

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 4, 2024 (Adar Aleph 24, 5784)

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Israel-Hamas War, Day 150

One Person Killed, Seven Wounded by Anti-tank Missile From Lebanon, Rescue Service Says

- *One person killed and seven wounded by anti-tank missile in Israel's north*
- *Top Hamas official: Hostage release, cease-fire deal might be reached by end of next week*
 - *Minister Benny Gantz kicks off round of talks with top U.S. officials in Washington*
 - *Gaza death toll rises to 30,534, Hamas-run health ministry says*
- *Israeli minister Benny Gantz kicks off round of talks with top U.S. officials in Washington D.C.*
 - *Israel boycotts Cairo hostage talks after Hamas refuses to list hostages*
 - *Israeli cabinet officials criticize Netanyahu for hostage talks demands*
 - *IDF names reservist killed in south Gaza fighting*

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IDF Spokesman: ‘IDF Did Not Fire on Gaza Aid Convoy’; IDF Spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari delivered a statement on Thursday, February 29, regarding that morning’s incident involving a humanitarian aid convoy in northern Gaza and the IDF’s ongoing humanitarian aid efforts. “This morning, the IDF coordinated a convoy of 38 trucks to provide additional humanitarian assistance to the residents of northern Gaza. This humanitarian aid came from Egypt, went through a security screening at the Kerem Shalom humanitarian crossing in Israel, and then entered Gaza for distribution by private contractors.” “As these vital humanitarian supplies were making their way towards Gazans in need, thousands of Gazans dispensed upon the trucks. Some began violently pushing and even trampling other Gazans to death, looting the humanitarian supplies,” he explained. According to Hagari, “The unfortunate incident resulted in dozens of Gazans killed and injured. Here are the facts,” he said: “At 4:40 a.m., the first aid truck in the humanitarian convoy started making its way through the humanitarian corridor that we were securing.” “At 4:45 a.m., a mob ambushed the aid trucks, bringing the convoy to a halt,” he said as he presented a new video of the incident. “As you can see, in this video, the tanks that were there to secure the convoy saw the Gazans being trampled and cautiously tried to disperse the mob with a few warning shots,” he added. He continued, “When the hundreds became thousands and things got out of hand, the tank commander decided to retreat to avoid harm to the thousands of Gazans that were there. Here you can see how cautious they were when they were backing up. I think, as a military man, they were backing up securely, risking their own lives, not shooting at the mob.” (INN / VFI News)

No Longer Afraid of Sparking War, Israel Takes Gloves off Against IRGC in Syria; Israel’s years-long air campaign against Iran-linked groups and weapons in Syria appears to have shifted into high gear in recent months, with strikes on high-value targets at a pace that is “changing the rules of the game,” according to experts. Although Israeli attacks on Iran-sponsored weapons transfers and Tehran-backed militias, including Hezbollah, go back to at least 2013, the air force is now unleashing more frequent operations that include assassinations of Iranian officials. Those on the ground have taken notice. In just the last few days, Israeli jets hit two members of the Hezbollah terror group traveling in a truck near the Syrian-Lebanon border Sunday morning, February 25, and bombed a residential building in an upscale neighborhood of the Syrian capital Damascus frequented by leaders of the IRGC, killing two people, according to local news sources. Tehran’s media sources claimed that no citizens of the Islamic Republic were killed. “[Israeli airstrikes in Syria] are no longer just about attacking weapons transfer or attacking Damascus International Airport,” said Carmit Valensi, a senior researcher on Syria and head of the northern arena program at the Tel Aviv-based Institute for National Security Studies (INSS). The uptick in attacks seemingly started sometime shortly after October 7, as Israel found itself fighting in Gaza and fending off attacks from Iran-backed groups from Lebanon, Syria, and beyond. (TOI / VFI News)

