

# **Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update February 12, 2024 (Adar Aleph 3, 5784)**

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The image shows a book cover on the left and a bottle of oil on the right. The book cover is purple with yellow and red text, titled 'GOD'S APPOINTED TIMES' by Barney Kasdan. The bottle is yellow with a white label, titled 'Anointing Oil' and 'Jerusalem of Gold Anointing Oil'.

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## ***Israel-Hamas War, Day 129***

### ***U.K. Slaps Sanctions on Four Israeli Settlers; IDF Strikes Hezbollah Operatives in Lebanon***

- *Israeli forces rescued two hostages held captive by Hamas in Rafah*
  - *Two IDF soldiers killed in the southern Gaza Strip*
- *Hamas-run Gaza health ministry says 67 killed in Israeli strikes in Rafah*
  - *Mahmoud Abbas meets with Emir of Qatar about 'day after' in Gaza*
- *Dutch court orders government to suspend export of F-35 aircraft parts to Israel*

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***Nearly One-Quarter of the Hostages Are Dead: Israeli Intelligence;*** Renowned American media reported on Tuesday, February 6, that Israeli intelligence believes that more than nearly one-quarter of the hostages who were kidnapped during the Hamas massacre of October 7 and are still being held captive in Gaza are dead. An internal assessment conducted by the IDF bumped up the hostage count from 132 to 136, with intelligence officers estimating that 32 of the 136 hostages who remain in Hamas custody have died, leaving just 104 still alive. An additional 20 hostages may also be dead, though this is still under investigation. According to the officials who spoke with the American news outlet, most of the hostages who died were killed on October 7 and did not die throughout the subsequent war. The families of the 32 hostages have reportedly been informed of their loved ones' deaths. Meanwhile, the IDF announced on Wednesday that it found a second round of Hamas hostage cages underground in Khan Yunis. In this case, there were cages for 12 hostages, nine of which are still held by Hamas, and three of which were returned to Israel during the November 23-30 hostage exchange deal. On a positive note, the Council of Paris unanimously voted in favor of a resolution to grant honorary citizenship to all hostages held by Hamas, on Thursday. After the vote, council members stood and applauded the families. All party leaders, including the Communist Party and the Radical Party of the Left, voted in favor and demanded in their speeches the immediate release of all hostages. (INN / VFI News)

***Hamas Wish List of Prisoners Includes Terror Masterminds of Second Intifada;*** Hamas is expected to demand the release of several high-profile terrorists, all of whom are serving multiple life sentences in Israeli prisons, as part of a potential truce and hostage release deal with Israel, according to a TV report aired Sunday, February 4. Israeli media reported that the list includes names of terrorists behind some of the biggest terror attacks in Israel during the Second Intifada between 2000 and 2005 like Abdullah Barghouti, Abbas Al-Sayed, Ibrahim Hamed, Ahmad Saadat, and Muhammad Arman. Hamas is seeking the release of the top terrorists as part of a new brewing agreement that could free the remaining hostages in Gaza who were abducted on October 7. Meanwhile, an Israeli news outlet has reported that Hamas's contact with Sinwar was cut off more than ten days ago and that the Hamas leadership has been making decisions without him since. Sources in the security establishment said that contact with the Hamas leader has not only been cut off from his organization's members but also from the mediators in the hostage negotiations. Further, American media reported on Thursday, citing six Israeli officials and senior advisers, that Israel will allow the exile of Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar from the Gaza Strip in exchange for the release of all remaining 136 hostages. "We will allow it to happen as long as all of the hostages are released," a senior adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was cited as saying. (TOI / VFI News)

***UNRWA Loses More Ground As Days Pass;*** Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ordered IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi and the military to find other alternatives to the reliance on UNRWA in all matters related to humanitarian aid in Gaza, which is currently transferred directly to the disgraced organization, Israeli media reported on Tuesday, February 6. According to the report, citing senior members of the Security Cabinet, Netanyahu has given Halevi until the end of this week to find such alternatives. Israel currently transfers all humanitarian aid for Gaza to UNRWA which oversees its distribution to the population, while Hamas takes at least a substantial part of the aid. In addition, it is reported that Finance

