

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 21, 2024 (Adar Bet 11, 5784)

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Israel-Hamas War, Day 167

Israeli Army: More Than 50 Terrorists Killed in Gaza's Al-Shifa Hospital in Past Day

- *Israel Defense Forces says more than 140 terrorists killed since operation in Al-Shifa Hospital began, including more than 50 over past day*
- *Pentagon chief urges Israel to reconsider Rafah ground op, seek alternative options*
 - *Netanyahu tells Senate Republicans that even if Israel would have to go into Rafah without U.S. support, 'We won't stop'*
- *Blinken meets Saudi FM, discuss 'urgent need to protect all civilians in Gaza'*
 - *Hamas says Israel's response to their cease-fire proposal was negative*
- *World Food Program chief: 'Small window left to prevent outright famine in Gaza'*
 - *IDF says 350 suspects arrested at Gaza's Al-Shifa Hospital*

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Hezbollah Tells Iran It Would Fight Alone in Any War with Israel; With ally Hamas under attack in Gaza, the head of Iran's Quds Force visited Beirut in February to discuss the risk posed if Israel next aims at Lebanon's Hezbollah. This offensive could severely hurt Tehran's main regional partner, seven sources said. In Beirut, Quds chief Esmail Qaani met Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah for at least the third time since Hamas' deadly October 7 attacks on southern Israel and Israel's devastating retaliatory assault on Gaza. The conversation turned to the possibility of a full Israeli offensive to its north, in Lebanon, the sources said. As well as damaging the Shi'ite Islamist group, such an escalation could pressure Iran to react more forcefully than it has so far since October 7, three of the sources, Iranians within the inner circle of power, said. At the previously unreported meeting, Nasrallah reassured Qaani he didn't want Iran to get sucked into a war with Israel or the United States and that Hezbollah would fight on its own, all the sources said. "This is our fight," Nasrallah told Qaani, said one Iranian source with knowledge of the discussions. Meanwhile, last Wednesday, March 13, when Nasrallah gave his Ramadan speech, he discussed the Israeli draft bill and commented on Chief Rabbi Yitzhak Yosef's threat: "If they force us to go to the army, we'll all leave the country," in regards to the military draft of the Ultra-Orthodox. According to Nasrallah, the issue is "a big problem in Israeli society." He addressed the chief rabbi's ultimatum and rejoiced: "Let them pack their bags and leave." Throughout his speech, he argued that the IDF "is exhausted on all fronts," and that the number of Israeli casualties and wounded is high, thus, Israel wants to draft the ultra-Orthodox. (JPost / VFI News)

Half of Israel May Come Under Hezbollah Fire, Former Israeli Security Chief Warns; Israel's security establishment is continuing to monitor the developments in the North closely. Meanwhile, in the coalition, threats against Hezbollah are becoming more frequent. After Defense Minister Yoav Gallant warned that "the hourglass is about to reverse course," ex-MK Moshe Feiglin (Likud) said in a conversation with Gadi Ness on a radio show that "Lebanon may be destroyed in the next war." In the midst of this, former National Security Council (NSC) chief Uzi Dayan warned in an interview with Ness that "we need to be prepared for a rocket attack from Hezbollah that will hit half of the State of Israel." He explained, "In the North, our sovereignty is being violated on a daily basis. Residents are not returning to their communities. What needed to be done a month ago was an operation on both fronts, in the North and in the South. But now, Gaza takes precedence. Beirut will have to come after Gaza. We cannot just sit and get attacked and do nothing in response." "We need to attack Lebanon in general and Hezbollah specifically more harshly, and this should come in addition to having the army form a barrier, a death trap, along the settlements up North," he stressed. Meanwhile, a new survey conducted by the Jewish People's Policy Institute revealed that 63% of Israelis also think that the IDF should attack Hezbollah with full force at the first available opportunity or after the war. Of those surveyed, 79% of the Israeli public believes there is no chance for peace with the Palestinians, and 44% think that the government, the IDF, and the

Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) have equal and shared responsibility for the October 7 failure. (JPost / VFI News)

