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## Reservist seriously wounded in north Gaza ambush; 20 said killed as IDF strikes back

*IDF says gunfire at troops in Israeli-held part of Strip a 'blatant violation' of ceasefire; children reportedly among dead in IDF strikes; Rafah Crossing remains open despite clashes*

By [Emanuel Fabian](#),

[Agencies](#) and [Noam Lehmann](#) Today, 12:16 pm Updated at 12:30 pm



*A relative of 6-month-old Mira al-Khabbaz, who was reportedly killed in an Israeli strike earlier in the day, carries her body outside Al-Shifa Hospital in Gaza City on February 4, 2026. (Omar AL-QATTAA / AFP)*

**An Israel Defense Forces reservist officer was seriously wounded by gunfire from Palestinian operatives in the northern Gaza Strip overnight, the military said Wednesday.**

**The IDF responded with a series of strikes on Gaza that Palestinian media said killed at least 20 people.**

**Despite a US-brokered truce entering its second phase last month violence has continued in**

**the Gaza Strip, with Israel and the Hamas terror group each accusing the other of breaching the agreement that came into effect on October 10, 2025.**

The latest bloodshed came days after Israel reopened the Rafah Crossing between Gaza and Egypt — the only exit for Gazans that does not pass through Israel.

According to the IDF, troops of the Alexandroni Brigade came under fire from multiple gunmen during operations on the Israeli side of the Yellow Line, which splits the Strip between areas controlled by Israel and Hamas.

In response, the military said, tanks opened fire on the gunmen, and airstrikes were carried out.

The IDF said the incident was a “blatant violation” of the ceasefire.

The seriously wounded officer was taken to a hospital, and his family was notified.

Palestinian media, citing hospitals in Gaza, reported that 18 people were killed in the overnight Israeli strikes in the Strip. They included 11 killed in Gaza City, according to the reports.

The reports said three people were killed, two of them children aged 16 and 12, in Israeli artillery shelling in Gaza City’s eastern Tuffah neighborhood.

Another three people, including a 5-month-old, were killed by Israeli shelling in the Zeitoun neighborhood of Gaza City, according to the reports.

In addition, three people were reported killed in a strike in southern Gaza’s Khan Younis, according to Palestinian media.

Reports also said there was an Israeli airstrike targeting a tent housing displaced Gazans in the Mawasi area in the Strip’s south. Hamas’s civil defense agency reported two people killed.

The Palestinian Red Crescent Society identified one of the dead as an on-duty Red Crescent medic, Hussein al-Samiri. The Red Crescent also said its field hospital in Mawasi has received at least a dozen people wounded in the strike.

The IDF did not immediately comment on the strikes.

The tolls could not be immediately verified, and Hamas casualty figures do not distinguish between fighters and noncombatants.



**Ambulances wait on the Egyptian side of the Rafah Border Crossing with the Gaza Strip on February 4, 2026, days after Israel permitted a limited reopening of the Palestinian territory's border post.(AFP)**

limited.

COGAT said that the World Health Organization, “which is responsible for coordinating the arrival of residents from the Gaza Strip to the Rafah Crossing, has not submitted the required coordination details at this stage for procedural reasons.”

“Once the coordination details are submitted as agreed upon, the transfer of patients and their companions into Egypt via the Rafah Crossing will be facilitated,” COGAT said, in reference to Palestinians seeking medical care.

More than 530 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire since the ceasefire took effect, according to Gaza’s Hamas-controlled health ministry. The Gazan figures cannot be confirmed.

Palestinian terror operatives have killed four Israeli soldiers since the truce, according to Israeli authorities.



**An Israeli airstrike in the west of Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, January 31, 2026. (Bashar Taleb / AFP)**

The attacks and the escalating death toll have rocked the US-backed truce and caused Palestinians in the Strip to say it does not feel like the war has ended.

Saturday was among the deadliest days, with the civil defense agency reporting at least [32 people killed](#) in Israeli attacks, which the military said were in response to a Hamas ceasefire violation.