Minister Bezalel Smotrich has decided to cancel the tax benefits extended to the UNRWA following the reports that the organization's employees had taken part in the October 7 massacre. Also, on Monday evening, hundreds of Jerusalem residents protested in front of the UNRWA headquarters in the Ma'alot Dafna neighborhood in the city, calling for the closure of the organization's headquarters. The demonstration was held with the participation of Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Aryeh King, bereaved families, reservists, and dozens of right-wing organizations. Lastly, the US government has already temporarily paused funding to the UNRWA, and said it would also redirect any funds for UNRWA to other aid agencies working in Gaza if Congress passes legislation that would bar funding of UNRWA, State Department deputy spokesperson Vedant Patel said on Monday. Patel's comments follow the unveiling of a bill by senators on Sunday which includes a provision blocking the agency from receiving funds made available by the bill. Patel said at a press briefing on Monday that the bill, negotiated by the Biden administration and a bipartisan group of senators, included \$1.4 billion for humanitarian aid for Gaza, but that could be sent to the UN's World Food Program (WFP), UNICEF or other aid groups. (INN / VFI News)

***Iran Is Capable of Building Nuclear Bomb in One Week, Report Finds as Middle-East Tensions Flare;*** An Iran watchdog group says the country has enough weapons-grade uranium to build a nuclear weapon in just one week. The Institute for Science and International Security published the findings in a report on Monday, February 5, saying Tehran could produce a total of six bombs in a month. "The volatile situation in the region is providing Iran with a unique opportunity and increased internal justification for building nuclear weapons while the United States and Israel's resources to detect and deter Iran from succeeding are stretched thin," the report states. "Iran's nuclear weapons capabilities are more dangerous than they have ever been, while its relations with the West are at a low point." Iran can "break out and produce enough weapon-grade enriched uranium for a nuclear weapon in a week, using only a fraction of its 60% enriched uranium," the report continued. "This breakout could be difficult for inspectors to detect promptly if Iran took steps to delay inspectors' access." Iran has been steadily growing its ability to produce enriched uranium in recent years. The substance needs to be enriched to roughly 90% before being used in a nuclear weapon. Iran has an extensive supply of 60% enriched uranium that could quickly be siphoned off and enriched further. The report comes as tensions in the Middle East continue to skyrocket. Iran's proxy terrorist groups have launched missiles into Israel and attacked US forces operating in Iraq, Syria, and the Red Sea. (FN / VFI News)

***Israel Recognition? 89% of Arabs Say Never;*** A significant shift has been seen in Arab public opinion on the recognition of Israel, according to a new survey conducted by the Arab Center Washington DC (ACW), in collaboration with The Arab Center for Research and Policy Studies (ACRPS). The comprehensive poll, which gauged sentiments across 16 Arab countries, underscores a growing resistance against normalization with Israel in the wake of the Israeli war on Gaza. A striking 89% of respondents from the Arab world expressed opposition to the recognition of Israel, marking a discernible increase from previous polls. This figure not only represents a nearly unanimous stance against normalization but also indicates a 5% rise in opposition compared to the results from the 2022 survey, where 84% were against recognition. In Saudi Arabia, opposition surged from 38% in 2022 to a remarkable 68% in the latest poll. Similarly, Morocco saw an increase from 67% to 78%, and Sudan from 72% to 81%, showcasing a significant hardening of attitudes across diverse Arab societies. The heightened opposition is especially pronounced in countries that have formal peace agreements with Israel, such as Jordan, Egypt, and Morocco, as well as those like Sudan, which have recently begun normalizing political relations. Despite governmental moves towards diplomacy, there appears to be a near-consensus among the populations of these nations against the recognition of Israel, underscoring a significant disconnect between official policy and public sentiment. (JPost / VFI News)

