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## 8 Muslim countries, including Saudi Arabia, accept invite to join Board of Peace

*Trump acknowledges some countries may need parliamentary approval to join group; Slovenia latest country to decline to participate, while Vatican says pope received invitation*

By [Jacob Magid](#)

and [Reuters](#) Today, 11:51 pm



*Arab leaders attend a multilateral meeting with US President Donald Trump to discuss the situation in Gaza, on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City on September 23, 2025. (Reuters)*

**Eight prominent Muslim countries jointly announced their decisions to join US President Donald Trump's Board of Peace on Wednesday, as Trump acknowledged some countries may have difficulties joining without parliamentary approval. Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Indonesia, Pakistan, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates will each appoint a representative to sit on the panel of world leaders, their**

**foreign ministers announced in a joint statement.**

**While Egypt, Pakistan, and the UAE had already announced plans to join the Board of Peace, the other five countries had been mulling the decision. Trump badly wanted Saudi Arabia to join, publicly urging its crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman, to do so, but Riyadh was mum until now.**

The Board of Peace was given a UN Security Council mandate to oversee the postwar management of Gaza until the end of 2027, though the US is aiming to use the panel for conflict resolution around the globe.

The proposed board would be chaired for life by Trump, with member countries required to pay a \$1 billion fee each to earn permanent membership.

It is only expected to meet a handful of times each year, and the panel more involved in decision-making regarding Gaza will be the Gaza Executive Board, unveiled on Friday. That body also includes representatives from Turkey, Qatar, the UAE, and the US.



*Young Palestinians play volleyball at a tent camp sheltering displaced families in Deir al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip, January 20, 2026. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)*

In the Muslim countries' statement announcing their decision to join the Board of Peace, they reiterated their support for "advancing a just and lasting peace grounded in the Palestinian right to self-determination and statehood in accordance with international law, thereby paving the way for security and stability for all countries and peoples of the region."

Trump acknowledged on Wednesday that some countries cannot join his Board of Peace right away, as they need parliamentary approval to join an international

body that Washington appears keen on using to bypass the United Nations.

"Some need parliamentary approval," Trump said in remarks to reporters at the beginning of his meeting with Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland.

However, he insisted that many countries are interested in joining, including ones that were not invited to do so.

US special envoy Steve Witkoff said earlier on Wednesday that 20 to 25 leaders had already accepted invitations to join the Board of Peace, which is slated to hold a signing ceremony on Thursday in Davos.

Invitations to join the board have been addressed to some 60 nations.

[Israel](#), Egypt, Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam are among those who have accepted.

Some Western diplomats say the board could undermine the work of the UN.



***Slovenian Prime Minister Robert Golob arrives for a meeting of the Coalition of the Willing at the Elysee Palace in Paris, France, January 6, 2026. (Yoan Valat, Pool photo via AP)***

***This concern was shared by Slovenia's Prime Minister Robert Golob, who said on Wednesday that his country would not accept the invitation.***

***"The main concern is that the committee's mandate is too broad and that it could dangerously undermine the international order based on the United Nations Charter," the N1 news web portal quoted Golob as saying.***

***"Although we find any initiative that can calm the situation in the Middle East to be commendable, this invitation dangerously encroaches on the broader international order***

***and not just on pacification in Gaza," he said.***

N1 cited Golob as saying he will not attend the signing of the initiative's founding charter on Thursday, but will instead attend the meeting of the European Council leaders in Brussels.

Meanwhile, the Vatican's top diplomat revealed that Pope Leo XIV was invited to join the board, but said a final decision has not been made on his participation.

"The pope has received an invitation, and we are considering what to do," said Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin. "I believe it will be something that requires a bit of time for consideration before giving a response."

Sweden, Norway, and Italy have refused to join, while Spain has said European leaders were working to consolidate a common position.



***US President Donald Trump (C) speaks during the Sharm El-Sheikh Peace Summit in the Egyptian Red Sea resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh on October 13, 2025. (SAUL LOEB / AFP)***

The board's [charter](#), obtained by The Times of Israel, makes no mention of Gaza and appears to take a swipe at the UN, saying that the new board should have "the courage to depart from approaches and institutions that have too often failed."

The document was attached to invitations to join the board that were sent to dozens of world leaders on Friday. When asked by a reporter on Tuesday if the board should replace the United Nations, Trump said: "It might."

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/8-muslim-countries-including-saudi-arabia-accept-invite-to-join-board-of-peace/>

## **Netanyahu accepts invite to Trump's Board of Peace; Europe formulating common position**



***Egypt announces participation; Witkoff says Putin expected to join; Sweden and Norway reject invitations; Italy said to believe joining the board would violate its constitution***

***By [ToI Staff](#) and [Agencies](#) Today, 2:35 pm***

***US President Donald Trump (R) shakes hands with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as he listens to a question from a reporter at the end of a news conference at Mar-a-Lago, December 29, 2025, in Palm Beach, Florida. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)***

**Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accepted US President Donald Trump's invitation to join the Board of Peace, the premier's office announced Wednesday, as Sweden and Norway became the latest**



**nations to say they would not be joining, and Spain said European leaders were working to consolidate a common position.**

**The proposed board would be chaired for life by Trump and start by addressing the Gaza conflict before expanding to other wars, with member countries required to pay a \$1 billion fee each to earn permanent membership.**

**Western diplomats say the board could undermine the work of the United Nations.**

Netanyahu has previously criticized Washington's decision to place senior representatives from Turkey and Qatar on the Board of Peace's operational arm for Gaza, called the Gaza Executive Board, making it initially unclear whether he would want to legitimize that panel's makeup by joining the Board of Peace.

Egypt's foreign ministry said Wednesday that President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi had also accepted an invitation for the board.

Egypt "announces its acceptance of the invitation and its commitment to fulfilling the relevant legal and constitutional procedures," the statement said, praising Trump for his Middle East policies.

"Egypt expresses its support for the Board of Peace's mission for the second phase of the comprehensive plan to end the conflict in Gaza," it added.



*Displaced Palestinians live amongst the rubble and debris, in the Jabalia refugee camp, in the northern Gaza Strip on January 17, 2026. (Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)*

Israel and **Egypt join Argentina, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kosovo, Morocco, the United Arab Emirates, and Vietnam in accepting.**

**Invitations to join the board have been addressed to some 60 nations but just a few have so far accepted without reservations.**

**Adding to concern among Western nations, the Kremlin said this week that Russian President Vladimir Putin had also been invited, while**

**Moscow's ally Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko has already accepted an invitation.**

Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff was asked Wednesday if Putin was expected to join, and responded: "I think so."

Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares said Wednesday that European leaders were holding consultations to formulate a common position on the board.



*Spain's Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares attends the opening day of the Doha Forum, an annual diplomatic conference, in Doha on December 6, 2025. (Mahmud HAMS / AFP)*

The United Kingdom has previously flagged Trump's invitations to Putin and Lukashenko as cause for concern, while French Foreign Minister Jean-Noel Barrot said that his country "cannot accept" the offer to join "at this stage," over concerns shared by some European governments that the Board of Peace could undermine the work of the UN, which Trump has accused of not supporting his efforts to end conflicts around the world.

