



ISRAEL UPDATE



Update from Israel

December 11, 2025 - October 7 War, Day 797, 1 hostage body remains in captivity.

Gaza Ceasefire and the Disarmament of Hamas

- The body of Staff Sgt. Ran Gvili remains in Gaza with search efforts halted due to stormy weather. Click [here](#) to read his heroic story.
- Prime Minister Netanyahu said that the first phase of the Gaza ceasefire is almost complete. Click [here](#) for a video of his statement.
- Hamas introduced a significant new condition for moving into the long-term ceasefire phase, indicating a willingness to discuss "freezing or storing" its weapons contingent upon immediate Israeli concessions.
- Hamas leaders specified that this move is non-negotiable until Israel first meets three prerequisites: the cessation of lethal strikes, the opening of a crucial border crossing into Gaza and a dramatic increase in humanitarian aid.
- In response to these demands, Israeli authorities reiterated that the return of all hostages and their remains is the fundamental prerequisite for any full-scale reopening of border crossings into Gaza.
- Analysts warn that the ceasefire's second phase, which includes disarmament, military withdrawal and long-term governance, poses far greater obstacles than the initial hostage exchange period.

The International Stabilization Force (ISF)

- A US official revealed yesterday that the planned ISF will not be deployed in areas controlled by Hamas in Gaza. This limitation fundamentally contradicts the force's stated goal within the peace plan.
- Furthermore, a key potential contributor, Azerbaijan, indicates that it has not committed troops and shares concerns with other Muslim-majority nations regarding Hamas engagement.
- Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC), speaking at a Jerusalem Post conference on Capitol Hill yesterday, publicly dismissed the ISF's viability altogether, stating that disarming Hamas is

a task only Israel can accomplish, and that relying on an international force for this role is unrealistic.

- Graham argued that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman “is not going to recognize Israel until he gets an outcome better for the Palestinians, or he will get killed.”
- He stressed that Israel must hold firm until its security is guaranteed, stating, “ Hamas needs to go. Hezbollah needs to be disarmed. I am not even approaching normalization until Iran’s proxies cannot generate another Oct. 7.”
- Speaking at the same conference, Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar tempered expectations for an Israel-Syria security agreement (a Trump administration priority), stating that the countries are now “further from reaching one than we were a few weeks ago.” Sa’ar attributed the widening gaps to new demands from Syria, though he did not provide specific details on the nature of the developments.
- Italy is considering sending troops to join the ISF, the first European nation to do so.

The Board of Peace

- The United States is expected to announce the establishment of the Board of Peace — the international body intended to oversee Gaza's management — at the end of the month, according to a senior European official.
- The initial timeframe for the announcement, which is part of Washington’s second phase of the peace plan, was mid-December but has since been postponed. The revised date aligns with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's scheduled visit to the US. He will meet with President Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago on December 29 to advance the plan.
- Once announced, the Board of Peace (to be headed by Trump) will establish an executive committee, which will then nominate the Palestinian technocrats responsible for the Strip’s day-to-day management. US envoy Mike Waltz confirmed that announcements on these second-phase components are expected soon.
- It appears that former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair is no longer under consideration as a member of the Board of Peace. The Financial Times reported that opposition from Arab and Muslim countries stems from the view that he holds responsibility for the 2003 Iraq War.

Northern Border and Regional Deterrence

- Israel intensified high-level diplomatic communication with foreign partners over the past week, seeking to preempt a wider regional conflict and stabilize the northern border with Lebanon.
- Officials conveyed deterrent messages to Hezbollah, warning that continued rearmament efforts and repeated border skirmishes would escalate the risk of a decisive Israeli military response.
- The political and military establishment kept northern communities on high alert, signaling that any significant escalation or security breach would prompt immediate, firm military retaliation.
- Diplomatic exchanges highlighted Israel's core concern over Hezbollah's military buildup, which the government views as a destabilizing factor requiring continued vigilance and international pressure on the Iran-backed terror group.
- Despite reports that the Lebanese Army has [disarmed](#) 80% of Hezbollah’s weapons south of the Litani River, Israel is losing patience as a key deadline nears.

