

Ynet-News, February 23, 2023 – Thursday

2.22.23 – We - - - News – Wednesday

Saudi Arabia, Egypt Jordan condemn IDF Wwst Bank raid; 10 PA killed, 102 injured

2.22.23 – We- - - News – Wednesday

Israeli-linked rocket strike in Damascus hit Iranian military experts

2.22.23 – We- - - News Placed in February 23 spot – Thursday

Magnitude 4.4 earthquake hits offshore Lebanon Wednesday morning, felt in Israel

2.21.23 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday

Rabbi 'humiliated' after Jordanian airport security cut the strings of his Tefillin

2.21.23 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday

Netanyahu calls for dialogue to witness the change we've been craving for so long

2.21.23 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday

American Jewish organization (JFNA) slams government legislation

2.21.23 – Tu- - - News Placed in February 21 spot – Tuesday

Israel passes several judicial reforms 63-47 vote to limit Supreme Court rulings

2.20.23 – Mo- - - News Placed in February 21 spot – Tuesday

Earthquake 6.3 hits Turkey-Syria border region, Monday after 7pm felt in Israel

2.20.23 – Mo- - - News – Monday

Netanyahu's son claims Shin Bet involved in 'coup' against his father

2.22.23

Saudi Arabia, Egypt Jordan condemn IDF Wwst Bank raid; 10 PA killed, 102 injured

2.22.23

Saudi Arabia, Egypt Jordan condemn Israeli raid on Nablus

Amman, Cairo issue statements expressing concern over escalating violence after troops engage in gunfight during raid to arrest terror suspect, resulting in 10 Palestinians killed and over 100 injured

Ynet|Updated:14:09

Saudi Arabia and Egypt and Jordan, on Wednesday, condemned the Israeli raid in Nablus killing at least 10 Palestinians.

Jordan's foreign ministry said in a statement that Israeli military operations on the West Bank must be stopped and efforts put in place to block further escalation of violence.

"Jordan consistently condemned Israeli incursions into occupied Palestinian cities, including today's raid in Nablus," the statement read.

In Cairo, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs also issued a statement.

"Egypt expresses its deep concern about the ongoing and dangerous escalation in the occupied Palestinian territories recently, which increases the complexity and aggravation of the situation every day," the Al Ahram newspaper reported.

The ministry said the IDF operation would "undermine the efforts to achieve calm between the Palestinian and Israeli sides."

The United States also expressed concern regarding levels of violence in Israel and the West Bank and is worried that there could set back efforts at restoring calm, the State Department said on Wednesday.

State Department spokesman Ned Price told a regular press briefing that Washington recognized Israel's "very real security concerns," but is "deeply concerned by the large number of injuries and the loss of civilian lives."

Price added that the U.S. is "deeply concerned that the impact of today's raid could set back efforts aimed at restoring calm... Today's events further underscore the urgent need for both sides to work together to improve the security situation in the West Bank."

The IDF entered Nablus earlier on Wednesday to arrest three wanted militants suspected in previous shooting attacks in the West Bank. It said it tracked down the men in a hideout.

The army said it surrounded the building and asked the men to surrender, but instead they opened fire. It said all three were killed in a shootout.

According to the IDF spokesperson, during the raid, armed suspects "shot heavily toward the forces," which responded with live fire. It said others hurled rocks and explosives at the troops.

The Palestinian Health Ministry said of the 102 people wounded, six were in critical condition. Palestinian militant groups claimed six of the dead as members. But a 72-year-old man was also killed. There was no immediate word on whether the others belonged to armed groups.

Israel beefed up its security after the raid increasing police presence and bracing for possible cross-border rocket fire from Gaza.

"The resistance in Gaza is observing the enemy's escalating crimes against our people in the occupied West Bank, and its patience is running out," Hamas spokesperson Abu Obeida, said.

2.22.23

Israeli-linked rocket strike in Damascus hit Iranian military experts

2.22.23

Israeli-linked rocket strike in Damascus hit Iranian military experts

Sources say that target of the strike was a meeting of Syrian and Iranian technical experts in drone manufacturing in an attempt to slow down production

Reuters|08:53

A rocket attack in Damascus on Sunday that Syria blamed on Israel hit an installation where Iranian officials were meeting to advance programmes to develop drone or missile capabilities of Tehran's allies in Syria, sources said.