***Macron Hosts Memorial for October 7, the ‘Biggest Antisemitic Massacre of Our Century’;*** French President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday, February 7, described the October 7 massacre by Hamas in Israel as the “biggest antisemitic massacre of our century” as he hosted a ceremony paying tribute to the French victims. He described the attack by the Palestinian terror group as “barbarism... which is fed by antisemitism and propagates it,” vowing also not to give in to “rampant and uninhibited antisemitism.” The ceremony at the Invalides Memorial complex in Paris paid tribute to the 42 French citizens killed in the brutal incursion into southern communities by Hamas and the three others still missing, believed to be held hostage. Macron said France would work “every day” for the release of the remaining French hostages. “Their empty chairs are there,” he said at the ceremony. “Nothing can justify or excuse terrorism,” he added. In the UK however, outside pressure forced employees of a London theater to cancel a pro-Israel event hosted on Sunday night. Staff at the Apollo Theater backed out of working the public event after receiving threats via email, Alan Aziz, the CEO of Technion UK, the nonprofit that organized the fundraiser, told Jewish media. British journalist Douglas Murray and British actress Louisa Clein planned to hold the discussion to raise money for Israeli soldiers. Murray posted on X, “We have arrived at the point where theaters in London no longer feel safe to support free speech - or at least not when the subject is about Jews or Israel.” (TOI / VFI News)

***Israeli Basketball Team Wins After Irish Team Refuses to Shake Hands;*** An Israeli women’s basketball team beat Ireland 87 to 57 in the first game of the 2025 Women’s EuroBasket qualifier in Riga on Thursday evening, February 8, a game in which sport was overshadowed by politics when the Irish team refused to shake hands with their Israeli counterparts. The Israeli Basketball Association (IBBA) said on social media that the victory came “despite the lack of sportsmanship of the visiting team.” However, the national governing body for basketball in Ireland said in a statement that “Basketball Ireland fully supports our players in their decision.” The statement by Basketball Ireland detailed that it informed the International Basketball Federation (FIBA) on Wednesday that its players would not be exchanging gifts or formal handshakes before or after the game, and that players would line up by the bench rather than at center court for the playing of their anthem. IBBA published an interview with Israeli basketball player Dor Saar on Tuesday in which she touched on the behavior and statements of the Irish team. “It’s known that they are quite antisemitic and it’s no secret, and maybe that’s why a strong game is expected,” said Saar. “We have to show that we’re better than them and win.” A few days earlier, on Saturday, Israeli windsurfer Sharon Kantor, 21, also won a gold medal at the iQFoil World Championships, punching her ticket to the Paris Olympics this summer. (JPost / VFI News)

***A Major Boost for Ofakim: Cisco Announces Expansion;*** In a significant move for Ofakim and the wider southern Israeli region, Cisco Systems, a leading information and IT technology company, has announced its decision to establish a branch in the city. This comes as Ofakim continues to recover from the hardships it faced on October 7. Cisco’s decision to open a branch in Ofakim demonstrates its commitment to strengthening ties with the city and making a meaningful contribution to its growth. The establishment of the Cisco branch in the town also has a contribution in respect to the Magnet complex, a technology hub in Ofakim. The company aims to foster a thriving tech ecosystem by offering courses and lectures, ensuring a holistic approach to supporting local talent and innovation. As part of its commitment to the region, Cisco will collaborate with its business partners, Amal network, and the Rashi Foundation to invest in training programs that will equip local youth with the necessary skills for careers in the IT industry. This investment will also include a career development program, ensuring long-term growth opportunities for the region’s talented individuals. The move by Cisco Systems marks a significant advancement for Ofakim, positioning it as a rising star in the hi-tech landscape. The city’s youth can benefit from the knowledge and expertise Cisco will introduce, opening up new avenues for growth and opportunities in an ever-evolving industry. Oren Segal, CEO of Cisco Israel, emphasized the company’s commitment to the region during a lecture he gave at the Magnet. (JPost / VFI News)

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