1-0 lead.

As the teams headed to the locker rooms, Haifa's Ali Muhammed received a yellow card for protesting to the referee. Muhammed continued his complaints and was promptly shown a red card, leaving the Greens to play the second half with only 10 men.

Beitar sought to capitalize on their numerical advantage, but their goalkeeper, Miguel Silva, fouled Dia Saba just outside the box and was also sent off, reducing Beitar to 10 men as well.

Haifa equalized in the 67th minute through Kenny Saief, but Ayi Kangani restored Beitar's lead just minutes later. Patrick Twumasi sealed the victory in the 88th minute with an insurance goal.

Beitar coach Barak Itzhaki expressed his delight, calling it a "character victory." He praised his players for their resilience in a challenging match.

"There is never a dull moment here, and the pressure is immense," he said. "Winning under these circumstances, especially at Sammy Ofer, shows the kind of team we have."

Haifa coach Barak Bachar lamented his team's missed opportunities and tactical mis-



BEITAR JERUSALEM players celebrate on the pitch following their surprise 3-1 road victory against Maccabi Haifa late Monday night at Sammy Ofer Stadium. (Beitar Jerusalem/Courtesy)

"At 1-1, we had excellent momentum and could have won the game," he said. "But we took too many risks, didn't control the pace, and paid the price."

Maccabi Tel Aviv demolished Ashdod SC 5-1, overturning a 1-0 halftime deficit with an explosive second-half performance.

Roie Levy had given Ashdod a surprising lead, but goals from Dor Peretz, Eran Zahavi, Osher Davida, and Dor Turgeman turned the game on its head. Peretz scored twice, while Davida played a pivotal role with a goal and an assist.

Maccabi coach Zarko Lazetic credited his players for their response but criticized their first-half performance.

"We underestimated our opponents, missed chances, and were complacent," he said. "In the second half, we were focused and clinical."

Ashdod coach Eli Levy

admitted his team collapsed after conceding the first goal.

"We prepared well, but once we were down 2-1, we fell apart," he said. "Maccabi is not in our league. We need to strengthen our squad and improve."

Hapoel Beersheba secured a 2-1 win over Hapoel Hadera to maintain its spot at the top of the table.

Alon Turgeman scored early with a header, and Kings Kangwa doubled the lead. Omer Senior pulled one back for Hadera in injury time, but it was too late for the hosts.

Beersheba coach Ron Kozuk expressed relief at the win despite his team's sluggish play.

"We didn't adhere to our principles and allowed Hadera to control the pace," he said. "We need to create faster gameplay despite the opponent's tactics."

Hadera coach Asaf Nimi

said his team failed to capitalize on their opportunities, especially in the first half. "We were always in the game but couldn't finish it off," he said.

Hapoel Haifa thrashed Maccabi Petah Tikva 5-1, with Guy Melamed scoring a hat-trick to lead the Carmel Reds to victory.

Melamed struck twice in the first half, and after Vitalie Damascan reduced the deficit, Theimoko Diarra restored Haifa's two-goal cushion. Darmame Salou and Melamed added further goals to complete the rout.

Haifa coach Rony Levy praised his team's response after a previous loss.

"We played positive football, made quality moves, and were very committed," he said.

Petah Tikva coach Tamir Luzon was visibly frustrated, calling his team's performance a mental breakdown.

"We can lose, but not like this," he said. "The third goal

broke us, and that has happened too often this season."

Melamed, the league's top scorer, expressed pride in his performance and ambition to continue excelling.

"My goal is to be the league's top scorer, but nothing is guaranteed," he said. "I aspire to play at the highest levels and will make the best decisions for my future."

Maccabi Netanya edged Ironi Kiryat Shmona 1-0 thanks to a dramatic 91st-minute winner from 17-year-old Daniel Dapaah.

Netanya coach Yossi Abukasis praised the young striker's impact.

"On days like this, scoring late shows great character. The players deserve all the credit."

Kiryat Shmona coach Shay Barda said his team needed to respect the game and recover from their struggles.

"We're not playing well, but we have to continue working hard," he said.

Bnei Reineh and Hapoel Jerusalem played to a goalless draw, with both teams splitting the points.

Reineh coach Sharon Mimer described the game as tough and evenly matched.

"Both sides cancel each other out, making it hard to create chances," he said.

Jerusalem coach Ziv Arie admitted his team played cautiously.

"We are all afraid to make mistakes, especially when we haven't won in a while."

Bnei Sakhnin and Ironi Tiberias also played to a goalless draw.

Tiberias coach Eliran Hodeida felt his team deserved to win based on their chances.

"We shut them down and created opportunities," he said.

Sakhnin coach Slobodan Drapić acknowledged his team's struggles against defensive opponents.

"In games like this, we need quality to capitalize on small chances," he said.

SPORTS SHORTS

Liverpool wary of Spurs in League Cup

Tottenham Hotspur are a dangerous opponent and Liverpool will have to work to prevent them from enforcing their style of play when the sides meet on Wednesday in a League Cup semi-final first-leg clash, said manager Arne Slot.

Liverpool and Spurs employ aggressive and attacking brands of soccer, with the last match between the sides in December resulting in a thrilling 6-3 win for the Merseyside club.

With both teams having scored more than 40 goals in the Premier League, another goalfest could be on the cards.

"We expect before we go into the game is that two teams have such a clear identity and playing style. Both teams are trying to force that identity towards the other," Slot told reporters ahead of the match at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium.

"Large parts of the away game two weeks ago we could show our identity. But they in large parts showed how good they are. Scoring three goals against us is a big compliment."

The Dutch manager also once again defended Trent Alexander-Arnold, after the right back drew some criticism from pundits for his performance in their 2-2 draw with Manchester United amid reports of a move to Real Madrid.

"Parts of our game we weren't completely happy with. It wasn't only Trent, there were more things we could have done better. Trent didn't play his best game, but some others also didn't play their best."

"If you play 50, 60 games in a season, one of them won't be your best performance. Maybe we should highlight these players are playing so well despite playing twice in a week." • Reuters

Giannis leads Bucks to rout of Raptors

Giannis Antetokounmpo had 11 points, 12 rebounds and 13 assists in only 29 minutes – the reduced minutes due in part to a cut he suffered during the game – and the visiting Milwaukee Bucks trounced the Toronto Raptors 128-104 on Monday night. Damian Lillard had 15 of his 25 points in the third quarter for the Bucks, who were coming off two straight home losses and led by as many as 33 points in the fourth quarter.

It was Antetokounmpo's fourth triple-double of the season and the 49th of his career. He had a cut finger that was treated during the game. He was able to continue until the game was under control, and he sat for the fourth quarter.

RJ Barrett had 25 points, nine rebounds and five assists for Toronto after missing three games with an illness. With his return, the Raptors had their projected starting lineup together for the first time this season.

Elsewhere, DeMar DeRozan poured in nine of his game-high 30 points in the second overtime, helping the Sacramento Kings outlast the visiting Miami Heat 123-118 in double-overtime for their fifth straight win under interim coach Doug Christie.

After missed shots and free throws dominated the final seconds of regulation and the first overtime, the teams were still tied – at 117-all – in the second extra session before DeRozan hit three shots, the third an 18-footer that opened up a five-point lead with just 12.8 seconds to play.

Domantas Sabonis put up a triple-double for the Kings with 21 points, a game-high 18 rebounds and a game-high 11 assists to go along with three blocks.

Also, Cade Cunningham had 32 points and nine assists as the host Detroit Pistons won their season-high fourth straight game with a 118-115 victory over the Portland Trail Blazers, with Israeli Deni Avdija scoring 14 points in a losing cause. • Reuters

COMMENT & FEATURES

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Reducing dependence

Much has surprised Israelis in the post-October 7 world.

They were surprised by the Houthis threat 2,000 km. away in Yemen. They were surprised by the degree, depth, and intensity of antisemitism in the West. And they were surprised that the Jewish state was dependent on basic munitions – rifles, artillery shells, mortars, and bombs – from outside sources, primarily the US.

For many, the last surprise came as a jolt. Granted, Israel needed the US for major weapons platforms like fighter jets, aerial refueling aircraft, and heavy-lift helicopters. But for bombs and mortars? Wasn't that a throwback to a bygone era, to the pre- and early-state days when Zionist arms merchants scoured the world looking for machine guns, mortars, and refitted planes to bring back to Israel?

Hadn't Israel, now one of the world's leading exporters of arms selling state-of-the-art weaponry around the globe, moved past that?

Apparently not, as report after report appeared in the media about one country or another embargoing the sale of arms to Israel, and the Biden administration slow-walking the supply of certain armaments – while providing billions of dollars of other weapons – because of a discomfort with the way Israel was waging the war.

This became painfully evident on March 1, when three soldiers were killed and 14 others were wounded in a booby-trap explosion in a building in Khan Yunis.

In the debate that followed the incident over why the IDF sent in troops to destroy the building, rather than doing it from the air, one explanation was that the IDF was reserving the type of bomb that would have been needed to level the building for other operations. In other words, Israel was afraid of running out of bombs, and the IDF was carefully monitoring its supply of ordnance to be able to fight a long war on numerous fronts.

The long-term danger of this type of dependence on the US for arms became even acutely evident in November, when Sen. Bernie Sanders sponsored three bills that would have embargoed future arms sales to Israel, including the sale of Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) bomb guidance kits that turn “dumb” bombs into precision-guided ones, as well as tank and mortar shells.

Though the bills were roundly defeated, about one-third of Democratic senators voted for the measures, something that justifiably causes concern when considering whether the US will continue to be as forthcoming in its sale of arms to Israel a decade from now.

It is for that reason that the signing on Tuesday of two deals worth NIS 1 billion with Elbit Systems is so welcome. One deal will provide the military with thousands of heavy bombs, and the other will build a facility to produce raw energetic materials – all previously imported – that are essential for manufacturing propellants and explosives for rockets and missiles.

We believe that anything that advances greater arms and weapon independence is to be applauded.

“Both agreements will ensure sovereign capability in producing bombs and munitions,” said Defense Ministry Director-General Eyal Zamir, adding that the aim is to “achieve full independence in these two areas” which would be “a central lesson from the war that will enable the IDF to continue operating powerfully in all theaters.”

Already in December, the Defense Ministry's procurement division launched a local tender to purchase tens of thousands of assault rifles to replace the US-made M4. Additionally, it explored establishing the first-ever local production line of one-ton bombs, a type whose delivery from the US was delayed due to disagreements over how the war was being conducted in Gaza. In addition, the Defense Ministry signed another large contract with Elbit in the summer for the supply of artillery and tank shells that were previously procured abroad.

The war has underlined Israel's dependence on arms from abroad, overwhelmingly from the US. No country, especially not one of Israel's size, can attain full weapons independence. But at the same time, this can be reduced in order to decrease the amount of leverage other nations – even friendly ones like the US – can have on Israel's decision-making process in times of war. Tuesday's announcement of the contract with Elbit moves the country in the right direction.

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Strategic threats change

A reminder for the new year

• By GOL KALEV

In a 2009 Tel Aviv University lecture, the elderly British professor, Bernard Lewis, surprised the audience: One day, Turkey and Iran might switch; Turkey could become like Iran, and Iran like Turkey.

This was met with giggles and smiles by the crowd, which included Israeli business leaders, politicians, and academics. After all, Turkey is our ally, a member of NATO, which was on a trajectory to become part of the European Union. This was while Iran was trying to build its stockpile of weapons of mass destruction, acquire nuclear capabilities, and tighten its reign on the Middle East through proxies.

I shared Lewis's comments in think tank discussions in New York about a series of position papers I authored on the transformation of Judaism – a precursor to my 2022 book, *Judaism 3.0: Judaism's Transformation to Zionism*.

We connected the two seemingly unrelated topics, as we were both talking about a seismic shift of a strategic threat. Lewis was warning about a potential seismic shift of a physical threat: I was warning about a potential seismic shift of an ideological threat.

As Zionism is becoming the organizing principle of Judaism, the threat to the survival of Judaism is shifting from traditional antisemitism to Israel-bashing and anti-Zionism. Indeed, some 15 years later, more people are concluding that we are in the midst of such shifts, on both those fronts.

IN THE LAST two months of 2024, Iran suffered a significant blow to its grip on the Middle East and is now facing serious



TURKISH PRESIDENT Recep Tayyip Erdogan (right) meets with Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian on the sidelines of the D-8 Summit in Cairo, last month. In a 2009 Tel Aviv University lecture, Prof. Bernard Lewis stated: Turkey could become like Iran, and Iran like Turkey. (Turkish Presidential Press Office/Reuters)

external and domestic survival challenges. At the same time, Turkey, which is no longer a Europe-facing liberal country, is expanding its influence in the Middle East, including through a new apparent proxy in Syria.

Some experts believe that we are heading toward a change from a Middle East based on two enemy powers – Israel and Iran – toward a very different Middle East based on Israel and Turkey as its power bases.

Also, during the last two months of 2024, we saw a sharp escalation of the threat to Judaism from the West, funneled through the Israel-bashing ideology.

The November 2024 International Criminal Court arrest

warrants against leaders of the Jewish state, along with instilling a modern-day blood libel that Israel soldiers are partaking in deliberate starvation of Palestinians, are just two examples. The immediate affirmation of these blood libels by European countries, along with pledges to collaborate with efforts to arrest Israeli Jews, is another.

And yet, just as there has not been sufficient focus during the last 15 years on Lewis's warning of a possible seismic shift of focus from Iran to Turkey, there is not sufficient focus on the possible seismic shift of the strategic threat – from the Middle East to the West.

I SPENT the last month of 2024

on a US tour for my latest book, *The Assault on Judaism: The Existential Threat Is Coming from the West*. Offering new strategies to counter the threat, I received occasional push-back for drawing the attention of decision-makers and influencers to an amorphous ideological threat coming from the West, at a time when Israel is facing a serious physical threat from Iran and its proxies: Missiles are coming in daily, Israeli soldiers are being killed every week, and over 100 hostages are still held in Gaza. Let Israel win the physical war first, and then launch your book. “This is a 2025-2026, post-war book,” I was advised.

Thankfully, many people to whom I presented the book

chose to address its ideas: We are in the midst of a fast-moving, multi-front attempt to negate the idea of the Jewish state, and through it, the idea of Judaism. Western opinions are being formed day after day. If we wait till after the physical war is over, it might be too late.

Lewis was born during World War I, when the Ottoman Empire still existed, and passed away in 2018. Learning from him, we should understand the depth of long-term processes and not just analyze what is evident on the surface.

As discussed in this column, the assault on Judaism from the West is a byproduct of the 2,300-year-old European opposition to Judaism, which Theodor Herzl, the visionary of Zionism, deemed as chronic. The 1948 establishment of the Jewish state did not end this feud; it merely provided a tangible vehicle to funnel the opposition by Europe and those who adhere to European ideology.

The Western assault on Judaism is also a proxy for an assault on America and should be treated as a US national security issue. As the new administration is about to assume power, a fresh look at the threat-map facing the United States and its allies is needed.

With new, non-obvious threats emerging, dynamic strategies should be put in place to counter them.

The writer is the author of a new book, *The Assault on Judaism: The Existential Threat Is Coming from the West*. He is chairman of the *Judaism 3.0 Think Tank* and author of *Judaism 3.0: Judaism's Transformation to Zionism (Judaism-Zionism.com)*. His geopolitical articles are featured on *Europe-AndJerusalem.com*.

What irks Israel's right wing?

• By YISRAEL MEDAD

On January 18, 1923, Vladimir Ze'ev Jabotinsky resigned as a member of the Zionist Organization's executive council. In doing so, he created the political right wing in Zionist and Israel politics.

He was annoyed that his negotiations with agents of the Ukrainian military commander Symon Petliura had been misrepresented, as his purpose was solely to assure the security and defense of the Jews in the areas of pogroms.

He was also angry that Dr. Chaim Weizmann agreed to Winston Churchill's interpretation of the Balfour Declaration, set forth in the June 1922 White Paper. The loss of Transjordan and the introduction of the “economic capacity” measure signified to Jabotinsky the weakening of the Mandate's purpose.

He wished to advance changes in the Palestine administration, whose officials he deemed anti-Zionist, and to create a firmer Zionist attitude toward the British government. He sought, too, a more unyielding stance toward the Arabs after the 1920 and 1921 riots. “England has not fulfilled its Mandate” was his rallying cry.

