

# 02012026 NEWS SPECIAL Don't miss Lev U'Neshama NOTE at end!

## Please Note:

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**After US warning, Iran say no plans to carry out live-fire exercises in Strait of Hormuz**  
*Iranian official denies planned drill after state TV announced it; CENTCOM had said it 'will not tolerate unsafe IRGC actions' in key sea passage*

By [Agencies](#) and [Tel Staff](#) Today, 6:52 pm



*An Iranian Revolutionary Guard vessel watches an American warship in the Strait of Hormuz May 19, 2023. (Jon Gambrell/AP)*

**An Iranian official on Sunday denied that the country had any plans to carry out live-fire exercises in the Strait of Hormuz this week, amid sky-high tensions in the region.**

**Speaking to Reuters, an Iranian official denied ever planning such exercises, although Iran's state-run Press TV reported on Thursday that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards' naval forces would hold the drill on Sunday and Monday.**

**"There was no plan for the Guards to hold military exercises there and there was no official announcement about it. Only media reports which were wrong," the official said.**

**On Friday, the US military issued a statement warning Iran against carrying out such exercises and urging it to avoid "unnecessary risk."**

"US Central Command (CENTCOM) urges the IRGC to conduct the announced naval exercise in a manner that is safe, professional and avoids unnecessary risk to freedom of navigation for international maritime traffic," the statement read. "The Strait of Hormuz is an international sea passage and an essential trade corridor that supports regional economic prosperity."

The [statement](#) added that "any unsafe and unprofessional behavior near US forces, regional partners or commercial vessels increases risks of collision, escalation and destabilization."



*The United States Navy destroyer USS Delbert D. Black docks at the Port of Eilat, southern Israel, January 30, 2026. (Yehuda Ben Itach/Flash90)*

The US military said that it "will not tolerate unsafe IRGC actions including overflight of US military vessels engaged in flight operations, low-altitude or armed overflight of US military assets when intentions are unclear, highspeed boat approaches on a collision course with US military vessels, or weapons trained at US forces."

The US Navy currently has six destroyers, one aircraft carrier, and three littoral combat ships in the region, raising the risk of war after Iran's deadly crackdown in January on nationwide protests against Iranian leadership.

US President Donald Trump was weighing options against Iran that include targeted strikes on security forces, Reuters has reported, citing multiple sources.

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei [was quoted](#) in state media on Sunday as saying that although Trump says he has sent ships to the region, "the Iranian nation shall not be scared by these things, the Iranian people will not be stirred by these threats.

"We are not the initiators and do not want to attack any country, but the Iranian nation will strike a strong blow against anyone who attacks and harasses them," he said.

On Saturday, Trump [told reporters](#) that Iran was “seriously talking” with Washington, hours after Tehran’s top security official Ali Larijani said on X that arrangements for negotiations were underway. Trump also said: “I hope they negotiate something acceptable. You could make a negotiated deal that would be satisfactory with no nuclear weapons.”

Tehran has said it is ready for “fair” negotiations that do not seek to curtail its defensive capabilities.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/after-us-warning-iran-say-no-plans-to-carry-out-live-fire-exercises-in-strait-of-hormuz/>

## Israel’s army chief meets US defense officials in Washington amid Iran tensions

**Military seeking to stay in loop on potential strike as US docks missile destroyer in Eilat; after EU slaps IRGC with ‘terror’ label, Iran declares European armies ‘terror groups’**

By [Emanuel Fabian](#)

and [Agencies](#) Today, 6:23 pm



*IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir speaks at a senior command conference discussing investigations into the failures surrounding Hamas's October 7, 2023, onslaught and the subsequent war, December 29, 2025. (Israel Defense Forces)*

**IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir was in Washington, DC, over the weekend for a series of discussions with American defense officials regarding Iran, The Times of Israel has learned.**

**The meetings in the United States came as US President Donald Trump continued to threaten military action against Iran against the backdrop of the regime's killing of protesters, and as Tehran programs following the June 2025 war with Israel.**

**News of the whirlwind visit was only permitted for publication on Sunday morning, as the Israel Defense Forces remained on high alert amid the high tensions with Iran.**

A report by Army Radio on Sunday claimed that Zamir said in a recent security assessment that an American strike in Iran could take place within a period between “two weeks and two months.”

The US has been moving military assets to the Middle East, boosting available firepower and defensive capabilities in the region. On Friday, an American missile destroyer docked at Israel’s Red Sea port city of Eilat. During the weekend visit, Zamir met with the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Gen. Dan Caine, and other American officials at the Pentagon.

Joining Zamir in the US for the meetings were Maj. Gen. Hidai Zilberman, head of the IDF’s Planning Directorate and former defense attaché to the US; incoming Israeli Air Force chief Brig. Gen. Omer Tischler; Brig. Gen. Amit Adler, head of the IDF’s Tevel international cooperation unit; and Brig. Gen. Manny Liberty, head of the Military Intelligence Directorate’s Operational Division.

*The United States Navy destroyer USS Delbert D. Black docks at the Port of Eilat, southern Israel, January 30, 2026. (Yehuda Ben Itach/Flash90)*

After returning to Israel, Zamir sat down with Defense Minister Israel Katz for a meeting.

“Following the series of meetings the IDF chief of staff recently held in the United States, the two are discussing, among other things, the regional situation assessment and the IDF’s operational readiness for any scenario,” Katz’s office said in a statement.





**Defense Minister Israel Katz (left) meets with IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir at his office in Tel Aviv, February 1, 2026. (Ariel Hermoni/Defense Ministry)**

Last week, Zamir met with US Central Command chief Adm. Brad Cooper in Israel, as part of efforts between the militaries to coordinate ahead of a possible American strike in Iran.

The chief of the IDF's Military Intelligence Directorate, Maj. Gen. Shlomi Binder, also visited Washington for talks with the US administration the same week.

The IDF has sought sufficient advance warning from the US before any potential strikes in Iran, to allow it to prepare defensively and to be ready to alert the public.

**IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir (left) meets with US CENTCOM chief Adm. Brad Cooper at the Israeli military's headquarters in Tel Aviv, January 24, 2026. (Israel Defense Forces)**

Meanwhile, the Wall Street Journal reported that American airstrikes on Iran are not imminent since the US military was still deploying additional air defense systems to the Middle East to bolster protection for Israel and its Arab allies.

According to the report, which cited US officials, the Pentagon was moving THAAD and Patriot air defenses to bases with US personnel across the Middle East.

US air defenses, in addition to those operated by Israel, were crucial to protecting the country during the 12-day war with Iran in 2025 and two previous missile and drone attacks launched by the Islamic Republic in 2024.

**This handout image from the US Navy shows an EA-18G Growler landing on the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in the Indian Ocean on Jan. 23, 2026. (Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Daniel Kimmelman/U.S. Navy via AP)**

News of Zamir's visit to Washington surfaced the same day Iran appeared to backtrack on plans to conduct a military exercise in the Strait of Hormuz, days after US Central Command warned against "unsafe and unprofessional behavior near American forces," which it said "increases risks of collision, escalation, and destabilization."



An Iranian official told Reuters Sunday that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' naval forces had no plan to carry out live-fire exercises in the strait, a key transit hub for global energy supplies, contradicting US claims and media reports.

"There was no plan for the Guards to hold military exercises there, and there was no official announcement about it. Only media reports, which were wrong," the official said.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi had criticized CENTCOM's warning Friday. "The US military is now attempting to dictate how our Powerful Armed Forces should conduct target practice in their own turf," he wrote on X.

