

# **Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update February 5, 2024 (Sh'vat 26, 5784)**

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## ***Israel-Hamas War, Day 122***

### ***UN Chief Appoints Review of Israel's Claims That UNRWA Staff Took Part in Hamas Massacre***

- *Netanyahu tells Likud lawmakers 'we must not end the war until we kill Hamas' leadership' at party meeting*
- *Knesset rejects motion of no confidence against PM Netanyahu submitted by opposition party*
  - *U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrives in Saudi Arabia in first stop on fifth visit to region since Oct. 7*
  - *Russia summons Israeli ambassador for 'unacceptable statements' criticizing Russia's stance towards Hamas*
    - *Rockets target northern and southern Israel*

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***Hamas Seems to Reject New Hostage Deal Offer, Says It'll Only Accept Full IDF Pullout;*** Hamas on Monday evening, January 29, appeared to reject a new framework for a hostage deal that had been agreed to by Israel, saying it would not accept any agreement that did not include an end to the war and the withdrawal of all Israeli troops from Gaza. The terror group issued a statement alongside a smaller terror group, the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, insisting Israel must halt its “aggression” and pull out of Gaza before any exchange deal takes place. A senior Hamas official added that the terror group wants a “complete and comprehensive ceasefire” in Gaza. “We are talking first of all about a complete and comprehensive ceasefire, and not a temporary truce,” Taher al-Nunu told French media, saying that once the fighting stops, “the rest of the details can be discussed” including a hostage release. Earlier, the Qatari prime minister said that he believed Hamas had “moved” from its demand for a complete ceasefire as a condition, something that has been outright rejected by Israel. Multiple Israeli networks reported earlier that Israel negotiators in Paris had agreed Sunday to a framework proposal for a hostage release deal. The draft offer, hatched during a meeting of the heads of the Mossad and Shin Bet intelligence agencies with senior US, Qatari, and Egyptian officials, was being presented Monday to Hamas, according to American media. On Tuesday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke at the Bnei David Institutions in the town of Eli and addressed the reports of the hostage deal, stating: “We will not withdraw the IDF from the Gaza Strip and we will not release thousands of terrorists. None of this will happen. What will happen? Total victory!” (TOI / VFI News)

***UN Aid Agency Members Supplied Hamas with RPGs, Took Israeli Woman Hostage, Damning Intel Finds;*** The UN aid-agency staffers who took part in Hamas’ October 7 attack on Israel included some who actually killed and kidnapped Israelis — with a teacher doubling as a terror commander, a damning new dossier says. Survivors of the attacks have described how some staff members at the UNRWA were “involved in actual murder — wielding guns and killing people,” said David Bedein, of Israel’s Center for Near East Policy Research. “People under attack recognized their attackers,” said Bedein, who told Jewish media that some of the staffers killed children in front of their parents during the slaughter. Seven of the 12 known UN employees-turned-terrorists worked by day as elementary and high-school teachers, according to reports by outlets that obtained the Israeli dossier given to the US. Israeli officials said they tracked the movements of UN aid workers on the day of the attack, using phone records and phone calls — and found that six were directly involved in the terrorist wave that attacked Israel on October 7. A UNRWA social worker also gave out ammo, coordinated vehicles — and toted the body of a dead Israeli soldier back with him to Gaza, according to Israeli intelligence. They said at least one staffer was told by text message to bring rocket-propelled grenades he kept at his house with him, dossier said. The staffer-terrorist was eventually killed in the conflict. In addition, a school counselor from southern Gaza teamed up with his son to abduct a woman who became one of the more than 200 hostages taken by

Hamas that day, according to the dossier. Other findings included a math teacher/Hamas terrorist who snapped a photo of a female hostage and a UNRWA staffer who established an operations room for the Islamic Jihad the day after the massacre, the report said. (NYP / VFI News)

***US Congressman Introduces Bill to Disband UNRWA;*** Rep. Brian Mast, US Congressman for Florida's 21st District, has introduced a bill to disband the UNRWA. "Anti-Israel protestors can yell 'liar' all they want, but the truth is this: The US-funded UNRWA enabled the deadliest attack on Jewish people since the Holocaust," Mast wrote on X, Wednesday morning, January 31. "I am proud to introduce a bill to disband the Hamas-tied UN agency and transfer all responsibility to Refugees." 'Refugees' refers to UNHCR, the United Nations refugee agency. Economy Minister Nir Barkat is headed in the same direction, advancing legislation against UNRWA. The new legislation states: "The UNRWA will not operate any facility, provide any service, or carry out any activity, directly or indirectly, within the sovereign territory of Israel." Further, after the revelations about the UNRWA staffers, Dem. New York Rep. Ritchie Torres accused "the international community" of cutting "a deal with the devil" in a series of tweets: "UNRWA, long funded by your tax dollars, has been governing Gaza at the behest of Hamas so that Hamas, which sees governing as a distraction, could dedicate itself to murdering Jews in Israel. That the international community would cut a deal with the devil (i.e. Hamas) is so scandalous and shocking in its stupidity that it leaves one speechless." (INN / VFI News)

***Iran Begins Construction of Four New Nuclear Plants;*** Iran began construction on four more nuclear power plants in the country's south, with expected total capacity of 5,000 megawatts, the official Iranian state media reported on Thursday, February 1. Iran seeks to produce 20,000 megawatts of nuclear energy by 2041. The country has one active nuclear power plant, a 1,000-megawatt plant that went online with help from Russia in 2011. The report said the four new plants are being built in the port town of Sirik on Iran's east coast, some 1,150 kilometers south of the capital, Tehran. Iran is also building a 300-megawatt plant in the oil-rich Khuzestan province, near the western border with Iraq. The IAEA, the UN's nuclear watchdog, said last year that Iran has increased the rate at which it is producing near-weapons-grade uranium. Director General Rafael Grossi said in the report that Iran "in recent weeks had increased its production of highly enriched uranium, reversing a previous output reduction from mid-2023," according to an IAEA spokesperson. Iran had previously slowed the rate at which it was enriching uranium to 60 percent purity, which is just a short technical step away from the weapons-grade level of 90%. (TOI / VFI News)