Israel Police Preparing for Mass Terrorist Infiltration from Jenin; Israel Police's Lowlands division conducted training exercises and security assessments throughout Israel's Northwest in recent weeks. These precautions are due to the ongoing warnings of possible Palestinian terrorist infiltrations into Jewish settlements within the region. Since the infiltration of Hamas terrorists into Israeli territory on October 7, police units have been preparing for any possible scenario of high-risk terrorist attacks. This comes following previous reports that under Hamas's original plan, attacks would occur beyond Gaza and throughout Judea and Samaria as well, perpetrated by local terror cells and allies. Jenin, located in the northwestern part of Judea and Samaria, has become, in recent years, a hotbed for terrorist activity. The IDF and Shin Bet killed a Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist in Jenin in a drone strike in late February en route to committing a shooting attack likely on Israeli forces. In January, three Palestinian men were killed in a hospital by Israeli commandos, with one being a member of the Palestinian terrorist group Hamas. Avi Daniel, Commander of Israel Police's Lowland Region, discussed the readiness of the security forces if a possible infiltration occurs, saying, "We are exceptionally strong and prepared for any scenario and intrusion." (JPost / VFI News)

IDF Obliterates Massive Hamas Tunnel Network Snaking Beneath Gaza: Officials; The IDF has leveled a mile-long section of one of the largest known Hamas tunnel networks snaking beneath the Gaza Strip, officials said. Members of the elite Yahalom unit and combat engineers with the 162nd Division detonated a large portion of a more than 7-mile-long tunnel located in central Gaza, the IDF said on Sunday, March 17. Dramatic video shows the moment the trigger is pulled, causing a mile-long plume of smoke to erupt out of the ground as the tunnel system caves in. The destroyed section was used to connect Hamas' military forces and served as an underground crossing route between northern and southern Gaza, according to the IDF. The complete 7.5-mile-long tunnel system dwarfs the largest tunnel discovered in December near the Erez Crossing, measuring about 2.5 miles. It took about three months for the IDF to announce that it had completed the destruction of the 2.5-mile-long tunnel, which was blown up and sealed with concrete. It remains unclear how long it would take the IDF to completely demolish and seal off the 7.5-mile-long tunnel in central Gaza. The IDF estimates that it has destroyed about 40% of Hamas terror tunnels, about double what US officials have estimated. (NYP / VFI News)

Senior Hamas and Houthi Figures Held Rare Meeting to Coordinate Actions Against Israel; Senior figures from Hamas and Yemen's Houthi rebels held a rare meeting to discuss coordinating their actions against Israel, Palestinian factional sources told French media. According to sources from Hamas and Islamic Jihad, leaders from the two Palestinian Islamist terror groups, as well as the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, held an "important meeting" with Houthi representatives about two weeks ago. The groups discussed "mechanisms to coordinate their actions of resistance" for the "next stage" of the war in Gaza, the sources said without identifying where the meeting took place. The Palestinian groups and the Houthis also talked about a possible Israeli ground assault into southern Gaza's Rafah, say the sources, who requested anonymity. The Houthis confirmed they would continue their attacks on Red Sea shipping to "support the Palestinian resistance," according to the Hamas and Islamic Jihad sources. (TOI / VFI News)

Iran Reportedly Pushed US to Broker Gaza Ceasefire During Secret Talks in Oman; During recent indirect talks, Iran asked the Biden administration to bring about a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war while the US pressed Tehran to curb attacks by its proxies, according to a renowned American news outlet's report published Friday, March 15. The report offered further details on the January meeting in Oman between the Biden administration's Middle East czar Brett McGurk, envoy on Iran Abram Paley,

and Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Ali Bagheri Kani. In addition to asking Iran to rein in attacks by Yemen's Houthi rebels and expressing concerns about its nuclear program, the report said that the American officials called for Iranian-backed militias in Iraq and Syria to stop targeting US forces. Citing US and Iranian officials, the report said Kani in turn relayed an Iranian request for the US to broker a ceasefire in Gaza, without specifying whether this meant a temporary truce or a permanent end to the fighting between Israel and Hamas. Two Iranian officials were quoted saying that the Islamic Republic continued to deny it controls the activities of its proxies, in particular the Houthis, but said it could influence them to bring attacks to a complete stop only after a ceasefire is reached. Though no agreement was reached, US and Iranian officials said they have continued to exchange messages via Oman about the proxies and a ceasefire. (TOI / VFI News)



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