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12.28.23 – Th

Croatian, German, Italian & Lithuanian parliamentarians toured once-vibrant Kibbutz

12.28.23 – Th

European lawmakers see body parts, view Hamas horror film, visit devastated Israeli kibbutzes

Italian and Lithuanian officials were among the European politicians who viewed the horrors of October 7 and spoke about sharing the tragedies and lessons learned with their governments

Felice Friedson, The Media Line|07:52

It was a jam-packed day for many Croatian, German, Italian and Lithuanian parliamentarians who had never been to Israel, let alone during a war between Israel and Hamas.

They packed into small buses and drove to Israel's southern border, along the way stopping at what has become the visual story sites that speak to the ghastly and sadistic slaughter that Hamas inflicted on innocent civilians on October 7.

The first stop was a briefing by an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) officer before they were shown the wrapped body parts of victims at the military morgue on the Shura Army Base near Ramla, where there are still many unidentified body parts. Then, the politicians continued to the Sderot Observation Center, where they were shown a film taken by Hamas terrorists as they entered the city of Sderot and shot innocent civilians in cold blood.

They were briefed by Superintendent Micky Rosenfeld, the Israel Police's spokesman to the foreign media, on the details and scope of the morning when Hamas invaded. He told the group that Sderot normally has more than 30,000 inhabitants, but now there are only 2,000 residents left in the city.

"They had a bigger plan"

Italian MP Mauro Del Barba, from Italia Viva, told The Media Line that he had a better understanding of the situation after the briefings that day. "Yes, I was very impressed by this witness. Because we didn't know how many fighters came from the Gaza Strip... so many more than 1,000. And we didn't realize that they had a bigger plan than the one we saw," Del Barba said, adding, "and probably a plan to conquer the entire country and to provoke a big war."

More than 125,000 residents have been taken to hotels or are in other areas of the country, and Rosenfeld said that he sees the war lasting many more months.

Stories one can't imagine

The next stop on the tour was the car cemetery, which has become a monument of all the scorched, tangled, and shot-up cars that had lined the streets near the Re'im music festival. While there, a tow truck entered the lot with another car in tow that was about to be dropped off, many weeks after that horrific day.

A siren sounded as the group was visiting, and everyone took cover, running and bending to hide near a cement wall. The rocket could be seen easily; Sderot residents have lived with this reality of taking shelter on an almost daily basis.

Back on the bus, the final destination was what remained of the once-vibrant Kibbutz Kfar Aza. The blackened walls, remains of shattered lives, and the remnants of a community that thrived were seen as the group passed a lifeless orange tree whose fruits were barely holding on.

Israel Lander, who has lived on the kibbutz for 30 years, guided the tour group along with an IDF spokesman. Both detailed the events of October 7. He spoke of 63 inhabitants who were brutally murdered, stopping at various fragments of homes along the way.

His white cropped hair, beard, and shirt stood out among the darkness of the burned ruins around him. Printed on his shirt was the famous "Bring Them Home Now" red circle, and in Hebrew, below it, in black letters, "Kfar Aza is my home." Lander's solemn face and tortured eyes told stories one can't imagine.

Holed up and helpless in the shelter of their home on the morning of October 7, Lander and his wife could hear the Hamas terrorists shooting from the roof of their home, and from their living room at the young people who lived in homes lining both sides of the street directly facing theirs.

"We had luck; they left the handle of the door. But they stayed in my house. They made my house a war room," Lander told the MPs.

With so much loss all around, it is interesting to note that none of the 36 members of Lander's extended family on the kibbutz were themselves murdered or abducted on that terrible day.

In one home, that of Roy and Smadar Edan, they were shown a clothing closet where their two children, Michael and Amalya, ages 9 and 6, hid for the next 14 hours until help came. The terrorists killed their parents - their mother in the same room where they hid.

Their sister Abigail, then 3, hid with neighbors, who were ultimately taken hostage. On November 24, Abigail was among the hostages released.

The IDF spokesman pointed to the place, cut out of the mattress of the bed, where Smadar was murdered, and the bullet holes in the adjacent wall. The room was filled with shock.

This story is written by Keren Setton and reprinted with the permission of The Media Line

IDF's objective in Gaza: Clearing 70% of enemy territory & move to targeted raids

12.27.23 – We

IDF's objective in Gaza: Clearing 70% of enemy territory

IDF explores new alternatives for the continuation of the ground offensive in Gaza in the coming months and estimates that the incursion will not end in January, but will rather move to targeted raids

Yoav Zitun|Yesterday | 16:34

IDF forces operated in recent days in the olive groves in the eastern part of the Gaza City neighborhoods of Daraj and Tuffah, the last Hamas stronghold remaining in the northern Gaza Strip. They carefully scanned the ground, and beneath almost every tree they found an entrance to a Hamas tunnel or a rocket launch pit.

The operation in those neighborhoods is expected to take a few more days, perhaps weeks, until achieving operational control and dealing a significant blow to the local Hamas battalion. The terrorists are not in a hurry to escape, as they have almost nowhere to go, given that the IDF is spread out in Jabaliya and nearby Shijaiyah.

For a significant portion of the forces, it appears that the required objective is to capture 70% of enemy territories such as neighborhoods or towns. This is a goal challenging to measure in numbers because soldiers discover most of the tunnels and massive ammunition caches while in motion. The 30% that will be relinquished by the enemy's territory will, in the best case, leave room for follow-up raids to strengthen operational achievements throughout 2024.