Iran has been a major backer of President Bashar al-Assad during Syria's nearly 12-year conflict. Its support for Damascus and the Lebanese group Hezbollah has drawn regular Israeli air strikes meant to curb Tehran's extraterritorial military power.

A source close to the Syrian government with knowledge of Sunday's strike and its target said it hit a gathering of Syrian and Iranian technical experts in drone manufacturing, though he said no top-level Iranian was killed.

"The strike hit the centre where they were meeting as well as an apartment in a residential building. One Syrian engineer and one Iranian official - not high-ranking - were killed," the source said.

This rocket strike, along with others that Israel says target infrastructure of Syria's military and its allies, reflect an escalation of what has been a low-intensity conflict aimed at slowing down Iran's growing entrenchment in Syria, according to Israeli military experts.

Syrian state media said at the time that Israel had carried out air strikes shortly after midnight on Sunday against several areas of the Syrian capital, causing five deaths and 15 injuries including civilians.

An Israeli military official declined to confirm or deny that Israel was behind the attack, but said some of the casualties were caused by errant Syrian anti-aircraft fire.

The United States and Israel have been increasingly concerned about Iran's drone manufacturing, and the possibility it would pass on those capabilities to regional proxies such as the heavily armed Hezbollah.

Last week U.S. forces shot down what they said was an Iranian-made drone flying over a base hosting U.S. personnel in northeastern Syria.

A second source, who spoke to Syrian security personnel briefed on the matter, said Iranians were attending the meeting of technical experts in an Iranian military installation in the basement of a residential building inside a security compound.

He said one of those killed was a Syrian army civil engineer who worked at Syria's Scientific Studies and Research Centre, which Western countries say is a military institution that has produced missiles and chemical weapons. Damascus denies this.

A regional security source said one Revolutionary Guards engineer involved in Iran's missile programme was seriously injured and transferred to a hospital in Tehran, while two other mid-ranking Guards members at the meeting were unharmed.

Another source, a regional intelligence official familiar with the strike, said the target was part of a covert guided missile production programme run by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC).

A fifth, regional source with knowledge of the strike and its target, said officials from Iran and Hezbollah had been targeted. The Lebanese group, which fought a five-week

war with Israel in 2006, has sent fighters to help Assad drive back rebels who once nearly encircled Damascus.

On Sunday, the Iranian Foreign Ministry condemned what it described as attacks on "residential buildings in Damascus" which killed and maimed innocent Syrian citizens".

The ministry criticised what it called Western silence over Israeli violations of Syria's "territorial integrity".

It made no mention of Iranian casualties.

The Foreign Ministry and the Revolutionary Guards did not respond to requests for comment.

The targeted building was located in the Damascus neighbourhood of Kafir Sousa, a heavily policed area where residents say several Iranian security agencies are located, along with an Iranian cultural centre.

Two Western intelligence sources said at the time the target was a logistics centre run by the Revolutionary Guards.

Hezbollah's top commander Imad Moughniyeh was killed in 2008 in a bombing in the same neighbourhood. Israel denied Hezbollah's accusations that it was behind the assassination.

Although officials rarely acknowledge responsibility for specific operations, Israel has been carrying out air strikes on suspected Iranian-sponsored weapons transfers and personnel deployments in Syria for almost a decade.

Israel has also in recent months intensified strikes on Syrian airports and air bases to disrupt Iran's increasing use of aerial supply lines to deliver arms to allies in Syria and Lebanon, including Hezbollah.

Iran's proxy militias, led by Hezbollah, now hold sway in large areas of eastern, southern and northern Syria and in several suburbs around the capital.

Assad has never publicly acknowledged that Iranian forces have operated on his behalf in Syria's civil war, saying Tehran has only military advisers on the ground.

2.22.23

Magnitude 4.4 earthquake hits offshore Lebanon Wednesday morning, felt in Israel

2.22.23

Magnitude 4.4 earthquake hits off Lebanon, felt in Israel

European Mediterranean Seismological Center reports the tremor originated offshore 18 kilometers below the sea; shock felt in northern and central Israel

Lior El-Hai, Israel Moskovitz 01:13

A 4.4-magnitude earthquake struck off the shores of Lebanon Wednesday morning, the European Mediterranean Seismological Center (ESMC) said, with reports the shock was also felt in Israel.

