



ISRAEL UPDATE



Update from Israel

February 12, 2026

Netanyahu in Washington for urgent talks on Iran with President Trump

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Iran

- Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin **Netanyahu traveled to Washington** this week for talks with US President Donald Trump, as the United States resumes negotiations with Iran over its nuclear program.
- The visit, moved forward at Netanyahu's request, comes against the backdrop of renewed diplomatic momentum following **last week's US–Iran discussions** in Oman on the one hand, and an ongoing American military buildup in the region on the other. Netanyahu said ahead of his departure that the talks would focus "first and foremost" on Iran, alongside discussions on Gaza and broader regional developments.
- Before meeting with President Trump yesterday, Netanyahu met with senior US officials, including **Secretary of State Rubio**, as well as Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and presidential advisor Jared Kushner.
- Israeli media have highlighted the fact that this is **Netanyahu's seventh meeting with Trump in the US** since the inauguration in January 2025, alongside an additional visit by the US President to Jerusalem – an unprecedented record.
- Earlier, President Trump, while describing the US's talks with Iran as "very good," suggested openness to a narrower, nuclear-focused deal, emphasizing that any agreement must prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons. Following initial US-Iran meetings, Trump said **no definitive decisions had been reached** but that negotiations with the Islamic Republic would continue.

- At the White House, **Netanyahu pressed the US administration** to expand the scope of any potential agreement with Tehran beyond nuclear enrichment, urging that limits on Iran's ballistic missile program, a cessation of attacks against Iranian civilians, and an end to the regime's support for regional proxy groups be included in any potential deal.
- In parallel, the US continues to **significantly increase its military presence near Iran**, assembling what President Trump described as a "massive armada" of naval, air and missile-defense assets across the Middle East. The buildup includes the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group, additional destroyers armed with long-range Tomahawk missiles, advanced fighter aircraft deployed to regional bases and reinforced Patriot missile defenses in the Gulf. Additional military assets are said to be headed to the region. In practical terms, this force gives Washington the ability to conduct sustained air and naval operations against Iran, strike hardened targets and defend US bases and allies.
- A number of Israeli reporters have pointed out that in all of Netanyahu's previous meetings with Trump, the **Israeli prime minister has more or less come away having been granted what he sought**.
- Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi **lashed out at Israeli-American philanthropist Miriam Adelson**, accusing her of promoting misleading claims about Iran as he invoked an antisemitic trope of "dual loyalties." Araghchi also said that Tehran prefers a diplomatic path in renewed talks with Washington but warned that his country is prepared for confrontation if negotiations fail, insisting its nuclear program is peaceful and that its missile and proxy networks are non-negotiable.
- In a significant win for Trump's plans in Gaza, earlier this week, **Indonesia's military chief** said the country is preparing for the potential deployment of 5,000 to 8,000 troops to the Strip under the peace plan.

Herzog in Australia

- Israeli President Isaac Herzog this week conducted an **official visit to Australia** focused on solidarity with the country's Jewish community following the December terror attack on a Hanukkah gathering at Sydney's Bondi Beach that killed 15 people.
- The visit, which was held at the **invitation of the Australian government and Jewish communal leadership**, included meetings with bereaved families, community representatives, and senior national leaders, as well as a memorial visit to the attack site.
- Jewish organizations said the visit was a **welcome acknowledgement of communal trauma**, was able to reinforce Jewish communal security concerns, and underscored the longstanding ties between Australia and Israel amid a period of heightened antisemitism and public tension.
- The visit prompted **large-scale protests in major cities**, significant police deployments and extraordinary security measures, all of which reflected sharp divisions within Australian society over Israel and the war in Gaza.
- President Herzog spent much of his time **meeting the Jewish community**, including attending two major communal gatherings and visiting a Jewish day school. The community expressed strong appreciation for the presidential visit but was alarmed by large, sometimes violent demonstrations against Herzog and by full-page newspaper ads opposing him. There were also calls to "globalize the Intifada."
- Yesterday, **graffiti calling for the death of Herzog** was found on a Melbourne University campus. The large lettering, painted on a major wall, also included an inverted triangle, a Hamas symbol.
- On his last day in the country today, **Herzog addressed the issue of the protestors** when speaking to a Jewish communal audience. "To me, it's obscure and odd that we need

to have so many incredible police officers protecting us for the inherent right of us to gather here as proud Jews, to host the president of the only Jewish state on Earth without any harassment and disturbance. And I say to all those protesters outside, go protest in front of the Iranian embassy.... For heaven's sake, they killed and butchered... tens of thousands of their own people, operating a whole machine of an empire of evil against us."