Typically, the IDF embarks on campaigns based on operational plans preserved in the drawer and adapted or rehearsed periodically in response to intelligence changes. For this incursion, and especially its depth, there was no plan at all – it was built from scratch in the three weeks following the October 7 terror attack, against the backdrop of numerous uncertainties heard from every possible direction - from the prime minister in the Cabinet to seasoned officers who doubted that ground forces would reach the depths of Hamas' stronghold. Now, IDF soldiers are treading on Gazan soil in places where the military had not operated even before the disengagement from Gaza in 2005.

At the current moment, the extent of the territory where IDF divisions are deployed in Gaza is at its peak: from Beit Hanoun and Beit Lahia in the north, to the suburbs between Khan Younis and Rafah. Still, there are many places the operation has not reached, such as Deir al-Balah and the Philadelphia Corridor in Wadi el-Hesi, the besieged city of Rafah. The incursion will not halt at the end of January, according to the estimates of military sources; it will only change form. A decision on the continuation of the operation will be made in a few weeks.

Meanwhile, there is more friction and encounters each day, so the IDF attack is unified, from multiple directions and with several brigades. Soldiers from the Golani Brigade, Givati Brigade, and the Engineering Corps, who initially captured the coastal axis,

stormed the streets of Shijaiyah, operated together in Jabaliya, and gained deep familiarity.

"This organizational structure and the experience accumulated in weeks of intense fighting are working to our advantage," said one of the officers in the 460th Brigade. Meanwhile, in the field, Hamas spares no means to entrap the soldiers. The troops in the field identify Hamas terrorists almost every day inside a UNRWA shelter, with their weapons, near children. To deal with this, IDF snipers are deployed in the area to precisely kill those terrorists. At the same time, the forces work with great effort to evacuate these shelters, but sometimes the terrorists shoot civilians who try to escape. Almost every school and even diplomatic embassies in the Gaza Strip have become a terrorist base, similar to the hospitals where weapons are found in abundance and firing positions.

12.25.23 – Mo

Biden calls Emir of Qatar to discuss Gaza war and jump-start a new hostage deal

12.25.23 – Mo

Biden calls Emir of Qatar to discuss Gaza war and new hostage deal

IAF intercepts Houthi rocket headed for Eilat; After attack on embassy, National Security Council issues warning advising Israelis in India to take safety precautions; IDF chief of staff: War will last for several more months
ynet correspondents|Updated:15:54

Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani received a phone call on Tuesday from U.S. President Joe Biden to discuss the latest developments in Gaza and current joint mediation efforts for calming the situation in the besieged enclave to reach a permanent ceasefire, according to a report from the Qatari State News Agency.

Biden initiated the call, according to Reuters, trying to jump-start a new deal like the one that was closed in November between Qatar and Egypt, in which Hamas released more than 100 hostages, in exchange for a cease-fire and the release of Palestinian prisoners.

Earlier on Tuesday, the White House announced that Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer would meet later in the day in Washington with U.S. Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan to discuss the war in the Gaza Strip and the release of the hostages held by Hamas.

Hours after the attempted terror attack on Israel's embassy in New Delhi, India, on Tuesday evening, Israel's National Security Council issued a warning that advises Israelis staying in India and New Delhi to take safety precautions. Among the recommendations are to try to avoid going to crowded places (malls, markets) and places identified as being used by Western or Jewish or Israeli people; maintain increased vigilance in public places (including restaurants, hotels and bars); avoid wearing Israeli symbols; avoid participating in large events that are not secure. In addition, Israelis should avoid posting

trip details on social media networks and posting photos and details before the trip and in real time.

The IDF spokesman said on Tuesday evening that an Israeli Air Force fighter jet earlier in the day successfully intercepted a hostile aerial target in the Red Sea region that was on its way to Israel. "The air control unit followed the target throughout the event," according to the IDF. The disclosure comes after the Houthis spokesman said that the Iran-backed rebel group in Yemen carried out drone attacks on Eilat in southern Israel and other areas in "occupied Palestine."

The Houthis also confirmed on Tuesday evening that it hit a ship in the Red Sea earlier in the day. The Houthi military spokesman said it fired missiles at and struck an MSC United commercial ship in the Red Sea after it "rejected three warning calls." Iran's Defense Minister Esmail Khatib said on Tuesday that the "assassination" of Revolutionary Guards official Sayyad Reza Mousavi the previous day "is a crime that came after Israel failed to deal with the resistance, and it will bring severe consequences." The commander of the Iranian army, Abd al-Rahim Mousavi, claimed that "the assassination of Mousavi once again revealed Israel's incompetence."

Meanwhile, Malawi, a country of 21 million people in East Africa, will open an embassy in Tel Aviv next week, it was reported on Tuesday evening. The embassy of Malawi is expected to be the 99th to be established in Israel. Over the last three years, Israel has been in talks with Malawi to open an embassy in Jerusalem. Malawi's foreign minister, Eisenhower Makaka, even announced in 2021 during his visit to Israel that his country would open an embassy in Jerusalem, which ultimately did not happen.

