

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update January 23, 2025 (Tevet 23, 5785)



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Israel-Hamas Cease-fire Day 5 - Israel-Hamas War 475 Days, Top Israeli Army Officer Says 13 Palestinian Militants Killed as West Bank Offensive Expands

- **LEBANON:** Israel seeks U.S. support to delay IDF withdrawal; Two UNIFIL soldiers wounded in Israeli bombardment
- **ISRAEL:** Swiss prosecutors examining "incitement to genocide" complaints against Isaac Herzog
 - **GAZA:** Israel to let 50 wounded Hamas militants cross for treatment in Egypt daily
 - **WEST BANK:** Thirteen Palestinians killed in Jenin, military source says
- **GAZA HOSTAGE DEAL:** Trump Mideast envoy Witkoff to visit Israel as part of 'inspection' team
 - **GAZA HOSTAGE DEAL:** Saudi FM says 'Responsibility of all region to ensure that cease-fire continues';
Trump Mideast envoy Witkoff to visit Israel to be part of inspection team in Gaza
- **ISRAEL:** Four people wounded in a stabbing in Tel Aviv by a Moroccan national with U.S. residence
 - **GAZA:** Israel to let 50 wounded Hamas militants cross for treatment in Egypt daily; 59 bodies recovered from rubble in past 24 hours, Hamas-run Health Ministry says
 - **WEST BANK:** Three Palestinians shot during East Jerusalem disturbances

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‘A Day of Joy and Comfort’: Herzog Welcomes Return of Hostages; President Isaac Herzog said that the entire nation is “rejoicing at your return” after Romi Gonen, Emily Damari and Doron Steinbrecher crossed into Israel after 471 days in captivity. “We send you and your families a huge embrace. This is a day of joy and comfort, and the beginning of a challenging journey of recovery and healing together,” says Herzog, sending his thoughts to the “anxious and grieving families whose loved ones have not yet returned.” The three Israeli hostages were returned to Israel by Hamas and Israel released 90 Palestinian security prisoners as the ceasefire took effect at 11:15 a.m. – almost three hours later than planned, on Sunday, January 19. At 5:07 p.m., Hamas had confirmed that 28-year-old Emily Damari, 23-year-old Romi Gonen, and 31-year-old Doron Steinbrecher had been released to the Red Cross in the vicinity of central Gaza. By 5:38 p.m. the Red Cross had handed them over to IDF special forces, including the Shayetet 13 naval commandos. At 5:53 p.m., the IDF had returned the three hostages to Israeli territory. The deal will see 33 hostages released in the first 42-day phase in exchange for the release of security prisoners, humanitarian aid, and an IDF withdrawal to a security perimeter around Gaza around 700-1,100 meters from the Israeli border. *(TOI / VFI News)*

90 Palestinian Prisoners Released on Sunday; Up to 1,904 to Be Released During the First Phase of the Deal; Ninety Palestinian prisoners were released in exchange for the three Israeli hostages released from Hamas captivity on Sunday, January 19, the Israel Prison Service announced in the early hours of Monday. The Palestinian prisoners had been transferred from various prisons across the country to the Ofer Prison in the vicinity of Jerusalem. There, they underwent security and identity checks in addition to medical examinations before being subsequently released. Red Cross buses transferred 78 prisoners to the Bitunya checkpoint in Judea and Samaria ahead of their release there, while Israeli police were set to oversee the transfer of 12 prisoners to east Jerusalem. Overall, Israel is set to release up to 1,904 Palestinian prisoners and detainees, including several serving multiple life sentences for deadly terror attacks and murder, in return for 33 Israeli hostages held in the Gaza Strip during the first, 42-day phase of its deal with Hamas, according to a government decision made early Saturday morning. Among the Palestinians to go free are 737 jailed detainees and security prisoners, some of whom are serving life sentences for murder. They include members of Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and the Palestinian Authority’s ruling Fatah movement, along with women and children being held in Israeli jails. Israel will also be releasing 1,167 Palestinians detained in the Gaza Strip during the IDF’s ground offensive, who did not participate in the Hamas-led October 7, 2023, invasion and massacre in southern Israel. *(TOI / VFI News)*

For Many Israelis, Hostage Release is Tempered by Concerns about Freeing Murderers; October 18, 2011, was a landmark day in Israeli history. Five years after he was kidnapped by Hamas terrorists, Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit was released from captivity in Gaza and photographed in uniform saluting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in what felt like an iconic moment and a sign of the success of a committed protest movement for his freedom, led by his indefatigable parents. When she ruminated on the ceasefire deal that was announced on Wednesday, January 15, that was the moment Israeli politician Einat Wilf recalled — because in exchange for Shalit’s freedom, Israel released 1,027 Palestinian security prisoners, including Yahya Sinwar, who would become the architect of Hamas’s Oct. 7, 2023, massacre. “So many of us felt relief at the Shalit deal, and we know how that ended,” said Wilf. “One thousand and twenty-seven terrorists. Can we be sure that what was, will not be again?” Most Israelis support the ceasefire deal, which if fully implemented would end the 15-month-long Israel-Hamas war and free the 98 people Hamas still holds hostage. Some families of terror victims have another story to tell: American-Israeli blogger and businessman Hillel Fuld revealed that the terrorist who killed his brother, Ari, was set to be released. “Seeing this name on the list of terrorists about to be released shattered my heart. Again. He murdered Ari, my older brother. And now he’s getting out,” Fuld wrote. Ari Fuld was stabbed to death by a 17-year-old Palestinian at the Gush Etzion Junction in Judea and Samaria on 16 September 2018. The terrorist stabbed Fuld, who shot him before collapsing and later being pronounced dead. (*TOI / VFI News*)