The IDF said its strikes 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.

The war started with the October 7, 2023, Hamas invasion of southern Israel, in which some 1,200 people were killed and 251 were taken hostage. The body of the final hostage, Ran Gvili, was returned last week, ending the first phase of US President Donald Trump’s plan.

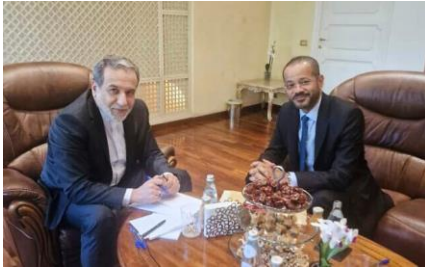
The second phase of Trump’s plan includes complex issues such as Hamas disarmament, which the group has long rejected, further Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and the deployment of an international peacekeeping force.

US envoy Steve Witkoff held talks with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem on Tuesday, during which Netanyahu insisted that Hamas must be disarmed and the entire Gaza Strip demilitarized before any reconstruction can begin. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/reservist-seriously-wounded-in-north-gaza-ambush-18-said-killed-as-idf-strikes-back/>

## **US and Iran to seek de-escalation in nuclear talks in Oman, regional official says**

**Tehran sought to move meetings from Turkey to location of last year’s talks in order to avoid any expansion of discussions to issues such its ballistic missiles**





By [Reuters](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 2:36 pm

*In this photo released by the Iranian Foreign Ministry, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, left, meets with his Omani counterpart Badr al-Busaidi at the Omani Embassy in Rome during the fifth round of Iran-US negotiations, Friday, May 23, 2025. (Iranian Foreign Ministry via AP)*

**The US and Iran are due to hold talks in Oman on Friday after Tehran requested a change of venue in order to keep the negotiations focused solely on its nuclear program, a regional official said, as a build-up of US forces in the Middle East raised fears of a**

**confrontation.**

**Iran wanted the meeting to take place in Oman as a continuation of previous rounds of talks held in the Gulf Arab country on its nuclear program, asking for a change of location from Turkey to avoid any expansion of the discussions to issues such as Tehran's ballistic missiles, the regional official said.**

**Iran has said it will not make concessions on its formidable ballistic missile program — one of the biggest in the Middle East — calling that a red line in negotiations.**

Tehran, which says it has replenished its stockpile of ballistic missiles since coming under attack from Israel last year, has warned that it will unleash its missiles to defend the Islamic Republic if its security is under threat.

The regional official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Iran had since the beginning stressed that it would only discuss its nuclear program, while Washington wanted other issues on the agenda.

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Oil prices extended gains on Wednesday after the US shot down an Iranian drone and armed Iranian boats approached a US-flagged vessel in the Strait of Hormuz, rekindling fears of an escalation between Washington and

Tehran.

*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)*

**Iran sought bilateral talks**

Trump has warned that “bad things” would probably happen if a deal could not be reached, ratcheting up pressure on the Islamic Republic in a standoff that has led to mutual threats of airstrikes and stirred fears of a wider war.

On Tuesday, the US military shot down an Iranian drone that “aggressively” approached the Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier in the Arabian Sea, the US military said, in an incident first reported by



Reuters.

Trump told reporters at the White House on Tuesday: “We are negotiating with them right now.” He did not elaborate and declined to say where he expected talks to take place.

A source familiar with the situation said Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, was due to take part in the talks, along with US Special Envoy Steve Witkoff and Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi.

Ministers from several other countries in the region, including Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, and the United Arab Emirates, had also been expected to attend, but the regional source told Reuters that Tehran wanted only bilateral talks with the US.

Iran held [five rounds of mediated talks](#) with the US in Oman in May 2025.

In June, the United States struck Iranian nuclear targets, joining in at the tail end of a 12-day Israeli bombing campaign. Israel said it launched strikes against the existential threat it faced from Iran's nuclear program. Though Iran, which vows to destroy Israel, insists the program is peaceful, it has enriched uranium to levels that have no civilian use and that are a short technical step from weapons-grade.