The ESMC added that the quake originated 18 kilometers below sea level and that so far

The earthquake occurred early in the morning and was reported to have been felt in Haifa, Nahariya, Afula, Nazareth, and parts of central Israel.

Naftali Gleitman, living near Tiberias, said that "I felt all the furniture in the house moving and then the floor moved, it was really scary. It feels like the quakes are getting closer to Israel, but no was one injured and nothing was damaged here."

According to Ohad Hazan from Kiryat Bialik, "At 08:02 am, I felt the bed move for about three seconds. It was the first time I felt an earthquake. We live in a 24-story building, and it seems that everyone felt it this time. We hope for the best because it's getting really stressful."

Two days prior, another 6.3-magnitude tremor rattled the Turkey-Syria border region and was felt in many areas across Israel.

Two other quakes were felt in Israel two weeks ago, the first measuring at 3.5 and the second – which occurred a day after – at 3.3 according to data from the Israel Geological Survey. The survey also added that both quakes originated in central Israel.

2.21.23

Rabbi 'humiliated' after Jordanian airport security cut the strings of his Tefillin

2.21.23

Rabbi 'humiliated' after Jordanian security desecrate Tefillin

Rabbi Haliwa says did not expect to see his Tefillin violated by Amman airport security insisting he can use leather strings to 'smother' other passengers, on flight to Abu Dhabi
Itamar Eichner|13:18

Security officials in the Queen Alia International Airport in Amman, Jordan cut the leather strings of the Tefillin belonging to Dubai's Chief Rabbi, Moshe Haliwa, as he was attempting to board a connecting flight to Abu Dhabi.

Haliwa attempted for over an hour to explain the sacred nature of the Tefillin but said the security men cut the leather strings right in front of him.

"I cried and pleaded," he said. "I explained that it's sacred. That we are cousins who pray to the same God. That there's no mettle inside and it's safe. They insisted I can't take it inside the plane because I might use the rope to smother someone.

"I told them Jews fly through international airports all the time and have never smothered anyone. I explained it's sacred and very valuable. Nothing helped. There were six of them around me, asking me to show them how to use it, so I did, but they still insisted I leave it. Eventually, I agreed for them to cut the strings and leave the rest.

"They told me that if I continue insisting, they'd call the police. I asked to speak to the supervisor but nothing helped. They insisted on keeping the leather strings."

With the strings cut, the entire set is formally disqualified from use. "it was appalling. It reminded me of scenes from the 1930s when they cut the sideburns of Jews. I was humiliated but I didn't want them to call the police. The incident felt very antisemitic."

This isn't the first time Jews have reported incidents of belittling sacred Jewish objects in Jordan. In 2015, a Jewish family was denied entry because of their Yarmulkes, and in 2017 a group of 20 ultra-orthodox Jews was detained in a hotel in Petra, with many of their religious symbols taken away with a strong sense of hostility.

In 2019 an expedition of Israeli deputy mayors reported a "humiliating examination" that included searching for Yarmulkes in their pockets and removing religious head coverings from women present, and last July saw a group of Yeshiva students asked to remove all religious showings, including replacing their Yarmulkes with regular hats.

Congresswoman's claim of Jewish heritage omits Nazi grandfather

Florida's Anna Paulina Luna, endorsed by former President Donald Trump, claims her father was a Messianic Jew even though family members say that is false and that he was Catholic

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2.21.23

Netanyahu calls for dialogue to witness the change we've been craving for so long

2.21.23

Netanyahu calls for dialogue, opposition: 'It's a scam'

After the Premier releases video calling on opposition to enter dialogue 'without preconditions' on judicial reform, Lapid says Netanyahu 'is lying', and protest organizers are similarly unconvinced

Itamar Eichner|12:35

Following a seemingly unending wave of nationwide protests against the coalition's judicial legislation, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday, called on opposition leaders to begin dialogue, in a video posted on social media.

"I hear the voices from the people," Netanyahu said. "Those who support our reform and those who are apprehensive about it. When there is a difference of opinion, we must speak to each other to either reach an agreement or at least lessen our disagreements. It is within our grasp.