Meanwhile, Corriere della Sera reported that Italy won't take part in the initiative, citing concern that joining such a group led by a single country's leader would violate Italy's constitution.

According to Italy's constitution, Italy may join international organizations that ensure "peace and justice among nations" only "on equal terms with other states," a condition incompatible with US primacy on the new board, Corriere said.

On Thursday, Trump is due to preside over a ceremony celebrating the new group in Davos, Switzerland, during the World Economic Forum.

A source told Reuters that Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, a rightwing leader who has had warm relations with Trump, was unlikely to go to Davos. The Italian government did not immediately respond to a request for comment.



*Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni speaks during a press conference with Japan's Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi at the prime minister's official residence in Tokyo on January 16, 2026. (Toru HANAI / POOL / AFP)*

Norway's government said Wednesday that it also would not join the board initiated by Trump, who has vented his frustration at the Nordic country after being snubbed for the Nobel Peace Prize.

"The American proposal raises a number of questions" requiring "further dialogue with the United States," State Secretary Kristoffer Thoner said in a statement.

"Norway will therefore not join the proposed arrangements for the Board of Peace, and will therefore not attend a signing

ceremony in Davos," Thoner said. Norway would continue its close cooperation with the US, he added.

"For Norway, it is important how this proposal is linked to established structures as the UN, and to our international commitments," Thoner said.

The government representative noted that Norway shared Trump's "goal of lasting peace in Ukraine, Gaza and in other situations."

Sweden's Prime Minister Ulf Kristersson told reporters in Davos that his country will also not participate in the initiative with the text presented so far.



*Palestinian men maneuver past debris and broken furniture, after an Israeli strike on the family home of Hamas military commander Muhammad al-Hawli, west of Deir al-Balah, in the central Gaza Strip on January 16, 2026. (Basahr Taleb/AFP)*

The Board of Peace was initially presented as a body that would exclusively oversee the postwar management of Gaza, and, in November, the UN Security Council voted to give it a two-year mandate to do so.

But its [charter](#), obtained by The Times of Israel, makes no mention of Gaza and appears to take a swipe at the UN, saying that the new board should have "the courage to depart from approaches and institutions that have too often failed."

The document was attached to invitations to join the board

that were sent to dozens of world leaders on Friday.

When asked by a reporter on Tuesday if the board should replace the United Nations, Trump said: "It might." <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-accepts-invite-to-trumps-board-of-peace-europe-formulating-common-position/>

## Amid Iran tensions, IDF chief says military ready to act 'against any enemy'

Zamir visits air base that welcomed three new F-35s into IAF arsenal; at Home Front Command earlier in week, IDF chief says Israel preparing for 'surprise war'

By [Emanuel Fabian](#), [Tol Staff](#) and [AP](#) Today, 5:55 pm



*IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir speaks to Israeli Air Force pilots and air personnel at the Nevatim Airbase in southern Israel, January 21, 2026. (Israel Defense Forces)*

**IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir on Wednesday said the military was prepared to act against any enemy posing a threat to the country amid ongoing tensions with Iran.**

**During a visit to the Nevatim Airbase in southern Israel, Zamir told Israeli Air Force pilots and air personnel that the military "will know how to strike powerfully in any arena against any enemy that threatens the security of the State of Israel," according to remarks provided by the military.**



**The base is home to the IAF's F-35I stealth fighters. This week, three new F-35s joined the IAF's arsenal, bringing its total to 48.**

"The air force constitutes the IDF's strategic arm. You have been at the forefront of the offensive and defensive effort in both near and distant arenas over the past two years of fighting," Zamir said.

Zamir told the pilots that during the 12-day war with Iran in June, "you accumulated operational experience unparalleled anywhere in the world, and we will know how to draw lessons from it and use it to ensure the security of the State of Israel at all times."

"We are prepared for various scenarios and continuously improve our capabilities in order to achieve victory in the overall campaign against our enemies. This is our responsibility and our mission," he said.



**IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir (left) speaks to an officer at the Home Front Command headquarters in Ramle, January 19, 2026. (Israel Defense Forces)**

During a visit to the Home Front Command on Monday, Zamir also said the military remains prepared for defense against "multifront threats," in an apparent reference to Iran.

"In the face of the scope of the multifront threats to the State of Israel, the Home Front Command stands on defense, is competent, trained, and on high alert. The command is prepared at all times to employ a wide range of capabilities to contend with an attack on the civilian home front and to save lives," Zamir said.

"At the same time, the IDF is prepared to employ an offensive capability unprecedented in its power against any attempt to harm the State of Israel," he continued.

"We are prepared with full defense for any scenario," Zamir said, adding that the lessons from the 12-day war against Iran in June have been implemented in the military, "and as part of this, the IDF is also preparing for the possibility of a surprise war."

The comments came a week after tensions spiked in the region, after US President Donald Trump threatened to strike Iran if it killed anti-government protesters.

While he has since appeared to back down, claiming authorities had halted plans to execute hundreds of protesters, Trump is continuing to push his aides to devise what he calls "decisive" military options against Iran, [The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday.](#)

Tehran has said in the past that it would target Israel and US military targets in the Middle East if Trump were to order strikes.

As concerns over war eased, the United Kingdom dialed down its travel warning to Israel on Wednesday, after advising last week that British citizens avoid "all but essential travel" to the region.



**Illustrative: A passenger arrives from a flight at Terminal 5 of Heathrow Airport in London, August 2, 2021. (Matt Dunham/AP)**

Now, the UK's Foreign Office lifted the warning for most of the country, with the exception of high-risk areas.

It continues to advise against all travel within 500 meters of the Gaza border, within 500 meters of the buffer zone separating Israel and Syria, and within 500 meters of the Lebanon border.

In the Palestinian territories, it recommends against all travel to Gaza as well as several areas in the West Bank, including Tulkarm, Jenin, and Tubas.

Finally, it "advises against all but essential travel" to the rest of the West Bank, excluding Bethlehem, Ramallah, and Jericho.

The death toll from the Iranian protests has reached at least 4,519 people, the US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency said. The agency has been accurate throughout the years on demonstrations and unrest in Iran, relying on a network of activists inside the country that confirms all reported fatalities. The Associated Press has been unable to independently assess the death toll.



*In this photo obtained by The Associated Press, Iranians attend an anti-government protest in Tehran, Iran, January 9, 2026. (UGC via AP)*

The death toll exceeds that of any other round of protest or unrest in Iran in decades, and recalls the chaos surrounding the 1979 revolution that brought the Islamic Republic into being. Although there have been no protests for days, there are fears the death toll could increase significantly as information gradually emerges from a country still under a government-imposed shutdown of the internet since January 8.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Saturday that the protests had left "several thousand"

people dead and blamed the United States. It was the first indication from an Iranian leader of the extent of the casualties.

