

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update December 30, 2024 (Kislev 29, 5785)



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Israel-Hamas War, Day 451

Israeli Soldier Killed in Northern Gaza Combat, IDF Announces

- **GAZA: Report: Northern Gaza hospital director detained in Sde Teiman; hospital shut down by IDF strikes**
 - **CEASE-FIRE TALKS: Hostage talks may collapse due to Israel's conduct, Egyptian sources say**
 - **ISRAEL: Soldier killed by tank turret in operational accident, IDF says**
 - **IRAN: Israeli arrested on suspicion of spying for Iran**
- **GAZA: IDF says it won't allow Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital to reopen after mass arrests, leaving north Gaza with one functioning hospital; Hamas' health ministry reported dozens killed in explosion next to hospital**
- **CEASE-FIRE TALKS: Report: Hostage talks may collapse due to Israel's conduct, Egyptian sources say**
 - **LEBANON: Israeli forces destroyed tunnel leading to Hezbollah command post**

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Burned, Beaten, Starved: Health Ministry Compiles Hostage Testimonies to Submit to UN; The Health Ministry has completed a draft report on the abuse that Israeli hostages suffered while held in the Gaza Strip, cataloging the physical and mental suffering they experienced and the lasting effects it has had on them, some of whom are children. Israel plans to submit the report to the United Nations. Compiled from the testimonies of hostages who were released in a November 2023 deal and those who were later rescued by Israeli forces, it details how they were burned and beaten, starved and humiliated, as well as how the abuse impacted their mental and physical health, even long after they were freed. Two Israeli media outlets reported details from the brief on Thursday, December 26. It marks the first formal report by the Health Ministry about the hostages' experiences. Compiled by the health and welfare ministries, the final report is to be presented to the United Nations committee that deals with cases of torture. Health Minister Uriel Buso said in a statement it is "a significant report that depicts the atrocities that hostages suffered and reveals to the world the cruelty of the enemies we are dealing with." (TOI / VFI News)

Negotiating Team Returns from Qatar; Hamas Doesn't Provide List of Hostages; The Gaza cease-fire negotiating team, which includes senior officials from the Mossad, Shin Bet, and IDF, "will return to Israel from Qatar after a significant week of talks," the Prime Minister's Office reported on Tuesday evening, December 24. In Israel, officials emphasized that the return of the team after 10 days in Qatar does not indicate a breakdown in talks. Following a prolonged negotiation process, the team now needs to conduct consultations. Israeli officials are placing blame on Hamas in Gaza, particularly on the leader of Hamas' military wing, Mohammed Sinwar, for creating difficulties and refusing to provide a full list of hostages, allegedly in an attempt to extract further concessions. "There's no collapse of the talks, but we've reached a point where decisions need to be made in Israel whether to continue with a deal without the lists," said an Israeli official familiar with the details. "Hamas has consistently lied. Even last time, Hamas claimed it had no women among the hostages, which was false." "The question now is whether to play into their hands. We need a solid foundation to proceed with the deal, to determine whether we are releasing prisoners in exchange for bodies or live hostages. The terms are different, and we won't start an agreement based on lies." (YNet / VFI News)

IAF Conducts Largest Strike on Houthi Targets Since Outbreak of War; Israeli airstrikes targeted a host of Houthi infrastructure near the airports of Hodeidah and the Yemeni capital of Sana'a, sources confirmed to an Israeli news outlet on Thursday, December 26. The strikes targeted Sana'a International Airport's main runway, control tower, and aircraft, some of which subsequently caught fire. The Director-General of the World Health Organization, Tedros Ghebreyesus, said he was at the airport during the strikes. He was in Yemen to negotiate the release of UN staff who had been detained there. Three people were killed and 16 injured at the airport in Sana'a following the Israeli attack, according to a Houthi-owned TV channel. The IDF confirmed that they had targeted Houthi military infrastructure, the Sana'a International Airport, the Hezyaz and Ras Kanatib power stations, and Al-Hudaydah, Salif, and Ras

Kanatib ports on the western coast. The targets were used to smuggle weapons from the Iranian regime into Yemen. Seven strikes were reported in Sana'a and three in Hodeidah, and dozens of aircraft were spotted in the air. The strikes were carried out as Houthi leader Abdul-Malik al-Houthi was delivering a 'victory' speech nearby, local sources said. (*JPost/VFI News*)

Christian Population Declined 90% Under Palestinian Authority and Hamas – Study; Violence and coercion have resulted in up to a 90% decline in the Christian population in areas under Hamas or PA control, according to a new study by the Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs (JCFA). In 1922, Christians constituted 11% of the population. Today, in 2024, they are just 1%. The JCFA research, led by Lt. Col. (res.) Maurice Hirsch and Attorney Tirza Shorr, discovered mass emigration of Christians, particularly from historically significant cities like Bethlehem. The Christian population in Gaza shrank from 5,000 before Hamas took over the area to only 1,000 in October 2023, the report found. JCFA explained that religious and legal discrimination, desecration of holy sites, social exclusion, and harassment, including of Christian clergy, by Muslim Palestinians and the Islam-dominated Palestinian Authority were behind the decline in the Christian population. The city of Bethlehem is used as an illustration of what JCFA calls “Christian demographic erasure.” In 1950, Bethlehem and the surrounding villages were 86% Christian. However, this has dwindled since 1994, when the PA took control of the city. The last census in 2017 showed Bethlehem was 10% Christian families. Bethlehem also serves as an example of Christians undergoing forced conversion to Islam, a phenomenon that Gaza’s Bishop Alexios, warned of in 2016. “Christians who converted to Islam did so under threats and violence,” Alexios said at the time. (*JPost/VFI News*)