***Gallant: Haifa Could Be Hit Hard in Near Future Hezbollah War;*** On Tuesday, January 30, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said that war with Hezbollah could be getting closer and that such a conflict could lead the terror group to seriously strike Haifa. Hezbollah has 150,000 rockets and mortars and could fire potentially up to 8,000 rockets per day, several levels of magnitude greater than what Hamas was able to do other than for one day on October 7. Its rockets are also more precise, long-range, and destructive. Combining those factors together, defense officials believe that even if Iron Dome maintained an 80-90% shoot-down rate, enough rockets would get through the missile shield to do major damage to Haifa and other cities. Israeli defense officials still believe Israel would "win" such a war in the military sense, but they also believe that the early period would harm the home front far more than Hamas and that Hezbollah could manage rocket fire for longer than Hamas. Meanwhile, a document warning of this extreme scenario in the north and recommending preparations for several days of electricity blackout circulated among Justice Ministry employees on Tuesday. Further, the National Emergency Authority urged all government ministries to develop plans for a week-long blackout, anticipating a large-scale exercise said to occur in mid-February. Similar letters were also sent to directors of geriatric institutions. (JPost / VFI News)

***PA Official: If Hamas Were to Win Elections, We'd Hand It the Government;*** The Palestinian Authority's deputy prime minister said Saturday, January 27, that President Mahmoud Abbas would be willing to hand control over his government to Hamas if the terror group were to win future general elections. In an interview with Saudi media, Nabil Abu Rudeineh, who also acts as a spokesperson for Abbas, said that the Palestinian people need to find common ground and formulate a unified position and that for the time being, "the address for political decisions is the Palestine Liberation Organization and its President Mahmoud Abbas." But after the war, the PA "is ready to hold general elections, and if Hamas wins, the president will hand over the Authority." The Palestinian Authority has not held general elections since 2006, when Hamas won a majority of the seats in the legislative council, and subsequently staged a violent coup in the Gaza Strip. Since the outbreak of the war, various PA officials have called for integrating the political wing of Hamas into a future Palestinian government, claiming that it is an essential component of Palestinian society. Meanwhile, a wartime opinion poll in December found 88 percent of Palestinians saying Abbas must resign. At the same time, 44% in Judea and Samaria said they support Hamas, up from just 12% in September. In Gaza, the terror group enjoys 42% support, up from 38% three months ago. (TOI / VFI News)

***'Hatikva' in Qatar: Israel Fencer Yuval Freilich Wins Gold, en Route to Paris Olympics;*** Israeli fencer Yuval Freilich won gold in the Doha Grand Prix on Wednesday, January 31, sparking a rare scene — the Israeli national anthem being played during wartime in Qatar, a country that does not have ties with Israel. The 29-year-old former European champion wore a shirt with the words "Am Yisrael chai" (the people of Israel live) embossed in Hebrew on the Israeli flag when he defeated one of the world's top fencers, world champion Yannick Borel of France, with a score of 9:15, moving him one step closer to advancing to the Paris 2024 Olympics. Gili Lustig, the CEO of the Olympic Committee, called Freilich's win "an impressive achievement in an Olympic-level tournament". "The win in Qatar and waving the Israeli flag in times like these on this unique stage is Israeli pride at its peak," Lustig was quoted as saying. Freilich became the first Israeli fencer to win a European championship in Germany in 2019. The 29-year-old fencer grew up in the Judea and Samaria settlement of Neve Daniel. He is the son of Australian immigrants and has been fencing since age five. He won two gold medals in teen championships in 2014 and 2015 and silver in the under-23 category in 2016. The playing of the Israeli national anthem "Hatikva" during the medal ceremony in Doha came weeks after two Israeli soccer players were deported from Turkey for making a gesture of sympathy to the hostages held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip since the terror group's October 7 massacre in southern Israel. (TOI / VFI News)

***Israeli Tech Succeeds in Growing Tomatoes that Consume Less Water;*** Besides arable land, the factor that most hinders agricultural production in this increasingly dry region and increasingly hot world is the lack of clean water. Now, scientists at Tel Aviv University (TAU) have succeeded in cultivating and characterizing tomato varieties with higher efficiency using irrigation water, and without compromising the yield. The researchers explained that in light of global warming and the diminishing of freshwater resources, there is a growing demand for crops that consume less water without compromising the yield. Naturally, at the same time, because crops rely on water to grow and develop, it is particularly challenging to identify suitable plant varieties. The researchers, using CRISPR genetic editing technology that allows scientists to quickly create cell and animal models, were able to grow tomatoes that absorbed less water while preserving the yield, quality, and taste. The research was conducted in the labs of Prof. Shaul Yalovsky and Dr. Nir Sade and was led by a team of researchers from the School of Plant Sciences and Food Security at TAU's Wise Faculty of Life Sciences. The team included Dr. Mallikarjuna Rao Puli, a former postdoctoral fellow supervised by Yalovsky, and Purity Muchoki, a doctoral student jointly supervised by Yalovsky and Sade. Other students and postdoctoral fellows from the School of Plant Sciences and Food Security advanced the study as well. Researchers from Ben-Gurion University (BGU) of the Negev in Beersheba and the University of Oregon also contributed to the research. (JPost /VFI News)

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