

Ynet-News, March 22, 2023 – Wednesday

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Hezbollah chief refuses comment on terrorist carrying explosives into Israel

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Israel, Poland resolve disputes, reinstate ambassadors & allow youth trips

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Syrian spy caught by Israel reveals Hezbollah methods, perks and salary

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650 reserve troops will not report to duty Sunday in compromised democracy

3.15.23 – We- - - News Placed in March 14 spot – Tuesday

Israel blocks EU foreign chief from visiting over critical comments

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Terrorist crossing from Lebanon into Israel planted road side bomb

3.22.23

Hezbollah chief refuses comment on terrorist carrying explosives into Israel

3.22.23

Hezbollah chief refuses comment on infiltration into Israel

Nasrallah says ambiguity serves Hezbollah's purposes and claims it is part of the psychological warfare he is waging on Israel, during a speech ahead of the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan

Associated Press|16:46

The leader of Lebanon's militant Hezbollah group refused to comment directly Wednesday on last week's killing of a man suspected of entering Israel from Lebanon. He said the Iran-backed group's silence is part of a psychological war.

Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah refused to say whether his group had anything to do with the attacker, who was carrying explosives and was killed dozens of kilometers (miles) south of the border with Lebanon.

Last week, the Israeli army said soldiers killed an armed man suspected of entering the country from Lebanon and blowing up a car, raising the risk of renewed tensions with Hezbollah.

The incident unnerved Israelis, who questioned on social media and elsewhere how someone with explosives could travel dozens of kilometers inside Israel and set off a roadside bomb before being detected.

“Our silence is part of the psychological, media and military battle with the enemy,” Nasrallah said in a televised speech adding that it is not Hezbollah’s responsibility to respond to what “is confusing the enemy.”

“Sometimes our answer is by not commenting on the incident,” he added. Responding to Israeli threats that if Hezbollah turns out to be responsible, Israel will retaliate against the group, Nasrallah said: “Go to hell.”

There was no immediate response to Nasrallah's comments from the Israeli military. The army this week said it had determined how the man crossed the border. But it gave no details, saying only that it had ruled out a tunnel infiltration. It says the incident is still under investigation.

The Israeli army said soldiers stopped a car carrying the bombing suspect at a checkpoint on March 13, shortly after a roadside explosion seriously injured a driver near Megiddo Junction in the country’s north.

The suspect was wearing a suicide vest and had a rifle and another gun when he was stopped. The army said it shot and killed the man and is questioning the driver.

The army said the device exploded at a 90-degree angle, which is unusual for the area. That led officials to suspect that the man infiltrated from Lebanon and may have been linked to Hezbollah.

The Lebanon-Israel border has remained quiet but tense since the 34-day war between Israel and Hezbollah in 2006 that ended with a draw.

Commenting on Finance Minister Bezael Smotrich, who said in Paris that the notion of a Palestinian people was artificial, Nasrallah said it seems that the Israeli official “does not know history.”

3.22.23

Israel, Poland resolve disputes, reinstate ambassadors & allow youth trips

3.22.23

Israel, Poland resolve years-long disputes, reinstate ambassadors

Eli Cohen's visit is the first at his government level since 2018, signaling a thawing in ties after years of tensions caused by disagreement over the memory of the Holocaust and Poland's role in the murder of Jews; signed an agreement that they said would allow for the resumption of Israeli youth trips

Associated Press, Ynet|09:57

The Israeli and Polish foreign ministers on Wednesday, announced that they had resolved a dispute between the two nations and were reinstating ambassadors to Tel Aviv and Warsaw.

Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and his Polish counterpart Zbigniew Rau, signed an agreement that they said would allow for the resumption of Israeli youth trips to Poland.

The visit by Foreign Minister Eli Cohen is the first at that level since 2018, and Poland's Foreign Ministry says it will be followed by Israeli President Isaac Herzog attending observances next month for the 80th anniversary of the World War II Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Herzog's office had no comment.

Wednesday's meeting, particularly if followed by a visit from Herzog, would signal a thawing in ties after years of tensions marked by a withdrawal of ambassadors and Poland's prime minister canceling a planned visit to Israel in 2019. Israel has since returned an ambassador to Poland, but there is still no Polish ambassador in Israel.

The two allies have seen ties deteriorate in recent years due to disagreements rooted in the Holocaust and how to remember Polish involvement in the killing of Jews by Nazi forces during WWII.

Nazi Germany occupied Poland in 1939 and killed millions of Jews and non-Jews. Unlike other countries occupied by Germany, there was no collaborationist government in Poland. While some Poles risked their lives to save Jews, others helped the Germans hunt down and kill them.