Syrian Christians Demonstrate Against Islamist Rebel Government to Protest Christmas Tree Burning; Christians have been highly skeptical of promises to protect all religious minorities made by the Islamist rebel leaders who overthrew dictator Bashar Assad. The protests were sparked by a social media video of hooded men setting fire to a Christmas tree in the Christian town of Suqaylabiyah, located near Hama in central Syria. The Islamist group that led the drive to overthrow dictator Bashar Assad earlier this month, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), told Suqaylabiyah residents the fighters who burned the Christmas tree were “not Syrians.” HTS representatives said the vandals would be caught and punished, and the Christmas tree would be restored. British media cited reports that the HTS emissary held up a cross to demonstrate respect for the residents of the Christian town. The London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) reported the vandals were indeed foreigners, members of a minor Islamist rebel group called Ansar al-Tawhid. The group was formed in 2018 from the remnants of an ISIS-aligned group called Jund al-Aqsa that fought with HTS, itself the rebranded Syrian franchise of the Islamic State’s rivals in al-Qaeda. HTS ultimately defeated and absorbed Ansar al-Tawhid into its ranks. During its brief years as an independent entity, the ideology of Ansar al-Tawhid leaned toward al-Qaeda, and the group was often accused of being an al-Qaeda proxy. (*BB/VFI News*)

Palestinian Anti-Semitism is Now Spreading Across the US – Opinion; In 2023, the American Jewish community, which accounts for less than 3% of the nation’s total population, was on the receiving end of two-thirds of all religion-based hate crimes in the country (1,832 out of 2,699), the Federal Bureau of Investigation revealed in September. This month, the USA Today news network contributed to the seething cesspool of anti-Jewish bigotry by peddling classic antisemitic tropes. The nearly 3,000-word article – “‘No one ever asks a Palestinian’: Ohio residents reacting with grief and anger over carnage in the Middle East,” in Ohio’s Canton Repository – appeared December 1 in more than a dozen newspapers across the country. Beyond grief and anger, interviewees unleashed unabashed antisemitism, with one invoking the age-old anti-Jewish myth straight out of The Protocols of the Elders of Zion alleging a Jewish cabal controlling the media, economy, government, and other societal institutions. “If you have Google behind you, if you have Microsoft behind you, if you have Intel behind you, if you have Lockheed-Martin

and Boeing behind you, yeah, of course you're going to be able to prop yourself up for 76 years," reporter Charita M. Goshay quoted Hasan Mueheisen without providing further comment. The Palestinian-American interviewee was alluding to alleged Jewish – or perhaps Israeli – control of business and tech giants to sustain the Jewish state. If Jews really wielded that much power, then presumably they could do something about the problem of being the insanely disproportionate target of US hate crimes. (*JPost /VFI News*)

Iranian Rial Hits Record Low As Economic Woes Mount; The Iranian rial fell to an all-time low on Wednesday, December 18, trading at 777,000 rials to the US dollar, a sharp decline from 703,000 in November after Donald Trump's victory in the US presidential election. Central Bank Governor Mohammad Reza Farzin announced measures to stabilize the currency, including injecting \$220 million into the market. Similar interventions have been used in the past with limited success. Despite Iran's vast oil and gas reserves, years of underinvestment, sanctions, and infrastructure mismanagement have left the economy ill-prepared for crises, contributing to rolling blackouts, gas shortages, and the current energy crisis, exacerbated by harsh winter weather. The rial's stronger value in 2015 during Iran's nuclear deal, when it traded at 32,000 to the dollar, contrasts sharply with today's conditions. The 2018 US withdrawal from the accord under Trump reignited sanctions and economic instability. (*JPost/ VFI News*)

Rare Oil Lamp with Temple Menorah Found from Time When Romans Barred Jews from Jerusalem; A rare, 4th-century AD ceramic oil lamp recently discovered during Israeli Antiquities Authorities excavations near the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem will be displayed to the public for the first time during the current Hanukkah holiday, the IAA said Thursday, December 26. The unusual lamp is decorated with imagery related to the services in the Jewish Second Temple in Jerusalem, including a Temple menorah (which had seven branches, unlike the nine-branched menorahs used during Hanukkah). Also depicted on the small lamp are an incense shovel, which Temple priests used when making offerings, and a lulav, the date palm frond used during the Sukkot holiday. The lamp was unearthed a few months ago and was discovered intact, a rarity for objects of the type, an IAA official told Israeli media. After examination, the "outstanding" artifact was determined to be 1,700 years old, dating from the late Roman period, making the find "particularly surprising, since we have very little evidence of the existence of a Jewish settlement in and around Jerusalem from this period," said Michael Chernin, excavation director. The Second Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, and the Roman emperor Hadrian suppressed the Bar Kochba Revolt in 135 AD, after which Jews were expelled from Jerusalem, and then renamed Aelia Capitolina. (*TOI / VFI News*)

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