The European Union followed the Trump administration's example late last week in declaring the IRGC a terrorist organization. The US designated the IRGC a terrorist organization in 2019.

The EU's decision sparked diplomatic retaliation from Iran, which on Sunday declared European countries' armies to be "terrorist groups."



*In this handout picture provided by the Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency (ICANA), members of Iran's parliament dressed in IRGC uniforms, chant 'Death to America, Death to Israel' during a session in Tehran on February 1, 2026 (ICANA NEWS AGENCY / AFP)*

Dressed in a Guards uniform in a show of solidarity, Iran's Speaker of Parliament Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said that under "Article 7 of the Law on Countermeasures Against the Declaration of the IRGC as a Terrorist Organization, the armies of European countries are considered terrorist groups."

Amid reports of rising tensions, Iran's security official said Saturday that progress had been made toward negotiations with the US, even as the Islamic Republic's

army chief warned Washington against launching military strikes.

Trump confirmed the two sides were talking, while keeping the threat of an attack in the foreground. "Contrary to the hype of the contrived media war, structural arrangements for negotiations are progressing," said Ali Larijani, head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council.

Larijani spoke a day after the Kremlin said he had held talks in Moscow with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said Saturday that a broader conflict would hurt both Iran and the United States. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-chief-meets-us-defense-officials-in-washington-amid-iran-tensions/>

## **In direct threat, Khamenei warns of regional war if US attacks Iran**

**Supreme leader says Washington knows that conflict would spread, Iranians not afraid; in tit-for-tat, Tehran's parliament designates European armies as terrorist organizations**

By Agencies and Tol Staff Today, 2:14 pm



*Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei shows him waving during a meeting with Iranian people in Tehran on February 1, 2026, ahead of the 47th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic Revolution. (KHAMENEI.IR / AFP)*

**Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Sunday that if the US attacks Iran, the hostilities will broaden into a regional conflict, the semi-official Tasnim news agency reported.**

**"The Americans should know that if they start a war, this time it will be a regional war," Khamenei was quoted as saying.**

**The US has built up its naval presence in the Middle East, with President Donald Trump repeatedly threatening Iran with intervention if it does not agree to a nuclear deal or stop killing protesters.**

**"[Trump] regularly says that he brought ships... The Iranian nation shall not be scared by these things, the Iranian people will not be stirred by these threats," Khamenei said.**

**"We are not the initiators and do not want to attack any country, but the Iranian nation will strike a strong blow against anyone who attacks and harasses them."**

The comments from the 86-year-old Khamenei were the most direct threat he's made so far.

*This handout image from the US Navy shows an EA-18G Growler landing on the flight deck of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln in the Indian Ocean on Jan. 23, 2026. (Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Daniel Kimmelman/U.S. Navy via AP)*



Tehran has warned that if Trump orders strikes, Iran will target Israel and American military assets in the Middle East.

A diplomatic solution remains in the cards, with Tehran saying it is ready for “fair” negotiations that do not seek to curtail its defensive capabilities.

Trump [said](#) Saturday that Iran is “seriously talking” with Washington.

Khamenei also likened recent anti-government protests to a “coup,” saying that the goal of the “sedition” was to attack the centers that govern the country, state media reported.

“They [rioters] attacked the police, government centers, IRGC centers, banks, and mosques, and burned the Quran... It was like a coup,” he said, adding that “the coup was suppressed.”

The Iranian authorities’ deadly response to the protests sparked threats of intervention from Trump, who dispatched an aircraft carrier group to the region.

The US Navy currently has six destroyers, one aircraft carrier, and three littoral combat ships in the region.



*In this handout picture provided by the Islamic Consultative Assembly News Agency (ICANA), members of Iran's parliament dressed in IRGC uniforms, chant 'Death to America, Death to Israel' during a session in Tehran on February 1, 2026 (ICANA NEWS AGENCY / AFP)*

The protests, which started in late December over economic hardships but morphed into the most acute political challenge to the Islamic Republic since its establishment in 1979, have now abated after repression.

Official numbers put the unrest-related death toll at 3,117, while US-based HRANA rights group said on Sunday it had so far verified the death of 6,713 people. Reuters was unable to independently verify the numbers.

The response prompted the European Union to list the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which played a central role in violently putting down the unrest, [as a terrorist organization](#). Iranian lawmakers retaliated on Sunday by slapping the same designation on European armies.

Lawmakers wore the green uniform of the Guards in a display of solidarity at the legislative session, where they chanted “Death to America,” “Death to Israel” and “Shame on you, Europe,” state television footage showed.

Slamming the bloc’s “irresponsible action,” speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said that under “Article 7 of the Law on Countermeasures Against the Declaration of the IRGC as a Terrorist Organization, the armies of European countries are considered terrorist groups.”

It remained unclear what immediate impact the decision would have.

Ghalibaf said the EU decision, “which was carried out in compliance with the orders of the American president and the leaders of the Zionist regime, accelerated Europe’s path to becoming irrelevant in the future world order.”

The move, he added, had only increased domestic support for the Guards.

Sunday’s session was held on the 47th anniversary of the return from exile of the late ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who founded the Islamic Republic in 1979.

The Guards are the ideological arm of Iran’s military, tasked with safeguarding the Islamic Republic from external and internal threats. Set up after Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution to protect the Shiite clerical ruling system,

the IRGC has great sway in the country, controlling swaths of the economy and armed forces. The Guards were also put in charge of Iran’s ballistic missile and nuclear programs.

The EU on Thursday listed the body as a “terrorist organization,” in part for orchestrating the crackdown on the recent protest movement. The step matched similar classifications enacted by the United States, Canada and Australia.

*EU High Representative and Vice-President for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Kaja Kallas talks to journalists upon arrival for a EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting at the EU headquarters in Brussels on January 29, 2026. (SIMON WOHLFAHRT / AFP)*



"Repression cannot go unanswered," European Union foreign policy chief Kaja Kallas wrote on X. "Any regime that kills thousands of its own people is working toward its own demise."

France and Italy, which were previously reluctant to list the IRGC as a terror group, lent their backing this week. Israel hailed the achievement of a goal it had long sought.

Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar praised the decision as "historic," calling the IRGC "the number one force behind the spread of terror and the destabilization of the region," asserting that the move will thwart such activities in Europe and send "an important message to the men and women of the Iranian people who are fighting for their freedom." <https://www.timesofisrael.com/in-direct-threat-khamenei-warns-of-regional-war-if-us-attacks-iran/>

### **'The regime has completely closed ranks': Israel and US ready skies for potential Iran confrontation**

**US reportedly reinforcing air defenses in the Middle East, deploying THAAD and Patriot batteries to better protect allies and force, a strong signal of readiness as IRGC official breaks silence after assassination rumors**

*Lior Ben Ari*, news agencies | 07:56

**Iran's Revolutionary Guard navy commander, Ali Reza Tangsiri, issued his first public remarks Sunday after rumors spread that he had been killed following a series of mysterious explosions across the country.**

**"Enemies are trying to spread despair through media warfare," Tangsiri was quoted as saying by state-affiliated Tasnim News Agency. "Our people must preserve unity and remain consciously present in the arena," he said. No recent images or video of Tangsiri were released.**



*Iran's Revolutionary Guard navy commander Ali Reza Tangsiri*

The statement followed reports Saturday of an explosion in the southern port city of Bandar Abbas, after which rumors circulated on social media claiming Tangsiri had been killed. Tasnim denied those reports, later saying a gas leak caused the blast.

Iranian authorities said one child was killed and 14 people were wounded in the explosion, which occurred in or near an eight-story residential building. Iran's fire department chief said the cause was a gas leak.