Poland's ruling nationalists have sought to suppress historical inquiry into the Polish killing of Jews, depicting it as a marginal phenomenon and focusing exclusively on remembering the Polish heroes who helped Jews. That position has been condemned by historians, Israeli authorities and Jewish survivors who suffered persecution at Polish hands before, during and after the war, and accuse the government of seeking to whitewash history.

For years, young Israelis have made pilgrimages to Auschwitz and other Holocaust sites, as well as historic Jewish sites in cities like Krakow and Warsaw. But last year Israel canceled the trips, claiming the Polish government was trying to control the Holocaust studies curriculum taught to Israeli children.

Poland, in turn, rejected Israel's demand to have security guards join organized Israeli school visits to Poland. The Polish officials argue that Poland is a safe country, and the presence of armed guards perpetuates an image of it as an antisemitic place where Jews need protection.

After the agreement to renew the youth visits was signed on Wednesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised the move and said it was a positive step that would strengthen diplomatic ties between the two countries.

The foreign minister said a new chapter in the bilateral relations has been opened.

"Poland is an important part of Europe and together we will advance matters of importance for both nations."

The Polish-Israeli dispute led to an explosion of antisemitic rhetoric in 2018 on social media and Polish state media, but physical violence is extremely rare, making the country safer than many in Western Europe.

Ties began to deteriorate when Poland passed a Holocaust speech law in 2018 that made it illegal to blame Poland as a nation for the Holocaust — legislation so controversial that it was watered down, and even then has not been applied in practice.

Then in 2021, Poland's parliament passed a law that effectively left Holocaust survivors and their descendants unable to reclaim property seized by the post-WWII communist regime.

Poland for centuries was home to a large Jewish community that numbered 3.3 million on the eve of the Holocaust. Only about 10% survived, and postwar persecution drove out many more. Today's Jewish community is very small but has seen some growth since the end of communism more than three decades ago.

Israel was founded in the wake of the Holocaust as a refuge for Jews. It is home to a large but rapidly dwindling population of Holocaust survivors and its annual Holocaust memorial day coincides with the memory of the Warsaw Ghetto uprising.

3.22.23

Syrian spy caught by Israel reveals Hezbollah methods, perks and salary

3.22.23

Syrian spy caught by Israel reveals Hezbollah's methods

In his interrogation, Ghaith Abdullah spills the beans on how terror group operates along Israeli border, from recruitment to reconnaissance and reporting
Israel Moskovitz|08:15

A Syrian national arrested by Israeli security forces and accused of spying for Hezbollah revealed during his interrogation the terror group's espionage methods at the northern Israeli border, Ynet learned on Wednesday.

Hezbollah chief: Civil strife in Israel suggests imminent collapse

Altercation between Israeli and Lebanese troops on border, Lebanon media reports
Ghaith Abdullah, 24, was arrested last January after entering Israeli territory and faces charges of being a member of a terrorist group, espionage and providing support and resources to foreign terrorist organizations.

During his interrogation, Abdullah also revealed the perks and the salary he was offered in exchange for his services. "As far as he is concerned, he was offered a good job with a good salary," the Israel Police said.

According to the indictment, Abdullah, who lives in the Syrian Golan, was recruited by a Hezbollah operative in late 2019 to monitor IDF maneuvers along the Syrian border, gather classified information and pass it on to his Hezbollah handlers.

About a month later, he received a camera and began taking photos and videos of the forces. In every meeting with his handler Abu Ali, Abdullah handed over the full memory card, and the operator gave him a new, empty memory card so that he could continue to document IDF maneuvers.

Eight months later, the suspect learned that the man who he was involved with was a Hezbollah operative, and yet he continued spying on the IDF.

How did you come to work for Hezbollah?

Abdullah: "My sister's husband Azuz offered me something in early 2020. He told me it was 'national security' and explained that the work is on the Syrian border, taking pictures for national security, so we started to work near the Israeli borders."

What kind of work did you do exactly?

"Photographing the Syrian-Israeli border, Israeli military vehicles and Israeli personnel if there was any movement."

What did Abu Ali tell you about the missions you're going to do?

"Watch the border with Israel and everything that happens there, and document everything, we want to know about the movement of forces, IDF patrols, patrol times. I received a salary on the fourth or fifth of every month, anywhere between 30 Syrian pounds to 200 Syrian pounds."

Why do you think Hezbollah needs your pictures and reports about IDF forces?

"At first I thought it was national security, I thought Syria needed the materials to know what was happening on its borders. I don't know what they did with these materials, but I was told it was for the archives. I would take a picture every two days."

