

# **Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update August 26, 2024 (Av 22, 5784)**

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## **Israel-Hamas War, Day 325**

### **Hamas Calls for West Bank Escalation After Ben-Gvir's Al-Aqsa Status Quo Declaration**

- *Ben-Gvir pushes for new Temple Mount policy; PM's office: Status-quo unchanged*
- *Iranian FM says Tehran's response to Israel will be 'definite, calculated and accurate'*
  - *Israeli sailor killed in attack on northern Israel*
- *Nasrallah: Hezbollah targeted Israeli intelligence base in central Israel, says Iran, Houthis will also respond*
  - *Israeli delegation returns from Cairo following deal talks*
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***IDF Confirms Signs of Bullet Wounds Found on All Six Hostages' Bodies Recovered from Gaza;*** Evidence of bullet wounds was found on all six bodies of the hostages who were recovered from the Gaza Strip earlier this week, the IDF confirmed on Thursday, August 22. These are preliminary findings, the army stressed. The captives may have been killed by friendly fire. Alternatively, they may have been shot dead by their captors. It is not yet possible to determine the circumstances of the hostages' deaths definitively, the military underlined. However, Israeli media reported that the military believes the hostages were indeed executed by their captors during an IDF operation near where they were being held, with their guards possibly believing a rescue operation was underway. The investigation is ongoing, and findings will be presented to families and the public, the military said. The initial findings came from the L. Greenberg Institute of Forensic Medicine at Abu Kabir, which performed the autopsies and examined the bodies of the six hostages, the military stated. Four bodies that were found next to the hostages in Gaza are presumed to be the remains of the terrorists who were holding the six captives. No signs of gunshot wounds were observed upon the examination of these corpses. The bodies of the six men taken captive on October 7, all of whom were killed in captivity, were brought back to Israel for burial. They were Nadav Popplewell, Yagev Buchshtab, Yoram Metzger, Chaim Peri, Alexander Dancyg, and Avraham Munder, all found in the Khan Yunis area in Gaza. (*JPost / VFI News*)

***Israel Recovered the Six Dead Hostages in 'Complex Rescue Operation,' Says Bodies Were Held Under Humanitarian Area;*** The IDF recovered the bodies of the six deceased Israeli hostages in a rescue operation on Monday, August 19, the forces announced. "Overnight our forces returned the bodies of six of our hostages that had been held by the murderous Hamas terrorist organization," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement. "Our hearts grieve over the terrible loss," Netanyahu said. "My wife Sara and I convey our heartfelt condolences to the dear families." The bodies of the hostages returned from the Khan Yunis area in Gaza thanks to the efforts of the IDF's 98th Division and carried out by the "Yahalom" Unit of the Paratroopers Brigade, along with others, the IDF announced. In a statement, IDF International spokesperson Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said, "This was a complex rescue operation that was conducted both above and below ground. We have not yet finished all our missions in the area. We are still operating inside the tunnels." He continued, "The bodies were being held in a tunnel under an area previously designated as part of the Humanitarian Area in Khan Yunis." The forces located a tunnel shaft about 10 meters deep leading to an underground tunnel route where the bodies of the hostages were found, according to a statement released on Wednesday. "The soldiers of the Yahalom Unit and the ISA investigated the route and neutralized the obstructions, blast doors, weapons, explosives, and hideouts used by the terrorists," the IDF explained. (*FN / VFI News*)

***Hamas Sends Threatening Calls, Messages to Hostage Relatives, Former Hostages Speak out;*** Hamas has sent threatening phone calls and messages to relatives of Israeli hostages in Hamas captivity,

according to a report on Tuesday, August 20, by Israeli media. The messages included warnings such as: “If you don’t fight the government, you won’t see your loved ones return.” According to the report, the terror group also sent ransom requests, claiming that without payment, the hostage families wouldn’t receive information about their loved ones. An initial investigation suggests that those behind the threats are hostile actors, either of Iranian origin or affiliated with Hamas. Meanwhile, former hostages who have since been rescued reveal the conditions they lived in while in captivity. Noa Argamani, while talking to Japanese Foreign Minister Yoko Kamikawa said: “I had cuts on my head; they [Hamas] beat me all over my body ... No one came to give me medical help. Nobody. Until I was rescued.” Former hostage Agam Goldstein-Almog also wrote about the abuse and antisemitism she was subjected to while in Hamas captivity. “My Hamas guards hated me for being Jewish, so I was coerced into reciting Islamic prayers and made to wear a hijab,” she wrote. “I was forbidden from mourning my father and sister and often ordered to look down at the ground.” While being held in a terror tunnel, Goldstein-Almog said that she came across six fellow female hostages. The hostages told her how they were molested by armed men who entered a room where they were showering. (*JPost / VFI News*)