Separately, Iranian media reported five additional deaths at a residential complex in the southwestern city of Ahvaz, near the Iraqi border. Details surrounding that incident were not immediately clear.

The explosions came amid heightened tensions in Iran over the possibility that U.S. President Donald Trump could order military action against the Islamic Republic, and amid speculation that Israel could be involved in any such strike.

An Israeli official told ynet that there was no indication the explosions were linked to Israel. Later, a U.S. official told CNN that the incidents were not connected to U.S. military activity.

### **US bolsters air defenses in Mideast**

Amid heightened tensions with Iran, Trump has repeatedly stated that a "[big, beautiful armada](#)" is en route to the Middle East in preparation for a possible strike. The force includes the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and six guided-missile destroyers, which Trump said outsize the force deployed off Venezuela ahead of the failed bid to oust Nicolás Maduro.



*Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet fighter jet (Photo: CENTCOM)*

Following a statement by Iranian official Ali Larijani suggesting progress toward a potential negotiation framework between Tehran and Washington, Trump said late Saturday that Iran is "seriously engaged in talks."

For now, the U.S. appears to be keeping all options open.

Though airstrikes are not imminent, senior American officials told The Wall Street Journal that the Pentagon is still deploying additional air defense systems to the region to better protect Israel, U.S. forces and Arab allies in the event of an Iranian response or broader conflict.

“The U.S. military could conduct limited airstrikes on Iran if the president were to order an attack today,” one official said, “But the kind of decisive attack that Trump has asked the military to prepare would likely prompt a proportional response from Iran, requiring the U.S. to have robust air defenses in place to protect Israel as well as American troops.”

The U.S. military already has missile defense assets in place across the region, including destroyers capable of intercepting aerial threats and the Abraham Lincoln carrier group. However, according to the Journal, Washington is now deploying an additional THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) battery and Patriot missile systems at U.S. bases across the region, including in Jordan, Kuwait, Bahrain, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The report cited American defense officials, flight tracking data, and satellite imagery.

Recent satellite images show the U.S. deployed an extra Patriot battery last week to Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar, the largest American base in the region and a previous target of Iranian retaliation after the U.S. strike on Tehran’s nuclear facilities in June of last year. THAAD systems can intercept ballistic missiles outside the atmosphere, while Patriots defend against low-altitude, short-range threats.

## (Y) DEFENSE THAT WAS DEPLOYED

### Capabilities of the THAAD System



Capable of intercepting outside the atmosphere



Detects missiles and aircraft at a range of 2,000 km



Integrates with the Arrow system



Mobile battery mounted on a truck



The deployment of a THAAD battery is a “particularly strong signal” that the U.S. is preparing for a potential clash with Iran, the Journal noted, especially since the U.S. possesses only seven operational batteries, which have been stretched thin over the past year — including in support of Israeli missile defense during the 12-day war. The THAAD system played a critical role in shielding Israel as its own Arrow interceptor supply dwindled. The U.S. launched over 150 interceptors in June 2024 alone — roughly a quarter of the total inventory ever purchased by the Pentagon.

“It is expensive to move Patriots and THAADs. The probability that they’re going to be used starts to go up,” said Seth Jones, a former Defense Department official.

Susan Maloney, a former State Department official specializing in Iran policy under Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama, added: “The air defense question is key—the extent to which we have sufficient materiel to ensure that our troops and assets in the region are going to be protected from some kind of Iranian retaliation.”

Analysts told the Journal that while the reinforcements improve protection for American facilities and population centers, they could strain logistics and readiness in the event of a wider conflict.

In addition to missile defenses, the U.S. has deployed three squadrons of F-15E fighter jets to Jordan, which could play a role in downing Iranian drones. These aircraft participated in

the April 2024 Iranian assault on Israel, which the U.S. Air Force described as the “largest air-to-air enemy engagement in over 50 years.”

U.S. Navy destroyers in the region are also armed with guided missiles capable of intercepting aerial threats. The Journal reported, citing naval sources and open-source imagery, that the U.S. now has eight destroyers within strike range of Iran: two near the Strait of Hormuz, three in the northern Arabian Sea, one in the Red Sea (which docked in Eilat on Saturday) and two more in the eastern Mediterranean.

**US warship docking at Port of Eilat (Photo: REUTERS/Doron Berti)**

U.S. preparations are continuing at a rapid pace, even as President Trump has yet to publicly reveal his



final decision. On Thursday, six F-35 fighter jets from the Vermont National Guard landed in the Azores, a Portuguese archipelago in the Atlantic, having been repositioned from the Caribbean to bring them closer to the Middle East. The same aircraft participated in the Venezuela operation. Additionally, several EA-18G Growler electronic warfare jets recently departed Puerto Rico and landed in Spain.

Despite the ongoing U.S. military buildup in the region, Gulf nations have warned the United States that Iran's missile program remains capable of inflicting "significant damage" on American interests in the Middle East, according to the Washington Post.

The report, based on two Western officials familiar with the matter, said that while Israel dealt heavy blows to Iran's missile infrastructure during last June's 12-day war, a U.S. ally in the Gulf assessed that key elements of the program survived and some capabilities have since been rebuilt.

Iran has reportedly signaled to U.S. allies in the region that any retaliation it launches in response to a potential American strike would be far more severe than its restrained response on Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar in June of last year.

One Western official cited in the report said Trump's vocal support for Iranian protesters — who initially demonstrated over rising living costs and were later violently suppressed by the regime — has led Tehran to view conflict with Washington as existential. A source in contact with Iranian counterparts said that even though parts of the Iranian leadership were uneasy with the scale of the crackdown, the perceived American threat pushed the regime to close ranks.

"The regime has completely closed ranks," the source said. "All the messages from my contacts now is 'We are ready for total war.'"



**Members of the Iranian parliament appear in full Revolutionary Guard uniforms**

Meanwhile, Iranian officials continue to issue threats against the U.S., Israel and Washington's allies. On Sunday morning, members of the [Iranian parliament appeared in full Revolutionary Guard uniforms](#) — a pointed message aimed at the European Union, which [designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps \(IRGC\) as a terrorist organization](#).

[Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei added to the warnings](#), saying: "Americans must know that if they start a war with us, this time it will be a regional war. We are not the initiators of war, but the Iranian people will strike hard at anyone who attacks them."

Khamenei later echoed that threat in a post on his X (formerly Twitter) account — in Hebrew.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/symrq0n8bl>

## **Rafah Crossing opens after over a year, with limited pedestrian passage to start Monday**

**COGAT says 'pilot program' assessing operation of crossing, as Palestinian security officers join EU mission on Gazan side of border gate to oversee mechanism**

By [Emanuel Fabian](#),

[Agencies and Tol Staff](#) Today, 1:03 pm

*Ambulances enter Rafah crossing as part of Israel's trial reopening, February 1, 2026. (STRINGER / AFPTV / AFP) [Go to website for video rdb](#)*

**The Rafah Border Crossing between the Gaza Strip and Egypt opened Sunday for a day of systems checks and tests ahead of its expected opening for pedestrians Monday, Israel's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) agency said.**

**While COGAT said that the crossing between Gaza and Egypt had reopened and that a "pilot is underway to test and assess the operation of the crossing," no pedestrians would actually be able to cross the border until Monday, despite earlier statements saying pedestrians would begin crossing on Sunday.**

**“The movement of residents in both directions, entry and exit to and from Gaza, is expected to begin tomorrow,” said the agency, the Defense Ministry body for Palestinian civilian affairs.**

**COGAT said that the crossing would open for the “limited passage” of Gazan Palestinians in both directions, in accordance with the ceasefire deal. It said the so-called “pilot phase” on Sunday was being “conducted in coordination with the European Union Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM), Egypt, and all relevant stakeholders,” and “all involved parties are carrying out a series of preliminary preparations aimed at increasing readiness for full operation of the crossing.”**

“The actual passage of residents in both directions will begin upon completion of these preparations,” it added.