More than 26,300 people have been arrested, according to the Human Rights Activists News Agency. Comments from officials have led to fears of some of those detained being put to death in Iran, one of the world's top executioners. That and the killing of peaceful protesters have been two red lines laid down by Trump in the tensions. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/amid-iran-tensions-idf-chief-says-military-ready-to-act-against-any-enemy/>

## **Trump still pushing aides to draw up 'decisive' military options against Iran — WSJ** *Options said to include actions aimed at toppling regime; Iran says it would fight back 'with everything we have'; Amnesty warns Iran plans to execute protester on Wednesday*

*By Tol Staff and Agencies Today, 10:06 am*



*A US Air Force F-15E Strike Eagle assigned to the 494th Expeditionary Fighter Squadron lands at an unnamed base in the Middle East, January 18, 2026 (CENTCOM/X)*

**US President Donald Trump is continuing to push his aides to devise what he calls "decisive" military options against Iran, The Wall Street Journal reported Tuesday, days after the American leader called off strikes against the Islamic Republic.**

**Citing US officials, the report said Trump has repeatedly employed the word "decisive" when discussing what outcome he would want from an American attack on Iran, leading aides at the**

## **White House and Pentagon to draw up an array of options for him — among them actions that would be aimed at toppling the regime.**

Other options that are more limited in aim reportedly include strikes on facilities linked to the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Officials quoted by the US newspaper said Trump still hasn't ruled out strikes, though it's unclear what he may ultimately decide, with the deliberations coming as an American aircraft carrier group moved westward toward the Middle East from Asia.



Meanwhile, American fighter jets and other equipment also appear to be moving to the Mideast after a major US military deployment to the Caribbean saw troops seize Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro.

On Tuesday, Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi issued the most direct threat yet against the US, warning the Islamic Republic would be "firing back with everything we have if we come under renewed attack."

*US President Donald Trump speaks before departing on Marine One from the South Lawn of the White House, Jan. 20, 2026, in Washington. (AP Photo/Alex Brandon)*

Tehran has said in the past that it would target Israel and US military targets in the Middle East if Trump were to order strikes.



The comments by Araghchi, who saw his invitation to speak at the World Economic Forum in Davos [rescinded](#) over a brutal crackdown on recent protests in Iran, came in an [opinion article](#) also published by The Wall Street Journal.

The Iranian foreign minister contended that “the violent phase of the unrest lasted less than 72 hours” and sought again to blame armed demonstrators for the violence.

Videos that have slipped out of Iran despite the internet shutdown appear to show security forces

repeatedly using live fire to target apparently unarmed protesters, something unaddressed by Araghchi.

***Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi attends a joint press conference with his Iraqi counterpart Fuad Hussein, in Tehran, Iran, on January 18, 2026. (ATTA KENARE / AFP)***



“Unlike the restraint Iran showed in June 2025, our powerful armed forces have no qualms about firing back with everything we have if we come under renewed attack,” Araghchi wrote, referring to the 12-day war between Israel and Iran in June.

“This isn’t a threat, but a reality I feel I need to convey explicitly, because as a diplomat and a veteran, I abhor war.”

He added: “An all-out confrontation will certainly be ferocious and drag on far, far longer than the fantasy timelines

that Israel and its proxies are trying to peddle to the White House. It will certainly engulf the wider region and have an impact on ordinary people around the globe.”

An Iranian official in the region said this week that the authorities had verified at least 5,000 people had been killed in protests in Iran, including about 500 security personnel.

Activists believe the death toll to be far higher, but the numbers cannot be verified amid an ongoing internet blackout.

There have been [reports](#) that the families of protesters killed have been coerced into saying their relatives were members of the security forces in an apparent attempt to inflate that toll.



***This frame grab from videos taken between January 9 and January 11, 2026, and circulating on social media purportedly shows images from a morgue with dozens of bodies and mourners after crackdown on the outskirts of Iran’s capital, in Kahrizak, Tehran Province. (UGC via AP)***

Speaking on Tuesday at the White House, Trump reiterated his claim that Iran halted plans to execute protesters last week after threats from Washington.

“They were going to hang 837 people, and... we let them know that if that happens, that will be a very bad day for them, and they decided not to do it,” he said. “I can’t tell you what’s going to happen in the future, but supposedly they’ve taken that off the table.”

The US president had threatened to strike Iran if it killed protesters, which the regime proceeded to do in the thousands.

But toward the end of last week, the president indicated that he had pulled back from plans to attack due to Iran’s purported cancellation of planned hangings of protesters.

The Islamic Republic has not publicly confirmed those plans.

Amnesty International said Tuesday that Iranian authorities planned to execute 19-year-old Amirhossein Ghaderzadeh on Wednesday over his participation in protests in Rasht in Gilan province.

Meanwhile, Iran warned Trump not to take any action against the country’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, days after the US president called for an end to Khamenei’s nearly 40-year reign.

Iranian General Abolfazl Shekarchi was quoted as saying Trump already knew Tehran would not hold back if the tables were turned.

“Trump knows that if a hand of aggression is extended toward our leader, we will not only sever that hand, and this is not a mere slogan,” Shekarchi was quoted as telling Iranian state media. “But we will set their world on fire and leave them no safe haven in the region.”

In an apparent response, Trump repeated his warning that the United States will “wipe” out Iran if Tehran

were to assassinate him.

“The whole country is going to get blown up,” Trump said in an interview with NewsNation. “I have very firm instructions — anything happens, they’re going to wipe them off the face of this earth.”

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-still-pushing-aides-to-draw-up-decisive-military-options-against-iran-wsj/>

## In first, police let Jewish visitors take printed prayers onto Temple Mount

**Police confirm change to longstanding ban on non-Muslim prayer, which comes weeks after Ben Gvir confidant appointed as Jerusalem’s top officer; Jewish activists laud policy**

By [Charlie Summers](#)

Today, 4:33 pm



*A woman recites prayers from a flyer distributed by the Temple Mount Yeshiva after police allowed Jewish worshipers to bring the liturgical material up to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City on January 21, 2026. (Courtesy/Beyadenu)*

**Police allowed Jewish worshipers to ascend the Temple Mount with printed prayer sheets Wednesday, in a further challenge to regulations barring non-Muslim prayer at the flashpoint Old City of Jerusalem site.**

**Early Wednesday, students at the Temple Mount Yeshiva handed out liturgical material printed on flyers to Jewish visitors waiting to go up**

**to the Temple Mount. The sheets included religious guidelines for visiting the holy site, a prayer to recite before ascending and the Amidah (standing) prayer, said thrice-daily in Jewish tradition.**

**Police said they acceded to a request from the Temple Mount Yeshiva — which encourages Jews to ascend and pray at the site — that visitors be allowed to carry “guidance sheets” with them to the complex.**

“In order to maintain the existing order, it was determined that the use of these sheets would be limited

solely to specific areas defined by the police,” police added.

Non-Muslim prayer has until recently been forbidden forbidden atop the Temple Mount — known by Muslims as the Al-Aqsa Compound — due to a string of agreements known as the status quo between Israel and Jordan, which administers the site through the Jerusalem Islamic Waqf.

The hotly disputed site, the holiest site in Judaism and third-holiest in Islam, was the location of both ancient Jewish temples and, since the 7th century, has housed the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock shrine. Conflicts around the site have sparked several rounds of violence in the region.