Shortly thereafter, Jabotinsky's camp was ostracized. Throughout the Mandate period, immigration rights, settlement land allowances, and employment opportunities of members of Betar were severely curtailed. During the period of the revolt against England's White Paper administration during the 1940s, members of the Irgun were kidnapped by Palmah cadres, subjected to violence. Many dozens were handed over to the British during the “saison” period. And then, on June 22, 1948, there was the *Altalena* affair off Tel Aviv's beachfront, which started at Kfar Vitkin two days earlier, when Irgun members were fired upon and killed.

The shunning, turning the Zionist Right into the ultimate “other,” politically, socially, and economically, set in motion a psychological mindset among Israel's cultural elite. On the one side were the *halutzim*, the Palmahniks, the socialists, all those symbolized in the line of Haim Guri's poem-turned-song



FAMILY MEMBERS of Eli Feldstein attend a Supreme Court hearing on his house arrest last month. His detention and interrogation didn't upset any of our liberals, the writer complains. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

“Camaraderie”: “those of the elegant forelock, the handsome.” On the other were the sourpuss bourgeoisie, ignorant immigrants from Arab lands, and terrorists of the motley crew led by a “fascist.”

Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, the Histadrut's hegemonic domination not only of Israel's economy but its theater, movies, and book publishing, and the media's labeling of Begin as the ultimate extremist, largely denied members of the right-wing senior jobs as well as senior positions in the government bureaucracy or advancement in many other sectors. The various forms of exclusion eventually became potent political and social leverage.

In today's Israel, despite the Likud victory in 1977 and government coalition dominance since, a perceived assumed privilege by the remnants of the Ashkenazi, secular, and liberal elites is seen by the right-wing camp. It is found, it is claimed, in the behavior of the media, the judicial system, and academia as an echo of those earlier times.

The predominance of military veterans in the various protest movements against the Likud-led governments since Amir Haskel's 2016 initiative leading to the 2020 Balfour Street demonstrations,

exploiting their ranks and service, grates their sensitivities. The High Court for Justice also provides fodder, extending its self-assumed privilege to act as a semi-legislator body.

Particular antipathy is directed to the State Attorney's Office ever since the various corruption charges were brought against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. It has only increased, not only as the courtroom testimonies have shown how weak their cases are (one of the original four was withdrawn and in another, the judges already indicated its criminal unsubstantiality).

But there's a deeper aversion that exists, the one directed at the state's attorney-general and the military advocate-general.

Both are seen as principled contrary to the government, seeking to insert sticks into the spokes of its wheels at every opportunity. For example, only a year after being asked by the Knesset speaker to investigate MK Gilad Kariv's suspected illegal leaking of a subcommittee deliberation has Gali Baharav-Miara responded that her office has begun to do so.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's requests that her office investigate cabinet leaks

months ago have been ignored and overlooked. On the other hand, within days of a television report that Sara Netanyahu organized protests at her Caesarea neighbors' house via an aide, a questionable “crime,” Baharav-Miara's office announced it had instructed the police to investigate.

In another instance, Maj.-Gen. Yifat Tomer-Yerushalmi, the military advocate-general, has yet to deal with the leaking of what has been shown to be a faked video clip of a supposed forcible rape of a Nukhba prisoner at the Sde Teiman detention center. As it could only have originated in a very small number of people, all within the system, it is baffling that no investigation has developed.

The damage caused by the clip's presentation by Channel 12's Guy Peleg, especially as regards Israel's “human rights crimes,” was enormous. But no one seems to be moved to pursue the leakers. The clip affected in a negative fashion Israel's ability to protect the hostages from Hamas anger and the international tribunal. And yet not a peep from them to get at the bottom of the matter.

Add to this the detention and interrogation of leakers Eli Feldstein and Ari Rosenfeld, on the other hand, and the unexplained delay of more than a year in the case of the suspected-but-forgotten spy who infiltrated top-secret consultations at the Southern Command base. Are double standards at work?

The media-orchestrated attention focused on Israel's government, and its head, as the sole elements responsible for the lack of the release of Israel's hostages who were taken by Hamas on October 7, 2023, also irked. From US President Joe Biden to Secretary of State Antony Blinken and on down, all insist Hamas is the guilty party in the negotiations' failure. Nevertheless, talk show hosts and interviewers all concentrate their questions to their guests on Netanyahu and what he has done or hasn't done.

Is it really only the right wing that has been irked? And if so, why?

The writer is a researcher, analyst, and commentator on political, cultural, and media issues.

Our leaders' boorishness

Can our soldiers' selflessness save us?



CENTER FIELD
By GIL TROY

Surprisingly, Itamar Ben-Gvir apologized. He claims to regret his manipulations that dragged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from his hospital bed shortly after prostate surgery and pulled MK Boaz Bismuth from his mother's shiva. Both came to the Knesset to pass legislation the coalition deemed critical. While defying coalition discipline, Ben-Gvir refused to find legislators to "offset" these legitimate absences.

Ben-Gvir's apology sits on Hypocrisy Highway, where "too little" meets "too late." Clearly, the coalition blowback he received pressured him to take a rare step back – or sideways. Still, he behaved reprehensibly.

With one vote, Ben-Gvir launched two assaults on the civility our Jewish-democratic state should take for granted. Can anyone, no matter how anti-Bibi, look at the pictures of our pale, ailing prime minister while voting, and not feel badly for him? Can anyone, Right or Left, look at the pictures of our pale, ailing prime minister forced to vote by his own Frankenstein, and not feel badly for us?

Then, equally outrageously, the same parliamentary chest-pounders force another coalition colleague to disrupt the seven-day mourning for his mother.

Before the vote, Likud had "requested that MK Boaz Bismuth be offset against an Otzma Yehudit MK and was answered negatively." That's why Ben-Gvir's apology feels as sincere as the wolf's apology after eating a flock of sheep saying, "I didn't realize you needed them for those sweaters we love!"

Is this the kind of politics we want? Are these the kind of leaders we deserve? What kind of moral mag-gots represent us?

Before the right-bessotted Channel 14 fanatics go ballistic, because anything anyone from the Right says or does is beyond criticism, let me be clear. The opposition behaved despicably, too. How come there weren't two politicians of conscience from the 58 nay votes to say, "Bibi, Boaz, we got this?"

The two graceful MKs should have been Benny Gantz and Yair Lapid. Beyond being the leading opposition leaders, they launched their 2019 political alliance promising to elevate Israeli politics. Although many forces helped them fail, their callousness last week betrayed their core principles – again.

ISRAELIS ARE obsessed with many issues we cannot control, especially the hostages. Even Secretary of State Anthony Blinken admits it's beyond us. It's mostly up to Hamas, which, Blinken claims, hasn't received enough world pressure. "Where is the world?" Blinken asked *The New*



PRIME MINISTER Benjamin Netanyahu sits in the Knesset plenum last week. He was forced from his hospital bed shortly after prostate surgery in order to pass legislation the government coalition deemed critical, the writer notes. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

York Times, telling Hamas: "End this!"

This debacle, however, was under Israeli control – and totally avoidable. Any two of 58 could have acted like "mensches" – and also score political points.

In politics as in life, doing the right thing often makes you look good, too. And acting ethically, graciously, has its own benefits, no matter the optics.

This moral misfire reflects a broader problem in Israel and the West. In our hyper-fluid age of doubt, when so many question so much, from God's existence to their own gender identity, few people question their own political preferences. The zealotry that once characterized too many religious people is now polarizing politics destructively.

Ambiguity, Behaving decently, and Compromise are the ABCs of democratic politics. Living with ambiguity welcomes nuance, paradox, and a healthy confusion into our world and our political debates. By behaving decently, we paper over the tensions we feel, the clashes we have, the angers that might linger, with a broader commitment to the common good – and our shared liberal-nationalistic journey in any healthy democracy. And accepting compromise acknowledges that most hot button issues are complicated, with good patriots often arriving at differing conclusions.

ITAMAR BEN-GVIR has become Israel's exemplar of the brutalization of politics worldwide. He is Netanyahu's creation, the spoiled child who inevitably brutalizes the parents who over-indulged him. He takes Bibi's take-no-prisoners politics to greater extremes, without being balanced by Netanyahu's successes in weaning Israel from stifling economic bureaucracy or, most recently, waging this war with more determination than the Americans and the opposition wanted.

Alas, too angry, vindictive, and

demagogic himself to rest on his recent diplomatic and military successes, Bibi also foments the ugliness. This time, it also backfired on him. Netanyahu finished 2024 with a short video defending his wife and their honor. Attacking the harassment some right-wing politicians endure, he said, "They chase them [coalition politicians] in the streets, they threaten their kids." He then blamed the Left for creating "the real poison machine we face," insisting, "it's not just a machine, it's an industry."

His complaints are as sincere as a cheetah professing vegetarianism amid a herd of antelopes. Netanyahu clawed his way back into power powered by his poison industry as his lackeys harassed MKs and their kids. No faux indignation can negate that.

Israeli politics has often lacked civility. David Ben-Gurion called Menachem Begin "a Hitlerist type." Golda Meir detested Shulamit Aloni. Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres squabbled constantly. And most politicians who served with Moshe Dayan hated him, for getting away with indiscretions they never could.

But today's Knesset antics, during wartime, with both sides acting horribly, are inexcusable. They contrast with the stories of grace, generosity, civility, patriotism, and unfathomable sacrifice we hear describing our soldiers and reservists.

The gap between such selflessness and our leaders' boorishness explains why some Israelis wish all 120 MKs would quit politics. And I certainly join the chorus hoping that our younger generation, which has done such a remarkable job saving us from our enemies, will jump into politics when the war ends – and also save us from ourselves.

The writer, a senior fellow in Zionist thought at the Jewish People Policy Institute, is an American presidential historian. His latest book, To Resist the Academic Intifada: Letters to My Students on Defending the Zionist Dream, has just been published.

Looking beyond the war

Bridging divides through medicine

• By YOEL HAR-EVEN

In times of crisis, it's natural to focus on the immediate – on survival, stability, and the resilience required to get through every day. Since October 7, 2023, Sheba Medical Center, Israel's largest medical center, has been at the forefront of this effort, providing critical care to civilians and soldiers alike. But as we reflect on the present, we must also look toward the future – the day after the war ends.

Eventually, like the global reawakening after COVID-19, we will emerge from this conflict, and with that comes a profound responsibility: to shape a healthier, better connected future. As one of the world's leading hospitals, we are uniquely positioned to help chart that course – because we are much more than just a hospital. We are a hub of innovation, research, education, outreach, and diplomacy. Our mission goes beyond healing within our walls – we are actively shaping a healthier global future through five key areas:

1. MEDTECH AND INNOVATION

Innovation is in our DNA. Over the past five years, our hospital has spun out more than 50 start-ups that are advancing health care globally. These innovations include new medical devices, digital health solutions, telemedicine and remote care platforms, and novel mental health care technologies, including one of the world's first AI solutions for PTSD diagnosis and treatment.

These technologies originate in Israel but go on to impact millions globally. They are already changing patients' lives worldwide, helping address some of the most pressing medical challenges.

As we look to a post-war world, we remain committed to supporting entrepreneurs and physicians of all backgrounds, including those from the Arab Israeli and Druze communities, to produce medtech breakthroughs that improve outcomes, increase access to care, and strengthen health systems globally.

2. HUMANITARIAN OUTREACH

Medicine is a global responsibility, as COVID-19 demonstrated how the health of one country's citizens can have a domino effect across the world. While we remain steadfast in our commitment to serving the people of Israel, our mission extends to underserved populations across the globe.

In moments of crisis, whether natural disaster or conflict, we have been there providing medical care, resources, and expertise to those in need, in Ukraine, Haiti, Italy, Samoa, Mozambique, and other locations.

This dedication elevates not only our institution but also our nation. Where others see crisis, Israel sees a chance to lend a hand and help. It



THE WRITER (left) meets with Albania's Prime Minister Edi Rama. "Through our hospital's efforts in medical diplomacy, we have fostered partnerships with leaders, governments, and institutions worldwide," says the writer. (Courtesy Sheba Medical Center)

serves as a reminder that compassion and care transcend borders and divisions, fostering goodwill and cooperation across countries, peoples, and faiths.

3. MEDICAL RESEARCH

With more than 200 PhDs among our staff, our hospital rivals even the most prestigious academic institutions. Our commitment to research has allowed us to preempt and tackle some of the world's most urgent medical challenges – from brain health and kidney disease to infectious outbreaks and more.

A prime example is The Sheba Pandemic Preparedness Research Institute (SPRI), which collaborated with the National Institute of Health (NIH) on global research and preparedness during COVID-19. We are now applying that knowledge to future pandemics like West Nile virus, developing countermeasures such as vaccines and monoclonal antibodies.

Our research efforts are not confined to theoretical discoveries. They are designed to be applied in real-world settings and drive meaningful change in patient outcomes. We are committed to utilizing every asset and mind at our disposal to make breakthroughs that benefit humanity.

4. MEDICAL EDUCATION

As the global population grows and health care systems become increasingly complex, the need for well-trained, multidisciplinary professionals has never been greater. Our hospital has embraced this challenge, expanding beyond traditional medical training to include new programs for counselors, art therapists, technicians, and more.

Through unique simulation programs with live actors and modern education techniques, we are not only preparing the next generation of health care providers within Israel but also supporting training efforts globally. Our goal is to ensure a

steady supply of skilled professionals who can address the rapidly evolving needs of patients.

5. MEDICAL DIPLOMACY

Perhaps one of the most profound aspects of medicine is its power to unite. Disease does not discriminate by language, religion, or culture, and the pursuit of health offers a universal common ground.

Through our hospital's efforts in medical diplomacy, we have fostered partnerships with leaders, governments, and institutions worldwide – from meeting with the pope to collaborating with officials in Albania, Kosovo, Somaliland, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, the Palestinian Authority, and many others.

These bridges extend beyond political divides, opening opportunities for collaboration that can benefit populations. In our own region and beyond, the potential for medicine to serve as a tool for peace and progress is immense, and we are committed to advancing it.

A HEALTHIER TOMORROW

As we continue to navigate the challenges of today, we do so with a clear vision for tomorrow. Our hospital is more than a place of healing – it is a catalyst for innovation, an example for humanitarian outreach, a leader in research, an educator of future professionals, and a builder of bridges.

We embrace the responsibility to create a healthier, more connected future not only for Israel but for the world. Together, we will not only get through this war but emerge stronger, carrying with us the lessons of resilience, unity, and hope that have defined our journey, as we look toward the horizon of a brighter future.

The writer, an IDF Lt.-Col. (res.), is the director of the International Division and Resource Development at Sheba Medical Center, Israel's largest medical center. He served in the Israel Defense Forces for 27 years.

LETTERS

Work on healing

There is no question that it is the right of families of hostages and other October 7 victims to express their pain and be heard ("Oct. 7 families demand a better Knesset welcome," January 7). By listening to their desperate cries, we share in their grief and possibly thereby subtract from their ongoing pain.

That being said, there can be guidelines for public expression especially when safety is concerned. What is really disgraceful is the piggybacking on the families' pain by political figures for their own political gain.

It is time to put political rancor aside and support our government's attempts to free the hostages from the Hamas captivity and work on healing our total body politic.

MARION REISS
Beit Shemesh

Shown the door

Regarding "Trudeau tells Canadians he's stepping down" (January 7): In Trudeau's resignation, another leftist woke regime is shown the door. It's too early for the same to befall Prime Minister Starmer in the UK but he and his party are heading toward that precipice.

STEPHEN VISHNICK
Tel Aviv

Perennial enemies

In "Will Trump seize the opportunity?" (January 6), Alon Ben-Meir writes that "any effort that could lead to a two-state solution will face vehement Israeli resistance, which can be mitigated once Israelis come to terms with the fact that their ultimate national security rests on the establishment of a Palestinian state." When will Ben-Meir and people of his ilk realize that the Palestinians are our perennial enemies? Hate for the Jews is ingrained in their DNA. The land

upon which Israel rests is, for them, occupied territory and will remain so forever. If he believes this will change in the next 300 years, he can only be described as a naive thinker. What we need to do is accuse PA head Mahmoud Abbas of fuelling the hatred against us, which he does by paying his people to kill us. We are too lenient. All those taking part in terror acts against Israelis should be sent to the Palestinian camps outside of Israel, no exceptions.