While no Gazans will be allowed through the border on Sunday, the crossing showed signs of life for the first time in nearly a year since it was closed last March with the collapse of a ceasefire signed in January 2025.

Palestinian security officers passed through the crossing’s Egyptian gate and headed toward the Palestinian gate to join a European Union mission that will be supervising exit and entry, said an Egyptian official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he wasn’t authorized to talk to the media. Ambulances also crossed through the Egyptian gate, the official added.



*European Union monitors and Palestinian security officers are seen at the Rafah Crossing between Gaza and Egypt, February 1, 2026. (COGAT)*

The reopening is expected to facilitate the entry of a 15-member Palestinian technocratic body, the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza (NCAG), established to oversee the day-to-day governance of the territory’s 2.2 million residents.

The committee, established under the ceasefire deal, will be supervised by the so-called “Board of Peace” chaired by US President Donald Trump.

However, the NCAG, headed by former Palestinian Authority deputy minister Ali Shaath, is not expected to enter the Gaza Strip on Sunday, a member of the committee said.

“The head of the committee was informed that Israel had approved the entry of the members into Gaza but has not yet set a date,” he told AFP. “We call on the mediators and the US administration to accelerate operations at the crossing and increase the number of travelers.”

According to Shaath, travel in both directions would start Monday.



*Ambulances wait on the Egyptian side of the Rafah border crossing with the Gaza Strip in northeastern Egypt on February 1, 2026 (AFP)*

#### **Multi-step mechanism**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said Israel will allow 50 medical patients a day to leave. An official involved in the discussions, speaking on condition of anonymity to discuss the diplomatic talks, said each patient would be allowed to travel with two relatives.

In addition, some 50 people who left Gaza during the war would be allowed to return each day.

The number of travelers is expected to increase over time if the system is successful.

Last week, The Times of Israel reported that all Gazan Palestinians seeking to enter or leave the Strip will be required to receive Egyptian approval, and Egypt was to send the names to Israel’s Shin Bet domestic security service for clearance.

Israel will supervise the exit of Gazans to Egypt remotely. From a control room, Israeli officers, using facial recognition software, will verify that those leaving the Strip are on the list of approved names, and open up a gate at the crossing to allow them through.



**Illustrative: Palestinians stranded in Egypt cross the Rafah Border Crossing to the Gaza Strip at Rafah, Egypt, as a temporary ceasefire between Israel and Hamas went into effect, November 27, 2023. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)**

Israeli officials said each name would be looked at individually, and if any top terror commanders would seek to leave Gaza, they would be denied.

The entry into Gaza from Egypt will, however, include an Israeli security screening, as those Palestinians will arrive at an IDF checkpoint after passing through the Rafah Crossing. Only afterward will they be permitted to continue toward the Hamas-controlled areas of Gaza.

There are no plans to allow the crossing to be used

for aid and goods, which go through other crossings where they are screened by Israel for contraband, especially weapons.

In the years before the war, Hamas used the Rafah Crossing to bring in numerous weapons and other supplies into the Strip for its military wing, without any Israeli oversight, according to the IDF and security officials. The Israeli defense establishment is backing an idea for a tri-border crossing between Israel, Egypt and Gaza, where the current Kerem Shalom Crossing is located.



**Trucks line up to enter the Egyptian gate of the Rafah crossing, heading for inspection by Israeli authorities before entering the Gaza Strip, January 27, 2026. (AP/Mohamed Arafat)**

#### **Medical patients anxious to cross for treatment**

Rafah, which Palestinians see as their gateway to the world, has been largely shut since it was seized by Israel in May 2024. About 20,000 Palestinians needing medical care are hoping to leave war-devastated Gaza via the crossing, and thousands of other Palestinians outside the territory hope to return home.

According to data from COGAT, some 42,000 Gazans left the Strip during the war, the vast majority of them patients seeking medical treatment abroad or dual citizens.

The crossing was briefly opened for the evacuation of medical patients during a ceasefire in early 2025. Israel had resisted reopening the Rafah crossing, but the recovery of the remains of the last hostage in Gaza last week cleared the way to move forward.

Zaher al-Wahidi, head of the Health Ministry's documentation department in Gaza, told The Associated Press that the ministry hasn't yet been notified about the start of medical evacuations.



**An injured man sits on a slab of concrete slab near a tent at Nuseirat camp for Palestinian refugees in the central Gaza Strip on January 31, 2026. (Eyad Baba / AFP)**

“Every day that passes drains my life and worsens my condition,” said Mohammed Shamiya, 33, who suffers from kidney disease and requires dialysis treatment abroad. “I’m waiting every moment for the opening of the Rafah land crossing.”

Safa al-Hawajri, who has received a scholarship to study overseas, was also eagerly anticipating the reopening.

“I’m waiting in the hope of fulfilling my ambition, which is tied to the reopening of the crossing,” said Hawajri, 18. “I hope to be able to travel as soon as it opens.”

# Muslim countries condemn Israel's Gaza strikes, allege 'repeated violations' of ceasefire

**Jordan, Egypt, UAE among 8 nations to sign letter urging transition to 2nd phase of Trump's Gaza plan, as Israel moves forward with banning Doctors Without Borders from enclave**

By [Lazar Berman](#) and [Emanuel Fabian](#)

Today, 8:52 pm



*Smoke rises following an Israeli airstrike west of Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip, January 31, 2026. (Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90)*

**Foreign ministers for eight Muslim countries, some hostile to Israel and some friendly, issued a condemnation of Jerusalem's "repeated violations" of the Gaza ceasefire in a letter on Sunday, after the IDF carried out a wave of airstrikes in the enclave.**

The joint letter — signed by Saudi Arabia, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Indonesia, Pakistan, Egypt, and Turkey — alleged that the strikes threaten "ongoing efforts to create appropriate conditions for transitioning to a more

**stable phase in the Gaza Strip."**

**A wave of Israeli strikes killed at least 32 Palestinians across the Gaza Strip on Friday overnight and into Saturday morning — one of the highest death tolls since the October ceasefire — as the IDF confirmed targeting terror commanders and infrastructure.**

The Israel Defense Forces said its strikes, in response to "a violation of the ceasefire agreement," targeted four commanders in the Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror groups, as well as a weapons depot, an arms manufacturing site, and two rocket launching positions.

It said they came after eight gunmen emerged from a tunnel in southern Gaza's Rafah on Friday in IDF-controlled territory. The IDF said at the time that three of the gunmen were killed in strikes and a fourth, described as a key Hamas commander, was captured.

The eight Muslim countries also called for the full implementation of the second phase of US President Donald Trump's plan for Gaza.

The letter urged "all parties to fully uphold their responsibilities during this critical period and to exercise the utmost restraint, in order to preserve and sustain the ceasefire."

Meanwhile, Israel announced Sunday that it would move ahead with its decision to ban Doctors Without Borders (MSF) from working in Gaza, alleging the group abused a "humanitarian cover for hostile activities and terrorism."

"The violation involves MSF's failure to submit lists of local employees, a requirement applicable to all humanitarian organizations operating in the region," the Diaspora Affairs Ministry, which has been charged by the government with overseeing the matter, said in a statement.

MSF called the ban a "pretext" to obstruct the delivery of humanitarian aid to the war-devastated enclave.