**A liturgical flyer distributed to Jewish visitors, with police permission, on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem’s Old City on January 21, 2025. (Courtesy/Beyadenu)**

While in the past, police would eject or detain Jewish visitors caught praying on the Temple Mount, this policy has largely fallen to the wayside over the past three years under National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, who has repeatedly demanded that police allow Jews to pray there.

In recent years, Jewish visitors have been permitted to pray and prostrate themselves in the eastern part of the complex, but were still barred from bringing prayer items, such as tefillin, prayer shawls and printed liturgy, to the site.

Police appeared to confirm their official sanction of non-Muslim prayer in a Wednesday statement that stressed that

officers work to “enable freedom of worship and visitation at the Temple Mount for all religions and communities.”





Leading activists for Jewish prayer at the Temple Mount downplayed the gravity of the new policy, insisting it was merely a recognition of the current reality.

“Jews have been bringing prayer pages and books onto the Temple Mount for a long time, even if the police didn’t always want to see it. What happened now is simply the police officially approving what is already happening on the ground,” said Akiva Ariel, the CEO of Beyadenu, an organization dedicated to cementing a Jewish presence at the site.



“We are moving forward until prayer on the Temple Mount becomes a normal and routine reality,” he vowed.

*File: Jews prostrate themselves on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem’s Old City, on Jerusalem Day, May 26, 2025. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)*

The group’s spokesman, meanwhile, stressed the significance of the shift, telling The Times of Israel that such printed material was “something that they [Israeli security] used to check for, to make sure you were not bringing” to the site.

Two weeks ago, Deputy Commissioner Avshalom Peled, a confidant of Ben Gvir, was appointed to the sensitive position of Jerusalem District commander, replacing Deputy Commissioner Amir Arzani who went on leave. Peled formerly served as deputy police chief.

Haaretz reported that Arzani departed under duress after he pushed back against the far-right minister’s attempts to further relax restrictions on the Temple Mount.

According to Beyadenu, police only allowed for the flyer printed by the Temple Mount Yeshiva to be brought into the site. This provision may change in the near future, the group’s spokesman noted.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-first-police-let-jewish-visitors-take-printed-prayers-into-temple-mount/>

## Wave of IDF strikes target Hezbollah arms depots, operatives in southern Lebanon

***Airstrikes target border crossings with Syria used for smuggling; operative who blocked Lebanese army from dismantling weapons site last month and weapons smuggler killed***

By [Emanuel Fabian](#)

and [AFP](#) Today, 11:35 pm



*Smoke and sparks ascend from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted a building in the southern Lebanese village of Kfour on January 21, 2026. (Rabih DAHER / AFP)*

**A wave of Israeli strikes hit Hezbollah infrastructure and operatives throughout southern Lebanon and on the border with Syria on Wednesday, the Israel Defense Forces said.**

**Ahead of the strikes, the military issued evacuation warnings for residents of several towns in southern Lebanon.**

**According to the IDF, one wave of strikes targeted Hezbollah weapon depots, including one**

**located underground.**

“The infrastructures that were struck were located in the heart of a civilian population. This is another example of the cynical use by the Hezbollah terror organization of Lebanese civilians as human shields and of the organization’s activity from within civilian assets,” the army said.

The IDF added that Hezbollah’s activity at the sites constitutes a violation of the November 2024 ceasefire between Israel and Lebanon and poses a threat to Israel.

The state-run National News Agency said Israeli warplanes launched raids on buildings in several southern Lebanese towns, including Qennarit and Kfour, after the evacuation warnings.

An AFP photographer was slightly wounded along with two other journalists who were working near the site of a heavy strike in Qennarit.

The air force also struck four land crossings on the Lebanese-Syrian border in Lebanon's northern Hermel region, with the IDF saying that the routes were used by Hezbollah to smuggle weapons.

Additionally, a Hezbollah operative who, according to the IDF, was responsible for preventing the Lebanese army from dismantling a weapons cache in southern Lebanon last month, was killed in an Israeli airstrike earlier on Wednesday, the military said.

Abu Ali Salameh, who the IDF said served as a Hezbollah "liaison officer" in the village of Yanouh, in the Tyre area, was targeted while driving on a road near the coastal Lebanese city.

"As part of his role, the terrorist managed Hezbollah's activities in the village of Yanouh, to enable Hezbollah to operate within the civilian area and in private properties in the village, and to embed terror infrastructure in the heart of the population through the deliberate and cynical exploitation of residents to advance Hezbollah's terror objectives," the military said.

According to the IDF, on December 13, Israel sent a request to the Lebanese army, via the US-led ceasefire oversight mechanism, to take action against a Hezbollah weapons depot in Yanouh.

"Salameh received the report from the Lebanese Armed Forces and passed it on to other Hezbollah elements. Upon the arrival of the Lebanese Armed Forces, Hezbollah terrorists prevented them from dismantling the infrastructure by creating a gathering that enabled Hezbollah to move the weapons out of the property," the military claimed.

At the time, the IDF had published an evacuation warning ahead of a planned strike on the site, before postponing it after the Lebanese army arrived in an attempt to dismantle it.

The IDF said that Salameh coordinated with the Lebanese army to document the site without weapons, "thereby claiming that the site was empty."

"During the Lebanese Armed Forces' operation, several suspicious boxes were removed from the compound through the rear door of the property," the IDF said.

The army said Salameh's actions constitute a violation of the ceasefire.

Separately, the IDF said that a strike it carried out earlier near Sidon killed a "key" Hezbollah weapons smuggler.

Mohammad Awatsheh was involved in managing weapon transfers to Hezbollah, "including through a front company that transported prohibited goods from various countries, including Iraq, Syria, and Gulf states," the military said.

Additionally, the military said Awatsheh was the handler for "numerous smugglers responsible for transferring weapons from Iraq to Syria and Lebanon."

An AFP correspondent saw a charred car on a main road in the town of Zahrani, in the Sidon district, with debris strewn across the area and emergency workers in attendance.

A Lebanese army statement on Wednesday decried the Israeli targeting of "civilian buildings and homes" in a "blatant violation of Lebanon's sovereignty" and the ceasefire deal.

It also said such attacks "hinder the army's efforts" to complete the disarmament plan.

The US-brokered ceasefire with Hezbollah came after two months of open conflict in Lebanon, including an IDF ground operation in the country's south in a bid to enable the safe return of some 60,000 residents of northern

Israel displaced by the terror group's near-daily attacks. The attacks began on October 8, 2023 — a day after fellow Iran-backed terror group

Hamas invaded southern Israel, sparking the war in Gaza.

***People flee a street as smoke rises from an Israeli airstrike that hit a building in Qennarit, south Lebanon, January 21, 2026. (AP Photo/Mohammed Zaatari)***

The ceasefire required both Israel and Hezbollah to vacate southern Lebanon, to be replaced by the Lebanese armed forces. Israel has withdrawn from all but five strategic posts along the border.

Since the ceasefire, the IDF said it has killed over 400 Hezbollah operatives and members of allied terror groups in strikes, hit hundreds of Hezbollah sites, and conducted over 1,200 raids and other small

operations in southern Lebanon.