Once they realize what's in store for them, then, maybe, there will be a change of heart. The Palestinians see us as the weak nation we are, trying to get people rooted in hatred to become our friends. They understand only toughness. Any soft tone, like giving them a state, is weakness. May Ben-Meir see the light soon.

EDMUND JONAH
Rishon LeZion

Something different

In "West Bank terrorism: The perpetual fight" (January 7), Herb Keiron reminds us after the latest wanton murder of three innocents that the unending battle against terrorism in Judea and Samaria goes on. Maybe it's time to try something different in this simmering war – invoking the death penalty.

Yes there will be calls from the UN and the international Left against institutionalizing the taking of another life, but there is much to be said for it. We will soon, please God, begin to get our hostages back. Yet there is a heavy price to be paid with the release of terrorists who have blood on their hands and who will then continue their murderous activities. Exhibit A is the Sinwar and 1000+ others/Schalit exchange carried out in 2011.

The death penalty may or may not reduce terrorism, but it will save Jewish lives. "If a person kills a human being, that person shall be put to death." (Leviticus 24:17)

FRED EHRMAN
Ra'anana

Destroyed by Hamas

Regarding "UN's Albanese: Medical staff should cut ties with Israel" (January 2): Francesca Albanese is correct – Gaza's health care system has been destroyed. However, it isn't Israel which is responsible; Gaza's health care system was destroyed by Hamas, which embedded its extensive network of terror tunnels so deeply amid the Gazan populace that mosques, schools, residences, businesses and hospitals all became legitimate military targets as those buildings are used to store weapons and munitions and as command centers and missile launching sites.

In accusing Israel of genocide, Albanese is telling terrorists that violating the rules of armed combat and placing civilians at risk is an effective way to prevent nations which have been attacked from responding and fighting to prevent further attacks on their own people. In short, Albanese is endorsing what West Point's Major John Spencer, a recognized expert on urban warfare, calls "human sacrifice." In working to guarantee that Israel's exemplary efforts to avoid harming civilians will be less than 100% effective, Hamas has gone much further than using the Gazans as human shields.

TOBY F. BLOCK
Atlanta

Critical steps

In "New approaches to Israel advocacy" (January 6), Prof. Todd Pittinsky raises some important points, but he fails to recognize a number of critical steps that Hillel has taken to reduce antisemitism on campus, and empower students in countering rampant demonization of Israel.

As president and CEO of Hillel International, let me share just a few examples of our impact. We've worked to ensure that universities

strengthen and enforce their codes of conduct, which has contributed to a significant decline in the number of acts of harassment, intimidation, and discrimination targeting Jewish and Israeli students. Hillel's Israel Leadership Network empowers thousands of student leaders to advocate for Israel on hundreds of campuses.

We created Campus4All.org to educate students, and empower them to counter misinformation about Israel and respond to antisemitic incidents. And our Teach-In Tour has brought hundreds of expert Israel speakers and educators to college campuses. We launched the Campus Antisemitism Legal Line in partnership with the ADL and Brandeis Center for Human Rights, providing pro bono legal representation and support to more than 1,000 students who have experienced campus antisemitism.

Notwithstanding our status as an "established Jewish organization," our teams have responded with intensity and agility in developing these initiatives, and getting flexible resources into the hands of Hillel students and staff members, in line with Prof. Pittinsky's call to action. Most importantly given our broader mission, we doubled down on Jewish joy and community, leading to record numbers of students participating in Jewish life.

None of the above is meant to minimize either the asymmetries in tactics and structures that Prof. Pittinsky outlines, or the deep-rooted issues that enable continuing demonization of Israel and other manifestations of antisemitism. But in 2025 and beyond, we need to recognize and build on the strategies that are driving systemic improvements.

ADAM LEHMAN
President and CEO of Hillel International
Washington

Obama: The worst recent foreign policy?

• By GREGORY LYAKHOV

When Barack Obama took the oath of office as US president in 2009, he ignited a wave of hope and a belief in transformative change that would define his presidency. His foreign policy, however, remains a topic of heated debate.

While Obama aimed to position the United States as a moral leader on the world stage, his actions often fell short of American expectations, leaving behind a legacy of instability and unfulfilled promises, particularly in the Middle East.

Obama's approach to foreign policy was often summed up by the phrase "lead from behind." This strategy prioritized building alliances and avoiding unnecessary wars, reflecting a preference for diplomacy over military intervention. While the philosophy seemed ideal, its practical application led to unintended, devastating consequences.

In 2012, for instance, Obama declared a "red line" against the use of chemical weapons by Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. Yet, when evidence showed Assad's regime continued to use such weapons, the Obama administration opted for a Russian-led deal to dismantle Syria's chemical stockpile rather than taking military action.

Obama's decision was widely criticized. Although it avoided immediate conflict, it failed to deter future chemical attacks. The Syrian Civil War raged on, killing over 500,000 people and displacing more than 13 million, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights and United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The war's continuation fueled a humanitarian crisis of massive scale; more decisive US action may have prevented the suffering of millions.

The effort to sanction Syria for its use of chemical weapons only adds to Obama's growing list of setbacks in handling the crisis, as he was ultimately ineffective due to strong opposition and substantial support for Syria from Russia and China. In 2015, for example, Russia intervened directly in the Syrian conflict by pro-



THEN-US president Barack Obama delivers a statement as then-secretary of state John Kerry looks on, in 2016. Obama aimed to position the United States as a moral leader on the world stage, but he left behind a legacy of instability and unfulfilled promises, particularly in the Middle East, the writer argues. (Carlos Barria/Reuters)

viding aerial military support to the Syrian Army, significantly strengthening the Assad regime. China used its veto power alongside Russia in the UN Security Council to block resolutions against Syria, preventing further international sanctions and interventions.

Obama aimed to weaken Assad's regime through economic sanctions; however, substantial assistance from Russia and China counteracted his efforts.

Obama's inaction in Syria also had repercussions for Israel. The ongoing chaos in Syria enabled Iranian-backed militias, such as Hezbollah, to expand their influence near Israel's borders. According to a 2017 report from the Israel Defense Forces, Hezbollah built an arsenal of over 150,000 rockets, many of which were transferred through Syria.

These developments heightened tensions in the region and posed a direct threat to Israeli security, further illustrating the ripple effects of Obama's Syria policy. In 2018 alone, Israel conducted over 200 airstrikes in Syria targeting Iranian assets to prevent further threats, showcasing the security challenges made possible by US inaction.

THE 2011 NATO-led intervention in Libya is another example of Obama's disastrous foreign policy. The operation successfully toppled Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi but failed to establish a stable government in his place. Libya descended into chaos, becoming a failed state plagued by civil war and hardship.

The increase of weapons from Libya, perpetuated by the war, fueled

conflicts across Africa and the Middle East. For instance, weapons from Libya were used in Mali's civil war and reportedly fell into the hands of extremist groups like Boko Haram in Nigeria. Even Obama acknowledged this failure, calling the lack of planning for Libya's aftermath the worst mistake of his presidency in a 2016 interview with Fox News.

The consequences of the Libyan intervention were global. In addition to regional instability, Libya became a hub for human trafficking and extremist groups, including ISIS. By 2017, Libya's migrant crisis had worsened, with thousands risking their lives to cross the Mediterranean, contributing to Europe's refugee crisis. According to the International Organization for Migration, over 3,000 migrants died attempting the journey in 2017 alone.

Obama's biggest failure was the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, also known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). The agreement aimed to halt Iran's nuclear program in exchange for lifting economic sanctions. While some viewed it as a diplomatic success, others criticized it for being a freebie to Iran. The US Treasury Department reported that the deal unfroze approximately \$150 billion in Iranian assets, a significant boost for a country with a GDP of around \$408 billion.

The JCPOA failed to ensure Iran's compliance with its terms. Reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency revealed gaps in monitoring, such as Iran's refusal to grant inspectors access to suspicious sites like the Karaj facility.

Israeli intelligence further highlighted these issues, uncovering

evidence that Iran continued developing missile technology and maintaining capabilities that could facilitate a rapid nuclear breakout. In 2018, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu presented a 55,000-page document proving that Iran had lied about its nuclear program, further undermining confidence in the deal.

The JCPOA also sparked controversy within the United States. Obama bypassed Congress by treating the agreement as a deal rather than a treaty, avoiding the Senate's ratification process. This decision drew criticism for ignoring constitutional norms.

The deal's impact on regional stability remains questionable, as it emboldened Iran's regional influence without addressing its ballistic missile program or support for terrorist groups like Hezbollah and Hamas.

A 2017 US State Department report emphasizes that Iran's support for terrorism remained "unabated," with the country providing over \$700 million annually to Hezbollah alone – money that may have very well been given to Iran by the US through the Nuclear Deal.

Despite a peaceful ideology, Obama often struggled with execution. While he sought to redefine America's role in the world through diplomacy and alliance, his administration's actions led to greater instability.

Whether Obama's foreign policy ranks the worst in recent history depends on one's perspective. The evidence, however, suggests that his administration's decisions left a significantly more fragmented and futile world than the one he inherited.

For all his rhetorical brilliance and strategic aspirations, Obama's foreign policy ultimately highlights the inability to govern a nation solely based on ideology.

The writer is a high school student from Great Neck, New York, passionate about advocacy and government. Through his writing and activism, he engages others in meaningful conversations about US politics, international relations, and Israel's significance as both a homeland for the Jewish people and a key ally of the United States.



THEN-PRESIDENT Shimon Peres meets with former US president Jimmy Carter in Jerusalem, in 2009. Carter was the best US president Israelis had had, the writer maintains. (Abir Sultan/Flash 90)

Thank you, Jimmy Carter

• By YORAM DORI

During a visit by Jimmy Carter to the President's Residence in Jerusalem when Shimon Peres was president, I approached the former US president and told him that in my opinion, he was the best American president Israelis had ever had. At the time, there was an active anti-Carter sentiment among many Israelis.

He looked at me with a bewildered expression and asked: "Are you kidding?" I replied that I knew, as both a fighter in the Yom Kippur War who lost most of my friends, and as someone who served as Peres's close political and diplomatic adviser, that he was the best and most important president for our future as a thriving, independent state.

There were certainly other presidents who helped us greatly – Lyndon Johnson, who worked closely with prime minister Levi Eshkol to improve our working relationship and gave us anti-aircraft missiles; Barack Obama, who opened US intelligence to us; George H.W. Bush, who mobilized the Iraqi missile warning system to protect us; and Ronald Reagan, who backed Peres's inflation reduction and economic rescue plan. But none of them compared to Carter.

He initiated and worked hard to impose upon us the peace agreement with Egypt. Without that agreement, who knows where we would be today. His determination encouraged Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat to rise and end the terrible cycle of violence that culminated with the heavy losses of the Yom Kippur War.

Carter expertly maneuvered within our political system to force Begin and the Likud Party to make a 180-degree turn from their position of

not retreating a millimeter from Sinai. Begin had even symbolically established his presence in the Neot Sinai settlement, an area in which I was fortunate to sleep during my military reserve duty.

Carter also moved Sadat away from the "three noes of Khartoum," a reference to the Arab League Khartoum Resolution of 1967, after the Six Day War, which had stipulated: No peace with Israel, no recognition of Israel, and no negotiations with Israel.

He succeeded in making both sides appreciate and internalize the consequences of the war. Thanks to him, we all came to understand that military strength is not eternal, that it can erode, that even a perfect surprise and overwhelming force don't lead to victory, and that enemies can inflict heavy losses on one another. (It's a pity that current leaders and military commanders have not learned this lesson.)

In other words, Carter reminded us of the limitations of power and its use.

The peace agreement with Egypt allowed us to focus on internal matters and allocate vast resources to our education and welfare needs. Our economy flourished after this agreement: the number of students per classroom was reduced, and roads and highways sprouted like mushrooms after the rain. In short, the State of Israel and its people reaped the fruits of peace daily.

For all of these things, Carter deserves our nation's gratitude. May his soul be bound up in the bundle of life.

The writer served as a strategic adviser to Shimon Peres from 1990 to 2016. He recently published a book in Hebrew, Whispers in His Ear, which includes never-before told stories about his years as a senior aide to Peres.

• By ALAN FREISHTAT

We have all heard stories about someone who tried something to improve their health and saw a magical turn-around. Usually, that something is a change in diet.

When we hear these stories, we tend to get excited about a potential cure or preventative measure to help eradicate whatever diseases may be afflicting us. These can range from reversing or curing some forms of cancer, reversing heart disease, diabetes and even a whole host of maladies that doctors say can't be cured.

Sometimes, there is something to glean from these stories, and we can back them up with good science. But unless we can prove something, we should be skeptical.

Many times, we discover a piece of information that catches our attention and can lead us to look further – and we may discover a plethora of information that can successfully help control or cure disease.

One of my favorite examples is that of Dr. Saray Stancic, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She noticed an article in a medical journal about improvement in some people with MS symptoms who consumed blueberries. This led her to research further about diet and MS. She discovered literature showing that whole food, plant-based eating brings great improvement and even elimination of symptoms of the disease.

Stancic implemented those changes and it changed her life for the better. She has helped many others suffering from MS and other diseases since then, using lifestyle medicine. She had to search for them, but the studies and evidence were there.

Stancic's story is something proven and verifiable. But what happens when we hear about a famous personality who makes a dietary change and is able to communicate through the media that they have defeated sickness and disease through those changes? Does that mean

that if I do the same thing it will work for me? Does that mean that everyone should implement what that person did to better their health? The answer is a resounding NO! If you don't have the proper scientific evidence, you don't have enough to go on.

LAST YEAR, a relative of mine pointed out what by now has become a famous story. Mikhaila Peterson, the daughter of popular psychologist Dr. Jordan Peterson, suffered from a young age from juvenile idiopathic arthritis and severe depression. Although I don't know exactly each and every calorie Peterson consumed in her previous way of eating, we can presume it must have been along the lines of the Standard American Diet.

She changed her eating to what has become known as the carnivore diet. By doing so, she eliminated all ultra-processed foods and has reaped many benefits. But is this diet something healthy in the long term or did it just take care of some problems before causing others?

There are a few variations of the carnivore diet – but generally, it is exactly what it sounds like: a diet centered on animal products. An article published this past year from the T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies stated, "the Carnivore Diet downplays or dismisses decades of observational studies linking nutrition to health and disease outcomes, selectively ignores intervention studies that do not suit its agenda, and substitutes its own favorite form of evidence: individual success stories."

In a study done by BS Lennerz and colleagues published in 2021, participants were recruited from social media communities commonly frequented by carnivore dieters, and anyone who had been on the diet for less than six months was excluded.

As stated by the Campbell Institute, "this means the survey captured only those who were the most dedicated to the diet (just over 2,000 sub-

jects, less than .000025% of the [world's] population); of course that group will report that the diet is tolerable – they are the ones who have already tolerated it. It remains unproven whether the diet is, or ever could be, tolerable to everyone else."

ONE OF the points most ignored in studies on diet is simply summed up in three words: compared to what. No matter what type of diet you are analyzing, what were the group of people you are basing the data on eating before? How unhealthy were they? This makes a big difference.

If someone is eating the typical diet of 63% processed foods, 25% animal proteins (including dairy), and only 6% fresh vegetables and fruits, and then you eliminate the processed foods, there will always be advantages. But are those advantages for the long haul, or are they short-term fixes with possible long-term negative ramifications?

Let's look at the weight loss data from this carnivore study. Body Mass Index at the time of the survey was 23.7 – which was about a 3-point improvement over the baseline number. Seems good, but they also reported significant increases in serum LDL cholesterol levels.

In other words, they lost weight on average but also mortgaged away their cardiovascular health. The weight loss most likely came from halting the consumption of junk food and sugared beverages.

The T. Colin Campbell Center points out the following: Countless large-scale observational studies consistently show that plant-predominant diets are associated with a lower incidence and mortality of numerous chronic diseases, including several cancers.

REASONABLE SKEPTICS understand that observational studies alone are generally considered a weaker form of evidence – correlation does not prove causation – but these correlations (regarding plant-

based nutrition) are reliably backed up by a combination of other forms of evidence.

Several intervention studies have shown that replacing animal-based foods with whole plant-based foods can improve health outcomes, particularly in heart disease patients. On a molecular level, "[Numerous] nutritionally mediated factors independently increase cardiovascular oxidative stress and inflammation and are all independently tied to CVD [cardiovascular disease] development."