"But that demands of us something basic - Leadership and a sense of national responsibility. I'm committed to providing full accountability and support to reach an agreement, but that requires talking to each other.

"Unfortunately," he said and got up from his seat to illustrate his point. "No one from the opposition has stood up, so I will. Let's speak to one another without preconditions. We can reach wide agreement for the benefit of all Israelis."

The video, however, did not impress opposition leader and former Prime Minister Yair Lapid. "This isn't the time for slogans and stunts, Mr. Netanyahu. Instead of video clips, call President Herzog, suspend all judicial reform votes and let's begin discussions. "For the people of Israel, I say this simply: The Prime Minister is lying. We've been trying to engage in discussions for weeks. The President has implored them to suspend voting and convene the appropriate meetings to facilitate a discussion. So did the American government and the people of Israel. "Instead they choose to rush into an offhand legislation that is irresponsible and frankly anti-democratic."

Labor chairwoman Merav Michaeli said: "It's curious how on the day the UN calls upon Netanyahu to not damage Israeli democracy, when world leaders show him a 'yellow card' and economists make it clear they're against it, suddenly he's willing to talk. He's desperate to legitimize the Coup d'etat he seeks to impose on the people of Israel. "Future generations will look back on us with scorn if we in the opposition allow him to move forward with these radical steps. I call upon my peers, Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz, to avoid any cooperation with this judicial revolution. It is incumbent on us to protest until we save our democracy."

Organizers of the protests against the judicial reform were similarly skeptical of Netanyahu's plea. "It's a scam designed to undermine the protests. Conversing is not an option as long as the vote on the reform hasn't been completely suspended." Late last night, with a vote of 63 in favor and 47 opposed, the Knesset plenum passed the judicial reform bill on its first reading. That lets the coalition have complete control over the committee for judge selection. It further means the high court of justice will be barred from challenging Basic Laws.

The first reading also passed a provision that stipulates the government will be able to summon Supreme Court nominees via the constitutional committee that has a minimum of five members. After the vote, the Premier went on Twitter: "A great day and a great night."

President Isaac Herzog, who has still been unable to get both sides to sit at a table and calm tensions, spoke earlier today at the 'People of the State' conference. "It's a sad morning. Many citizens from all swaths of Israeli society, including those who voted for this government are anxious about the people's unity.

"We must make every effort to begin conversing and reach a framework for a reform that will have a broad agreement, helping us out of this difficult time. As most people want a solution and a reasonable framework, we can work things out."

During the conference, opposition chairman Yair Lapid said: "What we need to see this upcoming Saturday is the biggest protest in our history, because that's the only thing that genuinely scares this government. This is a sad and difficult morning. They began a process that will end Israeli democracy and passed it on the first reading, and we're supposed to pretend it's okay. It's not.

"The government acts like we're in a dictatorship. This could become much worse, and I say that despite being a natural optimist. Everything they say about dialogue is a blatant lie. True dialogue doesn't interest them."

Justice Minister Yariv **Levin**, who is spearheading the judicial reform, said: "This is a morning of great hope and determination."

As **he was speaking at the conference, many attendees booed him loudly**, prompting him to respond: "Why are you booing? We won't be silenced. Is silencing us your idea of democracy? I'll gladly give the President my phone so he can see all the messages that came pouring in.

"People in Israel are worried about **how the reform is being reported**. But most Israelis, after a sleepless night of watching the Knesset in action, rise to **witness the change they've been craving for so long**. **We will complete this reform.**"

2.21.23

American Jewish organization (JFNA) slams government legislation

2.21.23

Largest N. American Jewish organization slams government legislation

Jewish Federations of North American (JFNA) publishes open **letter to PM and Lapid** to embrace Herzog proposal to resolve fight over legislation initiative against independence of courts

Itamar Eichner|10:18

The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) published an open letter urging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Opposition Leader Yair Lapid, to embrace President Issac Herzog's proposal to resolve the fight over legislation dealing with the judicial system.

Their **letter came one day after the Knesset passed the first reading** of two bills seen as dangerous to Israel's democracy.