"This is the first time we encountered an investigation of a living Hezbollah spy," said Northern District Police First Sergeant Major Khaled Zein al-Din.

"For the first time, we have investigated a Hezbollah man who has been spying on the IDF for several years and he revealed Hezbollah's methods in the Golan. The suspect has been questioned by me six times, for long, comprehensive, and interesting investigations. He is a Muslim single who lives in the village of Al-Asbah, near Quneitra, got engaged, and planned to marry."

"His brother-in-law was a very senior Hezbollah operative, he offered him to work with him and linked him to his handler. They offered him a monthly payment and a free pass through Syria, and gave him a pass that allows him to pass freely through all Hezbollah checkpoints," he added.

3.22.23

20 battalions with stun guns deployed in West Bank bracing for Ramadan

3.22.23

Israel braces for a tempestuous Ramadan as tensions run high

Large forces deployed throughout West Bank to maintain order during sensitive period, but all eyes are on Temple Mount where 'any small incident could snowball into something big and ignite the region'

Elisha Ben Kimon, Hassan Shaalan, Einav Halabij|06:11

The Supreme Islamic Council of the Al-Aqsa Mosque determined Tuesday that Ramadan will begin this Thursday, and in the meantime, Israel is on high alert at this time of heightened religious fervor that could exacerbate already high tensions with the Palestinians.

In the past few months, Israeli security forces have carried out preventive arrests of some 500 Palestinian suspects who were deemed likely to carry out or incite acts of terrorism during the month-long Muslim holiday.

About 20 battalions are currently deployed throughout the West Bank and trained to address various scenarios of escalation, eight of them are stationed along the West Bank border barrier to prevent Palestinian terrorists from entering Israel.

The IDF will also bolster its presence at several points throughout the territory that are expected to see large footfall over the holiday, which overlaps with Passover and Easter this year.

Security forces' presence will be especially felt on Fridays and holidays eves when many residents are traveling to holiday gatherings with family. In addition, soldiers will also be given stun guns under a new pilot program to curb unrest throughout the West Bank.

Another concern addressed by security officials is the Palestinian Authority's decision to switch to Daylight Saving Time next month. Israel will make the switch this week and the time gap may have various operational implications.

Meanwhile, the IDF Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Maj.-Gen. Ghassan Alian announced that some restrictions will be eased during the holiday according to security assessments.

West Bank Palestinian worshippers will be permitted to enter Jerusalem's Temple Mount for Friday prayers during Ramadan, and women of all ages will be allowed to enter without a permit with children up to the age of 12.

Furthermore, Israeli Arabs and visitors from foreign countries will be allowed to visit relatives in the West Bank during the holiday.

Palestinians will also have the option to book designated flights and travel abroad via Israel's Ramon Airport. Additionally, during the holiday, the operating hours at various crossings in the West Bank will be extended.

Some Gaza Strip Palestinians, mainly women over 50 and men aged 55 and older, will be allowed to travel to Jerusalem on weekdays.

However, despite feverish preparations throughout the West Bank, all eyes are on Temple Mount.

“Any small incident could snowball into something big and ignite the region,” a security source said. “Any such event could easily spread to other sectors such as the West Bank, Gaza, and even the north.”

The Palestinian Foreign Ministry warned against attempts by the Israeli government to blame the Palestinians for any escalation during Ramadan, claiming in a statement that the government and its arms bear full and direct responsibility for the tensions running

high with continued "incursions and attacks" on Palestinian cities whether by the "occupation army" or "settler militias and their terrorist organizations."

3.16.23

650 reserve troops will not report to duty Sunday in compromised democracy

3.16.23

Hundreds of IDF reservists say will not report to duty as of Sunday

The group numbering 650 reserve soldiers from intelligence and cyber units say a bill preventing the ouster of a prime minister of anything other than health reasons means democracy is being held at gunpoint

Nina Fox|15:40

Some 650 reserve troops from the intelligence and cyber units in the IDF announced on Thursday, that as of Sunday, they would no longer volunteer for service after the coalition rejected the president's proposed compromise.

The 450 intelligence members of intelligence units and 200 members of the IDF reserve cyber force said that after the Knesset began voting on a bill that prevents the removal of a prime minister for any reason other than physical or mental incapacity, and blocks any judicial review of the law, they had decided to stop volunteering.

"We have no contractual agreement with a dictator – we will return when democracy is assured," they said.

The Knesset voted on the first reading of the bill which passed with a 61 to 51 majority, earlier this month and intends to bring it to a second and final vote next week.

"We now hear that the first dictatorship law will be put to the final parliamentary vote next week. That means there is a gun pointed at the head of democracy and the trigger is set to be squeezed. Therefore, it is with great sadness that we must now take action and all of us, with no exception, will not report to duty," they said.