"This is a pretext to obstruct humanitarian assistance. Israeli authorities are forcing humanitarian organizations into an impossible choice between exposing staff to risk or interrupting critical medical care for people in desperate need," MSF said in a statement.

On January 1, Israel vowed to enforce a ban on the activities of 37 international NGOs operating in Gaza, including MSF, over their failure to comply with stringent new "security and transparency" requirements concerning their employees.

*Palestinians walk past the clinic of Doctors Without Borders, or Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), in the al-Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City on January 11, 2026. (Omar AL-QATTA / AFP)*

The standards were put in place under a government resolution from March 1 requiring NGOs to submit a raft of



documentation about their organization and identify all foreign and Palestinian employees, including their passports and personal identification numbers.

Some of the NGOs targeted have said the requirements flout, or at least erode, international humanitarian law, and Israel has faced international criticism for the move.

In 2024, the Diaspora Affairs Ministry was designated by the Israeli cabinet as the government body responsible for registering international NGOs focused on providing welfare to Palestinians. The ministry heads an inter-ministerial team with tools to determine if an NGO calls for boycotts against Israel or works to delegitimize the state in other ways, according to the government.

According to the ministry, MSF initially committed to handing over employee lists, and Israel expected to receive them last Tuesday. "These employee lists are not shared with external parties and are used solely for internal purposes," said the ministry.

But MSF reportedly walked back the commitment and announced it would not comply. The organization will end operations in Gaza by the end of February, the Diaspora Affairs Ministry said.

"Assessments are being made to provide alternative medical solutions to ensure the continuity of humanitarian aid to the residents of the Gaza Strip following the organization's departure," said the ministry statement.



*Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli speaks at a Knesset session on antisemitism, January 26, 2026. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)*

Diaspora Affairs Minister Amichai Chikli said that MSF "abruptly changed its position after publicly committing to act according to procedure."

"We are aware that MSF employs individuals active in terrorist organizations, which is why it hides its employee lists," he charged. "The organization operates in coordination with the Hamas Ministry of Health, and not by coincidence, its statements were published in proximity to similar statements from elements within the Strip."

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/muslim-countries-condemn-israels-gaza-strikes-allege-repeated-violations-of-ceasefire/>

## 'Hero' Gaza hospital director and op-ed writer for NYT revealed to have been Hamas colonel

*Despite his Hamas rank being well known in Arabic media, Safiya was still invited to write opinion pieces for the NYT.*

By [MATHILDA HELLER](#) FEBRUARY 1, 2026 21:37 Updated: FEBRUARY 1, 2026 22:36



*Hussam Abu Safiya, director of Kamal Adwan hospital, shows the damage inside the hospital, during the ongoing Israeli military operation, amid Israel-Hamas conflict, in Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip, December 18, 2024. (photo credit: REUTERS/STRINGER)*

**A Gaza doctor and hospital director who criticized Israel in two separate New York Times op-eds has been revealed to be a Hamas colonel.**

**Dr. Hussam Abu Safiya is a Palestinian pediatrician and the director of Gaza's Kamal Adwan Hospital in Beit Lahiya. The IDF arrested him on December 27, 2024, and he has since been held**

**in an Israeli prison.**

**Safiya's arrest sparked scores of international campaigns calling for his release. Amnesty International, for example, has launched a campaign for his unconditional release in which it refers to him as an "arbitrarily detained Palestinian health worker."**

Multiple other activist groups have deemed him "the hero" of Gaza.

Last month, Safiya was even granted “honorary citizenship” by the city of [Lyon, France](#). The city said, “Safiya is one of the leading figures in Gaza’s health system and embodies the courage of healthcare workers in the face of the unspeakable.”



**Workers of the health sector protest in front of the Catalan health department after Israeli forces detained dozens of medical staff from Kamal Adwan Hospital in the Gaza Strip on Friday, among them its director Hussam Abu Safiya (credit: REUTERS/Bruna Casas)**

#### **Evidence of Safiya's Hamas involvement**

Following Lyon’s announcement, a senior researcher at NGO Monitor – Vincent Chebat – began researching Safiya.

He soon discovered a 2016 photo of the doctor in his Hamas uniform “at a gathering of Hamas elites, including Gen. Abu Obaida al-Jarrah, the director of Military Medical Services Saeed Saoudi, and National Security Forces commander Col. Naeem al-Ghoul.”

Safiya was also referred to as “a colonel” in a 2020 Facebook post on the Gaza Medical Services page.

Moreover, NGO Monitor and other online researchers identified multiple Arabic-language sources that openly refer to Safiya as “Colonel Hussam Abu Safiya.”

Kamal Adwan Hospital itself is also considered to be a Hamas stronghold.

Additionally, researchers found Facebook posts by Safiya celebrating October 7 and calling for terror against “the Jews.” One read: “And they thought their fortresses would protect them from God, but God came upon them from where they did not expect, and cast terror into their hearts.” The text was accompanied by an image of terrorists parachuting into Israel on the day of the massacre.

An IDF spokesperson confirmed that Safiya is a ranking member of Hamas.

Despite his rank in Hamas being well known within Arab media circles, Safiya was nevertheless invited to write opinion pieces for the NYT. Since October 7, he has been invited to write two op-eds in which he blamed Israel for hospital crises, fuel shortages, civilian suffering, and “horrific” attacks on Gaza’s health system.

“We are suffering and paying the price of the genocide that is happening to our people here in the northern Gaza Strip,” he wrote in one.

Neither Safiya nor the NYT disclosed his reported affiliation with Hamas.

“Those who platformed Abu Safiya must do some serious soul-searching, and figure out how they ended up promoting the propaganda of a literal Hamas terrorist,” Chebat told the *New York Post*.

“A basic search of Google and social media enabled me to prove he is a colonel,” Chebat told *The Jerusalem Post* on Sunday. “So, if I can do that, anyone who wants to vet such a person can do the same.”

“Therefore, he should never have been granted the ‘honorary citizenship’ of Lyon. Similarly, all the NGOs campaigning for his release should also be aware of these facts.”

The translator of Safiya’s articles for the NYT, Max Weiss, has criticized the paper for its “deafening silence” on the situation in Gaza and Safiya’s so-called treatment.

Following the publication of the second piece, Weiss called for a global boycott of the New York Times asking it give “expanded coverage to the bloody and inhuman treatment of Palestinians in Israeli detention as well as to the unended genocidal war that is still being unleashed upon the Palestinian people of Gaza, the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as the Lebanese and Syrian people, who continue to be subjected to ethnic cleansing and ecocidal violence throughout the borderlands.”

Weiss also accused the NYT of “burying” a “single sentence about the detainment of Safiya” after “an obedient paraphrase of the Israeli military’s video announcement” that “240 ‘militants’ had been swept up in the raid on the hospital.” <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-885264>

## **Israeli woman arrested in Turkey on charges of anti-Palestinian rhetoric, denouncing Erdogan**

***The Foreign Ministry confirmed that it was aware of an Israeli citizen who was detained in Istanbul. N12 reported she has been held for 10 days.***

**By JAMES GENN FEBRUARY 1, 2026 22:40 Updated: FEBRUARY 1, 2026 22:54**



*Turkish police arresting an Israeli woman in Taksim Square, Istanbul, January 2026.(photo credit: SCREENSHOT/X/VIA SECTION 27A OF THE COPYRIGHT ACT)*

**An Israeli woman was arrested in Istanbul, Turkey, on accusations of engaging in anti-Palestinian rhetoric, denouncing Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and cursing the Turkish flag, according to Sunday reports from Israeli media.**

**The Foreign Ministry confirmed that day that it was aware of an Israeli citizen who was detained in Istanbul.**

According to Israeli media, the woman was detained

in Taksim Square, a central, heavily trafficked area of the [Turkish](#) metropolis.