Hezbollah Rains 60 Rockets Down on Golan in Retaliation for Israeli Strikes; Hezbollah on Monday, February 26, fired dozens of rockets toward the Golan in a significant departure from its general focus on the northern Galilee. The Lebanese terrorist group said it was aiming for an IDF Golan base in retaliation for Israeli strikes near the city of Baalbek, which were themselves unusually deep strikes into Lebanon's territory. Baalbek is around 100 kilometers away from the Israeli border and is in Lebanon's northeast, whereas most IDF attacks to date have been focused only on southern Lebanon, or on Beirut, which is still much further south than Baalbek. Thankfully, there were no reports of injuries from what Hezbollah said was a 60-rocket barrage. The IDF did not say how many rockets were fired, but the Home Front Command only recorded 20 rocket sirens, appearing to ignore much of the Golan rocket fire as not dangerous during this round. Occasionally, Iranian-affiliated militias from Syria have fired small numbers of rockets on the Golan, but nothing near Monday's volume. Continuing the rounds of retaliation, the IDF later said it had killed senior Hezbollah official Hassan Hussein Salami in an airstrike on southern Lebanon. Salami, whose rank is equivalent to that of a brigade commander, was hit on the way to the southern Lebanon village of Majadel. This was one of the rare cases where the IDF intentionally took credit for the assassination. According to the IDF, Salami commanded one of Hezbollah's regional units, including managing attacks on IDF troops and Israeli communities in northern Israel, especially Kiryat Shmona. (JPost / VFI News)

Hamas' Sinwar Still in Khan Yunis, Hiding Behind Hostages – Report; Hamas' chief in Gaza Yahya Sinwar is believed to be hiding in tunnels under Khan Yunis, but getting to the terrorist leader will be difficult as he's seemingly surrounding himself with a human shield of hostages, Israeli, US, and Western intelligence and security officials told American media on Monday, February 26. According to the report, the central challenge in capturing or killing Sinwar will be trying to do so without killing or injuring nearby hostages. "It's not about locating him, it's about doing something" without putting the hostages at risk, a senior Israeli official told the American news outlet. According to Israeli press reports, soldiers have found Sinwar's clothes, notes that he wrote by hand, and even a toothbrush he may have used in the tunnels. Last week, a newspaper run by a Saudi-British businessman reported that Sinwar had managed to escape through a tunnel from Rafah to Egypt. The newspaper additionally claimed that eight large tunnels were running between Rafah and Egypt big enough for cars and small trucks. The report has been rejected by Israeli sources. One source close to senior Israeli leadership told the American news outlet that removing Sinwar would sever vital ties between Hamas and its international network: "We know of course someone else would step into his shoes, but it would either lead to a split or a tremendously weakened Hamas." (JPost / VFI News)

UC Berkeley: Jewish Students Forced to Evacuate through Tunnel by Violent Mob; Jewish students at UC Berkeley were forced to evacuate a theater on campus as a mob of anti-Israel protestors violently stormed a pro-Israel event Monday night, February 26. The event, 'Israel at War: Combat the Lies,' featured Ran Bar-Yoshafat, an IDF reservist who served in Gaza during the current war. Several hundred protestors chanted "Intifada! Intifada!" while banging on the doors of the Zellerbach Playhouse. At one point, a glass door was shattered by the protestors. Jewish media reported that multiple students were injured during the incident, including a young woman who was hurt while attempting to hold a door shut while the protestors attempted to break in. One student said that she saw a girl being grabbed by the neck and shoved by the angry mob. Another Jewish student said he was called a "dirty Jew" and spat at. Due to the violent protestors, security guards ordered the event attendees to evacuate via underground tunnels out of the building for their safety. The violent protest was held by Bears for Palestine, a local affiliate of the Students for Justice in Palestine movement. (INN / VFI News)