Laboratory experiments (animal studies) help to explain the association between animal protein and disease progression; these findings provide evidence of biological plausibility. For example, in rodent models, animal protein has been shown to increase the binding of a carcinogenic metabolite.

Numerous additional studies highlight the potential benefit of shifting away from animal-based foods to prevent or treat kidney disease, type 2 diabetes, obesity, Alzheimer's, osteoporosis, and more.

We, of course, wish Mikhaila Peterson and others who suffer from any illness a better and healthier life. But individual cases don't have the validity of long-term studies. It is incredibly important to look at the data, examine the studies and see what "works" – not just for the short-term but what is sustainable and brings us overall excellent health.

It's not the carnivore diet or any other Keto-type diet; when we eat a healthy, balanced diet that is plant prominent, sleep well, and stay active, we can diminish our risk of any chronic disease and many autoimmune diseases by up to 80%. Do that and you will "add hours to your days, days to your years and years to your lives."

The writer is a wellness coach and personal trainer with more than 25 years of professional experience. He is a member of the International Council of the True Health Initiative, the board of Kosher Plant Based, and is director of The Wellness Clinic. alan@alanfitness.com

Earthquake in Tibet kills more than 120, striking near holy site

• By JOE CASH
and GOPAL SHARMA

BEIJING/KATHMANDU (Reuters) – A strong earthquake struck the foothills of the Himalayas near one of Tibet's holiest cities on Tuesday, killing at least 126 people and flattening hundreds of houses, Chinese authorities said.

The magnitude 6.8 quake's epicenter was about 80 km (50 miles) north of Mount Everest. Tremors also shook buildings in neighboring Nepal, Bhutan, and India.

The impact was felt across the Shigatse region of Tibet, home to 800,000 people. The region contains the traditional seat of the Panchen Lama, one of the most important figures in Tibetan Buddhism.

Many homes in Shigatse City were reduced to rubble, a video released by Tibet Fire and Rescue showed. Rescue workers searched through the debris of a ruined home and pulled out one injured person, it showed.

Adding to the misery for those left homeless, temperatures in the region had fallen to -6° late on Tuesday and were forecast to drop as low as -16° overnight.

The China Earthquake Networks Centre located the epicenter in Tingri County, known as the northern gateway to the Everest region, at a depth of 10 km (6.2 miles). The US Geological Service put the quake's magnitude at 7.1. It struck at 9:05 a.m. local time.

At least 126 people were known to have been killed and 188 injured on the Tibetan side, China's state-run Xinhua news



RESCUE TEAMS search through rubble in the aftermath of an earthquake in a location given as Shigatse City, Tibet Autonomous Region, China, yesterday. (Tibet Fire and Rescue/Handout via Reuters)

agency reported. There were no reports of deaths elsewhere.

Footage broadcast on state television China Central Television showed rescuers performing CPR on an injured person and soldiers erecting temporary shelters.

The Dalai Lama, Tibet's spiritual leader who fled to India along with thousands of Tibetans in early 1959 after a failed uprising against Chinese rule, said he was deeply saddened.

"I offer my prayers for those who have lost their lives and extend my wishes for a swift recovery to all who have been injured," the Nobel peace laureate said in a message.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said all-out search and rescue efforts should be carried out to minimize casualties and to resettle affected people.

Beijing, which administers

Tibet as an autonomous region within China, rejects criticism from rights groups and exiles who accuse it of trampling on the religious and cultural rights of the Tibetan people.

China closed the Everest region to tourists after the quake, Xinhua reported.

Mount Everest is a popular destination for climbers and trekkers, but winter is not a prime season for climbers and hikers in Nepal.

A German climber was the lone mountaineer with a permit to climb Everest, but he had already left the base camp after failing to reach the summit, tourism department official Lilathar Awasthi said.

More than 1,500 firefighters and rescue workers have been dispatched to the affected areas, Xinhua said. Approximately 22,000 items, including tents,

coats, quilts, and folding beds, have also been sent, it said.

TREMORS, AFTERSHOCKS

Villages in Tingri, where the average elevation is around 4,000-5,000 meters, reported strong shaking during the quake, which was followed by more than 150 aftershocks with magnitudes of up to 4.4.

Crumpled shop fronts could be seen in a video on social media showing the aftermath in the town of Lhatse, with debris spilling out onto the road.

Three townships and 27 villages lie within 20 km of the epicenter, with a total population of around 6,900, and more than 1,000 houses have been damaged, Xinhua reported.

The southwestern parts of China, Nepal, and northern India are often hit by earth-

quakes caused by the collision of the Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates.

Since 1950, there have been 21 earthquakes of magnitude six or above in what is known as the Lhasa block, the largest of which was the 6.9 magnitude quake in Mainling in 2017, according to CCTV.

Mainling is located in the lower reaches of Tibet's Yarlung Zangbo River, where China is planning to build the world's largest hydropower dam.

A magnitude 7.8 tremor struck near Nepal's capital, Kathmandu, in 2015, killing about 9,000 people and injuring thousands in the country's worst-ever earthquake. Among the dead were at least 18 people killed at the Mount Everest base camp when it was hit by an avalanche.

On Tuesday, tremors were felt in Kathmandu, some 400 km from the epicenter, and residents in the city ran out of their homes.

"The bed was shaking, and I thought my child was moving the bed... I didn't pay that much attention, but the shaking of [a] window made me understand that it's an earthquake," said Kathmandu resident Meera Adhikari. "I'm still shaking out of fear and am in shock."

One person was injured in Kathmandu when he jumped off the top of a house after feeling the strong tremors, Nepal Police spokesman Bishwa Adhikari said.

The quake also jolted Thimphu, the capital of Bhutan, and the northern Indian state of Bihar, which borders Nepal.



CANADA'S PRIME MINISTER Justin Trudeau speaks to reporters, announcing he intends to step down as Liberal Party leader but will stay on in his post until a replacement has been chosen from his Rideau Cottage residence in Ottawa on Monday. (Patrick Doyle/Reuters)

What happens after Trudeau steps down?

EXPLAINER

• By DAVID LJUNGGREN

OTTAWA (Reuters) – Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on Monday said he would step down in the coming months after nine years in power, bowing to legislators alarmed by his Liberal Party's miserable pre-election polling numbers.

Trudeau said he would stay on both as prime minister and Liberal head until the party chooses a new leader to take it into the next election, which must be held by late October this year. Here is what might happen next:

WILL TRUDEAU LEAVE OFFICE IMMEDIATELY?

No. Trudeau will stay on both as prime minister and head of the ruling Liberal Party for now. Unlike the process in other countries like Australia, where party leaders are elected by legislators and can be removed overnight, in Canada they are chosen by special leadership conventions that can take months to organize.

WILL AN ELECTION BE HELD IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE?

No. Trudeau announced that parliament – which had been due to resume work on January 27 – would instead be prorogued, or suspended, until March 24.

This means opposition parties that had originally planned to unveil non-confidence motions to bring his minority government down as soon as they could after January 27 will now have to wait until some time in May since the government controls the agenda for most of each session.

If all the opposition parties vote together on the motion, the Liberals will be defeated and a new election called. As a result, a new election is unlikely to be held before May at the earliest.

When parliament resumes, the government has to formally unveil its plans for the new session in the so-called Speech from the Throne. The Liberals are not obliged to make this subject to a vote of no confidence.

Parliament is scheduled to start its summer break no later than June 20 and if the Liberals are still in power by then, an election would be held as scheduled at the end of October.

HOW ELSE COULD THE LIBERALS BE REMOVED FROM POWER?

Under the original parliamentary calendar, the House of Commons-elected chamber had been due to vote on spending measures in late March. This would trigger a confidence vote.

It is unclear whether that vote would still be scheduled for late March and if it were, whether the opposition parties would vote to bring down the Liberals, whether they are led by Trudeau or a new party head.

The Conservatives, who are favored to win the next election, and the left-leaning, small New Democratic Party

have both made it clear that they want to defeat Trudeau on a formal motion of no confidence that they themselves have presented.

The Liberals could also be brought down over their annual budget, which would most likely be unveiled in April. The initial vote on the legislation implementing the budget would be a matter of confidence but the government has some flexibility as to when that would take place.

HOW LONG DOES THE PARTY HAVE TO CHOOSE A NEW LEADER?

The nightmare Liberal scenario is that the party takes so long to choose a new leader that it has to fight the next election with Trudeau still in charge. It is likely therefore to announce a shortened contest designed to ensure that Trudeau's replacement is in office as soon as possible.

When Trudeau won the Liberal leadership in April 2013, the contest lasted exactly five months. In 2006, it lasted almost eight months.

Trudeau said he has asked the party to start the process of choosing a new leader. Liberal president Sachin Mehra said he would call a meeting of the party's national board this week to begin the process. He gave no further details.

WOULD A NEW LEADER HELP THE LIBERALS AVOID DEFEAT?

Polls strongly indicate that the Liberals will lose the election, no matter who the leader is. But the scale of the defeat could be tempered if Trudeau is not in charge.

Those who could run include Innovation Minister Francois-Philippe Champagne, Transport Minister Anita Anand, Foreign Minister Melanie Joly, as well as former finance minister Chrystia Freeland and Mark Carney, former governor of the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England.

Tradition dictates that Carney, currently Chair of Brookfield Asset Management, would need to secure a seat in parliament in order to take office if he won the party leadership.

IS THERE ANY OTHER WAY TRUDEAU CAN BE FORCED OUT?

Ultimate constitutional power in Canada lies with Governor General Mary Simon, who is the personal representative of Britain's King Charles, the head of state. She can, in theory, remove Trudeau, but there is virtually no chance of that happening.

Jordan and Syria to combat ISIS resurgence

AMMAN (Reuters) – Jordan and Syria have agreed to form a joint security committee to secure their border, combat arms and drug smuggling, and work to prevent the resurgence of Islamic State militants, the Jordanian foreign minister said on Tuesday.

Western anti-narcotics officials say the addictive, amphetamine-type stimulant known as Captagon has for years been mass-produced in Syria and that Jordan is a transit route to the oil-producing Gulf states.

Jordan's army has conducted several preemptive airstrikes in Syria since 2023 that Jordanian officials say targeted militias accused of links to the drug trade, as well as the militias' facilities.

"We discussed securing the borders, especially the threat of arms and drugs smuggling and the resurgence of Islamic State. Our security is one; we will coordinate together to combat these mutual challenges," Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi told a joint press conference with Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shibani.

Shibani, who was in Amman after visiting Qatar and the United Arab Emirates following the December 8 fall of president Bashar al-Assad, told Safadi that drug smuggling would not pose a threat to Jordan under Syria's new Islamist rulers.

"The new situation in Syria ended the threats posed to Jordan's security," Shibani said. "When it comes to Captagon and drug smuggling, we promise it is over and won't return. We are ready to cooperate on this extensively."

Answering a question about US sanctions on Syria, Shibani said the latest move by Washington to ease restrictions on humanitarian aid for Syria should be a step toward a full lifting of sanctions, which were imposed to isolate the Assad government over its deadly crackdowns on opponents.

He added that existing sanctions posed a major obstacle to the recovery of Syria from 13 years of devastating civil war.

UN says Iran executed over 900 people, dozens of women in 2024

GENEVA (Reuters) – The number of people executed in Iran rose to 901 last year, including 31 women, some of whom were convicted of murdering their husbands after suffering abuse or being forced into marriage, the UN Human Rights Office said on Tuesday.

Most of the executions were for drug-related offenses, but political dissidents and people connected with mass protests in 2022 over the death in police custody of a 22-year-old woman were also among the

victims, according to the UN statement.

"It is deeply disturbing that yet again we see an increase in the number of people subjected to the death penalty in Iran year-on-year," UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Türk said. "It is high time Iran stemmed this ever-swelling tide of executions."

In total, at least 901 people were executed by hanging last year in the Islamic Republic, compared to 853 in 2023, the UN rights office said. That re-

resented the highest number since 2015 when 972 people were executed.

The 2022 protests, which sparked some of the worst turmoil since the 1979 Islamic Revolution, followed the death in police custody of Kurdish Iranian woman Mahsa Amini, who was arrested for allegedly flouting Iran's mandatory dress code.

At least 31 women were executed in 2024, UN rights office spokesperson Liz Throssell told reporters at a Geneva press

briefing, representing what she said was the highest number in at least 15 years.

"The majority of cases involved charges of murder. A significant number of the women were victims of domestic violence, child marriage, or forced marriage," she added.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, a reformist who won the July 2024 presidential election, made promises during his campaign to better protect the rights of women and minorities.

Former French far-right leader Jean-Marie Le Pen dies aged 96

• By ELIZABETH PINEAU

PARIS (Reuters) – Jean-Marie Le Pen, the founder of France's far-right National Front party who tapped into blue-collar anger over immigration and globalization and reveled in minimizing the Holocaust, died on Tuesday aged 96.

His death was confirmed by his daughter Marine Le Pen's political party, National Rally (Rassemblement National).

Jean-Marie Le Pen spent his life fighting – as a soldier in France's colonial wars, as a founder in 1972 of the National Front, for which he contested five presidential elections, or in feuds with his daughters and ex-wife, often conducted publicly.

Controversy was Le Pen's constant companion: his multiple convictions for inciting racial hatred and condoning war crimes dogged the National Front.

His declaration that the Nazi gas chambers were "merely a detail" of World War Two history and that the Nazi occupation of France was "not especially inhumane" were for many people repulsive.

"If you take a book of a thousand pages on World War Two, in which 50 million people died, the concentration camps occupy two pages and the gas



JEAN-MARIE LE PEN, founder of France's far-right National Front political party, reacts during an interview with Reuters in Montreuil, France, in 2018. (Charles Platiau/Reuters)

chambers ten or 15 lines, and that's what one calls a detail," Le Pen said in the late 1990s, doubling down on earlier remarks.

Those comments provoked outrage, including in France, where police had rounded up thousands of Jews who were deported to the Nazi death camp at Auschwitz.

Commenting on Le Pen's death, President Emmanuel Macron said: "A historic figure of the far right, he played a role in the public life of our country for nearly seventy years, which is now a matter for history to judge."

Le Pen helped reset the parameters of French politics in

a career spanning 40 years that, harnessing discontent over immigration and job security, in some ways heralded Donald Trump's rise to the White House.

He reached a presidential election run-off in 2002 but lost by a landslide to Jacques Chirac. Voters backed a mainstream conservative rather than bring the far right to power for the first time since Nazi collaborators ruled in the 1940s.

Le Pen was the scourge of the European Union, which he saw as a supranational project usurping the powers of nation states, tapping the kind of resentment felt by many Britons who later

voted to leave the EU.

Marine Le Pen learned of her father's death during a layover in Kenya as she returned from the French overseas territory of Mayotte.

FOREIGN LEGION

Born in Brittany in 1928, Jean-Marie Le Pen studied law in Paris in the early 1950s and had a reputation for rarely spending a night out on the town without a brawl. He joined the Foreign Legion as a paratrooper fighting in Indochina in 1953.

Le Pen campaigned to keep Algeria French, as an elected member of France's parliament and a soldier in the then French-run territory. He publicly justified the use of torture but denied using such practices himself.

After years on the periphery of French politics, his fortunes changed in 1977 when a millionaire backer bequeathed him a mansion outside Paris and 30 million francs, around 5 million euros (\$5.2 million) in today's money.

That helped Le Pen further his political ambitions, despite being shunned by traditional parties.

"Lots of enemies, few friends and honor aplenty," he told a website linked to the far-right. He wrote in his memoir: "No regrets."

Breaking tradition



GRAPEVINE
• By GREER FAY CASHMAN

Jewish tradition teaches that people should not be judged in their grief. It is a miracle that the parents and siblings of the hostages are still sane after all the grief and humiliation they've gone through in their attempts to secure the release of their loved ones. If they scream a little or use inappropriate language in the Knesset or outside the prime minister's homes, it is mostly out of frustration that the government is in their view ignoring the will of the people. When they are interviewed on radio and television, by journalists who are sympathetic and who give them a platform on which to express themselves, they are polite and often soft-spoken, and extremely grateful for the opportunity to say something that might be heard by a hostage relative in Gaza.

