

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update January 8, 2026 (Tevet 19, 5786)

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Israel-Hamas Cease-fire Reports in Gaza: Four Killed, Including Two Children, in Drone Strike on Khan Yunis Tent

- *Tel Aviv University students protest IDF raid on Bir Zeit University in West Bank*
- *IDF: Hezbollah militant struck in southern Lebanon in response to alleged cease-fire violations*
 - *Masked Israelis set fire to a Palestinians' vehicle in the West Bank, wounding three*
- *IDF says rocket launched from Gaza, fell in the strip; Lebanese Army announces progress in Hezbollah disarmament*
 - *Gaza reports: Search resumes for deceased hostage Ran Gvili*
- *Police probe bus driver for murder after fatal ramming at Haredi protest in Jerusalem*
 - *Iran army chief threatens preemptive action over U.S., Israel rhetoric*
- *Anti-government protesters block junction near Supreme Court in Jerusalem, four arrested*

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Rubio Vows to Eliminate Hezbollah, Iran Operations from Venezuela after Maduro Capture; In the wake of Nicolás Maduro's capture, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Venezuela will no longer serve as a hub for Iran-backed Hezbollah or other malign actors operating in the Western Hemisphere. In televised remarks on Sunday, Rubio framed the post-Maduro transition as an opportunity to uproot entrenched terror networks and to sever Caracas's long-touted connections to Tehran's proxies. Security analysts cited longstanding open-source reporting about Hezbollah's presence in Venezuela, including alleged access to state institutions and documentation, and the use of logistics hubs for financial and operational activity across Latin America. Rubio indicated Washington would work with any transitional authority and rely on US counterterrorism agencies to identify and dismantle networks tied to Iran and Hezbollah that have used the country as a base. Hezbollah condemned the US operation that removed Maduro, while regional watchers said the depth of any purge depends on the shape of the next government and how quickly it cooperates. Rubio's comments underscored a broader US push to curtail Iranian reach in the Americas at a moment of flux for Venezuela's politics and for allied groups long protected by the former regime. *(FOX/VFI News)*

IDF Hits Hezbollah Radwan Training Site and Depots in Southern Lebanon; On Friday, January 2, the IDF carried out strikes on several Hezbollah targets in southern Lebanon, including a training compound used by the terror group's Radwan Force and nearby weapons depots. Images from the Jezzine district showed smoke rising after Israeli planes targeted positions in the Rihan Heights as part of ongoing efforts to blunt cross-border threats. The army said the targets were linked to efforts by Hezbollah to regenerate capabilities near the frontier. Recent weeks have seen periodic escalations, with Israel emphasizing that strikes are aimed at preventing rearmament and deterring incursions while maintaining readiness along the northern border. The operation reflects Israel's stated goal of degrading elite Radwan elements positioned to threaten northern communities, even as broader diplomacy continues. It also highlights the delicate balance between localized enforcement actions and the risk of broader confrontation should responses spiral. *(TOI/VFI News)*

Israel Updates Guidance: Avoid Travel to Venezuela after US Operation; Israel's Foreign Ministry updated its travel guidance on Saturday, January 3, advising citizens — including dual Israeli-Venezuelans — to avoid travel to Venezuela following the US strike and the capture of Nicolás Maduro. The advisory cited security concerns during a volatile transition and reminded the public that Caracas severed relations with Jerusalem in 2009. Officials emphasized that consular assistance could be limited for Israelis already in the country. The notice came as multiple governments reassessed risk levels and airlines adjusted routes amid heightened uncertainty about the local security landscape and potential for unrest. The update aligns with broader regional caution as authorities monitor developments, from street protests to ripple effects on diplomatic ties and travel logistics. *(TOI/VFI News)*

Aliyah Ministry Closes 2025 with 21,900 New Immigrants; Israel closed 2025 with 21,900 new immigrants, the Aliyah and Integration Ministry reported, noting that roughly one-third were ages 18–35.

Interest surged worldwide, with the Jewish Agency citing tens of thousands opening aliyah files as fairs and outreach drew large crowds in Europe and beyond. Officials highlighted strong participation from France and the United Kingdom among the leading countries of origin, alongside continued arrivals from Russia and elsewhere. The figures reflect both long-term demographic trends and the impact of community programs designed to ease integration. The ministry said it would prioritize employment assistance, language training, and regional absorption to support families as they settle into communities across the country. (*JPost/VFI News*)

Australian Family Becomes First Olim of 2026; A Sydney family, Trevor and Dalit with their daughter Ashira landed at Ben-Gurion Airport on January 1 to become Israel's first new immigrants of 2026, the Aliyah Ministry announced. Their son, Levi Zaks, made aliyah earlier and serves in the IDF, a point of pride the family shared as they began their new chapter. The ministry said their arrival reflects steady momentum in aliyah interest as the new year opens, with logistical teams assisting newcomers from paperwork to housing and school placement. The family's story resonated with communities in both Israel and Australia following months of preparation and anticipation. They credited support networks for smoothing the process and expressed gratitude for the welcome at the airport, a symbolic start to life in Israel that many Olim describe as both emotional and energizing. (*JPost/VFI News*)

Tourism Rebounds with 1.3 Million Visitors in 2025, Led by US, France, UK; Israel's Tourism Ministry reported an estimated 1.3 million visitors in 2025 as the sector rebounded from recent shocks. The United States topped countries of origin, followed by France and the United Kingdom, reflecting pent-up demand and the gradual restoration of air links and itineraries. Officials pointed to pilgrimage traffic, heritage sites, and urban cultural draws as anchors of the recovery. The ministry and industry partners have focused on safety, service, and targeted marketing, positioning Israel to build on momentum as 2026 begins. While challenges remain, stakeholders expressed cautious optimism that expanding routes and stable conditions could lift visitor numbers further in the months ahead. (*JPost/VFI News*)

Israeli Artists Build Bridges at Xavier University, Nation's Only Catholic HBCU; Israeli musicians Neta Elkayam and Amit Hai Cohen shared North African Jewish music and stories with students at Xavier University in New Orleans, the United States' only Catholic historically Black college/university, emphasizing cultural connection beyond language. Organizers said the program encouraged dialogue and curiosity at a time when many campuses are polarized. Students described the encounter as a window into Mizrahi traditions and rhythms, while the artists highlighted the shared themes of identity, resilience, and joy. The visit is part of a wider effort to build people-to-people ties through art, faith, and performance. Amid rising tensions in global discourse, the evening modeled how music can foster empathy, with participants leaving energized to learn more about Hebrew, Arabic, and the stories behind the songs. (*JPost/VFI News*)

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