Weakened by the war and still facing regular Israeli strikes, Hezbollah is under internal and international pressure to hand over its weapons. The Lebanese army recently said it had completed its mission to disarm the terror group south of the Litani River, in the area closest to the Israeli border. Israel responded that the news was





“encouraging” but insufficient. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/wave-of-idf-strikes-target-hezbollah-arms-depots-operatives-in-southern-lebanon/>

## Knesset advances bill granting October 7 victims unlimited mental health treatment

*The bill was sponsored by MK Merav Michaeli and Moshe Gafni and passed unanimously, with 19 Knesset members voting in favor and none opposed.*

*By KESHET NEEV JANUARY 21, 2026 21:14 Updated: JANUARY 21, 2026 21:23*



*Bereaved families and opposition MKs formed a separate committee meeting in the Knesset in protest of the first debate advancing the government bill that aims to establish a politically appointed committee to investigate the failures surrounding the October 7 attacks. (photo credit: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM)*

**The Knesset plenum approved in a preliminary reading on Wednesday a bill that would entitle victims of hostile acts, such as the October 7 Hamas attacks, to receive mental health care support through unlimited psychological treatment.**

**Survivors and victims of hostile acts would not need to prove physical or psychological disability, nor would there be a limit on the number of treatments they can receive under the proposed legislation.**

The bill was sponsored by Democrats MK Merav Michaeli and United Torah Judaism MK Moshe Gafni. It passed unanimously, with 19 Knesset members voting in favor and none opposed. The bill is titled: “Compensation for Victims of Hostile Acts Bill, Amendment – Eligibility for Psychological Treatment.”

The proposed legislation will now be referred to the Knesset’s Labor and Welfare Committee for further discussion, and will still need to pass three additional readings before becoming law.

According to the bill’s outline, anyone officially recognized as a victim of hostile acts would be entitled to

psychological treatment.

*The Kfar Shaul Mental Health Center in Israel’s capital of Jerusalem (credit: VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)*

The explanatory notes accompanying the bill cite the [October 7 massacre](#), pointing to the mental health needs of survivors.

**Available assistance an ‘extreme mismatch’ to needs of survivors**

The notes state that the attacks have highlighted “the [extreme mismatch](#)” between the needs of victims of hostile acts and the assistance currently provided to them.

“This amendment will enable victims to receive the necessary mental health support,” the explanatory notes read.

“Expanding the scope of assistance will help rehabilitate the victims and restore a sense of security and stability to their lives.”

The notes further stipulate that rehabilitating victims of hostile acts is of social and economic interest, contributing directly to the maintenance of a healthy society and higher national productivity.

Michaeli said after the advancement of her proposed bill that mental health care for



victims of terror is the country’s “responsibility.”

“Those who were harmed by the horrific October 7 massacre, at the Nova festival, and as a result of other

terror attacks should not have to prove disability or count treatment sessions. They need rehabilitation,” she added.

Michaeli also addressed survivors of attacks, calling on them to seek support as needed.

“To the dear survivors: take care of yourselves. We care about you, and we will not relent until the state provides you with the support you deserve,” she said. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-884129>

## Trump says ‘we think we know’ location of Ran Gvili, the last hostage in Gaza

**Parents of slain policeman: US president’s remarks show Hamas ‘deliberately violated’ ceasefire by not returning all captives; Trump suggests his Board of Peace ‘might’ replace UN**

By [Jacob Magid](#)

and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 1:19 amUpdated at 6:47 am



*Relatives, friends and supporters of Master Sgt. Ran Gvili, whose body remains in Gaza, attend a Shabbat service at Hostages Square in Tel Aviv, calling for the return of his body, on January 16, 2026 (Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90)*

**US President Donald Trump said Tuesday that “we think we know” where the body of the final hostage, slain Israel Police Master Sgt. Ran Gvili, is being held in the Gaza Strip.**

**Trump made the revelation during a White House press briefing while going through his administration’s accomplishments during his first year in office.**

**Gvili, a member of the Yasam police unit, was killed battling terrorists at Kibbutz Alumim on October 7, 2023, and his body was abducted to Gaza, where it is still being held.**

“They have one left that we think we know where it is, amazing, it looked like we weren’t going to get anywhere near that, now they’ve gotten that almost,” Trump said of Gvili’s remains.

Gvili’s parents, Itzik and Talik, responded that in light of Trump’s remarks, the US and Israel must apply all possible pressure to ensure that Hamas returns their son.

“President Trump’s statement confirms what we have been saying for the past three months: Hamas knows exactly where our son is and has knowingly and deliberately violated President Trump’s framework and the agreement to return all hostages,” the Gvilis said in a statement released by the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which represented the families of most of the hostages.

“The responsibility now lies with the Government of Israel and the US administration to exert the full weight of their authority to ensure that Hamas fulfills its obligations under the agreement, or guarantee that serious sanctions are imposed on Hamas,” the Gvilis said.

Referring to a meeting they had with Trump last month, when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with the US president in Florida, the Gvilis said they trust Trump to keep his personal assurance to them that Ran’s remains will be brought back to Israel.

“President Trump looked us in the eyes, with tears, and promised to bring our Rani home,” they said. “We have no doubt that he is a man of his word, and we believe we will see Rani home soon.”



**Police officer Master Sgt. Ran Gvili.(Courtesy)**

The Gvili family and supporters had insisted there should be no move into phase two of the US Gaza plan — the start of which the Trump administration announced last week — while Ran’s body remains in the enclave. The US has said it is working for the return of Gvili’s body, but would not hold up phase two for that purpose, though all hostages were supposed to have been returned from Gaza under phase one of the agreement.

“The responsibility for bringing Rani home rests with the Israeli government, which must refrain from any steps toward implementing phase two until Rani has returned,” the Gvilis



added in their statement.

A Hamas spokesman, meanwhile, claimed to Al Jazeera that the Palestinian terror group has relayed everything it knows about Gvili's body and has been working to find it.

### **Board of Peace the new UN?**

During Tuesday's press conference, Trump was asked whether he wants his new Board of Peace to replace the United Nations.

"It might," he responded.

"The UN just hasn't been very helpful. I'm a big fan of the UN potential, but it has never lived up to its potential," Trump said. "The UN should have settled every one of the wars that I settled... [but] I believe you've got to let the UN continue because the potential is so great."

The US originally presented the Board of Peace as an oversight body focused on Gaza, and the UN Security Council voted in November to give it a mandate to do so until the end of 2027.

But the Board of Peace charter sent to potential members last week makes no mention of Gaza and indicates that the US would like the panel of world leaders to become the world's preeminent conflict resolution body.



*US President Donald Trump greets Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as Erdogan arrives at the White House in Washington, DC on September 25, 2025. (SAUL LOEB / AFP)*

Among those invited to join the board is Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, "who I like," Trump said. He added that he would shortly hold a "very important call" with Erdogan, which he later described as "a very good call."

The Turkish president's office said they discussed developments in Syria and Gaza, adding Erdogan told Trump that Turkey would continue to work in coordination with its NATO ally the United States to achieve peace in the latter.