To deny **Einav Zangauker**, whose son **Matan** is among the hostages, entrance to the Knesset on the grounds that she is a disruptive force is nothing short of disgusting, when Knesset members include people such as **Tally Gotliv**, **May Golan**, and **Limor Son Har-Melech**, whose behavior is often a disgrace. They are the real disruptive forces. Knesset Speaker **Amir Ohana** should publicly apologize to Zangauker for the way in which she was treated in what is supposed to be the house of the nation.

■ IN AN interview that he gave to **Matthew Knott**, foreign affairs correspondent of *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Melbourne Age*, Ambassador to Australia **Amir Maimon** said that he believes that Australia fails to grasp the seriousness of the security threats to his nation. He was speaking in response to mounting pressure from the Albanese government and the international community for the creation of a Palestinian state.

Maimon said that such pressure will not accelerate the establishment of a Palestinian state and insisted that antisemitism is the main driving force behind global criticism of Israel.

The article mentions the once close relations that existed between Australia and Israel which deteriorated after the killing of Australian aid worker Zomi Frankcom in Gaza, and later when Australia voted against Israel in the United Nations, and more recently when it denied an entry visa to former justice minister **Ayelet Shaked**.

■ WEDNESDAY EVENING, January 8, President **Isaac Herzog** will confer the President's Medal of Honor on a group of individuals from the US, UK, Israel, Germany, and Australia who have distinguished themselves in their activities on behalf of the Jewish people, the State of Israel, and humanity in general.

The recipients are **Maurice Levy**, **Malcolm Hoenlein**, **Julie Platt**, **Sir Frank Lowy**, **Sir Trevor Chinn**, **Brigitte Zypries**, and **Mark Leibler**.

World Jewish Congress President **Ronald Lauder**

was unable to be in Israel at this time, and will receive his medal when Herzog is in the US for the inauguration of President-elect **Donald Trump**.

■ AS A follow-up to International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Philippines Embassy in Israel, in cooperation with the Holon Municipality, Holon Institute of Technology (HIT), Mediatheque Culture Center Holon, and the family of the late Max Weissler will hold a screening of *Quezon's Game* at Mediatheque, 6 Golda Meir Street, Holon, on Tuesday, January 28, at 6 p.m.

Weissler was one of the German Jews who responded to the Open Door Policy of president Manuel Quezon during the Second World War. Quezon's actions were particularly daring given the fact that Nazi officers were constantly around him, including at social events.

For a long time, the late Antonio Modena, who was the Philippines ambassador to Israel some 20 years ago, battled unsuccessfully to have Yad Vashem recognize Quezon as Righteous Among the Nations, but it was only when people such as Weissler and others who owed their lives to Quezon began to campaign that his role in saving Jews was finally acknowledged.

What also helped was the biographical drama film made by **Matthew Rosen** and released in 2018, including in Israel, where it has been screened several times. Once Quezon was recognized, a meeting of survivors and offspring of survivors who found a haven in the Philippines was held at Yad Vashem.

Speakers at the forthcoming screening will be **Danny Weissler**, son of Max Weissler, **Shai Kenan**, mayor of Holon, Prof. **Eduard Yakubov**, president of HIT, and **Anthony Achilles Mandap**, chargé d'affaires at the Philippines Embassy.

■ THE CHARMING Ruth Hotel in Safed, which is part of the Dan chain, has reopened after being closed for more than a year. Tourism in the Galilee was hard hit by the dearth of tourists during the Israel-Hamas War and the war against Hezbollah. Both domestic and foreign tourism have begun to pick up in recent weeks, a factor warranting the reopening of the Ruth Hotel in Safed's Old City.

The reopening of the hotel was considered sufficiently important to attract the attendance of Chabad Rabbi **Mordechai Bistrizky**, **Michael Federmann**, one of the owners of the Dan chain and his wife, **Liora**, his cousin **Ami Federmann**, who is also among the owners of the chain, Prof. **Salman Zarka**, the director of the Ziv Medical Center in Safed, **Eli Cohen**, the president of the Israel Hotel Association, and other IHA officials, **Eli Mor**, head of the Galilee-Golan fire station, **Ilan Hassan**, head of the Safed Municipality Tourism Division, and members of the Dan chain executive board.

The Ruth Hotel is one of



THE IDF'S Chaim Herzog (left) and Yigael Yadin (with hat) at Tel Aviv's Press House in 1949. (Hans Pinn/GPO)

the few hotels in Israel with a female general manager in the person of **Ruth Kaplan**, who took all those attending the reopening of the hotel on a tour of the premises, sections of which had been renovated, some to the extent of a total facelift.

Michael Federmann explained the importance of reopening the hotel as soon as possible as a sign of the Dan chain's support for the residents of the North and an eventual return to a normal lifestyle. He emphasized the need to support Safed, which suffered so many rocket attacks from Lebanon.

Shlomi Tahan, CEO of the Dan chain, praised the hotel's staff for its speedy and efficient return to work.

■ WHILE SOME evacuees have begun to return to their homes, some will remain in other parts of the country indefinitely, especially those who come from places such as Kiryat Shmona and Metulla, which are on the Lebanese border.

Among those who are yearning to return to Kiryat Shmona are people who have been living in the Theatron Hotel in Jerusalem for 14 months, and do not know when they will be going home, because the security situation has not been resolved.

However, they are fortunate in that the owner of the hotel, **Zion Hasid**, has made every effort to make them feel welcome, as have various social welfare organizations in Jerusalem. These include Geshel Shel Zahav, which on the last night of Hanukkah organized a festive event at the hotel and initiated a permanent connection between the people of Kiryat Shmona and Jerusalem.

Attorney **Yehuda Zaretsky**, who heads Geshel Shel Zahav, said that its branches in Israel and abroad have pulled out all the stops since October 7, 2023, to help those personally affected by the massacre and the ensuing war.

■ THE CHAPEL of The Jaffa Hotel, which is located in the very heart of Jaffa, will this coming Friday, January 10, host its first major event for 2025, with an exhibition and sale of fashion, jewelry, fashion photography, and other art forms, in addition to which visitors will be able to sample the hotel's cuisine and its cocktails.

Under the title of "A Love Let-

ter to Jaffa - Design and Art Fair," the event will feature creations by six Israeli artists, including **Kianne Frankfort**, **Idan Laros**, **Asaf Einy**, **Yigal Levi** and **Raz Danon**.

■ EVER SINCE the Hamas incursion into Israel, there have been calls from many quarters for a state investigation to determine who bears responsibility for the lack of preparedness against such an assault. Some people have already accepted responsibility, including former defense ministers **Yoav Gallant** and **Benny Gantz**, each knowing that it could cost him dearly, but Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** is still holding out until the war against Hamas is won. Meanwhile the hostages are languishing, which is yet another mark against the prime minister.

This situation will not go away and is coming up for discussion on Wednesday, January 15, at an open meeting of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 43 Jabotinsky Street, Jerusalem, at 7 p.m.

Under the heading of legal responsibility, the discussants will include retired judge **Menachem Finkelstein** and retired Supreme Court justice **Ayala Procaccia**. The two will talk about ministerial and legal responsibility. The meeting will be chaired by Prof. **Nili Cohen**, a former president of the academy.

The event will be broadcast live on the Academy website, www.academy.ac.il

■ FACULTY AND administrative staff at the University of Haifa have volunteered in the effort to enable evacuees from the North to return to their homes. Some 60 people employed at the university are working to rehabilitate the Ya'ara village in the Upper Galilee.

Due to the security situation, the residents were evacuated 14 months ago. Some of their homes have fallen into disrepair or are covered in dust resulting from long neglect. The volunteers have engaged in cleaning and basic repairs, painting, trimming shrubs, and generally tidying up so that residents will return to a more pleasant and welcoming environment.

The Ya'ara population numbers some 8,000 souls. Ya'ara, which is close to Shlomi, was one of the Hezbollah targets in its goal to invade the Galilee and was subjected to a bombardment of rocket attacks.

University of Haifa President Prof. **Gur Alroey** noted that the volunteers were given a very warm welcome by those residents of Ya'ara who have already returned. They were most appreciative of the efforts of university staff to make their homecoming a positive experience in every way possible.

■ ONE OF the benefits of being a freelance journalist is not having to worry about offending colleagues by writing a story that would ordinarily be on their beat. Part of journalistic ethics is not poaching on a colleague's territory. But that basically applies to journalists on salary.

Freelancers can write about any subject they wish and don't necessarily discuss the matter with an editor in advance, nor

do they have a loyalty to any particular publication, but are free to roam the field.

Although her byline has appeared in *The Jerusalem Post* for 50 years, **Gloria Deutsch**, currently known as a restaurant reviewer, has tackled almost every subject that has been published in the *Post*. Although she is a freelancer, there were times when she had more published articles than some of the salaried editorial staff. This was particularly so during the 1980s, when she interviewed many of the top-line figures in Israel's entertainment industry. Over the years, she also wrote about women in prison, medical problems, ceramics, pets, Prisoners of Zion, tourism, fashion, home decor, and a whole lot more.

It all started when her husband, **Alex**, a surgeon, was working at Laniado Hospital in Netanya. He met a group of Brahminites, who are Christian Evangelists, who were waiting for the Second Coming of the Messiah, which they thought was imminent. They worked with hassidim and dressed like them, with the men all wearing fedora hats and braces on their trousers.

Gloria Deutsch pitched the story to Fay Doron, who was then the features editor of the *Post*. She accepted the article, and in the years that followed, Gloria Deutsch wrote hundreds of articles for the paper. These days, she and her husband, who is now retired, enjoy traveling around the country and sampling the menus of different kosher restaurants and making them known to *Post* readers.

■ INCLUDED IN the category of common knowledge about Israel is that there are arguably more law graduates per capita than in any other country, and that there is an acute shortage of doctors and nurses.

Organizations such as Nefesh B'Nefesh and The Israel Experience are attempting to amend the latter lacuna, but surprisingly, there is also an effort afoot to encourage American lawyers to relocate to Israel.

Admittedly, not all lawyers work for law firms. Many act as legal consultants within major companies. Nonetheless, it seems a little strange to make a pitch for American lawyers. But that's what happened this week when representatives of some of Israel's most prestigious law firms gathered in New York at the offices of DLA Piper to recruit American legal professionals who are interested in making aliyah.

Despite having relatively few immigrants in their current ranks, especially from the professional sector, the participating Israeli law firms are demonstrating a strong commitment to integrating new immigrants into Israel's legal community.

The recruitment event featured an impressive lineup of speakers, including senior partners from major Israeli law firms such as Herzog Fox Neeman, Gornitzky & Co., and Arnon Tadmor-Levy, as well as in-house counsel from prominent organizations and representatives of international law firms which operate in Israel.

This was not the first time that such an event was held. Last year's event led directly to multiple job offers and successful aliyah stories, which illus-



RUTH KAPLAN and Shlomi Tahan. (Dima Maislis)

trate the strong impact of this initiative.

The program included panel discussions on opportunities in Israeli law firms, in-house positions, and an economic retrospective of Israel's resilience. American lawyers who attended were also informed of an upcoming mission to Israel where they could explore possibilities for themselves, meet with potential employers and with American lawyers who have already moved to Israel and are employed in their profession.

■ JEWISH HEROISM is not exactly new. It dates back to biblical days. Since then, Jews have distinguished themselves in the armies of the countries in which they lived, and for the past three quarters of a century in the army of Israel.

During that period of time, many immigrants to Israel had grown up with the stereotyped image of the ghetto Jew who was scared of his own shadow. It was a fear that manifested itself out of the harassment against Jews by many of their fellow citizens living in predominantly Catholic countries. It took a very long time for a reconciliation between the Catholic Church and the Jewish people.

Anyone seeking evidence of Jewish heroism in the world at large can find it at the Chaim Herzog Museum of the Jewish Soldier in World War II, which will be toured by members of the Israel, Britain and the Commonwealth Association on Wednesday, February 19. Unfortunately, the event is limited to members only and will be followed by a visit to the nearby Khan Sha'ar Hagai (also known as Bab el-Wad), which pays tribute to the saga of the Burma Road, a bypass built to enable daily provisions to be delivered to Jerusalem, which was under siege and surrounded by hostile Arab villages.

Prior to the creation of the Burma Road, Sha'ar Hagai was the main route for deliveries to Jerusalem. But it was constantly under attack, and lives were lost in the process.

Nonetheless, the supply convoys continued to ply the route until they were able to use the Burma Road alternative. This, in itself, was heroism.

The museum, named for Chaim Herzog, who was an officer in the British Army during the Second World War, and later in the nascent Israel Defense Forces, is located in the grounds of Israel's famous tank museum, the Armored Corps Memorial Site and Museum at Latrun. It was officially opened in May last year on Victory in Europe Day.

The opening was attended by President Isaac Herzog and his older brother **Michael**, who is Israel's outgoing ambassador to the US and a former senior army officer himself. The creation of the museum was supported by the Mike and Sofia Segal Foundation, which honored the memory of **Mike Segal's** father, artillery Maj. Yevsey Segal, one of four brothers who all fought in the Red Army and Navy.

Some 500,000 Jews served in the Red Army, and a similar number served in the US Armed Forces, plus 400,000 in other Allied armed forces. In addition, there were some 100,000 Jewish partisans.

This year's VE Day ceremony at the museum promises to be even more memorable than the opening, because it will mark the 80th anniversary of the end of the Second World War, and among those attending will be the last living heroes of that era.

■ ONE OF the many contemporary heroes among the young soldiers who paid the supreme sacrifice in the attempt to defend the state and to eliminate Hamas was Noam Abramowitz, who was killed at the Nahal Oz military base in October 2023.

Noam's family decided to perpetuate her memory by launching a program at Reichman University in her name. A public service leadership program, it has been named **Bedarchei Noam** (In Noam's Ways).

At the launch ceremony, Noam's mother, **Adva Abramowitz**, delivered a moving lecture in which she said that imbuing people with a sense of public service was Noam's dream, and that the program is a direct continuation of that dream. It will provide exceptional students with specialized training in public service and leadership, with the aim of cultivating the next generation of Israeli leaders.

Reichman University President Prof. **Boaz Ganor** shared Noam's personal story - that of a young woman who dreamed of becoming prime minister of Israel and was murdered by Hamas terrorists.

"Noam had a deep love for the state and society of Israel," said Ganor. "As a true leader, she set herself the admirable goal of becoming prime minister and steering the country toward a better future."

He added that Noam had planned to study at the university's Lauder School of Government, Diplomacy and Strategy. "With the loss of Noam, we lost a future student who I am sure would have left her mark on the school. Her family lost a precious daughter, and the State of Israel lost a leader at a time when we needed her most."

In her heartfelt and intimate address, Adva shared personal anecdotes about Noam's life, the values that guided her, and her unique personality. She recounted her daughter's final moments through the family's correspondence with her during the difficult hours of October 7, and reiterated the tragic story of the female observers at Nahal Oz. With moving honesty, Adva also spoke about coping with bereavement and the challenges of navigating this new, painful reality.

Noam Abramowitz was one of the 23 soldiers who fell at the Nahal Oz base during the Hamas terrorist onslaught. While her dream of leading the country was brutally cut short, her vision endures through the **Bedarchei Noam** program, which will nurture young leaders who aspire to follow in her footsteps.

That her family chose to memorialize her in the place where she had hoped to receive the tools that would serve her ambitions says a lot about Noam and about Reichman University.