Israeli opponents of the moves advanced by Netanyahu's far-right and religious coalition have been taking to the streets in protest. On Monday as the Knesset convened to pass the bills, **tens of thousands protested outside parliament calling for democracy to be preserved.**

JFNA, which is the largest umbrella organization representing 146 independent Jewish federations and a network of 300 smaller communities across the United States and Canada, asked the two leaders to **clarify that a 61-seat Knesset majority should not be allowed to override Supreme Court decisions** while noting the community's unconditional and eternal support for Israel.

"The essence of democracy is both majority rule and protection of minority rights," the letter says.

"We recognize that any system of checks and balances will be different than those in our own countries, but such a dramatic change to the Israeli system of governance will have

far-reaching consequences in North America, both within the Jewish community and in the broader society," the JFNA said.

2.21.23

Israel passes several judicial reforms 63-47 vote to limit Supreme Court rulings

2.21.23

Israel passes several judicial reforms on first reading

In overnight 63-47 vote, Knesset gives first nod to plan that would give Netanyahu's coalition more power over who becomes judge, rein in courts; 'A big night and a big day,' PM tweets after vote

i24NEWS, news agencies|00:37

Israel's parliament, the Knesset, passed on first reading of several reforms to Israel's judiciary early Tuesday, with 63 votes for the bill and 47 votes against it.

The proposed reforms have split the Israeli public, with the coalition going forward on just some of the controversial measures after public outcry.

This bill would limit the Supreme Court ruling on Basic Laws, which function as Israel's constitution, while also changing the composition of the committee that selects judges. The vote marked only preliminary approval for the plan. But it raised the stakes in a political battle that drew tens of thousands of protesters into the streets, sparked criticism from influential sectors of society and widened the rifts in an already polarized country.

Yair Lapid, Israeli opposition leader, told coalition members in a tweet that "history will judge you." Lapid earlier met with Netanyahu over the reforms, as the two sides try to find a compromise.

Israel's figurehead president has also urged the government to freeze the legislation and seek a compromise with the opposition, a position supported by most polls.

Chaos in the Knesset ahead of the vote

Despite efforts, it appears Israel's government is moving ahead regardless of opposition. "A big night and a big day," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted after the vote. "The people exercised their right to vote in the elections and the people's representatives will exercise their right to vote here in Israel's Knesset. It's called democracy," Netanyahu said, though he left the door open for dialogue on the planned changes.

Part of the criticism of the reforms, besides changing the longstanding balance of power between branches of government, surrounds Netanyahu and the corruption trials against him.

A spike in heated rhetoric, which the right wing has dubbed incitement, over the reforms has been recorded even among political leaders, including Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai and former prime minister Ehud Olmert.

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2.20.23

Earthquake 6.3 hits Turkey-Syria border region, Monday after 7pm felt in Israel

2.20.23

Earthquake registering 6.3 hits Turkey-Syria border region, felt in Israel

Third major quake jolts regions hard hit in recent tremors as rescue efforts ongoing, raising concerns of additional damages and loss of life

Israel Moshkovitch , Meir Torgman , Daniel Salami, Korin Elbaz Alush, Ilana Curiel, Lior El-Hai, Matan Tzuri, Eyal Lehmann|Yesterday | 13:02

A 6.3 magnitude earthquake shook near the Turkey-Syria border Monday and was felt throughout Israel.

According to the European-Mediterranean Seismological Centre (EMSC), the earthquake occurred in the area at a depth of two kilometers. The tremor was felt in many cities in Israel including Tel Aviv, Haifa, Be'er Sheva, Ashdod, Rishon LeZion, Nahariya, and Afula.

According to Israel's Geological Survey, "An earthquake was felt in the country, a little after 7:00 p.m. The epicenter isn't located in the country, but to the north. Further details are being looked into."

Israelis from all over across the country reported feeling the tremor in their homes.

"I was playing on my computer and suddenly felt it moving back and forth. It lasted for quite a long time," said Ziva, a resident of Nahariya in northern Israel.

Yatsi, living in Rishon LeZion, said that "I felt my chair shaking for a few seconds. I have a key hanging on the door, and whenever there's a quake, it swings."

Idan Rahamim from Afula said, "I was at home playing with the kids when suddenly all of the lights started shaking. I wasn't alarmed, I live on the fourth floor. It's a new building so I wasn't too concerned about it. We stayed home and didn't move anywhere."