Erdogan thanked Trump for inviting him to join the Board of Peace, it added.

The two's relationship been a cause of anxiety in Jerusalem, due to Erdogan's support of Hamas as well as his bitter criticism of Netanyahu and Israel's prosecution of the war in Gaza.

Netanyahu has expressed his opposition to the US placing top representatives from Turkey and Qatar on the Board of Peace's Gaza Executive Board, which will be playing a key role in the oversight of the postwar management of Gaza.

### **Iran hangings 'supposedly off the table'**

Trump on Tuesday also reiterated his claim that Iran halted plans to execute protesters last week after threats from Washington.

"They were going to hang 837 people, and... we let them know that if that happens, that will be a very bad day for them, and they decided not to do it," Trump said at the White House. "I can't tell you what's going to happen in the future, but supposedly they've taken that off the table."

*People walk past a burned building destroyed during public protests in the Iranian capital Tehran on January 19, 26. (ATTA KENARE / AFP)*

Trump had threatened to strike Iran if it killed protesters, which the regime proceeded to do in the thousands. But toward the end of last week, the US president indicated that he had pulled back from plans to attack due to Iran's purported cancellation of planned hangings of protesters.

The Islamic Republic has not publicly confirmed those plans. [https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-says-we-think-we-know-location-of-ran-gvili-the-last-hostage-in-](https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-says-we-think-we-know-location-of-ran-gvili-the-last-hostage-in-gaza/)



[gaza/](#)

**Swastikas sprayed on Brooklyn playground used by Jewish children 2 days in a row**

## **Dozens of hate symbols and 'Adolf Hitler' scrawled on slides, walls and pavement in park next to Orthodox community in Boro Park**

By [Luke Tress](#)

Today, 9:54 pm



**Swastikas found at a Brooklyn playground, in New York City, January 21, 2026. (Courtesy/Boro Park Shomrim)**

**NEW YORK — Swastikas were found on a children's playground in a Jewish area of Brooklyn on Tuesday and Wednesday.**

**The local community board shared photos of blood-red swastikas on the playground's slide and pavement on Tuesday, saying the area was "littered" with the hate symbols.**

**On Wednesday, the board shared more photos showing blue swastikas surrounding the name "Adolf Hitler" on a wall.**

**The Boro Park Shomrim, a Jewish neighborhood watch group, said 57 swastikas were found in the park on Wednesday.**

The graffiti was in Gravesend Park, adjacent to the Boro Park neighborhood, which has a large Orthodox population.

The community board said the NYPD's Hate Crimes Task Force was investigating.

"Parents should never have to fear that their children will encounter vile hatred at the playground," the Anti-Defamation League said. "We are disgusted to see this display of antisemitism in Boro Park, home to tens of thousands of Jewish New Yorkers and thousands of Holocaust survivors."

"This horrific act of hatred in a park within a heavily Jewish community where many Orthodox children play is a vile attack on Jewish New Yorkers," said Mark Treyger, the head of the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York.

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani also condemned the vandalism.

"I am sickened by this antisemitic vandalism in Borough Park. Antisemitism has no place in our city, and I stand shoulder to shoulder with the Jewish New Yorkers who were targeted," Mamdani said in a statement. "My administration is working closely with the NYPD's Hate Crimes Task Force as well as our Parks Department, and those responsible will be investigated and held accountable."

Mamdani, who has [identified](#) as an anti-Zionist, has [consistently](#) condemned classic anti-Jewish tropes as antisemitic, but has [defended](#) hardline anti-Zionist rhetoric, or [refrained](#) from calling anti-Zionism discriminatory toward Jews.

In November, a vandal [scrawled swastikas](#) on a Jewish school near Gravesend Park.

Jews are [targeted in hate crimes](#) more than all other groups combined in New York City.

The NYPD reported 330 suspected antisemitic incidents in the city in 2025, out of 576 total suspected hate crimes.

The antisemitic incidents amounted to 57 percent of the total hate crimes reported to police, and represented an anti-Jewish incident every 26 hours.

Jewish security officials have said many antisemitic incidents are likely not reported to police.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/swastikas-sprayed-on-brooklyn-playground-used-by-jewish-children-2-days-in-a-row/>

## **WATCH: Shots fired as criminal illegal alien 'weaponizes vehicle and rams law enforcement,' injuring officer**

By [Joe Kovacs](#)

January 21, 2026



**A federal law-enforcement officer was injured Wednesday in California when a criminal illegal alien from El Salvador allegedly rammed officials with his car, prompting shots to be fired.**



**The U.S. Department of Homeland Security says at 7:05 a.m. local time, "DHS law enforcement officers were conducting a targeted operation in Compton, California, to arrest a violent criminal illegal alien from El Salvador, William Eduardo Moran Carballo, who is involved in a human smuggling operation and has two prior arrests for inflicting corporal injury on a spouse or cohabitant. An immigration judge issued him a final order of removal in 2019.**

**BREAKING: There was just a FEDERAL AGENT-involved SHOOTING in Willowbrook,**

California after an illegal alien tried RAMMING HIS VEHICLE into them  
IT HAS TO STOP.

The man is a violent El Salvador illegal alien who "rammed law enforcement," and an agent fired defensive shots

A... [pic.twitter.com/tblAUEp065](https://pic.twitter.com/tblAUEp065)

— Eric Daugherty (@EricLDaugh) [January 21, 2026](#)

"In a dangerous attempt to evade arrest, this criminal illegal alien weaponized his vehicle and rammed law enforcement. Fearing for his life and safety, an agent fired defensive shots. The criminal illegal alien was not hit and attempted to flee on foot. He was successfully apprehended by law enforcement. The illegal alien was not injured, but a CBP officer was injured.

Reporting from [#willowbrook](#) near Compton following an immigration enforcement operation conducted by the border patrol. A shooting took place, no one was hit. Federal agents are still here [@ABC7 pic.twitter.com/FdZukOGgUj](#)

— Josh Haskell (@abc7JoshHaskell) [January 21, 2026](#)

**"These dangerous attempts to evade arrest have surged since sanctuary politicians, including Governor Newsom, have encouraged illegal aliens to evade arrest and provided guides advising illegal aliens how to recognize ICE, block entry, and defy arrest. Our officers are now facing a 3,200% increase in vehicle attacks."**

**BREAKING UPDATE:** Federal agent (U.S. Border Patrol/DHS) involved in shooting during operation in Willowbrook, California this morning near 126th St & Mona Blvd.

LASD: Border Patrol notified them ~7:30 a.m.; shots fired shortly after.