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EINAV ZANGAUKER, mother of hostage Matan Zangauker speaks, as Israelis protest in Tel Aviv last month and show support for the hostages who were kidnapped during the deadly October 7, 2023, attack. (Kai Pfaffenbach/Reuters)



A FULL PAGE OF EXERCISE FOR THE BRAIN
EVERY SUNDAY AND WEDNESDAY

CROSSWORDS

ACROSS

- 1 Carve into
- 5 Multitasking, perhaps
- 9 Chocolate canines
- 13 22-Down city
- 14 Turkish bigwigs
- 16 Run ___
- 17 Emphasize and then some
- 19 Written reminder
- 20 Portents
- 21 Glowing quality
- 23 Me day place
- 24 Had an aha moment
- 27 Bearded garden figure
- 29 NPR host Shapiro
- 30 "Don't get carried ___!"
- 32 Whisper receiver
- 34 Book of maps
- 39 "Remember your training, people!," and what can be said about the starts of 17-, 24-, 51-, and 63-Across
- 43 "Water Lilies" painter Claude
- 44 Little bit
- 45 Above
- 46 Slugger Mel inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1951
- 49 Isabel Wilkerson work subtitled "The Origins of

Our Discontents"

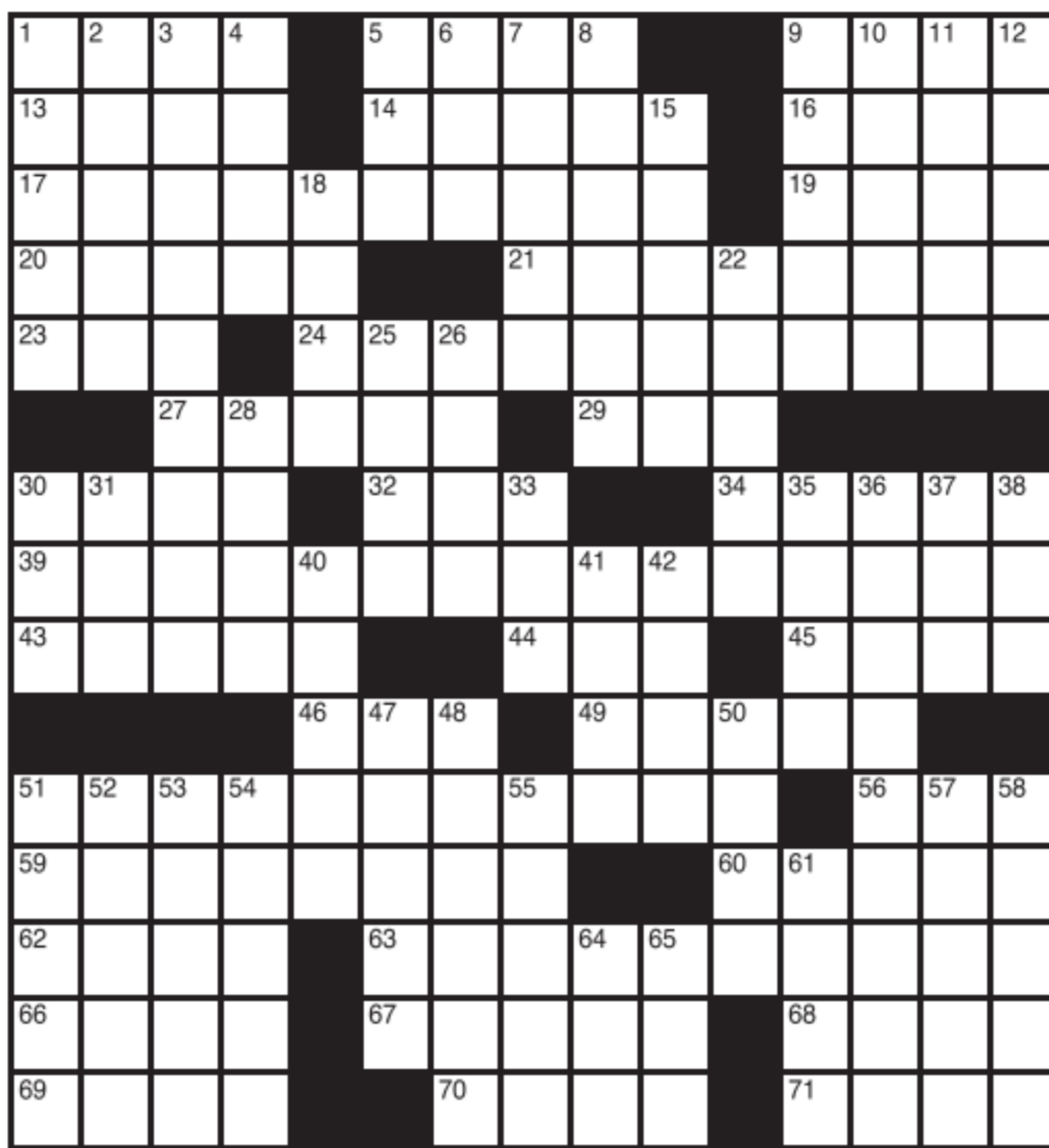
- 51 "Be brutally honest"
- 56 Financial daily, initially
- 59 Speechmaker's story
- 60 Bonn's river
- 62 Soothe
- 63 Some Expedia search results
- 66 Jazz legend Fitzgerald
- 67 Canyonlands features
- 68 Campfire output
- 69 Stand the test of time
- 70 Credit card balance, e.g.
- 71 Requests

DOWN

- 1 Belief system
- 2 Walk with heavy steps
- 3 "What?"
- 4 "His Eye Is on the Sparrow," for one
- 5 Forbid
- 6 "How repulsive!"
- 7 In the red
- 8 Big name in electronic instruments
- 9 One of four islands in Maui County
- 10 "You're ___ friends"
- 11 Bungle
- 12 Shooting sport
- 15 Passover meal
- 18 Canadian fuel giant

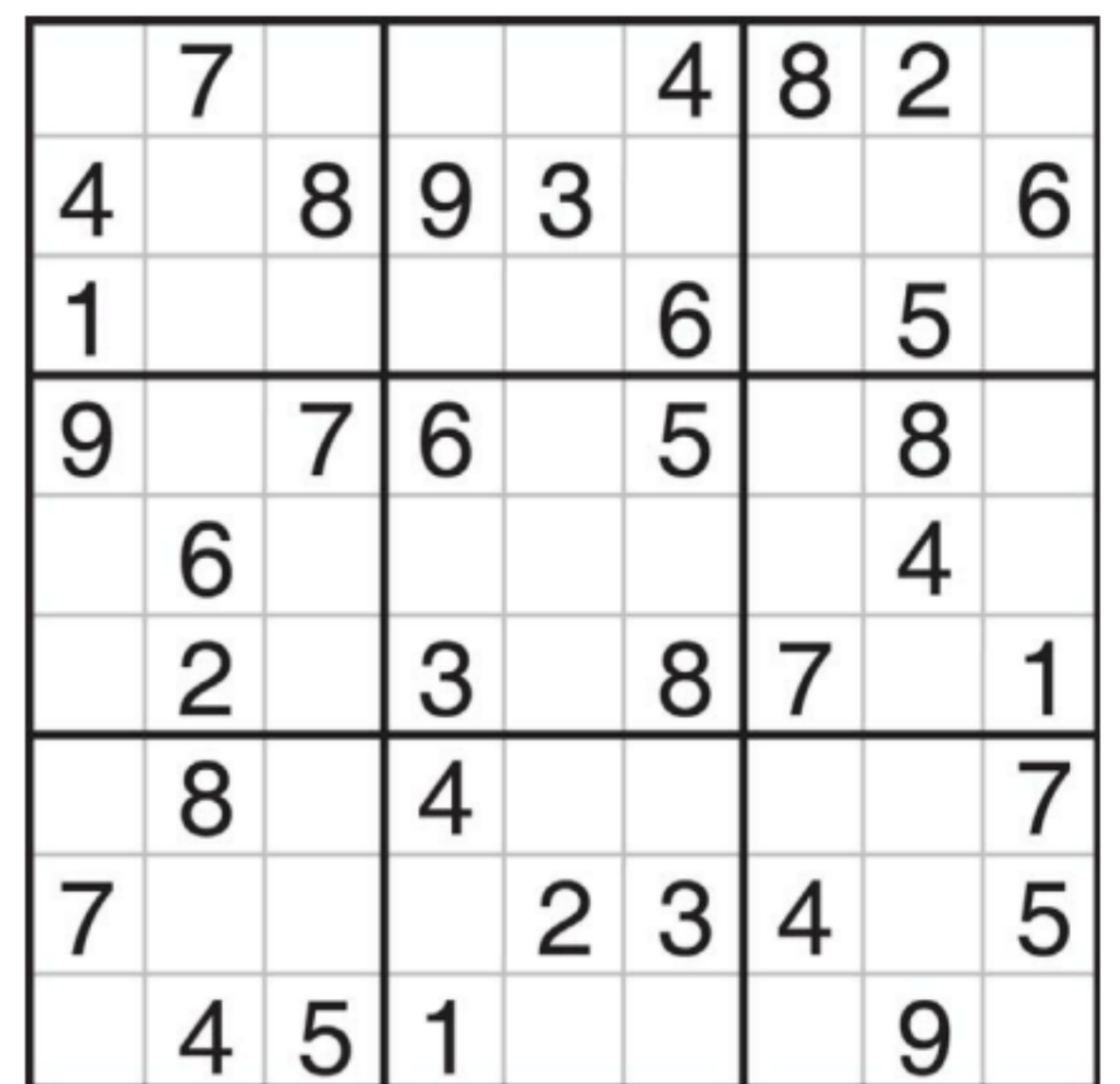
22 Epic poem featuring

- Patroclus and Achilles
- 25 Iowa college town
- 26 Gradually ease off
- 28 Org. with opening and closing bells
- 30 PIN point
- 31 "___ knows?"
- 33 "Rubbish!"
- 35 Not quite run
- 36 Go-getters
- 37 India Pale ___
- 38 Pro's camera
- 40 "Mom knows"
- 41 RPM gauge
- 42 Driver at the Oscars
- 47 Early afternoon hr.
- 48 Named
- 50 Feudal laborer
- 51 Laundry instructions spot
- 52 "___ Holmes": Millie Bobby Brown film
- 53 Obscure
- 54 Razzle-dazzle
- 55 Rib
- 57 B-ball shoe
- 58 Makes jokes
- 61 "That's funny!"
- 64 Snag
- 65 Superlative ending