Fitch Analyst: Gaza Ceasefire Could Positively Impact Israel’s Credit Rating; A ceasefire in Gaza’s ongoing conflict could positively impact Israel’s pressured credit rating, Fitch’s top sovereign rating analyst said on Thursday, January 16, according to renowned British media. Israel’s credit rating, currently rated “A,” remains on a downgrade warning, also known as a “negative outlook” in the terminology used by rating agencies. “We’ve got Israel on negative, I guess that’s something that’s really related to public finances associated with the war,” said James Longsdon, Fitch’s head of sovereign ratings, at a firm-hosted conference. “To the extent that (the war) can sort of stabilize, that would be positive I think there.” His comments follow the agreement between Israel and Hamas on a ceasefire and hostage release deal, which was announced on Wednesday but was not yet signed when Longsdon spoke. Last August, Fitch downgraded Israel’s credit rating to “A” from “A+” with a negative outlook, citing “the continuation of the war in Gaza, heightened geopolitical risks and military operations on multiple fronts.” (*INN / VFI News*)

Trump’s Appointed National Security Adviser: ‘ Hamas Will Never Rule Gaza; Mike Waltz, Trump’s appointed National Security Adviser, pledged in an interview with American media on Sunday, January 19, that Hamas will not control the Gaza Strip. According to Waltz, “Hamas will never rule Gaza – we’ve made it very clear to the Israelis...if they need to go back in, we’re with them if Hamas doesn’t live up to the terms of this agreement.” Earlier in the day, it was reported that Trump was considering temporarily deporting some of the two million residents of Gaza, in order to rebuild the Gaza Strip, by another American news outlet. Further, throughout the ceasefire period, Trump’s envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, is expected to remain in the region “almost permanently,” to ensure that the ceasefire is upheld by all sides. It was also reported that Witkoff is considering a visit to the Gaza Strip. (*INN/VFI News*)

US Said Leading Efforts to Replace UNRWA, as Ban that Would Paralyze Operations Looms; The US is leading talks at the United Nations to find a replacement for the global body’s Palestinian refugee aid agency, as a deadline fast approaches when Israeli laws banning cooperation with the body come into effect, a Hebrew newspaper reported on Thursday, January 16. Legislation passed by the Knesset on October 28 bars the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) from operating in Israeli territory and prevents Israeli authorities from holding any contact with the agency. The laws were to

go into effect after a 90-day grace period from their passage, which expires in two weeks. The law is expected to effectively cripple the agency's ability to operate, as its operations are dependent on contact with Israeli authorities. With no replacement set up, Israel is under pressure to find an alternative for institutes and services operated by UNRWA that are expected to collapse, the report said. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres is refusing to even speak directly with Israel about a replacement, several unnamed sources familiar with the situation told the Hebrew news outlet. However, senior UNRWA officials have said that they were open to talking with Israel, but no solution has been presented so far. (TOI/VFI News)

Ugandan Judge Who Backed Israel in Genocide Case Said Set to Become ICJ Chief; Justice Julia Sebutinde of Uganda is set to be appointed president of the International Court of Justice according to media reports, after Lebanese President Joseph Aoun earlier last week summoned Nawaf Salam to designate him prime minister. An ICJ statement released on Tuesday, January 14, announcing Salam's resignation did not mention Sebutinde, but as the court's current vice president, she is expected to be promoted to the top spot. Justice Salam began his role as ICJ president in February 2024 and has served as a judge on the court since 2018. In his first speech as premier, Salam, referring to Israel, whose cases he until recently oversaw, said he would work to "impose the complete withdrawal of the enemy from the last occupied inch of our land." Sebutinde, on the other hand, was the only judge on the 17-member ICJ panel to vote against all six measures adopted by the court last year in a ruling ordering Israel to take action to prevent potential acts of genocide as it fought Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip. She was also one of only two judges to oppose the court's assertion that Palestinians' claims of war crimes in Gaza may fall under the scope of the Genocide Convention. The other was Israeli Justice Aharon Barak. (Contrary to some reports at the time, the court did not rule it was plausible that genocide was taking place.) (TOI/VFI News)

Survey: 3/4 of New Yorkers Support Mask Ban Amid Anti-Israel Protests; Three-quarters of New Yorkers support banning masks in public as activists frequently wear masks at hateful anti-Israel protests, American media reported, citing a recent survey. The survey, which was conducted by the Mercury Public Affairs organization for the civil rights coalition #UnMaskHateNY, found that 75% of New Yorkers support a mask ban. In addition, 68% of respondents said that the value of free expression must be balanced with public safety. 74% of Jewish respondents said that discrimination and harassment based on bigotry are worse than before the October 7 massacre, compared to 60% of all respondents. 76% of Jewish respondents said that they feel less safe now, compared to 50% of all respondents. In June, the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) called for a ban on wearing masks at political rallies following a series of antisemitic incidents. During numerous anti-Israel rallies, activists wearing masks or other face coverings have broken the law, called for violence, and committed acts of vandalism and violence. The wearing of masks by perpetrators of violence and other illegal acts has made identifying them more difficult for the police. In one incident, a group of people covering their faces took over a subway car in New York and demanded that any "Zionists" on board raise their hands, saying that it was their "chance to get out." (INN/VFI News)

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