2.24.23 – Su

Al-Jazeera group would not grant permits to Bethlehem Catholic festivities

2.24.23 – Su

Christmas celebrations are called off in Bethlehem

With the war raging in Gaza and estimates of over 20,000 Palestinians dead, the Bethlehem municipality called off all Christmas celebrations, with only a church prayer allowed to commemorate it; 'Bethlehem's message is one of sadness, anger and complete rejection of aggression,' said the city's mayor

Einav Halabi|14:40

It's Christmas eve, possibly the most prominent holiday in the Christian religion, and homes all around the world will be showcasing their Christmas trees while kids will soon be opening the presents left there by Santa, but in Bethlehem, the birthplace of Jesus, no one will be celebrating.

The Palestinian city has decided to scrap the celebrations, preferring instead to mourn Palestinians killed in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. While prayers in churches are still

allowed, there will be no Christmas festivities to speak of, and no decorations for the Church of the Nativity. Similarly, tourists will not be making the customary pilgrimage this year either.

In light of the over 20,000 Palestinians that Hamas says have been killed since October 7, Catholic churches in Bethlehem have canceled all celebrations. The Church of the Nativity square will host patriarch Pierbattista Pizaballa, but the customary Christmas tree will not be displayed, instead replaced by an exhibit called "Christmas Beneath Ruins," symbolizing the vast destruction within the Gaza enclave.

"This year, Christmas comes at a time when our Palestinian brothers are suffering from the oppression of the occupation. Bethlehem's message is one of sadness, anger and complete rejection of aggression toward the Gaza Strip and the Palestinian people," said the mayor of Bethlehem, Hanna Hanania.

The priest of the Latin Community, Father Rami Askaria called for prayers for peace. "These are difficult circumstances we live in, so the Bishop Council has decided to avoid Christmas festivities this year, instead focusing on prayers for peace. Bethlehem is now a sadder place with many losing their livelihood, thus it is incumbent upon us to pray," he said.

Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas, has expressed hope that Christmas will bring about the end of the conflict both in Gaza and the West Bank. "The dawn of an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital is right around the corner," he said in his Christmas speech.

He further added that "the river of blood, the victims, the suffering and the heroic resilience of the Palestinian people on its land is the path for freedom and honor. The Palestinian struggle for self determination and the legitimate right to live on Palestinian land will go on. I wish a speedy recovery to the wounded and freedom for the imprisoned, may they safeguard our people in the West Bank, Gaza, Jerusalem and abroad, and may we achieve freedom, independence and honor in our homeland, Palestine."

Unwilling to settle for merely canceling festivities, Christians have made contact with religious and judicial authorities worldwide, emphasizing the need to act for a cease-fire in Gaza. In late November, a Bethlehem delegation visited Washington D.C. to convey that message to President U.S. Joe Biden, in light of his support for the Israeli offensive.

According to estimates, some 8,000 Christian Palestinians live in Jerusalem. Church heads have made a visit to Israel's President Isaac Herzog, a visit widely condemned by Palestinians. Moreover, the Greek-Catholic council in Ramallah clarified that the visit to the Israeli president was not their doing and they have no relationship to those who initiated it.

In preparation for Christmas, two parades are held annually in Jerusalem. One takes place alongside the lighting of the Christmas tree and the other takes place on the morning of December 24.

Leader of the Arab-Catholic Scouts, Elias Habbash, has told Al-Jazeera his group was not granted the permits required to hold Christmas festivities, for the first time in a long while. "Every year, this is the time where we practice everyday for hours for the parade, but not this year. It doesn't hurt us as much as it hurts the community and the location," he said.

2.24.23 – Su

Hamas police killed a man who stopped an aid truck; large clan demands revenge

2.24.23 – Su

Hamas killed a young man who stopped an aid truck; now his family demands revenge
The young man, along with others, tried to take packages in West Rafah before he was shot dead by a Hamas policeman who had trouble dealing with the crowd; his family, a famous clan in Rafah, threatened to take revenge on the policeman and burned tires outside the police station

Einav Halabi|13:39

On Sunday a Hamas police officer shot dead a Gazan youth who was part of a group of civilians who stopped an aid truck trying to deliver packages. The young man belongs to the Abu Burika family, a large clan in southern Rafah, which was asked to assist Hamas in guarding the aid packages until a member of the family was shot. Following the incident, the family threatened to take revenge, burning tires outside the police station in the city.

"We call on the Hamas government to take responsibility for its actions. They told us to guarantee the entrance of the aid, but today they shot at us and a member of my family," said a member of the victim's family, during a protest outside the police station.

Last week, the Associated Press news agency published a dramatic video documenting the looting of an aid truck by crowds of Gazans in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip, the city to which hundreds of thousands of refugees fled due to the fighting. In the video, the crowd is seen chasing a truck carrying boxes of humanitarian equipment, after it apparently entered from the Rafah crossing. They run after the truck and some of them climb on the crates and start throwing them off. One of them is even seen waving his hands in the air, as a sign of victory. At some point the truck is forced to stop, and many others run toward it to grab some of the loot as well. In a few minutes all of the aid packages were looted.

The dramatic video came amid evidence of the hunger that the refugees are facing. According to the United Nations, about 85% of the population of the Strip, or some 1.9 million Palestinians, have been displaced from their homes, and the organization warns that many of them are having trouble finding enough food for themselves and their families. Similar video clips of truck robberies were already circulated in recent days, and others were filmed by armed men.