No injuries — no one hit by gunfire.... <https://t.co/WRgkTHfd9W> [pic.twitter.com/d8GeuRNqbg](https://pic.twitter.com/d8GeuRNqbg)

— Breaking News (@TheNewsTrending) [January 21, 2026](#)

**[Is the news we hear every day actually broadcasting messages from God? The answer is an absolute yes! Find out how!](#)**

<https://www.wnd.com/2026/01/watch-shots-fired-as-criminal-illegal-alien-weaponizes/>

## **'It's disgusting': Former NFL reporter enters U.S. Senate race vowing to clean up Minnesota fraud fiasco**



By [Adam Pack, Daily Caller News Foundation](#)

[January 21, 2026](#)

**Michele Tafoya**

**Michele Tafoya, a former NFL sideline reporter and Twin Cities broadcaster, entered Minnesota's 2026 Senate race Wednesday vowing to expand Senate Republicans' 53-seat majority during November's midterm elections.**

**Tafoya, who left NBC's "Sunday Night Football" in 2022 after a decade-long stint, is touting her background as a political outsider offering voters a clean slate as**

**she vies for a Democratic-held seat that has long eluded Republicans. She argued Minnesota's massive welfare fraud scandal gives Republicans an offensive play for the seat she characterized as "wide open," though the state tends to favor Democratic candidates at the federal level.**

"I've just seen the failure of leadership in Minnesota ... and watching the decline of this place that I love and where I've raised my kids is really difficult to witness," Tafoya told the Daily Caller News Foundation in an interview prior to her campaign launch. "I finally just got to the point where I said, 'OK, why don't you do something about it? You stand up and you help.'"

The longtime journalist is pledging to put Minnesota Democrats, including Gov. Tim Walz, under the microscope for failing to stop the theft of taxpayer dollars. Federal prosecutors have said the total amount defrauded could surpass \$9 billion, with those charged [mostly](#) of [Somali](#) descent.

"I'm trained to ask questions and get to the truth, and that's something that I feel very strongly about, that we have failed at," Tafoya said. "We have not held people to account."

For years, I walked the sidelines when the stakes were the highest, and that job taught me how leadership really works.

I'm running for U.S. Senate to bring that experience to Washington and deliver the real results Minnesota deserves. [pic.twitter.com/vDbHWpAXg9](https://pic.twitter.com/vDbHWpAXg9)

— Michele Tafoya (@Michele\_Tafoya) [January 21, 2026](#)

Tafoya sharply criticized Lieutenant Governor Peggy [Flanagan](#) and Rep. Angie [Craig](#), the Democratic candidates in the race, who are engaged in a vicious battle for the party's base voters ahead of the August primary. She argued Flanagan and Craig are "two career politicians who have done nothing to help Minnesota" while touting her unique background that would bring "fresh ideas" to the state.

The large-scale theft of taxpayer dollars could prove to be a major liability for [Flanagan](#), who served as Walz's deputy while most of the fraud transpired. Craig also defended Walz's leadership amid the widening scandal in a brief interview with the Daily Caller News Foundation in December. Walz [suspended](#) his reelection bid weeks later, citing the growing public outcry.

Tafoya also slammed the Democratic rivals for using increasingly belligerent rhetoric toward Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which the Trump administration has [alleged](#) are facing an unprecedented number of assaults.

Craig, who previously [touted](#) her "moderate" brand, compared ICE's operations to the "1930s in Germany" following the [shooting](#) of Renee Good by an ICE Agent on Jan. 7. Craig has also pledged to vote against future funding for ICE and has championed DHS Secretary Kristi Noem's impeachment.

"We've watched as Tim Walz and his friends on the far-left have created an agitated environment that's dangerous not only for law enforcement, but for our citizens — all just to pick a political fight with the president," Tafoya said regarding the recent [unrest](#) in Minnesota.

"It's dangerous. It's disgusting," Tafoya continued. "We need leaders who want to enforce the law, support law enforcement and make Minnesota safe and peaceful — the way that we all know it can be."

Tafoya, who has never held elected office, first floated running for the open seat in February 2025 following Democratic Minnesota Sen. Tina Smith's decision to not seek reelection.

The National Republican Senatorial Committee (NRSC), Senate Republicans' campaign arm, actively [recruited](#) her into the race. Tafoya told the DCNF she heard from many other folks in addition to NRSC chairman Tim Scott asking her to run for the open Senate seat.

Tafoya will vie against a crowded field of candidates for the GOP nomination, including Adam Schwarze, a former Navy SEAL, and ex-NBA player Royce White.

President Donald Trump, whose endorsement can often sway the results of Republican primaries, has yet to back a candidate. Tafoya told the DCNF she would be "honored" to have Trump's support, but remains focused on winning the primary with or without him.

"He's on his own timeline, and if he decides to endorse, great," Tafoya said.

Though national Republicans view Tafoya as a star recruit for Minnesota's 2026 Senate race, she is still set to face an uphill battle in the traditionally left-leaning state. Tafoya's candidacy also means Democrats will likely have to spend resources in Minnesota to shore up their nominee instead of using that money in other battleground states.

The nonpartisan Cook Political Report [rated](#) the contest as "Likely Democrat" prior to Tafoya's announcement. A Republican has not won a statewide election in the North Star State since former Republican



Gov. Tim Pawlenty's reelection win in 2006.

Despite these apparent challenges, Tafoya shared that conversations with residents across the state indicate that voters want an alternative to one-party Democratic rule this November. In addition to the welfare fraud scandal, the GOP candidate cited boys competing in girls' sports, violent crime and taxpayer spending on illegal immigrants as areas where Minnesotans are looking for another choice to the Democratic status quo.

"Minnesotans are not blind to the issues around them," Tafoya told the DCNF. "You've got fourth and fifth generation families here who don't want to leave, but they're thinking about it. They want to see change. I know this. They want to see something different."

"I think that we are at a moment in Minnesota that is ripe for this, for people to change their minds and say, 'Hey, this isn't working. Let's find someone who will work for us,'" Tafoya continued.

Tafoya has lived in Minnesota for more than three decades where she raised two children with her husband, Mark Vandersall.

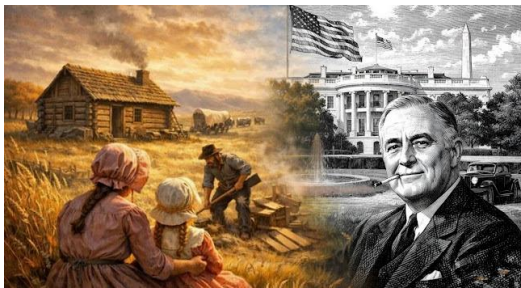
Republicans are also seeking to flip Democratic-held seats in Michigan, Georgia and New Hampshire during the midterms.

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## OP ED

# The Little House on the Prairie and the White House

*Tue, 20 Jan 2026 7:46 AM PST by Daniel Greenfield*



Philippe de Lannoy, born to a Protestant family fleeing Spanish religious persecution, arrived in the Plymouth Colony in 1621. His descendants carrying the Delano family name include three presidents; Grant, Coolidge, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

And Laura Ingalls Wilder.

FDR and the writer of the 'Little House on the Prairie' books may be by far the best known of all the many prominent Delano descendants. The story of the pioneering family persevering through blizzards, droughts and plagues of locusts from Minnesota through Wisconsin to

the Dakotas to carve a living from the soil while always remaining hopeful was not just a world away from the 'Boston Brahmins' and the Northeastern elites who dominated the country: it was also a deliberate philosophical contrast between independence and socialism.