Udi Buch, living in Haifa, said that "I live on the 11th floor, my wife and I were sitting in the living room and suddenly everything shook. The earthquake lasted only a few seconds, but it was felt well. It was quite scary."

"I live on the ground floor in Kiryat Motzkin, and I heard an earthquake alarm go off from the nursing home nearby," Ron Schwartz told Ynet. "A few seconds after the alarm, I felt the tremors. I grabbed the kids and we ran to a shelter."

In Turkey and Syria, where more than 45,000 people were killed in major tremors over two weeks ago, authorities fear further damages and loss of lives as a result of the quake. Witnesses in Turkey and Syria so far reported damage to buildings in Antakya and Aleppo, alongside power outages.

Two other quakes were felt in Israel two weeks ago, the first measuring at 3.5 and the second – which occurred a day after – at 3.3 according to data from the Geological Survey. The survey also added that both quakes originated in central Israel.

2.20.23

Netanyahu's son claims Shin Bet involved in 'coup' against his father

2.20.23

Netanyahu's son claims Shin Bet involved in 'coup' against his father

In now-deleted Twitter post, Yair Netanyahu demands commission of inquiry into intelligence sources who provided alleged incriminating information in premier's graft cases

Ynet|Yesterday | 09:29

Yair Netanyahu, the son of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, claimed on Monday that the Shin Bet is involved in a "coup" against his father.

"Wow! The Shin Bet is involved in a coup against the prime minister," he tweeted in response to a post by pro-Netanyahu journalist Eli Tsipori who covers his father's corruption trial. Netanyahu later deleted the post.

The post refers to witness testimony by Police Deputy Commissioner Shlomo Meshulam in which he claimed that the initial evidence that led to some of the charges against Netanyahu the father was provided by Yair's personal driver, who is employed by the internal security agency.

"Commission of inquiry now!" he added in his post. "These people should be prosecuted and put away for many years."

The prime minister is facing charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust, he denies any wrongdoing and says he is the victim of a politically orchestrated "witch hunt" by the media and the left to oust him from office.

The prime minister's son is known for his firebrand political activism on social media and controversial opinions.

Back in December, he accused police and State Attorney's Office officials of treason for "making up criminal charges" against his father.

"Everyone can look up the laws in Israel and see what the punishment for treason is," the young Netanyahu said in an interview. "They don't include imprisonment or deportation," he said, alluding to the death penalty.

Netanyahu also claimed that the allegations leveled against his father were part of an attempt to remove a democratically elected leader, knowing full well he was innocent.

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Ynet-News, February 19, 2023 – Sunday

2.19.23 – Su- - - News Placed in February 19 spot – Sunday
PA block roads, burned tires & dumpsters in Jerusalem over police activity

2.19.23 – Su- - - News – Sunday
PM blames Iran for Saturday attack on oil tanker in the Persian Gulf

2.19.23 – Su- - - News – Sunday
Blinken strongly opposes Netanyahu unilateral measures on settlements

2.19.23 – Su- - - News Placed in February 19 spot – Sunday
Israeli MK tells US Ambassador to 'mind his own business' amid judicial crisis

2.18.23 – Sa- - - News Placed in February 18 spot – Saturday
Rare attack in central Damascus on Iranian institutions within residential areas

2.13.23 – Mo- - - News Placed in February 13 spot – Monday
Earthquakes 7.8 & 7.5 in Turkey, near Syria border, kill 45,000 over following weeks

2.13.23 – Mo- - - News Placed in February 12 spot – Sunday
 Hamas Rockets Sunday; In response, IDF cabinet voted in nine West Bank settlements

2.03.23 – Fr- - - News – Friday
Netanyahu in Paris: consensus on Iran, status quo on Israeli-Palestinian issue

2.02.23 – Th- - - News – Thursday
Israel's AG says gov't judicial reform impacts system of checks and balances

2.01.23 – We- - - News – Wednesday
Iran blames Israel for Thursday industrial complex drone attack, vows revenge

2.01.23 – We- - - News Placed in February 01 spot – Wednesday
Israeli Air Force strikes in Gaza after rocket launch; sirens sound again in Sderot

2.01.23 – We- - - News Placed in January 31 spot – Tuesday
US mediation teams between Israel and PA on expulsions & withholding of taxes