The IDF Spokesman in Arabic published on Tuesday a recording of a conversation between a Gaza resident and an intelligence officer, which illustrates the anger and frustration that many Gazans feel toward Hamas and its rule in the Strip. "Tell your leadership that Hamas has left Palestine, slaughter them, they are destroying us. They are out there, sitting in hotels."

"May God burn Hamas, may God curse them, dogs for dogs," the Gazan said in the recording. "They destroyed us, set us back 100 years. What is the fault of the children who came into the world?"

"When will you save us from them?" he asked the officer. "Why should we save you? Why didn't you save your lives from them?" replied the officer. The Gazan answered: "Because they killed us, yesterday they killed my cousin."

2.24.23 – Su

School raid in Gaza uncovered a trove of hundreds of weapons & munitions

2.24.23 – Su

Books and guns: IDF raids school in northern Gaza and uncovers Hamas weaponry, terrorists

Troops discover school in the Gaza City neighborhood of Sheikh Radwan houses a wide array of rifles, grenade launchers and explosive charges, and eliminate a nearby terrorist squad

Yoav Zitun|13:01

A targeted raid on a school in the Gaza City neighborhood of Sheikh Radwan led to the elimination of a Hamas terrorist squad and uncovered a trove of hundreds of weapons and munitions, according to the IDF spokesperson.

The IDF says the raid conducted by the 401st Brigade combat group and Shayetet 13 was executed based on intelligence gathered by the Israeli defense establishment. The apprehended terrorists were transported to Israel for interrogation.

The school where the Hamas weapons were found, is adjacent to mosques and residential buildings, a testament to Hamas' cynical use of the local population as human shields.

A Shayetet 13 officer posted a video clip recorded inside the school, showing the variety of Hamas munitions seized on site, in close proximity to Palestinian civilians.

"Following the evacuation of the civilians, we discovered a wide array of munitions hidden among their belongings. Weapons, ammunition, laptops, explosive charges and grenade launchers," according to the officer.

12.24.23 – Su

US say Abbas too weak to lead PA; Top 5 candidates chosen

12.24.23 – Su

Top 5 candidates to lead Palestinian Authority post-abbas

While Biden administration views Abbas as too weak to lead PA in the future, several contenders vie for public support for post-Abbas era, though some have ties to terrorist activities

Einav Halabi|06:47

The Palestinian Authority's 88-year-old President Mahmoud Abbas has been in power for nearly 19 years. Abbas, who replaced Yasser Arafat, didn't strive to approach Israel and resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – be it out of a lack of desire or lack of effort.

Other than his cooperation with Israel on security coordination against Hamas, his long tenure has been characterized by tense relations with officials in Jerusalem. Now, with the U.S. signaling to Abbas to step down, the Palestinians are preparing for the post-Abbas era. Here is a shortlist of potential successors to "The Rais."

U.S. President Joe Biden's administration, which has already begun drawing up plans for the region for the day after the war with Hamas, doesn't rely on the weak Abbas to govern the West Bank, and possibly Gaza after a deep reform within the Palestinian Authority. Last month, Biden called for the establishment of a "revitalized Palestinian Authority" and the implementation of the two-state solution.

Fatah is the dominant party in the West Bank. The next generation of Palestinian leadership is already working to garner popular support. These leaders aren't new blood but figures familiar to Israelis for many years.

Nasser al-Qudwa, 70, is Arafat's nephew and served as the Palestinian Authority's ambassador to the UN and as the Palestinian foreign minister. His resume also includes the position of Deputy Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in the UN's aid mission to Afghanistan and the Special Envoy to Syria responsible for making contact with rebel groups.

In 2021, al-Qudwa announced his independent candidacy in the Palestinian Legislative Council elections, leading a joint list with Marwan Barghouti under the name "Hope." Following his independent run, al-Qudwa was disqualified from Fatah's central committee. Nevertheless, he is still considered an influential figure there.

Marwan Barghouti, 64, imprisoned in Israel for many years, is considered a prominent figure in the Palestinian public sphere as someone who could change the Palestinian stance if released through future deals and agreements regarding Gaza and the Palestinian Authority.

In the latest poll conducted in the West Bank, he is considered a preferred candidate to replace Abbas. Barghouti, referred to as the "Palestinian Mandela" in the West Bank has been sentenced to five life sentences and 40 years in prison for his involvement in terror

attacks that killed and injured Israelis. During the war, Hamas reportedly demanded his release as part of a future deal with Israel.

Hussein al-Sheikh, 63, has been serving as **Secretary-General of** the Executive Committee of the **Palestine Liberation Organization since 2022**, and is considered a **potential successor to Abbas**. However, he doesn't enjoy broad public support, partly due to sexual harassment and **corruption allegations against him**.

Al-Sheikh, who served time in an Israeli prison at 18 for involvement in terrorist activities, was appointed in 2007 as the head of the General Authority for Civil Affairs and later as the head of the Community Action Center.

Mohammed Dahlan, 62, **one of Fatah's founders**, was **exiled** to the United Arab Emirates after **Abbas discovered** that he was **working to oust him**. Dahlan, born in the Gaza Strip's Khan Younis, previously served as the head of Palestinian Preventive Security in the coastal enclave.