The intelligence and cyber reservists are part of a move by reservists from other elite units and Airforce pilots who have warned they would not volunteer for duty if the judicial overhaul which they say would end Israeli democracy, is completed.

3.15.23

Israel blocks EU foreign chief from visiting over critical comments

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Israel blocks EU's foreign chief from visiting over critical comments

Josep Borrell's comments include criticism of the judicial overhaul and comparing Jewish settler riots in Huwara to terror attacks made against Israelis, in an address to the European Parliament
i24NEWS|14:54

The Foreign Ministry reportedly blocked the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Josep Borrell from visiting the country due to his recent critical comments about Israel.

Borrell, who has recently expressed interest in visiting Israel and the West Bank, on Tuesday voiced concerns over the Israeli government's planned judicial reform.

Last week, he also published an article in which he compared Israeli settler attacks in the West Bank to Palestinian terrorist attacks against Israelis. In addition, Borrell criticized Israeli military operations that "frequently cause civilian Palestinian deaths, often without effective accountability" and "illegal settlements" that are "expanding on occupied land." "There's no reason to reward him (Borrell) for his conduct," an official in the foreign ministry was quoted as saying by the media.

The move comes after Borrell on Tuesday addressed the European Parliament during a special session on "the deterioration of democracy in Israel" amid the ongoing protests against the judicial overhaul.

He underlined that the EU would not interfere in internal Israeli politics, but "is fully empowered to discuss these dynamics and to understand what happens there with respect to our perception of values and interests in the region."

Israel's Foreign Minister on Tuesday had a phone conversation with Borrell, where he condemned both his comments and the EU session.

"There's no place for any comparison between Israeli terror victims and Palestinian terrorists supported by the Palestinian Authority," Cohen said.

"The intervention of the European Union in Israeli internal politics and the financing of Palestinian activities that encourage incitement and payments to terrorist families must stop," he stressed.

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3.15.23

Terrorist crossing from Lebanon into Israel planted road side bomb

3.15.23

Terrorist crossing from Lebanon into Israel is behind road side blast, IDF says
Cleared for publication: Terrorist likely breached border earlier in the week and planted the IED; was located in a car driving north and killed after endangering forces
Yoav Zitun|11:14

IDF forces search Lebanon border area after road side bomb explodes

Security forces killed a terrorist who planted an explosive device on a highway on Monday, seriously wounding one man.

"During searches and roadblocks in the area of Moshav Ya'ara (route 899), ISA and "Yamam" police forces stopped a vehicle, in which an armed terrorist posed a threat to the forces, who neutralized and killed him," the military said in a statement. "The terrorist was found in possession of weapons, including an explosive belt ready to be activated and additional means," the IDF said adding that he was near the Lebanese border.

Troops stop driver taking terrorist to northern Israel

The military said that their inquiry suggests that the man was presumed to have crossed from Lebanon into Israeli territory earlier this week.

They identified the explosive device as a type used by the Iran-backed Hezbollah group and were previously used in an attempt to target IDF soldiers along the border with Syria, in 2020

The investigation and its aftermath were kept under a gag order since Monday, despite the advice of the military that it should be made known.

There was no further information on who dispatched the man into Israeli territory to carry out an attack. Hezbollah was not named as responsible, in the military's statements. Additionally, no information was released as to how the border was breached.

Still, security officials urged the prime minister to launch a military response against Hezbollah after the terrorist was able to travel from the border for miles and plant his explosive device.

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Ynet-News, March 13, 2023 – Monday

3.13.23 – Mo- - - News Placed in March 10 spot – Friday
Sans Arab factions Lapid, Gantz, Michaeli & Liberman to boycott judicial votes

3.13.23 – Mo- - - News Placed in March 11 spot – Saturday
Moroccan king asks Arab countries to stop criticizing cooperation with Israel

3.13.23 – Mo- - - News Placed in March 13 spot – Monday
2 days after Iran-Saudi-China agreement; Saudi blocks Israel from UN event

3.12.23 – Su- - - News Placed in March 12 spot – Sunday
Israel strikes weapons depot in Syria, in campaign to stop Iran presence

3.09.23 – Th- - - News Placed in March 09 spot – Thursday
Saudi seeks US guarantees & nuclear weapons as term for peace with Israel

3.09.23 – Th- - - News spot – Thursday

Anti-judicial reform protesters up the ante with 'day of resistance' across Israel

3.08.23 – We- - - News Placed in March 08 spot – Wednesday

PM urges MKs to tamp down tensions & not inflame reservists protesting reform