She has been detained for at least 10 days, N12 News reported.

Photographs shared on social media appear to show police officers handcuffing the woman. However, *The Jerusalem Post* has not been able to independently verify the images.

*Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan speaks during a ceremony for the handover of new vehicles to the gendarmerie and police forces in Istanbul, Turkey, November 28, 2025; illustrative. (credit: REUTERS/MURAD SEZER)*

#### **Israelis accused of 'spying' on Erdogan**

Israelis have been arrested in Turkey in the past.

A notable case included when [Natali and Mordy Oaknin](#) were detained after being accused of spying. The couple took photographs of the Presidential Palace, and faced charges of "political or military espionage," Turkish media reported at the time.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-885267>

## **Qatar's takeover of Georgetown University should be investigated - opinion**

*A new investigation details how Qatari funding transformed Georgetown from campus to curriculum.*

*By WINFIELD MYERS JANUARY 29, 2026 18:22 Updated: FEBRUARY 1, 2026 19:15*



*Healy Hall at Georgetown University with the Qatari flag above it (photo credit: SHUTTERSTOCK)*

**Georgetown University is the epicenter of Qatari influence in American higher education. Over the past two decades, the Washington, DC, institution has received more than \$971 million from Qatar through its Doha campus partnership and targeted endowments - funding that further ensconced extant Islamist influences in the university's intellectual culture.**

**This financial dependence is particularly consequential at the Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service (SFS), the**

#### **United States' premier training ground for diplomats and foreign-policy leaders.**

##### **Qatar's Multilayered Funding of Georgetown**

Qatar has strategically funded four endowed chairs in Muslim societies, Islamic history, Indian politics, and Arab studies, elevating faculty whose work consistently advances anti-Western narratives while remaining conspicuously silent on authoritarian abuses within Qatar and the broader Middle East.

Meanwhile, Georgetown's Center for Contemporary Arab Studies (CCAS), among other academic units, including the Bridge Initiative, has increasingly functioned as a platform for anti-Israel advocacy, with Qatari-

funded scholars reframing U.S. foreign policy through a post-colonial lens aligned with Doha's geopolitical interests.

Qatar's influence now extends into Georgetown's governance, with Sheikh Abdulla bin Ali Al Thani—son of the former Emir of Qatar—a member of the university's Board of Directors, thereby embedding Qatari interests at the highest level of institutional decision-making in America's capital.

### Documenting Qatar's Institutional Influence at Georgetown

As documented in the Middle East Forum's new [report](#), "Qatar's Multidimensional Takeover of Georgetown University," Qatar has leveraged its nearly \$1 billion in funding to embed itself deeply within Georgetown's academic, financial, and governance structures. Drawing on federal foreign-gift disclosures, governance records, faculty appointments, and curriculum analysis, the report shows that Qatar's tentacles reach from Doha to DC, manipulating research agendas, endowed chairs, faculty activism, exchange programs, and even key decision-making bodies. The result is less a conventional overseas partnership than a sophisticated soft-power strategy enabling a foreign government to influence how American students are taught to understand the Middle East, Islam, US foreign policy, and Israel. The degree of this influence demonstrates that Georgetown has surrendered too much control to an Islamist, Hamas-supporting foreign state with hostile geopolitical interests.

*Infographic from the new report (Credit: MIDDLE EAST FORUM)*

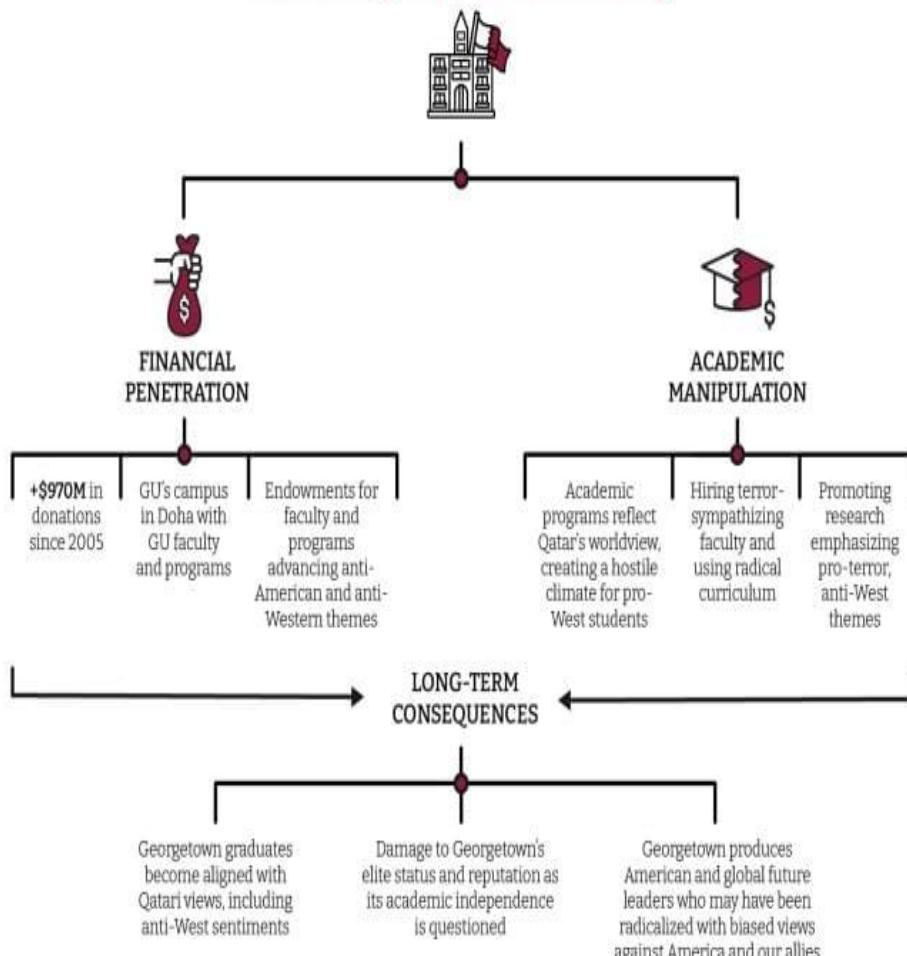
### Curbing Foreign Influence in American Universities

**The Department of Education and Congress must take concrete steps to curb foreign interference to reverse Qatar's ability to undermine academic independence and national security interests.**

**Transparency is paramount.**

All Qatari funding should be disclosed in real-time; foreign governments should be restricted in their financing of endowed chairs that shape curricula in sensitive fields such as international relations and Middle East studies. Recent congressional scrutiny underscores why. In 2024, Northwestern University faced questions over its Qatar campus, with President Michael Schill testifying before the House Committee on Education and the Workforce about Qatar's role in campus operations. While Northwestern ultimately retained its Doha campus, the hearings revealed contractual constraints that effectively prohibit criticism of the Qatari government - an obvious violation of core academic-freedom principles.

## Qatar's Multidimensional Takeover of Georgetown University



The Education Department should require publicly available audits of universities receiving substantial funds from foreign governments - including Georgetown - to determine whether such largesse affects the

curriculum and faculty conduct and whether it supports contractual or informal restrictions on speech. Georgetown's Qatar campus has received a "poor" rating from the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression (FIRE) for restrictive speech policies tied to local law - a lack of academic freedom that is not confined to Doha. MEF's report documents dual-affiliated anti-US/anti-Israel faculty at the Doha campus who share teaching and governing duties at the DC campus.