In 2020, he was appointed as the special advisor to Abu Dhabi's then-heir apparent, Mohammed bin Zayed. Dahlan gained popularity in the West Bank and Gaza. According to various reports, he was **involved in the Abraham Accords**, which included his future return to the Palestinian Authority. Dahlan also receives support from moderate Arab countries.

Samer Sinjlawi, a Fatah activist, noted that Dahlan is **the most suitable to succeed Abbas**. "Israel should consider involving him in the process following the war with Hamas. He's **considered reliable both in Israel** and among the Palestinians and **believes in coexistence**," he said.

Jibril Rajoub, 70, a Fatah member and the chairman of the Palestinian Football Association. He served as the **head of the Palestinian Preventive Security in the West Bank** and is considered popular in the Hebron Governorate. He's known for having **pragmatic positions regarding Hamas**, although he has **acted against it in the past**. Recently, he **justified the October 7 massacre**, calling it "part of the Palestinians' defensive war."

12.24.23 – Su

PA WB Officer video says Iran is ruining PA; shot by Jihad, Iran wants his head

12.24.23 – Su

Palestinian security official shot for calling Hamas 'Iranian proxy'
West Bank officer slams terror group for 'ruining the nation'; operatives of Hamas ally Islamic Jihad track him down, shoot him in the leg and post video of him writhing in pain online; Fatah calls for their head

Einav Halabi|03:14

A Palestinian security officer was shot by Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) operatives in the West Bank after posting a video of himself to social media in which he calls Hamas an ". "

In the video, Muhammad Bayan Abed, a member of the Palestinian Authority's Preventive Security Service from the village of Kafr Dan in the Jenin Governorate, says "A lot of people are starting to parrot slogans, like 'Why doesn't the Palestinian Authority enter the war?' What is the goal? They want to destroy the Palestinian Authority and will kill the people," he said.

Abed adds, "The Palestinian Authority is not ready to sacrifice its defense apparatus and its people in order for you to say, 'They are men.' We are men whether you like it or not. These same people have been ruining the nation since 1994. Thousands of people have become refugees because of the resistance and 700 security personnel have been killed." In retaliation, operatives of PIJ, a smaller Islamist terrorist faction actively fighting Israel in the Gaza Strip alongside Hamas, tracked Abed down and shot him in the leg, later sharing a video of him writhing in pain online.

The Al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigades, the armed wing of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas's secular Fatah movement, published a statement against the shooters in response that marks them for death, titled "They crossed the line." The statement calls on the shooters' parents to "surrender them" and urges the local PIJ branch to condemn their actions.

Last month, two Palestinians were lynched and executed in the West Bank's Tulkarm refugee camp after being accused of collaborating with Israel. One of them confessed in a series of video recordings about the details of the collaboration to having received 17,000 shekels (\$4,600) and the second suspect received 10,000 (\$2,700).

12.23.23 – Sa

Israel vessel hit by UAV off India & Iran may close Mediterranean Sea at Gibraltar

12.23.23 – Sa

'Israel-affiliated' merchant vessel hit by UAV off India

Reports say the tanker sustained damage and water entered it, but the fire that broke out was extinguished and there were no casualties among the personnel

Reuters | 05:08

An Israel-affiliated merchant vessel in the Arabian Sea off India's west coast was struck by an unmanned aerial vehicle, causing a fire, British maritime security firm Ambrey said on Saturday.

The fire on the Liberian-flagged chemical products tanker was extinguished without crew casualties in the incident 200 km (120 miles) southwest of Veraval, India, it said.

"Some structural damage was also reported and some water was taken onboard. The vessel was Israel-affiliated. She had last called Saudi Arabia and was destined for India at the time," the firm said on its website.

It said the Indian navy was responding, but the navy did not immediately respond to Reuters request for comment.

Meanwhile, an Iranian Revolutionary Guards commander said the Mediterranean Sea could be closed if the United States and its allies continued to commit "crimes" in Gaza, Iranian media reported on Saturday, without explaining how that would happen.

Iran backs Hamas against Israel and it accuses the United States of backing what it calls Israeli crimes in Gaza, where weeks of bombardment have killed thousands of people and driven most of the population from their homes.

"They shall soon await the closure of the Mediterranean Sea, (the Strait of) Gibraltar and other waterways," Tasnim quoted Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Naqdi, coordinating commander of the Guards, as saying.

Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group has over the past month attacked merchant vessels sailing through the Red Sea in retaliation for Israel's assault on Gaza, leading some shipping companies to switch routes.

12.22.23 – Fr

Iran militia in Iraq claim drone attack on Israel's Karish natural gas rig in Mediterranean

12.22.23 – Fr

Iran-backed militias in Iraq claim struck Israel's Karish natural gas rig in Mediterranean
Claim comes following IDF report fighter jet downed drone en route to Israeli territory last week; army did not specify who was responsible for launching the drone
Lior Ben-Ari, Yoav Zitun|14:31

Pro-Iranian militias attacked Israel's Karish natural gas rig in the Mediterranean using a drone, a source from the Islamic Resistance in Iraq militia told Al Jazeera on Friday.

Earlier, the militias claimed they had attacked a "target" in the area and that a "hit was recorded."

This comes on the heels of an IDF report that an Israeli fighter jet, in collaboration with the Navy, downed an unmanned aerial vehicle off the coast of Lebanon that was making its way to Israeli territory last week. According to the report, the aircraft did not cross into Israeli airspace.