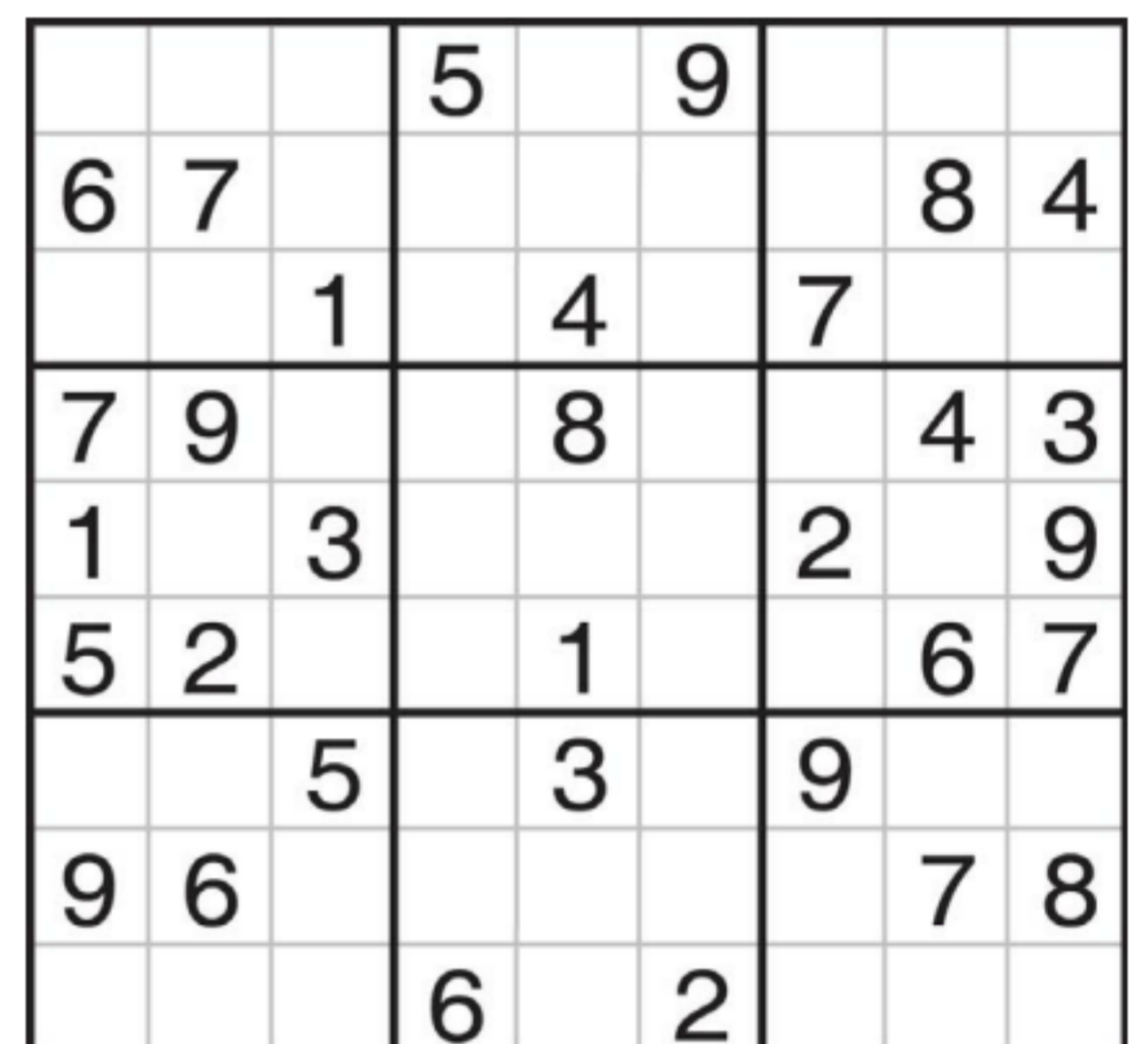


SUDOKU

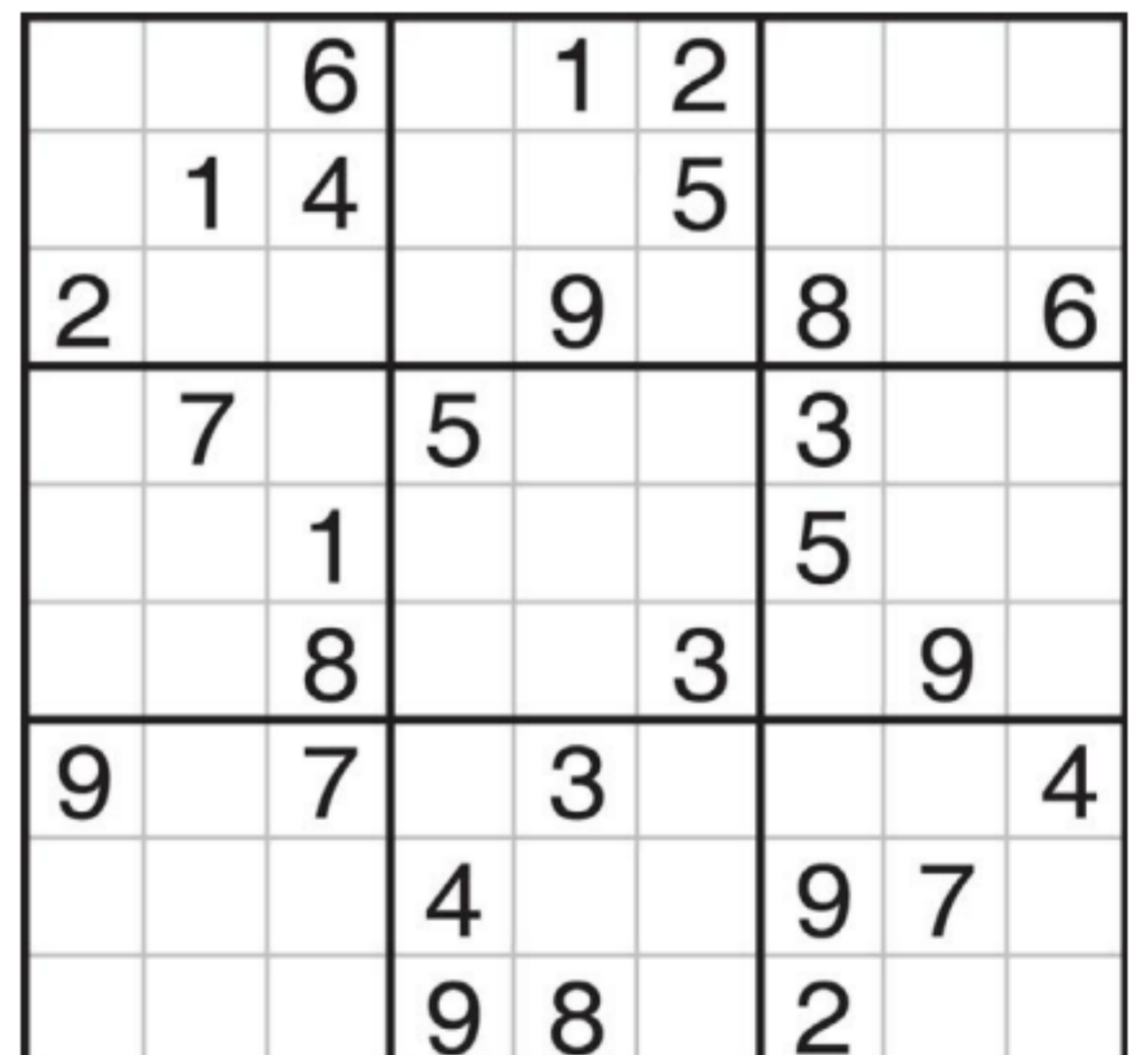
VERY EASY



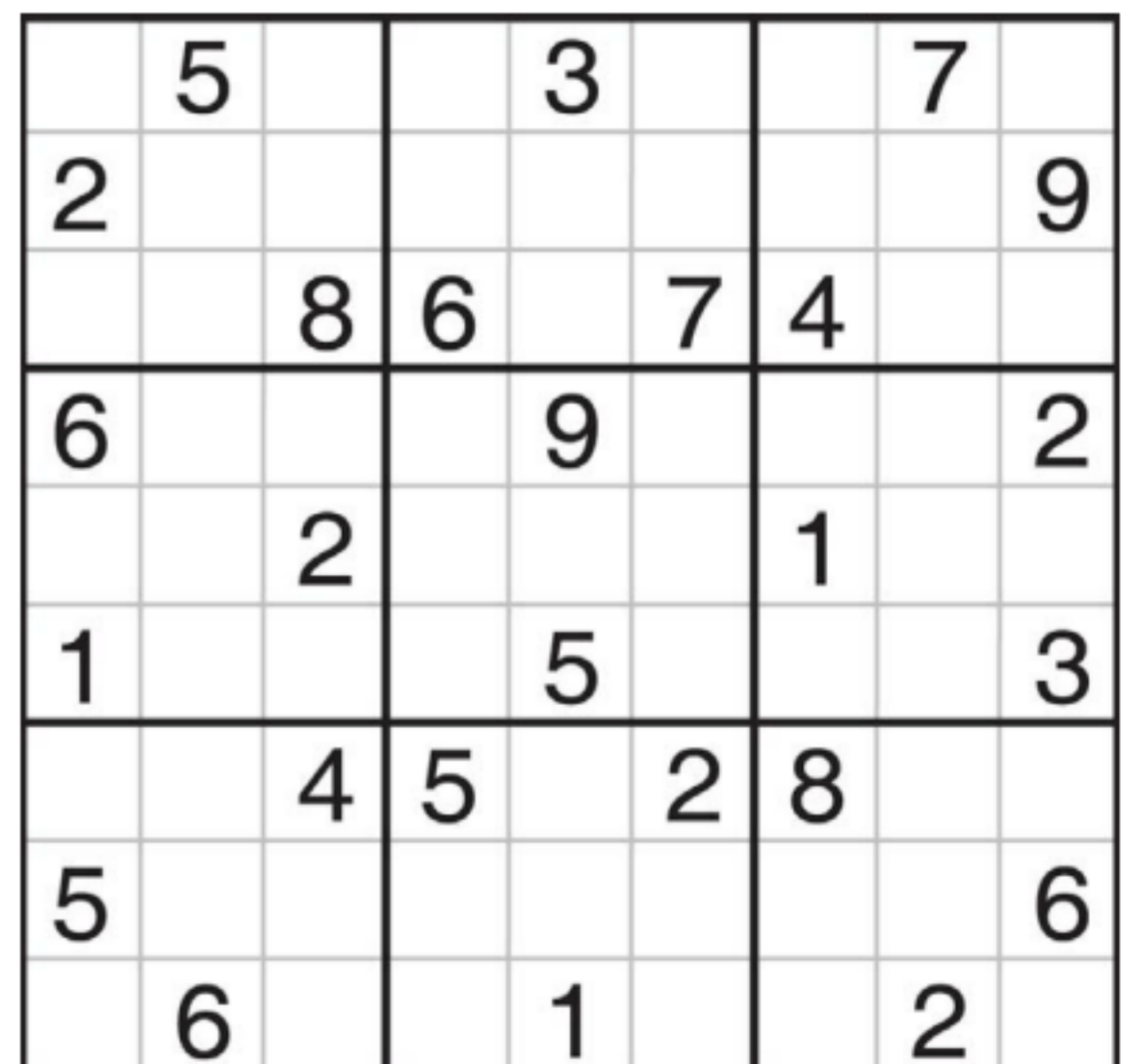
EASY



MEDIUM



HARD



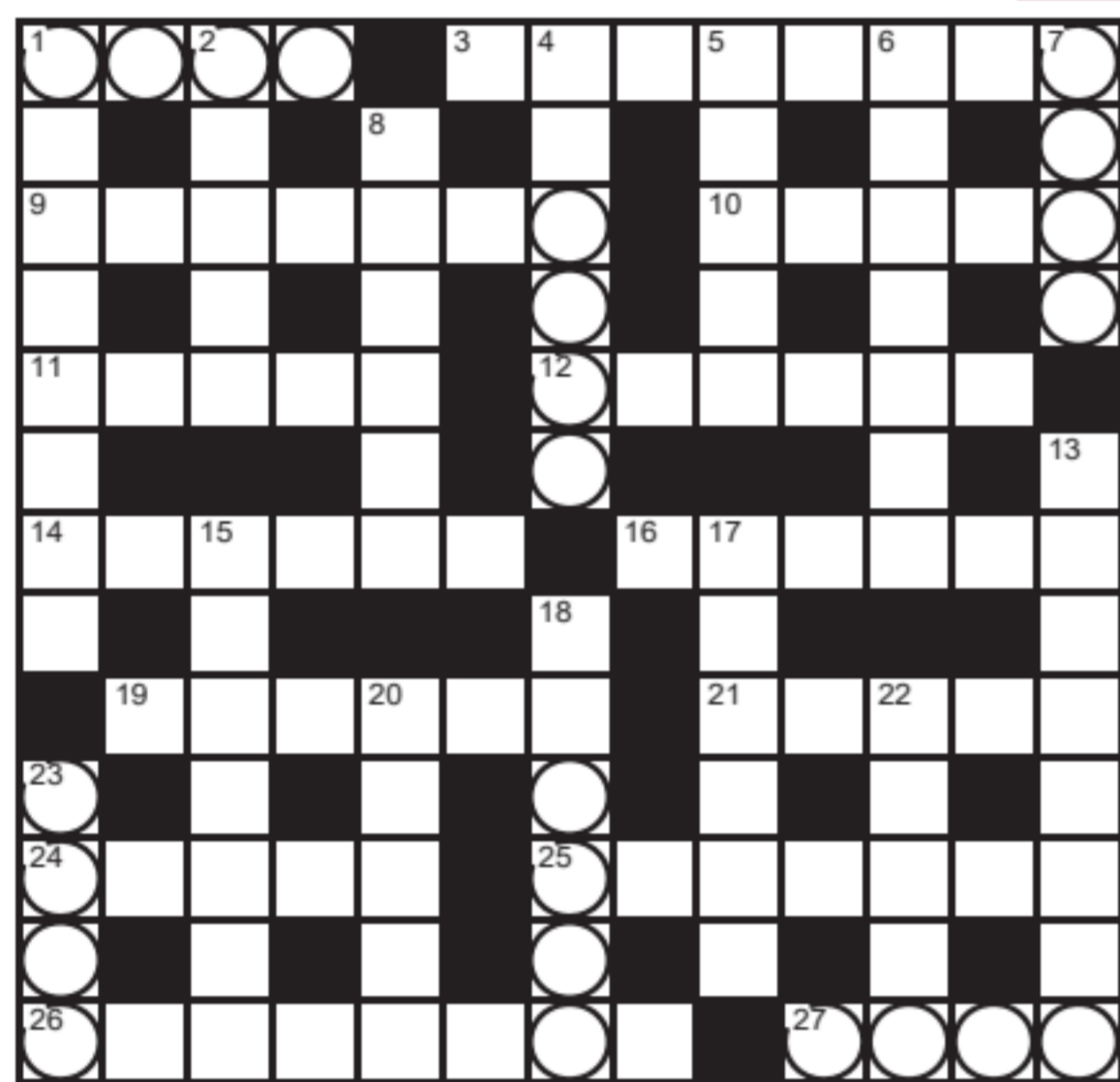
QUICK CROSSWORD

Across

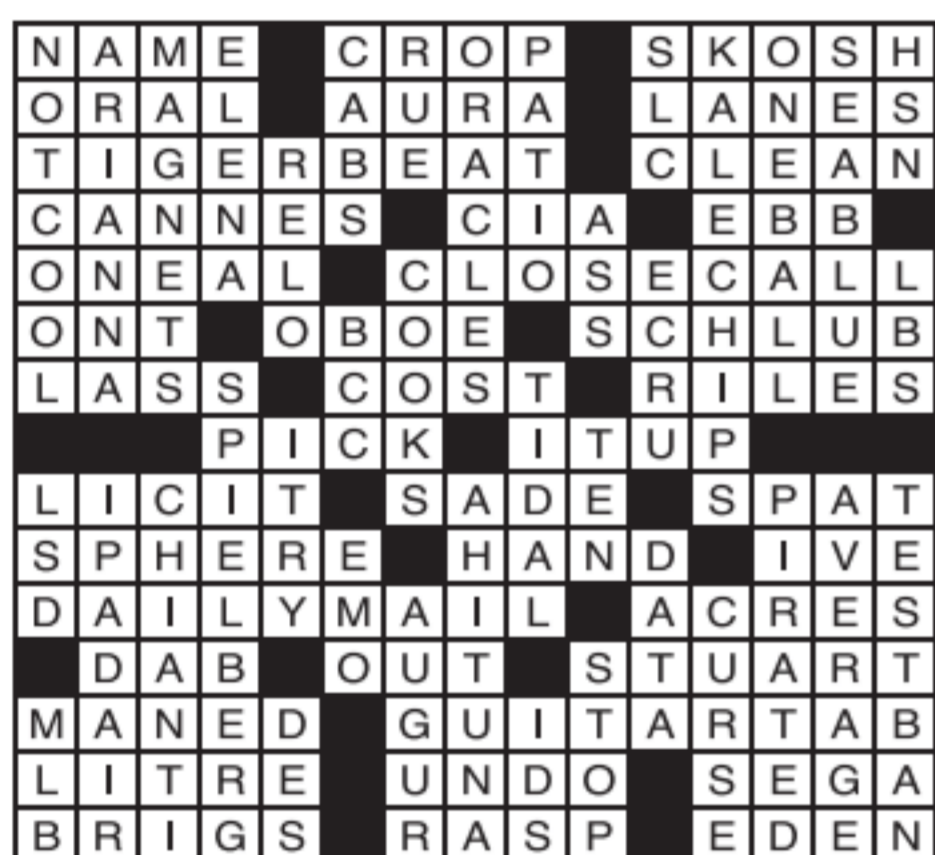
- 1 It may be fleeting (4)
- 3 Carcinogenic fireproofing (BASS TOES anagram) (8)
- 9 Guarantees, makes certain (7)
- 10 Ruler's domain (RAMLE anagram) (5)
- 11 "___ & Kel" (teen show) (5)
- 12 Courtly dance (6)
- 14 Swan-to-be (6)
- 16 Legitimate, not illegal (6)
- 19 Skittish, jumpy (2,4)
- 21 Crazy caper (5)
- 24 Concert setting (5)
- 25 Friendly (7)
- 26 Cook's three-minute hourglass (3,5)
- 27 "Ender's ___" (classic sci-fi novel) (4)

Down

- 1 Award for a soccer foul (4,4)
- 2 Layer of stones (5)
- 4 Bert and Ernie's street (6)
- 5 Heartthrob Zac (5)
- 6 Tasseographer's bit (EAT FLEA anagram) (3,4)
- 7 'It's the ___ Old Song' (Four Tops hit) (4)
- 8 Hypnotized state (6)
- 13 Post-fistfight shiner (5,3)
- 15 Root used in some energy drinks (7)
- 17 Saudi ___, OPEC member country (6)
- 18 "___ Mucho" (1944 chart-topper) (6)
- 20 ___ Harrison (George's son) (5)
- 22 Fibula neighbor (5)
- 23 "A Horse With No ___" (1971 America hit) (4)

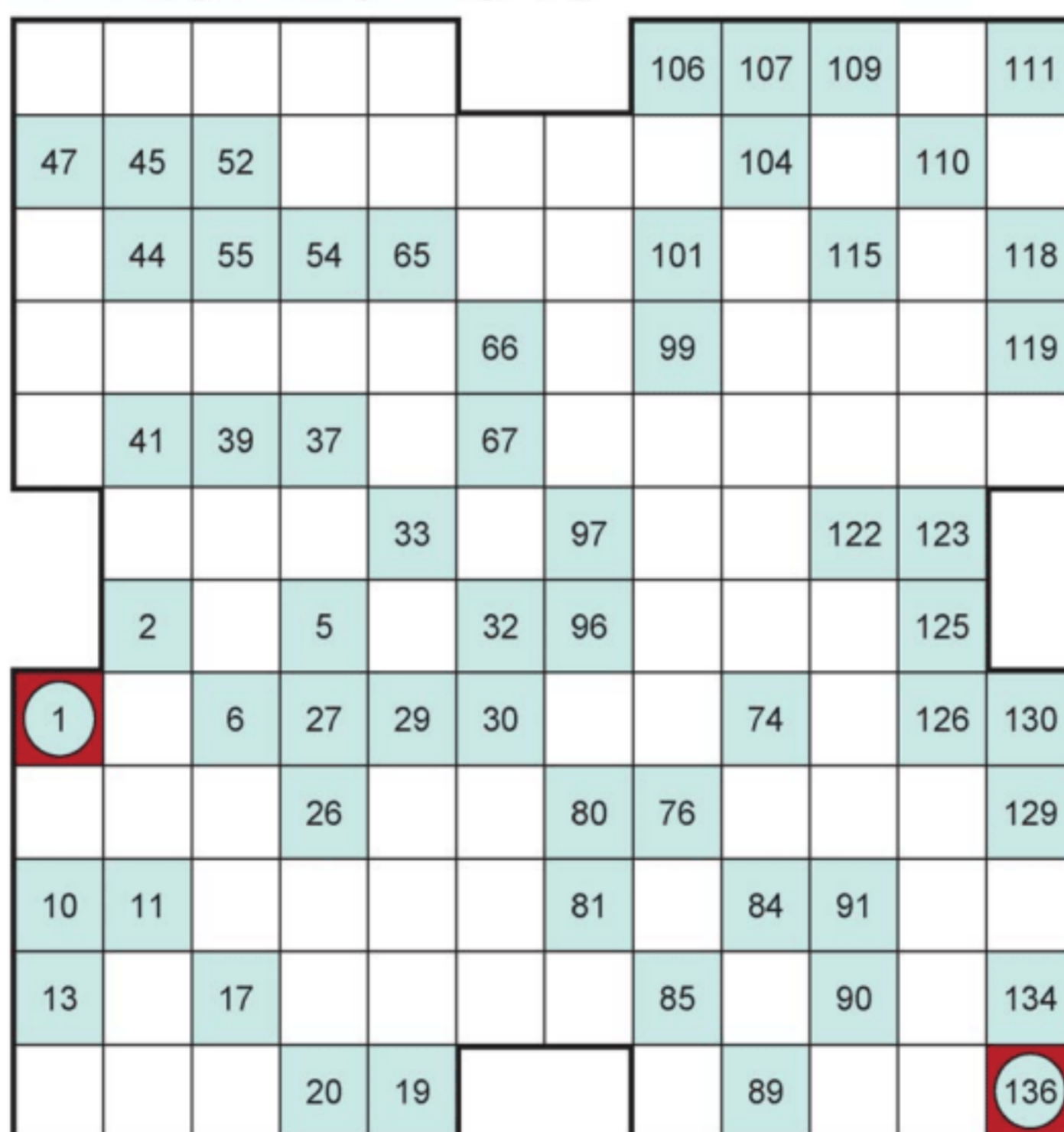


YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION



HIDATO®
FIND THE PATH - SOLVE THE PUZZLE

Complete the grid so that numbers 1 - 136 connect horizontally, vertically or diagonally:



SOLUTION ON SUNDAY

WORD-BUILDER
5699



How many words of three or more letters, including plurals, can you make from the five letters, using each letter only once? No foreign words or words beginning with a capital are allowed. There's at least one five-letter word.