Finally, Georgetown University must remove foreign government representatives from its Board of Directors and senior governance bodies. No institution charged with educating future American diplomats should permit representatives of an Islamist regime to exercise influence over academic policy, research priorities, or institutional strategy. The problem extends beyond formal board membership. The appointment of Ian Almond, a Georgetown University/Qatar professor who has publicly justified Hamas's October 7 attacks, as a voting member of the Main Campus Executive Faculty illustrates how ideological currents associated with Qatar-funded programs now reach into Georgetown's core academic decision-making structures.

As Campus Watch has shown for [years](#), Georgetown graduates populate the federal institutions that shape American power and policy around the world. That their education continues to be influenced by the Islamist petrostate of Qatar is unacceptable and must end.

*Winfield Myers is managing editor of the Middle East Forum and director of its Campus Watch project.*

*This op-ed is published in partnership with a coalition of organizations that fight antisemitism across the world. Read the previous article by [David Bernstein](#). <https://www.jpost.com/opinion/article-884998>*

## Timeline set for upcoming Russia-Ukraine-US talks – Zelensky

*The next round of Washington-mediated peace negotiations between Moscow and Kiev are slated for next week in Abu Dhabi, the Ukrainian leader has said*

1 Feb, 2026 13:44



*Vladimir Zelensky © Kevin Dietsch / Getty Images*

**The next round of US-mediated Moscow–Kiev talks is scheduled to take place on February 4 and 5 in Abu Dhabi, rather than this Sunday as previously planned, Ukraine's Vladimir Zelensky has announced in a post on his Telegram channel. The Kremlin has yet to comment on any change of schedule.**

**The initial round, held on January 23–24, marked the first trilateral format since the Russia-Ukraine conflict escalated in February 2022 and was described by all sides as "very constructive." The issue of territorial concessions, however, remained the main sticking point, as Ukraine refused to recognize Russia's new borders.**

The New York Times reported on Sunday that the reason for the rescheduling of the talks remains unclear, noting that it followed a "surprise" meeting over the weekend between Russian and US negotiators in Florida.

Neither side disclosed details of the discussions. However, US envoy Steve Witkoff later wrote on social media: "We are encouraged by this meeting that Russia is working toward securing peace in Ukraine." Russian President Vladimir Putin's envoy Kirill Dmitriev also called the meeting "constructive."

While the upcoming Abu Dhabi talks have been described as trilateral, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said earlier that both envoys Witkoff and Jared Kushner – Washington's main negotiators in the Ukraine peace process – would not attend the next round of talks, though "there might be a US presence."

Zelensky added in his Sunday post that "Ukraine is ready" for substantive discussions and is interested in achieving an outcome that would bring the conflict closer to an end.

Russia normally declines to publicly comment about details of sensitive negotiations, arguing that Ukraine-style "megaphone diplomacy" is counterproductive. Moscow has maintained that it would prefer to achieve its goals diplomatically but is prepared to do so militarily if talks fail.

Moscow insists any settlement must include Ukraine's withdrawal from the Donbass regions of Donetsk and Lugansk that voted to join Russia in 2022 referendums and recognition of the country's new borders, including Crimea. Kiev has rejected these demands and insisted on regaining the territories, despite continuously losing ground to Russian forces. [https://www.rt.com/russia/631833-russia-ukraine\\_us-talks-timeline/](https://www.rt.com/russia/631833-russia-ukraine_us-talks-timeline/)

# Thousands of mutilated kids will sue 'Mengele' gender surgeons – Musk

The Tesla and X owner reacted to a US jury verdict in favor of a woman who underwent a mastectomy at 16

1 Feb, 2026 07:11



Elon Musk at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, January 22, 2026. © Anadolu / Getty Images

US surgeons who perform 'gender transition' procedures on minors could face thousands of lawsuits, Elon Musk has said. He likened them to Nazi doctor Josef Mengele, who carried out sadistic medical experiments on prisoners at the Auschwitz II-Birkenau concentration camp during the Second World War.

The Tesla and X owner was reacting to news that Fox Varian, who had a double mastectomy at age 16, won what is described as the first detransitioner malpractice lawsuit in the United States. Now 22, Varian said New York doctors had compelled her to undergo the surgery while she was still a minor.

Both a psychologist and a surgeon approved the procedure. A jury later found them liable for malpractice. Varian was awarded \$1.6 million for pain and suffering and another \$400,000 for future medical costs.

"There will be thousands of court cases of children who were mutilated by evil doctors, modern day Mengeles," Musk wrote on X on Saturday, sharing a post about the ruling.

"The schools, psychologists/psychiatrists and state officials who facilitated this will pay dearly too," he added.

Musk has previously spoken publicly about his own family's experience with the radical 'gender transition' movement. One of his children, Xavier, came out as transgender at 16 and later changed his name to Vivian Jenna Wilson.

The billionaire has claimed he was "essentially tricked into signing documents" by doctors, calling the practice "incredibly evil."

"I lost my son, essentially. They call it deadnaming for a reason," Musk said in earlier remarks, adding that Xavier had been figuratively killed by what he described as the "woke mind virus," which he vowed to "destroy."

Since returning to office, President Donald Trump has rolled back several policies introduced under his predecessor Joe Biden, including federal support for medical gender transition procedures for individuals under the age of 19. Several US states have also moved to restrict or ban such treatments for minors.

<https://www.rt.com/news/631819-thousands-of-mutilated-kids-will/>

## 'Clear escalation': Leaked Signal chats suggest ICE agents 'targeted for assassination'

By [Joe Kovacs](#)

February 1, 2026



In what is being called a "clear escalation," leaked Signal chats suggest American ICE agents may be targeted for assassination with with bull's-eyes appearing on images as Target stores are accused of cooperating with federal immigration officials.

Steven Crowder, host of "Louder with Crowder," posted images of what he called a "breaking Signal leak" on X, stating: "Minneapolis ICE Agents Are Being 'TARGETED' With Bullseyes In Apparent Assassination Threat Following Target's Cooperation With Federal Immigration Officers."

Cooperation With Federal Immigration Officers.

"MugClub Undercover found these images being distributed in the signal chats. This is evidence of clear escalation."

## BREAKING SIGNAL LEAK:

Minneapolis [@ICEgov](#) Agents Are Being "TARGETED" With Bullseyes In Apparent Assassination Threat Following [@Target](#)'s Cooperation With Federal Immigration Officers.

MugClub Undercover found these images being distributed in the signal chats.

This is... [pic.twitter.com/CpSld8nHA6](https://pic.twitter.com/CpSld8nHA6)

— Steven Crowder (@scrowder) [January 31, 2026](#)

Crowder appealed to FBI Director Kash Patel, saying: "Have you seen enough now? SHUT IT DOWN!"

One of the images for CVS at Target shows a bull's-eye on a car with the caption, "Drive up & get your shots," and the Target logo now reading :"TARGETED."

Another shows Border Patrol Commander Greg Bovino and other agents on a Target poster reading: "We let ICE do in-store pickup."

One of the leaked Signal chats has one user asking: "Is there a group organizing this?"

A user named "Guillotine Daddy" responds: "I'm with socialism alternative and we [are] trying to send a message to Target. If you can help tomorrow, we'd love to see you. We are coordinating with Target employees to send a LOUD message."