The military's statement did not specify who was responsible for launching the drone. On that same day, Hezbollah did not claim responsibility for launching loitering munitions

toward Israel. The Lebanese terrorist organization did claim responsibility for seven operations that included firing at IDF positions and border towns.

IDF Spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said in his daily briefing Friday evening, "We don't know the intended purpose of this aircraft, and we don't reveal everything at the moment – also for reasons of information security and material collection.

“What's important is that we destroyed it - and we will continue to do so against any threat to Israel." According to publicly available information, there have been no recent hits on the Karish platform.

This isn't the first time since the war began that pro-Iranian militias claim responsibility for attempted attacks on Israel as they have claimed to have targeted sites in the southern city of Eilat "in response to attacks in Gaza, and the infringement of Palestinian rights, including children, women and the elderly."

No sirens were activated in Eilat over the last day, and according to reports in Arab media, the Jordanian army downed a drone en route from Iraq to Israel.

12.21.23 – Th

IDF Hezbollah strikes intensify to clear 32 kilometer zone north of Israel border

12.21.23 – Th

IDF Hezbollah strike intensify, reach further into Lebanon, Arab media says

London based paper says Israel hit targets 32 kilometers (20 miles) north of the border for the 1st time since the war began, says Israel seeking security zone in Lebanon and fires at any car moving near frontier

Yoav Zitun, Lior Ben Ari, Yair Kraus, Matan Tzuri, Reuters|Updated:16:24

Israel was increasing the scope of its strikes against Hezbollah targets in Lebanon, the UK based Asharq Al-Awsat news paper reported on Thursday evening.

According to the report, Israel attacked targets in a distant of 32 kilometers (20 miles) north of the Lebanon-Israel border for the first time since the war began and was firing at any vehicle traveling near the border in an area it seeks to see secure and free of Hezbollah forces.

A total of more than 20 countries have agreed to participate in the new U.S.-led coalition safeguarding commercial traffic in the Red Sea from attacks by Yemen's Houthi movement as more nations join the effort, the Pentagon said on Thursday.

Still, the new Pentagon total would suggest that at least eight of the countries who have signed up have also declined to be publicly named, in a sign of political sensitivities of the operation as regional tensions soar over the Israel-Hamas war.

The IDF said it completed demolition of the central tunnel system used by Hamas commanders in Gaza City. the tunnels connected to the homes and officers of senior leaders and commanders of the terror group and included underground offices and facilities including their military command HQ.

It ran from the exclusive Rimal neighborhood where many of the leaders of Hamas resided toward the center of Gaza City to be used when they felt unsafe over-ground amid Israeli attacks.

Inside the underground facility, forces found proof that Hamas' military wing commander Mohammed Deif stayed inside the command center for a time after locating an elevator shaft leading to his office, alongside a wheelchair likely to have been used by him after injuries from IDF attempts to kill him.

"Tunnel shafts leading to the network of tunnels are located in the residences and offices of senior officials and allow for a covert descent through designated elevators and stairs. This enabled Hamas operatives to both escape and remain in hideouts for extended periods. The underground tunnel network includes blast doors and hideouts. In some cases, food products, water and electrical infrastructure were found that allowed for prolonged stays," the IDF said in a statement on Wednesday.

A senior official said in a briefing to the foreign press on Thursday that there was currently no negotiations towards a deal to release hostages held by Hamas in Gaza and Israel insists on the release first of all of 17 women and children who are among the remaining 92 hostages, before any further discussion can take place.

The IDF said on Thursday that its forces increased their stronghold on Shejaiyah in Gaza City after weeks of fighting, and eliminate the Hamas command of its forces there. According to the military, the troops encountered terrorists at close quarters and killed them, found tunnel leading from shafts inside homes, schools and medical clinics as well as weapons and guidebooks.

According to the military, the troops encountered terrorists at close quarters and killed them, found tunnel leading from shafts inside homes, schools and medical clinics as well as weapons and guidebooks.

Earlier, dozens of rockets were fired from Gaza toward southern and central Israel on Thursday afternoon, sending millions of Israelis running for safe areas. The rockets were fired at major population centers in Israel including Ashkelon and Ashdod in the south, and Tel Aviv, Bnei Brak, Ramat Gan, Petah Tikva, Rishon Lezion, Herzliya, Hod Hasharon, Ramat Hasharon, Ra'anana and Kfar Saba in the center. Rocket fragments fell in several of the cities, but no major damage was reported.

Shrapnel from a rocket in the afternoon barrage fell on a school in Tel Aviv. The school said that all the children made it on time to protected areas and were not injured. Palestinian factions reject any talks about prisoner swaps until after Israeli "aggression" is ended, a statement published by Hamas on Thursday said. "There is a Palestinian national decision that there should be no talk about prisoners or exchange deals except after a full cessation of aggression," the statement said. In addition to Hamas, Islamic Jihad, a smaller Palestinian terrorist group, is also holding hostages in Gaza.

Two anti-tank missiles were fired from Lebanon toward the northern Israeli border community of Avivim late Thursday morning, one of them hitting a parked car, causing extensive property damage. There were no immediate reports of casualties.

Shortly after, sirens blared in the northern border communities of Dafna, Hagoshrim, Ghajar, Kibbutz Dan, She'ar Yashuv and Snir due to a suspected hostile aircraft infiltration.