TODAY'S GOALS:
Good - 23 Excellent - 33 Amazing - 41

SOLUTION 5698: est, eth, eths, ethos, hest, hoe, hoese, hos, hose, host, hot, hots, set, she, shoe, shot, soh, sot, the, those, toe, toes, tosh.

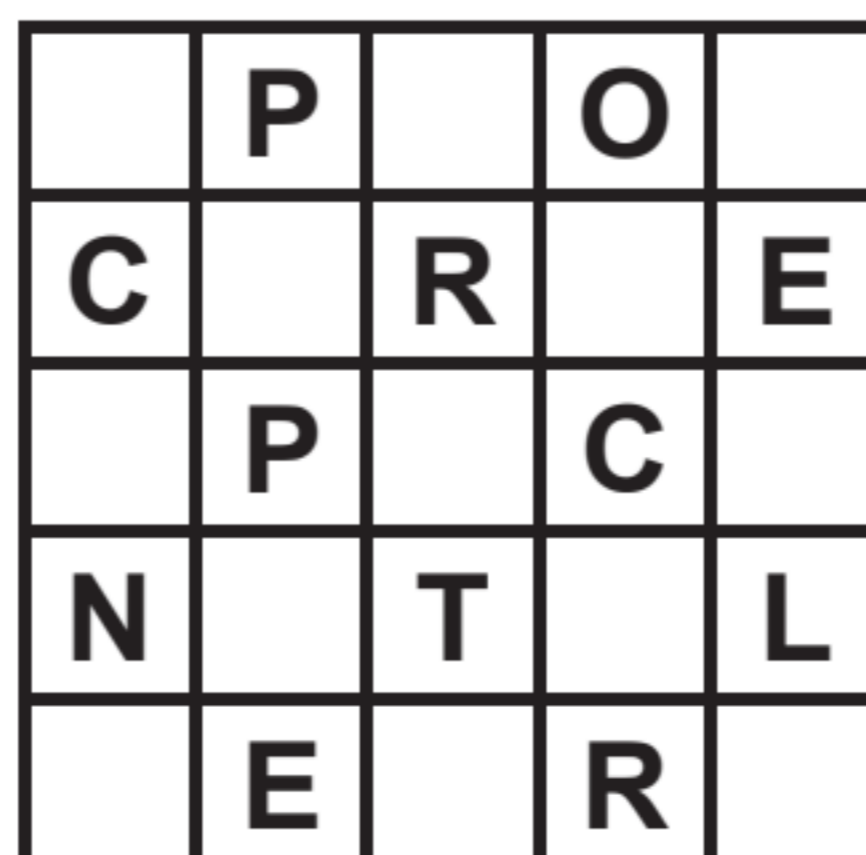
5x5

Insert the missing letters to complete ten words - five across the grid and five down.

5659



PREVIOUS SOLUTION (other combinations may be possible)



Amos Gitai asks, 'Why War,' in his new film

• By HANNAH BROWN

One brilliant phrase I find myself quoting year after year is by the critic Paul Valéry, who wrote, about a century ago, "Everything changes but the avant-garde."

I'm mentioning this quote again in connection with Amos Gitai's latest film, *Why War*, which was shown at the Haifa International Film Festival and is playing in theaters around Israel. The title asks a question that will always be relevant, especially now, of course.

The director attempts to answer it in an inventive way, by quoting from an exchange of letters between Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud in the early 1930s. The movie manages to trivialize the quoted text with clichéd stylistic flourishes that make their debate seem inane, but which lovers of the ever-unchanging avant-garde style may find meaningful.

Right off the bat, one annoying aspect of the movie is that it's in French. Gitai has worked with French actors frequently in the past, and the French have consistently been the biggest fans of his work, so from his point of view this makes sense, but if there's one thing we know about a correspondence between Freud and Einstein, it's that it was in German.

There's nothing really wrong with translating it to French except that in Gitai's hands, the French translation lends itself to aphoristic posturing of ideas that are crisp and to the point in the English translation of their letters, as they likely were in the original German.

The movie starts off with a



FROM THE film 'Why War.' (Dan Bronfeld/Agav Film)

sequence relevant to the current war, in Hostages Square in Tel Aviv. As several female soldiers walk by, an ambulance passes and a group does yoga to honor the former hostage Carmel Gat, who was murdered this summer by Hamas. The camera veers off into the model of a terror tunnel that was built in the square to make the public more aware of the hostages' plight.

But soon, we've moved 2,000 years back in history, to the time of the Romans and the destruction of the Second Temple, as texts from Flavius Josephus's *The Jewish War* are read and soldiers fight and die. In case you weren't aware, this makes the point that wars have been going on for a long time in this region.

Much of the rest of the movie

features shots of the actors playing Freud (Mathieu Amalric) and Einstein (Micha Lescot) reading aloud from their letters. Their correspondence was initiated by the League of Nations, the precursor to the United Nations, which asked Einstein to discuss the question of why war kept happening with anyone in the world, and Einstein chose Freud.

They debate the physical aspects of war (Einstein) versus psychological aspects (Freud), including the arms industry, war profiteering, and how humanity's violent nature can be controlled. Freud puffs a cigar and talks about wanting "to liberate humans from the threat of war." He seems to have most of the good lines, as he chides the physicist for his astonishment that it is so easy

to make people enthusiastic about war, and naturally references his theories about the death instinct.

WHILE THERE have been successful films that are essentially a conversation between two people sitting across a table – Louis Malle's *My Dinner with Andre* comes to mind – this exchange of bon mots in French seems especially static and irrelevant.

The monologues are interspersed with scenes that don't connect but are meant to emphasize the points Einstein and Freud make. There is footage of a French actress (Irène Jacob, who starred in Gitai's recent film, *Shikun*) checking into a hotel room, watching the news, and talking to her son on the phone. There's also



an operatic choir that, at one point, performs the kaddish prayer in Hebrew.

Jacob wears an orange slip dress and writhes around under a sheer white cloth on the beach, which may represent a shroud – I wish I were making this up, but I'm not – and the dress slips off and she wades nude into the surf. Later, she writhes on one of the stone slabs at Berlin's Holocaust memorial, which makes a fairly obvious point.

In another scene, Jacob very slowly dyes her hair red on camera, smearing the dye on her face and body so that it looks like blood. Two Israeli actresses who have acted in several of Gitai's films, Keren Mor and Yael Abecassis, stand around and hug. It seemed to me they were meant to repre-

sent mothers of hostages offering each other comfort.

Texts by Susan Sontag and Virginia Woolf, all in French, are quoted, and later there are scenes set in an actors' dressing room, where two Ukrainian actors who are a couple debate whether they should raise children in their war-torn country.

Unlike virtually all the thinkers he quotes and references in *Why War*, Gitai actually fought in a war, the Yom Kippur War, where he was wounded when a helicopter he was riding in was hit by a missile fired from Syria, but he doesn't add any insights based on his own military service.

He dramatized this experience in the movie *Kippur* (2000) and ends this film with an image of a soldier looking out over green fields from a heli-

copter from that movie. But if you haven't seen *Kippur* or don't know about the director's biography, the image will mean nothing to you.

Gitai is one of Israel's most prolific filmmakers, with 68 directing credits (including for short films) to his name, and deserves respect for managing to make nearly one feature film per year, even during periods when the Israeli film industry was in the doldrums. Abroad, he is without a doubt Israel's most acclaimed director. In person, he is warm and self-deprecating.

Every time I see one of his films, I hope for the best, but I have enjoyed only parts of one or two of his movies. To return to Valéry's quote, everything changes but the avant-garde – and Amos Gitai.

'Better Man' is the next evolution of the music biopic

• By AMY NICHOLSON

The pop star Robbie Williams is leagues more famous in his homeland of England than in the United States, American tastemakers having capriciously chosen to ignore his chart-topping '90s boy band Take That and megawatt solo career. Go see his biopic anyway. All you need to know heading into *Better Man* is that Williams considers himself a performing monkey. Some screenings even have a pretaped introduction where he tells you so himself.

The wildly creative director Michael Gracey (*The Greatest Showman*) fills you in on the rest with hilarious, no-holds-barred zeal: the drugs, the tabloid love affairs, the insecurity that made Williams desperate to be famous – a need to entertain that rewarded him with 14 No. 1 albums on the UK charts and a Guinness world record for selling 1.6 million concert tickets in 24 hours, as well as exhaustion and rehab. Through it all, the infamous party animal is played by a CGI chimpanzee. As Williams the monkey admits to his support group, "I'm unevolved."

Williams produces and narrates the film and seems to have given the screenwriters Simon Gleeson, Oliver Cole, and Gracey the go-ahead to rip him to shreds. Some superstars hide their megalomania under humility; Williams shields his tenderness with jokes about being a narcissist, only exposing his wounds in his muscular, vulnerable lyrics. He insults himself in the first minute of the movie, and from then on wears his humiliations like a Purple Heart pinned to his hairy, simian chest.

It's conceivable that the guy who titled his best-of album *The Ego has Landed* approved the chimpanzee gimmick because he simply couldn't bear the idea of a casting director discovering a younger version of Robbie Williams. And it's



JONNO DAVIES in the movie 'Better Man.' (Paramount Pictures/TNS)

easy to accept the conceit. Both chimps and pop stars are prone to destroying furniture and grinning while ripping off your face. Even physically, Williams shares an ape's frank gaze and defiant chin. He charges instinctively after what he wants, chiefly a crowd so deafening he can't hear his own self-loathing.

Here, Williams acknowledges his struggles with depression. But his goal is the same as ever: Entertain at all costs. That's been his modus operandi – a defense mechanism, really – since he was a 16-year-old, terrified that he was the least-talented and most-replaceable member of Take That, the biggest teenybopper pop act in Britain at the time. By moxie alone, he became Take That's fan favorite, the cheeky one who would do anything for applause. Baring his bum on TV, Williams is the embodiment of the phrase "charm offensive."

Yes, there are the beats you expect in a musician's biopic: the scene where he quits the band, the song lyrics scribbled after a tragedy, the wrenching quest for validation from his absent father, Peter (Steve Pemberton, fantastic). If you could tear your eyes away from the screen enough to check a stopwatch, not one minute goes by without a flourish that's either funny, ridiculous, stunning, or emotional. Sometimes, they're all at once, like when young

Williams (played by Carter J. Murphy) mimics his dad, a two-bit club performer, as they sing along with Frank Sinatra on television. The moment is at once a lens into a power dynamic that will run the length of the film, and a send-up of monkey see, monkey do.

Jonno Davies is the ape performer under the Weta FX motion capture and he's terrific, as is the ensemble that acts against him with spectacular conviction. His Williams is always in motion: winking, gyrating, climbing in people's laps. Millions of people watched the awards shows where Williams wagged his hips at Tom Jones, or challenged Oasis's Liam Gallagher to a fist fight – moments that have been absorbed into pop culture. Williams was loose and free and likely blitzed out of his mind. Davies, however, nails it sober.

It's unclear how much of the dance choreography Davies is doing under those pixels. He's a proper theater actor who came to renown playing Alex in an onstage production of *A Clockwork Orange*. There's a rousing musical sequence where the Take That lads rampage through the West End and, at the song's peak, Williams leaps from the top of a double-decker red bus. Like everything in the movie, this heavily digitized fabulosity is all vibes – the gleeful mayhem of being rich and famous and 20 years old.

The other four actors in the scene playing the human members of the band are fully exposed and great at both dancing and self-mockery. Jake Simmance, as songwriter Gary Barlow, gets one of the film's biggest laughs. Incensed that Williams is falling down drunk at a stadium show, his Barlow flounces up in a thong to hiss, "You're making us look like fools out there!"

The script toys with our awareness that pretty much everyone Williams feuded with is still alive – even his dad – and some, including Nigel Martin-Smith, the founder of Take That, have proven to be litigious. Fittingly, the humor bobs and weaves, setting up punch lines only to pivot to a zinger. Nigel, Williams says, is "an absolute sweetheart." Cue a pause long enough to make you wonder if he'll leave it there or drop the hammer. (He drops it, over and over.) For a bonus dig at the dawn of the grunge era, the hair and makeup team give Nigel (Damon Herriman) an icky, trendy chin-strap goatee.

As for Williams's fans, they're seen as equal parts thrilling and terrifying. After he leaves Take That in 1995, suicide hotlines are flooded with calls from sobbing girls. Here, during a nightmarish underwater rendition of his ballad "Come Undone," those teenagers swirl around him like frenzied chum, their slashed wrists trailing blood as they threaten to sink him, too.

The only thing scarier would be going ignored, a dilemma Williams satirized in his 2000 music video *Rock DJ*, which, if you weren't scarred by it at the time, climaxes with Williams impressing a room of women by cheerfully peeling off his own skin and pelting the crowd with chunks of his raw flesh.

AUDIENCES THAT know his hits will see them gorgeously recontextualized as needed to suit his life story *

– the chronology of his singles doesn't matter at all. In these mini-music videos, Gracey and his five-person editing team merge the present and future to cover as much ground as they can. The standout is the love song "She's the One," which starts with Williams meeting his early girlfriend, All Saints' Nicole Appleton (Raechelle Banno), on a yacht. As the fledgling couple whirls into a ballet, the number flashes forward to show the heart-break ahead, and then cuts back again so that we feel the sting of all that wasted promise.

There's no need for the movie to look this good. Erik A. Wilson's cinematography is warm and grainy; it and the script have been polished until the scene

transitions flow like vodka down a frat party's ice luge. Gracey gets an astonishing amount across in the details: the goofy creak of a leather jumpsuit, a camera angle tilted to show the utterly unspectacular pulley system that yanked Williams upside down in front of a crowd of 125,000. The production designers are always pulling the rug out from under us. As soon as Williams ascends to a new height of fame, it begins to look tatty. There's always someplace cooler he's got to get to next.

Yet, even as the movie captures Williams's recklessness, it's also a convincing sketch of his artistic growth and commitment. We catch on that he's a genuine songwriter before he does.

There's a moment where his new manager (Anthony Hayes) warns Williams that success will drain him of everything he's got, and then the film launches into an exhausting montage of cocaine and crowds and puke that proves him right.

So it says something about American hardheadedness that we've resisted learning about Robbie Williams for the last 35 years. We're as stubborn as he is.

But go to the movie anyway. Within two hours, you'll be so caught up in his charismatic maelstrom that when one chimpanzee tearfully stabs a baby chimpanzee on a confetti-ed battlefield, you'll think, yes Robbie, I totally understand where you're coming from. (Los Angeles Times/TNS)

Aviv Competitions winners announced

• By NERIA BARR

The America-Israel Cultural Foundation (AICF) has concluded its Spring Competitions and announced the winners across all categories. The AICF's Spring Competitions provide a platform for young musicians on the cusp of a professional career at the highest levels.

Through the competition, participants gain exposure to audiences and critics, performance opportunities, radio broadcasts, and assistance in developing their careers in Israel and abroad.

Twenty-eight contestants between the ages of 21 and 30 competed in the 2024 Spring Competitions in the following disciplines: piano, viola, violin, and woodwinds. At the conclusion of the final round, the winners in each category were announced at a festive event at the Tel Aviv Museum of Art.

The winners for this year are: Piano: Itamar Feinberg; Violin: Michael Shaham; Viola: Noga Shaham; Woodwind: Doron Hazan (saxophone); Outstanding Performance of an Israeli Work Prize: Doron Hazan (saxophone) and Elad Navon (clarinet).

Iris Reff-Ronen, CEO of the America-Israel Cultural Foundation, who also serves as the CEO of the foundation in the United States, stated:



THE AVIV Competitions prize winners. (Askaf)

"We are delighted to conclude the foundation's Spring Competitions, and as always, it was exciting to encounter the many talents who graced the stage and amazed us with their musical abilities. We are proud to support and accompany them. In these challenging times for the State of Israel, the Spring Competitions, which are one of the highlights of Israel's musical culture, also provide moments of healing and comfort. The judging process was demanding, and ultimately, the winners were announced. I congratulate them and am excited to continue with them on their journey."