Ultra-Orthodox

- The **Haredi draft bill that** would require more ultra-Orthodox youth to enlist in the IDF appears headed for failure after talks in the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee exposed a seemingly unbridgeable gap between ultra-Orthodox demands and the position of government legal advisers. One major sticking point is that Haredi parties insist sanctions on draft evaders apply only in the future, while legal officials say enforcement must include those already in the system.
- The bill's collapse **does not immediately threaten the coalition**: the Haredi parties are expected to back the budget in March despite the stalemate, preserving the government for now. Israeli media is calling the result "a familiar trade-off — no draft reform, but a passed budget." Nonetheless, the tensions suggest that the issue could still cut short the coalition's lifespan and bring elections as soon as June. If this does not occur, elections will likely be held in either September or October.
- Updated figures from the Kohelet Forum show the **growing economic burden posed by Israel's Haredi sector**. The conclusion was made by calculating all public transfers in Israel, including taxes paid and benefits received. The results show that ultra-Orthodox households tend to be a far more significant burden on society than other groups. The monthly net gap between non-Haredi and Haredi households has now widened to about \$5,000, up roughly 50 percent since 2018. Kohelet's latest figures show that the average non-Haredi Jewish household made a net monthly contribution of roughly \$3,000 to the state, while the average Haredi household ran a net deficit of about \$2,000.

Other News

- The spate of largely **crime-syndicate-related violence in the Arab sector** (discussed in last week's update) has intensified, with five different murders taking place in a 12-hour period overnight. An average of one person has been killed each day in 2026 in violent crimes in the sector.
- Israeli media report that Israel is advancing a **quiet, incremental shift in the West Bank**, easing long-standing legal and bureaucratic restrictions to make it easier for Jewish Israelis to acquire land in disputed areas. Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Defense Minister Israel Katz have adopted several technical changes that can quietly and legally expand Jewish settlement. Most recently, the government has moved to repeal or streamline rules that limited Jewish land purchases in Areas A and B (those under the Palestinian Authority's control under the Oslo Accords) and reduced approval requirements for legal bodies, changes that could effectively accelerate settlement growth without a formal policy announcement. Significantly, the rules remove the restrictions (in place since the days of Jordanian rule) that bar land from being sold to Jews.
- The government has also announced a new initiative to **address a recent rise in settler violence** against Palestinians, allocating millions of shekels to a program led by Defense Minister Israel Katz targeting the so-called "Hilltop Youth." The group, made up largely of radicalized and often marginalized young settlers, has been linked to an increase in vigilante attacks, including arson, stone-throwing and raids on Palestinian villages, amid claims of lax enforcement and even tacit political backing. Katz's plan focuses on prevention

rather than policing, expanding funding for social workers and educational frameworks aimed at reintegrating at-risk youth into Israeli society.

- France has **called for the resignation of UN Special Rapporteur Francesca Albanese** following remarks she made at the Al Jazeera Forum that French officials said crossed the line from criticism of Israeli policy into attacks on Israel as a nation and people. French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot described the comments as “unacceptable,” citing a pattern of statements that, he said, have included justifying the October 7 attacks and invoking antisemitic imagery. The controversy has prompted more than 20 French lawmakers to demand that Albanese be stripped of her UN mandates, further intensifying international scrutiny of her role and rhetoric. The controversy comes amid already strained relations with Washington, which last year imposed US sanctions on Albanese under a presidential executive order, accusing her of antisemitism and of engaging in illegitimate “lawfare” against the US and Israel through the International Criminal Court.
- Legendary **Israeli musician Matti Caspi died this week** at the age of 76 after a prolonged battle with cancer. Caspi was one of the architects of modern Israeli music; he was a prolific composer, arranger, and multi-instrumentalist whose songs became part of the country’s cultural DNA. Tributes from across the political and cultural spectrum described him as “the greatest musician of our generation.”

Further Reading

- [Trump's progress may be used to delay a new Israeli invasion of Gaza](#)
- [Relax, MBS isn't aligning with Islamists. He also isn't normalizing with Israel soon](#)
- [Haredim in Israel 2050: Demographic Projections and Economic and Security Scenarios](#)
- [Trump Must Help Iranians Bring Down the Islamic Regime](#)

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