Protests against Target stores took place across America on Saturday, with [NPR reporting](#):

The anti-ICE protests include calls for boycotts against retailers and businesses perceived to be in cooperation with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and U.S. Customs and Border Protection. In Washington, D.C., a coalition of organizations picketed Target stores. The retailer is headquartered in Minneapolis. "I want them to see that we are not just standing idly, while our neighbors are being kidnapped. We are standing for our brothers and sisters in Minneapolis," said Slobodan Milic, wearing his purple Free DC sweatshirt while picketing a Target store along a busy thoroughfare of the city.

Target said it shared with its teams that "Target does not have cooperative agreements with ICE or any other immigration enforcement agency."

Journalist Nick Sortor shared video of one of the sit-ins, noting; "Liberal white boomers are now out in FULL FORCE taking over Minnesota Target stores.

"Imagine being so worthless that you spend your Saturdays singing songs in support of child r\*pists while

harassing shoppers at Target."

NOW: Liberal white boomers are now out in FULL FORCE taking over Minnesota Target stores

Imagine being so worthless that you spend your Saturdays singing songs in support of child r\*pists while harassing shoppers at Target [pic.twitter.com/PUDn8kb0k4](https://pic.twitter.com/PUDn8kb0k4)

— Nick Sortor (@nicksortor) [January 31, 2026](#)

These absolute idiots don't understand the difference between private and public. Target Minneapolis told them to take a hike. Any private business has a right to boot you out for disturbance. Good Lord, they are dumber than I thought [pic.twitter.com/GnrTSLi0Am](https://pic.twitter.com/GnrTSLi0Am)

— Rob V (@RobV59) [January 31, 2026](#)

OP ED

## Is Trump Being Bamboozled?: Islamic State Terrorists Threaten Comeback Thanks to His Support for Syria's Islamist Leader

by [Con Coughlin](#)

February 1, 2026 at 5:00 am

**US President Donald Trump's campaign to prevent Islamic State (IS) terrorists from staging a comeback is in serious danger of being undermined because of his support for Syria's Islamist "interim" president, Ahmed al-Sharaa.**

*Pictured: Trump hosts al-Sharaa at the White House on November 10, 2025. (Image source: Donald Trump/Truth Social/Wikimedia Commons)*

US President Donald Trump's campaign to prevent Islamic State (IS) terrorists from staging a comeback is in serious danger of being undermined because of his support for Syria's Islamist "interim" president, Ahmed al-Sharaa.

It was not that long ago that al-Sharaa had a \$10 million bounty on his head after Washington designated him a

terrorist for his close links to al-Qaeda in both Iraq and Syria.

The bounty was subsequently [lifted](#) after al-Sharaa, with significant military backing from Turkey, succeeded in overthrowing the Baathist dictatorship of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in late 2024.

Trump's attempts to improve ties with both Turkey and Saudi Arabia brought about the US lending its endorsement to al-Sharaa's Islamist regime in Damascus. The result is that al-Sharaa has now set about, at the very least, failing to prevent ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)) wholesale attempts, apparently by his own government's [security forces](#), to slaughter Syria's religious and ethnic minorities: Druze, Alawites and Kurds, including America's presumed allies, the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces Army (SDF), who courageously [defeated](#) Syria's Islamic State terrorists.

Syria's Christians may well be the al-Sharaa government's [next](#) target.

Al-Sharaa's [meeting](#) with Trump at the White House in November 2025 ended with US officials announcing that the new Syrian regime had been invited to join Trump's international coalition to combat the threat posed by IS terrorists -- a remarkable turnaround in al-Sharaa's fortunes, given his previous close association with Islamist terrorist organizations.

The Trump administration has become increasingly concerned at the prospect of IS staging a comeback after suffering a [catastrophic defeat](#) at the hands of US coalition forces in 2017, which succeeded in destroying the so-called caliphate that IS had established in the Syrian city of Raqqa.

The prominent role played by the Kurdish-led SDF proved crucial to the eventual outcome of that US-led offensive.

Trump's decision, therefore, to invite a known Islamist such as al-Sharaa to join the latest US effort to crush IS understandably raised many eyebrows in Washington, with critics questioning whether the new Syrian leader could be trusted to take a firm stand against IS terrorists.

Following his White House meeting with al-Sharaa, Trump appeared impervious to such concerns. He claimed that his main priority was "to see Syria become a country that's very successful. And I think this leader can do it. I really do."

Al-Sharaa, for his part, [assured](#) Fox News that his visit to the White House represented a "new era" in which the country would cooperate with the US.

Trump's willingness to give his backing to al-Sharaa is said to be the result of his attempts to deepen ties with Middle East states such as Qatar, Turkey and Saudi Arabia which, for different reasons, appear keen to see an Islamist government in power in Damascus -- as elsewhere. For [Qatar and Turkey](#), supporting al-Sharaa fits in with their long-established policy of backing radical Islamist groups, such as the Muslim Brotherhood, while the Saudis' backing for the new Syrian regime is based on their desire to prevent Iran's ayatollahs from re-establishing a foothold in a country, Syria, that was once Tehran's closest regional ally.

Trump's backing for al-Sharaa, at a time when he has repeatedly declared his determination to prevent IS



terrorists from staging a comeback, now faces the very real prospect of backfiring spectacularly after recent events in Syria, where al-Sharaa's attacks against Kurdish strongholds in the north of the country have resulted in hundreds of IS terrorists escaping from Kurdish-run prison camps.

Al-Sharaa's forces earlier this month launched a series of assaults, ostensibly with Trump's backing, against Kurdish-controlled regions of northern Syria as part of his efforts to assert his control over the entire country.

The Kurds established their own autonomous zone while fighting alongside US forces during Syria's long-running civil war, and around 1,500 US troops still remain in the area, partly to protect the Kurds, as well as to help maintain security for the estimated 50,000 IS terrorists and their dependents that were taken prisoner following the fall of Raqqa.

Trump has made no secret of his desire to end America's military involvement in Syria. At the end of his first term in office, he tried to [withdraw](#) the remaining US forces, but had to abandon the plan after being accused of betraying the Kurds, who had proved themselves to be such valued allies during the war against IS.

Since returning to office last year, Trump has renewed his efforts to end US military involvement in Syria – a move said to be one of the reasons behind his decision to back al-Sharaa's Islamist regime.

If the US ever does pull its troops from Syria, the vacuum will most assuredly be filled instantly by Turkey and other Jihadists, as well as by [Russia](#) again and possibly [China](#).

Trump's support for Al-Sharaa has, in addition, raised concerns about the fate of the IS prisoners still being held in Kurdish-controlled territory, after reports that significant numbers managed to [escape](#) during recent fighting between government forces and the Kurdish-led SDF.

There have even been reports of IS raising its flag again in Raqqa after al-Sharaa's forces [seized control](#) of the city from the Kurds.

Certainly, any development that results in IS terrorists re-establishing a foothold in Syria could prove more than embarrassing for the Trump administration after the president personally pledged his commitment to maintain the US military effort to prevent the terrorist group from regrouping.

The White House recently authorised strikes against IS bases in both Syria and Nigeria after three US military personnel were [killed](#) in an IS ambush in December, prompting Trump to promise that his administration would undertake "very serious retaliation" against those responsible for the killings.

The US president could find himself facing an extremely difficult predicament, especially during midterm elections, if, as a result of his support for Syria's Islamist leader, more Americans and others are killed or suffer serious injury at the hands of al-Sharaa's government, IS terrorists who have escaped from Syrian prisons, as well as al-Sharaa's apparent commitment to ethnically cleanse, then Islamise, Syria.

**Con Coughlin is the Telegraph's Defence and Foreign Affairs Editor and a Distinguished Senior Fellow at Gatestone Institute.**

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/22240/trump-sharaa-syria-islamic-state>



#### 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 [mortsma@aol.com](mailto:mortsma@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