'I Don't Sleep More than Two Hours A Night': Teens Struggle with Trauma After Watching October 7 Videos; Since the beginning of the war, experts have been warning about the psychological

implications of watching footage from October 7 that had flooded social media. For children, who spend a significant part of their day on social media platforms and are exposed to disturbing content, the damage can be even more severe. Parents, educators, and students report anxiety among teenagers following prolonged exposure to such videos. The Israeli Pediatric Association recently conducted a study that revealed that 84% of Israeli children are experiencing emotional distress in the aftermath of the attacks. That figure increases to 93% when dealing with children directly affected by October 7, with 69% of them suffering from anxiety. The Israel National Cyber Directorate notes that Israeli children are exposed to the horrors of war on social media almost uncontrollably. According to studies, about 40% of children in Israel have been exposed to inappropriate content, mainly violence or bullying and sexually explicit material. In 2023, there was also an increase among those reporting that social media was affecting the quality of their sleep. “I haven't slept more than two hours a night lately,” shares a 7th-grade student. “The content I'm exposed to on social media keeps popping into my head every time I try to doze off. When I try to distance myself, it's everywhere. There's no escaping it.” On Sunday, February 25, Ohel Children’s Home and Family Services announced that it is assisting Israeli children affected by emotional distress following the October 7 massacre by translating and distributing two renowned workbooks on emotional resilience to Israel. The translated workbooks, titled “Inner Space: My Resilience Workbook” and “I Feel That Way and That’s Okay!”, serve as valuable tools for children to recognize and manage their emotions. (YNet / VFI News)

UK Announces £54 Million to Protect Jewish Communities, Prince William Visits Synagogues; On Wednesday, February 28, British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak announced £54 million (\$68 million US dollars) of new funding to protect Jewish communities after figures showed anti-Semitic incidents had hit a record high in Britain last year. A week after the heir-to-the-throne, Prince William, called for an end to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, William met young ambassadors from the Holocaust Educational Trust who are seeking to tackle hatred amid soaring antisemitism in Britain. On Thursday, he visited the Western Marble Arch Synagogue in London to hear about the rise in antisemitism. During his visit to the synagogue, the prince, who wore a kippah, listened to Jewish students as they recounted how there had been what one described as an “explosion” in antisemitism, including death threats and assaults. He also met with 94-year-old Holocaust survivor Renee Salt to hear about her experiences. Last week’s unusually direct intervention by William that “too many have been killed” in the Gaza conflict and that Hamas must release hostages generated international headlines as royals by convention avoid contentious political matters. But after becoming the first senior British royal to make an official visit to Israel and Palestinian territory in 2018, he has followed the region closely, his office said. The 41-year-old has been expected to step up and perform more public engagements after his father, King Charles, revealed earlier last month that he was undergoing treatment for an unspecified form of cancer. (JPost / VFI News)

Defying War’s Wreckage, Self-Drying Cherry Tomatoes Ripen Near Gaza; The first plants of a new cherry tomato species that self-dries naturally were planted in September 2023 at greenhouses in Netiv Ha’asara, in the agricultural heartland of southern Israel and one of the best places to grow tomatoes, on the border with the Gaza Strip. The first orders of the fruit, developed by an Israeli genomics company, were supposed to be shipped at the start of 2024. Then, on October 7, Hamas terrorists burst into southern Israel from Gaza, killing close to 1,200 people and abducting 253 hostages. The greenhouses were wrecked, the plants were ruined, and the Thai agricultural workers fled. “Everything was destroyed,” said Gil Ronen, the founder and CEO of NRGene, which uses algorithms to map out the genetic makeup of plants to increase their yields and resilience. But even before October was over, the work restarted and the first fruits of the newly planted vines have just been picked, with deliveries starting in the coming months. These cherry tomatoes come with a twist: instead of being pleasingly plump, they look wrinkled, more like a raisin or a dried cranberry. That is because they have self-dried naturally on the vine, offering a burst of sweet and sour flavor to the palate with four times the juiciness of sun-dried tomatoes, the founder says. “The product is completely natural, it didn’t undergo genetic engineering, nor gene editing,” said Ronen.

The self-drying feature is a completely natural characteristic of wild tomatoes that originally grew in South America, he explained and added that “after they ripen, wild tomatoes dry up so as not to rot too quickly.” (TOI / VFI News)



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