***US Ambassador to the UN: Pressure Hamas to Accept the Ceasefire Deal;*** A potential ceasefire and hostage release agreement “is now within reach,” US Ambassador to the United Nations Linda Thomas-Greenfield informed the Security Council on Thursday, August 22, according to British media. Thomas-Greenfield mentioned that a compromise proposal, introduced last week by the US, Qatar, and Egypt, aligns with a plan proposed by President Joe Biden in May and endorsed by the Security Council in June. “Israel has accepted the bridging proposal. Now Hamas must do the same,” she stated to the council. “As members of this council, we must speak with one voice, and we must use our leverage to press Hamas to accept the bridging proposal.” On Sunday, Hamas officially announced that it is rejecting the proposal for an agreement for the release of hostages and a ceasefire as presented at the summit in Doha, Qatar. “The proposal completely meets Netanyahu’s conditions and especially his refusal to a permanent ceasefire and a complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip, and his insistence on continuing to occupy the Netzarim axis, the Rafah crossing, and the Philadelphi Corridor. It also adds new conditions regarding the exchange of prisoners, and a withdrawal of the Israeli position in other sections, which prevents the success of the deal,” Hamas said. (*INN/ VFI News*)

***US Officials: Sinwar Trapped Underground, Running Low on Supplies;*** US officials believe that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar wants to strike a deal with Israel since he is “trapped” underground and running out of ammunition and supplies, American media journalist David Ignatius wrote in an opinion column on Wednesday, August 21. Ignatius notes that Hamas is “playing a waiting game,” hoping that Iran or Hezbollah will attack Israel, a move that would transform the battlefield. However, he writes that Iran will likely disappoint Hamas. He reports that US officials estimate that Iranian leaders have decided to delay their strike on Israel, deterred by strong threats by the US. According to Ignatius, Tehran is urging Hezbollah to strike Israel in its place. On Hezbollah’s part, US officials believe that its leader Hassan Nasrallah has backed down from his initial plan to launch a missile barrage on Tel Aviv and will instead choose to hit other targets. Meanwhile, a senior Egyptian official who spoke with US officials told them that “Sinwar emphasizes that his life and safety must be ensured,” the official stated, meaning that Israel would have to pledge not to assassinate the Hamas leader from the moment it signs the deal. (*INN /VFI News*)

***Hezbollah Rocket Barrage Hammers Homes in Golan Heights;*** Terrorist organization Hezbollah rained rockets down on Israeli territory this week with over 50 rockets striking the Golan Heights during a Wednesday attack, August 21, that injured one individual and destroyed two houses – part of a deadly exchange still ongoing between the Lebanese group and Israel. “Hezbollah continues to indiscriminately fire projectiles toward Israel,” the Israel Defense Forces said in a statement Wednesday. “Just now, approx. 50 projectiles were fired and some fell in the town of Katzrin.” Israel claims the attack was a

response to their successful strike on a weapons storage facility in Lebanon. That strike reportedly killed at least one person. “There was no other target in the area other than a civilian neighborhood and kids on their summer vacation,” Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani said following the attack. “Attacks against our civilians will not go unanswered.” Israel has controlled the Golan Heights since capturing it at the end of the Six Days War. Israel maintains the Golan Heights is necessary for national security and the territory was officially annexed in 1967. The United States has recognized it as Israel’s territory since 2019. (FN /VFI News)

***Gallant in Gaza: ' Hamas Rafah Brigade Has Been Defeated'***; On Wednesday morning, August 21, Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant entered the Gaza Strip with troops from the IDF’s Division 162, deployed to the Rafah area and the Philadelphi route. Minister Gallant held an operational situation assessment together with senior IDF officials. He was briefed on the operational activity that enabled the defeat of the [Hamas] Rafah division and the destruction of over 150 tunnels in the area. Minister Gallant instructed the forces to concentrate efforts in the coming period on completing the destruction of the remaining tunnels. Gallant told the troops, “I came here first and foremost to express my appreciation. The Rafah brigade was defeated by the IDF’s Division 162.” (INN / VFI News)

***Report: Hamas Considering Avenging Haniyeh by Killing Israelis Abroad***; The Hamas terrorist organization is considering carrying out assassinations of Israelis abroad to take revenge for the assassination of its leader Ismail Haniyeh last month, Israeli media reported. The report, which cites Arab sources, comes as Israel continues to wait for the attack Iran has been threatening to launch since Haniyeh was assassinated in Tehran. The Hamas terrorist organization, like Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, is an Iranian proxy that accepts funding, weapons, and orders from Tehran. Its ability to retaliate against Israel directly for the assassination of Haniyeh is limited given the losses it has suffered since the war in Gaza began. Israel has not claimed responsibility for Haniyeh’s assassination. (INN / VFI News)



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