"We have a dictator," Rose Wilder Lane wrote after FDR's inauguration. The term was not nearly as outrageous then as it seems now through the distorting lens of time. Prominent liberals (and at least one movie, 'Gabriel Over the White House') had called for FDR to assume dictatorial powers and modern conservatives may bemoan Democrats today, but that was nothing compared to the economic powers wielded by the government under the New Deal.

Like many young intellectuals of her era, Rose Wilder Lane had flirted with Socialism and Communism. But she had also been raised by her parents, Laura and Almanzo, and grown up as the sole inheritor of her family's pioneering history, working her way from small town South Dakota to become a nationally renowned writer and world traveler. Lane, a talented reporter, had also been in the Soviet Union during the Communist regime's manufactured famine.

Arrested by the Soviet secret police, Lane dropped her Communism and became deeply cynical about both the system and many of her friends in the media who sympathized with it, remarking about her photographs of devastated landscapes under Soviet rule, "no picture of a Bolshevik country that looks like this would be joyously received by any American editor." It was a long way for the woman who had once called herself a Communist and had been friends with John Reed who had given his life to push Soviet propaganda on behalf of the murderous regime.

After documenting the brutality of Armenian genocide perpetrated by Turkish Muslims, followed by extended trips around the Middle East, which she described to the 'Ma' of the Little House books, she returned home to her family just in time for the stock market crash and the Great Depression, and helped her mother edit together her memories into what became known as the 'Little House on the Prairie' series along with her own

popular, but forgotten, pioneer novels.

The books were a means of earning a living for a family of women in the midst of an economic depression, but they also asserted what America was and what it was not. A widow and a divorced woman might have been expected to be the first to turn to socialism. Instead, Lane became one of the three 'founding mothers' of what became the libertarian movement.

The contrast between the 'little house', the struggles of Ma, Pa and the siblings, and the White House's solution of socialism was not accidental. Much like Harold Gray, another farmboy who became successful through his determination and hard work, with Little Orphan Annie, the cultural message of the books was that individual perseverance built character while the government was more likely to destroy what everyone had built than to hold it up. (The 'Annie' musical was maliciously transformed into a celebration of FDR and a rejection of Gray's work.)

"In 1933 a group of sincere and ardent collectivists seized control of the Democratic Party, used it as a means of grasping Federal power, and...began to make America over. The Democratic Party is now a political mechanism having a genuine political principle: national socialism," Lane wrote. The national part would not endure long past the fifties and the sixties. By the seventies, the Democrats had become just another international socialist party, keen not on industrializing, but deindustrializing America, captive to the fashionable trends of liberal elites whose appetite for identity politics and the Soviet Union's 'third worldism' continue to define their politics now.

Unlike Harold Gray's Annie, doomed to be buried by the musical with its cheerful paeans to the New Deal (in sharp contrast to the comic strip which excoriated the totalitarian economic regime of the National Recovery Act, mandatory unionization and total economic control), the Little House on the Prairie books largely survived intact because they were less overtly political.

But as the twenty-first century continued its descent into wokeness, the censors came for the 'Little House'. Just ahead of the BLM purges, the American Library Association, which had long ago come under the control of the sorts of leftists who thought the Bolsheviks were misunderstood, and then come under the control of those who thought Malcolm X was the greatest figure in America history, purged Laura Ingalls Wilder and her popular series.

The American Library Association (ALA) had awarded its first literary award to Wilder for "substantial and lasting contributions to children's literature" and named it the Laura Ingalls Award. Later honorees included Dr. Seuss, who would eventually also be purged, and Maurice Sendak, who apparently has not yet been purged. But it's probably only a matter of time.

In 2018, the ALA awarded what had been the Laura Ingalls Award to Jacqueline Woodson, a black lesbian, who writes about what it's like to be a black lesbian, and, of course, about "white privilege". The ALA also voted unanimously to change the name because Laura Ingalls Wilder, unlike hating white people, was now politically incorrect. The most recent honoree, Carole Boston Weatherford, became famous for complaining that anime is racist.

Rose Lane Wilder could have seen it all coming, even if her mother who had traveled by covered wagon might not have. "The Soviet hope of economic equality rests now on the death of all men and women who are individuals. A new generation, they tell me, has already been so schooled and shaped that a human mass is actually being created; millions of young men and women do, in veritable fact, have the psychology of the bee swarm, the ant hill," she wrote.

"I came out of the Soviet Union no longer a Communist, because I believed in personal freedom. Like all Americans, I took for granted the individual liberty to which I had been born. It seemed as necessary as the air I breathed; it seemed the natural element in which human beings lived. The thought that I might lose it had never remotely occurred to me. And I could not conceive that multitudes of human beings would ever willingly live without it."

That 'new generation' with the psychology of an ant hill and no sense of freedom, to whom collectivism is the only morality and the repression of individuals their highest ambition, is all around us. It's what the former Laura Ingalls Wilder award now celebrates.

By the sixties, Lane, now in her seventies, was reporting from Vietnam on the latest fight against Communism. That war was lost, but the question she was concerned with was whether the war would be lost in America. Would the 'Little House' triumph or would the White House rule us all.

In the age of social media collectives, the questions of individualism are more urgent than ever. America cannot be saved by virtuous mobs, only by the hard work of virtuous individuals.



***Daniel Greenfield** is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center. This article previously appeared at the Center's **Front Page Magazine**.*

<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/1/#inbox/WhctKLbvRTtICSbGcjzhfmnvXKrxPTKGzTNGnWNzsNjxHdQFLHWnSINKGTZrppJmdjxZxsB>



BS"D

#### STEP BY STEP

STEP BY STEP: Good news is that many friends and supporters of Lev U'Neshama (Heart and Soul) donated towards the Education Fund project to provide basic school supplies for actually 350 children within our Lev U'Neshama families.

We are grateful that the school supply part of our effort has been successful.

According to the Israel Population and Statistics office, Tzfat's population is about 40,000, and one third live at the poverty level. We do what we can so at least the children within our struggling LUN families can get the things they need.

Every week we are providing new sport shoes and eye exams/eyeglasses to the children on our request list. However, previous donations are rapidly dwindling. I am reaching out now before the fund has been emptied and we will have to say "no" to additional requests.

We work with two local shoe merchants who give Lev U'Neshama a discount but they advised us the cost of the shoes has increased. Also, we work with an accredited optician in town who also gives us a discount but his cost is stable.

Lev U'Neshama is an Israeli registered non-profit charity organization, volunteer run, no business expenses whatsoever and every \$ goes into our programs.

Shoes: \$45 per pair regular and \$60 for First Steps, baby shoes.

Eye Exam/Eyeglasses: \$60 per child.

Your support is urgently requested.

Or use the Zelle US to US bank transfer system (contact me at [mortsmo@aol.com](mailto:mortsmo@aol.com) for bank information.

US Donors may also send checks made payable to

Simcha Smolensky, my son, who is also a volunteer. Send to:

Rabbi Simcha Smolensky, 6739 N Mozart St Chicago IL 60645

**Your support will be appreciated.**

Yaffa Smolensky