Haredi Military Exemption Debate

- Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu publicly defended the government's controversial bill regulating military exemptions for ultra-Orthodox (Haredi) students during a heated Knesset debate on Monday.
- Netanyahu claimed the newly revised draft legislation marked the "beginning of a historic process" to increase Haredi conscription and would significantly ease the burden on active and reserve forces.
- Opposition Leader Yair Lapid vowed to fight the bill by every means, condemning the government's proposal as an "evasion law" that fails to meet the military's urgent need for recruits.
- Israel's Attorney General believes the proposed legislation fails to meet the military's needs and rather than incentivizing Haredi enlistment serves the needs of Haredi yeshivas and their students. Read more [here](#).
- A poll found that 94% of former Soviet Union (FSU) immigrants support a mandatory draft law for all citizens and that nearly 70% do not want Netanyahu to continue in office. This community represents approximately one million eligible voters and is poised to be a major factor in the next election.

Muslim Brotherhood (MB) Controversy

- Florida Governor Ron DeSantis designated the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) as a "foreign terrorist organization" via an executive order, following Texas Governor Greg Abbott's similar move last week.
- CAIR's Florida chapter immediately filed a lawsuit challenging the order, which Interim Executive Director Hiba Rahim denounced as "defamatory and unconstitutional" at a Tampa press conference. See this [video](#) from CBS News in Miami.
- Efforts across Europe and North America have intensified to target specific MB-linked charities and financial entities believed to be channeling funds, making them the primary operational focus of the diplomatic drive this week.
- In the Middle East, the push for the MB designation faced new resistance, with Turkey and Qatar warning that the move would be a "drastic overreach" that ignores the political realities of the movement in many nations.
- Israeli officials continued to press Western allies to formalize the MB designation, leveraging ongoing US legal pressure and emphasizing the organization's global financial support structure for extremist groups.
- The leader of Israel's Ra'am Party (United Arab List), MK Mansour Abbas has announced plans to separate from the Shura Council and Muslim Brotherhood. See more in this [article](#).

Prime Minister's Pardon Request

- A new survey released this week by the Times of Israel indicates that a majority of Israelis (approximately 53%) oppose granting Prime Minister Netanyahu a presidential pardon unless it is conditional on an admission of guilt or remorse.
- Netanyahu clarified his stance on the pardon request, stating that he would not retire from political life even if clemency were granted.
- Analysts view the public debate over a potential pardon as a significant ongoing internal political risk that could complicate the government's wartime decision-making and erode coalition support. See this [video](#) from the Australian media on how the issue is polarizing the Israeli public.

- During the Knesset debate, Netanyahu dismissed opposition claims that his wartime policies had caused a "collapse of Israel's international standing," insisting the country remained "stronger than ever" both economically and militarily.
- Netanyahu used the platform to defend his own legal situation, his handling of the Gaza war and the governing coalition's proposed commission of inquiry into the October 7 massacre.

Economy and Business

- Shari Redstone, formerly of Paramount, has taken a leadership role at the Israeli entertainment company Sipur, noting that its focus on projects combating antisemitism aligns with her family foundation's goals.
- The Bank of Israel released data showing continued strain on the national labor market due to the large number of reservists still on active duty, noting significant impacts on the high-tech, construction and agricultural sectors.

Eurovision Controversy

- Iceland has become the fifth nation to announce it will boycott the 2026 Eurovision Song Contest, joining Spain, Ireland, Slovenia and the Netherlands.
- The decision, formalized by Icelandic broadcaster RÚV on Wednesday, follows confirmation last Thursday that Israel will participate in the competition. RÚV stated that Israel's participation, despite military action in Gaza, has caused "disunity" among members of the European Broadcasting Union (EBU) and the public.
- Leading up to the confirmation, international petitions backed by artists and cultural figures were submitted to the European Broadcasting Union (EBU), urging a ban on Israel's participation unless specific humanitarian conditions are met.
- Israeli officials and cultural figures launched counter-campaigns emphasizing that excluding Israel from the contest would represent a politicization of culture and discrimination against the nation's artists.
- The European Broadcasting Union has maintained its non-political status. Still, pressure remains high on the body to address growing public and political outcry across member states.

Further Reading

- [The Transatlantic Rift Over Gaza's Future](#)
- [The Extraordinary Logic of Netanyahu's Bid for a Pardon](#)
- [Trump is Right to Crack Down on the Muslim Brotherhood](#)

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