At the same time, rocket warning sirens sounded four times on Thursday morning in communities located near the Gaza border, after a day of quiet.

Dozens of protesters gathered near the Kerem Shalom border crossing on Thursday morning to demonstrate against Israel allowing the entry of humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip during the war. The protesters, some of whom are parents of soldiers fighting in Gaza, were stopped by the IDF before reaching the border crossing. The demonstration moved to nearby communities.

Egyptian officials discussed the negotiations between Israel and Hamas regarding the release of hostages and a cease-fire in the Gaza Strip in an interview with the Hezbollah-affiliated Al-Akhbar newspaper. According to the sources, the principle under which one Israeli hostage will be released in exchange for 10 Palestinian prisoners is still on the table. The sources added that Israel wants to see Hamas' demands - including the names of the prisoners the organization wants to be released as part of the deal - before giving final approval to the move.

At the same time, senior Hamas officials acknowledged Thursday morning that Israel presented a proposal for the release of hostages and an end to the fighting in the Gaza Strip, in the wake of a similar report the previous evening in the Wall Street Journal. The chiefs added that the proposal revolves around a seven-day cease-fire, and noted that the Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip, led by Hamas, said in response to the proposal that "the time for a temporary truce is over."

Three more IDF soldiers have fallen in battles in the Gaza Strip, the IDF announced early Thursday morning. They are: Sgt. Lavi Ghasi, 19, from Hashmonaim, an infantryman in the Nahal Brigade's 931st Battalion; Lt. Yaacov Elia, 20, from Ramat Gan, a cadet in the Bahad 1 officers school's Gefen Battalion who previously served as a Givati squad commander; Lt. Omri Shwartz, 21, from Shadmot Dvora, a cadet in the Gefen Battalion who was previously a soldier in the Paratrooper Brigade's Reconnaissance Battalion. Eight other soldiers were seriously injured in the same battles.

Rockets fall on Kiryat Shemona

Eight rockets were launched overnight from Lebanon toward the northern city of Kiryat Shemona and rockets struck sites in the city, causing damage. Gas cylinders located next to a building in Kiryat Shemona were hit by one of the rockets, damaging the building and a nearby vehicle. The municipality later reported that a rocket fell near homes and cars in a Kiryat Shmona neighborhood, causing shrapnel damage. No injuries were reported.

On Thursday morning, Israeli Air Force fighter jets attacked Hezbollah terrorist infrastructure near the Lebanese village of Kila in Lebanon, which is opposite Metula. The attack comes hours after the IDF said late on Wednesday night that air force jets attacked the operational headquarters of Hezbollah in Lebanese territory.

Also on Wednesday evening forces identified a number of terrorists who approached the perimeter fence from Lebanon along the border with Metula. The forces fired at them and "hits were detected."

Following rocket warning sirens in the Golan, the IDF announced that four rocket launches from Syrian territory were identified that crossed into Israeli territory. IDF forces attacked the sources of the rockets as well as a military position of the Syrian army."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken late on Wednesday night appealed to the countries of the world that are not demanding that Hamas lay down its weapons, saying during a press briefing that "many countries are calling for an end to this conflict, which we all want, but I don't hear most of them demanding that Hamas stop hiding behind civilians and lay down its weapons." According to him, "If Hamas does this - the war will end tomorrow. It could have ended already a month ago if Hamas did this. How can it be that there are no demands of the attacker, but only demands of the victim."

His remarks came after the Wall Street Journal reported on Wednesday night that Hamas rejected an Israeli offer to stop fighting in the Gaza Strip for a week in exchange for the release of 40 hostages. According to the report, which is based on Egyptian sources, the terrorist organization stated that it will not discuss the release of Israeli hostages until the cease-fire comes into effect.

Meanwhile, a United Nations Security Council vote on a bid to boost aid to the Gaza Strip and ask the U.N. to monitor humanitarian aid deliveries in the Palestinian enclave was delayed at the request of the U.S., diplomats said on Wednesday. "Negotiations are ongoing and need more time. A rushed vote does not seem like it will end well," a U.N. diplomat familiar with negotiations told Reuters, referring to a possible U.S. veto of the draft resolution.

The text - drafted by the United Arab Emirates - essentially aims to dilute Israel's control over all humanitarian aid deliveries to 2.3 million people in Gaza. Washington traditionally shields its ally Israel from U.N. action. The vote could come on Thursday. First published: 07:55, 12.21.23

12.21.23 – Th

IDF & engineering units deploy another division to clear western Gaza

12.21.23 – Th

Watch: IDF expands central Gaza Strip maneuver, deploys another division

IDF says forces eliminated terrorists and discovered concealed weapons within children's toys and beds in the Bakshi area

Yoav Zitun|13:53

Soldiers efficiently eliminated terrorists and uncovered a cache of weapons, including rocket launchers and explosives, as well as confiscated motorcycles. Additionally, they

successfully demolished tunnel shafts, some of which housed crucial water and electricity infrastructure.

Simultaneously with the operation in the Bakshi neighborhood, IDF soldiers actively engaged in clearing the western neighborhoods of Gaza City. During the searches, numerous combat means were discovered, some of which were hidden within children's toys and under children's beds.

Reserve troops in collaboration with engineering units, successfully neutralized the stockpiles of combat materials that were identified. The IDF stated, "So far, the division's troops have eliminated many terrorists, discovered hideouts, and directed airstrikes to neutralize threats and terrorists in the area."

12.21.23 – Th

Iran plot to enlist Israelis for terrorism uncovered by Shin Bet

12.21.23 – Th

Iran plot to enlist Israelis for terrorism uncovered, Shin Bet

Iranians reach out to Israelis via online apps operators request photos of houses, and plan terror attacks under the guise of criminal murders, by using women's profiles to lure Israelis; Shin Bet warns Iran in Persian that 'playing with fire has dangerous consequences'

Elisha Ben Kimon|11:37

An Iranian plot to recruit and deploy Israeli citizens for terror attacks and other missions was uncovered by Shin Bet. The agency said on Thursday adding a warning that Iran was "Playing with fire has dangerous consequences".

According to the Shin Bet, Israeli citizens were contacted through social media as well as casual job sites using women's profiles. They received requests on Telegram, WhatsApp, Facebook, Instagram and X in several languages, including Arabic. The Iranians used fake identities and claimed to be realtors, drones salespersons, delivery carriers and more. The recruited Israeli citizens were paid to perform various "tasks". These missions were not necessarily security-related, but they were meant to serve Iran and enrich its intelligence. Those tasks included acquiring photographs of places, finding out their addresses and more. According to the Shin Bet, some of the Israeli citizens who received such suspicious inquiries, avoided responding to them and even alerted security officials in Israel about them.

In one of the chats monitored and revealed by the Shin Bet, the Iranian operator, who identified as "Sofia", orders an Israeli to murder a person. The Iranian operator orders the Israeli to "do it with a gun". In another case, an Iranian operator who identified as "Adam" asked to point to various institutions in Israel - including Microsoft headquarters, Wix, Tel Aviv University and the Design Museum in Holon.

"Since the beginning of the war, it is evident that the Iranian efforts have greatly intensified. The cyberspace is being used for intimidation, conveying messages and promoting undercover terrorist acts," the Shin Bet said. "The Shin Bet even identified platforms that pretended to be Israeli and used the Israeli hostages in Gaza to gain traction. The Iranians also tried to recruit and act against families of hostages and bereaved families.

The Shin Bet announced that it was able to identify many fictitious profiles used by the Iranian security forces. The Shin Bet even posted a warning for Iran in Persian. "It's been a long time that we in the Shin Bet, through our unlimited control, have been closely following your empty efforts to maintain contact with Israeli citizens and to assign them with different tasks," said the Shin Bet spokesperson.

"We inform you that during this period, we uncovered many of your objectives and thwarted your plots. We emphasize that all your activities against Israeli citizens, both Arabs and Jews, are under the strict control and supervision of the Shin Bet and will be neutralized and thwarted immediately. Finally, I warn you that playing with fire has serious and dangerous consequences and we advise you to save your life and the lives of your families. Do not interfere in matters that are not yours. Respectfully, the friends from the Shin Bet," he added.

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Ynet-News, Dec 21, 2023 – Thursday

Possible Abomination Days are April 7 & June 20, 2024

12.21.23 – Th- - - News Placed in December 21 spot – Thursday
Dozens of rockets from Gaza, UN aims to dilute Israel control over all aid deliveries

12.21.23 – Th- - - News – Thursday
PA national decision; no hostage-prisoner swap until aggression ends

12.21.23 – Th- - - News Placed in December 21 spot – Thursday
 Hamas demands release of 3 notorious terror architects in hostage deal

12.20.23 – We- - - News – Wednesday
IDF Discreet stakeouts eliminate Hamas lookouts & Jihad surveillance cameras

12.19.23 – Tu- - - News Placed in December 20 spot – Wednesday
IDF eliminates financier who transferred multi-millions of dollars to Hamas

12.19.23 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday
Northern Gaza weapon production sites & large arsenal in Jabaliya

12.19.23 – Tu- - - News – Tuesday
 Hamas used ambulances, hospitals, clinics, mosques & schools for terrorist purposes

12.18.23 – Mo- - - News – Monday

Rockets from Syria into Golan Heights; proposal for UN monitoring in Gaza

12.18.23 – Mo- - - News – Monday

5 million cash & an array of weapons found in senior Hamas home

12.18.23 – Mo- - - News Placed in December 19 spot – Tuesday

Hacker Cyber attack against Iran shuts down 70% of their gas stations

12.18.23 – Mo- - - News Placed in December 18 spot – Monday

3 hostages walking street shirtless, holding a white flag, killed by IDF sniper

12.17.23 – Su- - - News Placed in December 17 spot – Sunday

Hamas insists Israel cease once and for all for hostage release

12.15.23 – Fr- - - News Placed in December 15 spot – Friday

IDF recovers bodies of 2 abducted soldiers & one hostage from Gaza

12.14.23 – Th- - - News – Thursday

Harvard President & Board of Trustees will allow chants for extermination of Israel

12.14.23 – Th- - - News – Thursday

Hamas planning attack in Europe arrested in Berlin and Netherlands

12.14.23 – Th- - - News Placed in December 14 spot – Thursday

About 70 terrorists left a Gaza hospital and handed over their weapons

12.14.23 – Th- - - News – Thursday

Next hostage deal demands release of high-profile terrorists to replace Abbas