*An Iranian man and a child visit an exhibition showcasing missile and drone achievements in Tehran on November 12, 2025. (ATTA KENARE / AFP)*

More recently, the US navy built up forces in the region following Iran's violent crackdown against anti-government demonstrations last month, the deadliest since Iran's 1979 revolution.

Trump, who stopped short of carrying out threats to intervene, has since demanded nuclear concessions from Iran, sending a flotilla to its coast. Iran's leadership is increasingly worried a US strike could break its grip on power by driving an already enraged public back onto the streets, according to six current and former Iranian officials.

The priority of the diplomatic effort is to avoid conflict and de-escalate tension, a regional official told Reuters earlier.

### **Tanker incident**

Iranian sources told Reuters last week that Trump had demanded three conditions for the resumption of talks: zero enrichment of uranium in Iran, limits on Tehran's ballistic missile program, and an end to its support for regional proxies. Israel is reportedly also pressing the US to insist on those terms.

Iran has long said all three demands are unacceptable infringements of its sovereignty, but two Iranian officials told Reuters its clerical rulers saw the ballistic missile program, rather than uranium enrichment, as the bigger obstacle.

During the June war, Iran fired ballistic missiles at Israeli military sites and cities, killing dozens of people, destroying buildings and leaving thousands homeless.

Since the US strikes in June, Tehran has said its uranium enrichment work — which it says is for peaceful, not military purposes — has stopped.



*A high-rise residential building in Beersheba that was hit by an Iranian missile on the final day of the war in June, 2025, is demolished, on October 8, 2025. (Tsafrir Abayov/Flash90)*

In another incident on Tuesday, this one in the Strait of Hormuz, the US Central Command said Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps forces had approached a US-flagged tanker at speed and threatened to board and seize it.

Maritime risk management group Vanguard said the Iranian boats ordered the tanker to stop its engine and prepare to be boarded. Instead, the tanker sped up and continued its voyage.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-and-iran-to-see-de-escalation-in-nuclear-talks-in-oman-regional-official-says/>

## **Trump says Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei 'should be very worried'**

"I want peace in the Middle East," Trump said. "If we didn't take out that nuclear, we wouldn't have peace in the Middle East."

By [GOLDIE KATZ](#) FEBRUARY 4, 2026 21:19 Updated: FEBRUARY 4, 2026 22:20

**United States President Donald Trump said that Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei "should be very worried" during a pre-recorded interview with NBC News on Wednesday.**

**NBC reporter Tom Llamas asked Trump about Iranian anti-regime protesters, who have repeatedly requested US intervention, as the regime continues to conduct a violent crackdown in an attempt to quell the protests.**

**Trump stated that the US has had the protesters' backs, elaborating that the regime's defense capabilities are "a mess" due to US intervention during the 12-day war in which the US, using B-2 bombers, "wiped out" Iranian nuclear facilities.**

"I want peace in the Middle East," Trump said. "If we didn't take out that nuclear, we wouldn't have peace in the Middle East."

### **Iranian attempts to rebuild nuclear sites**

Llamas additionally probed Trump on the possibility of Iranian attempts to [rebuild nuclear infrastructure](#).

The US President stated that he had heard that Iran was taking steps to rebuild and had warned Tehran that if they do try to rearm, he would send US B-2 bombers "right back to do their job again."



He said that Iran was "thinking about starting a new [nuclear] site in a different part of the country," adding that when he found out about this plan, he told Iran: "If you do that, we're going to do very bad things to you."

The segment of the interview was released shortly after the [US-Iran nuclear talks](#), originally scheduled for Friday, were cancelled and then rescheduled due to disputes over the meeting's location, format, and agenda.

<https://www.jpost.com/international/article-885642>

**'Still lethal': As Tehran tests US resolve, Iranian drones pose a deadly threat, experts say**  
*Iran's drones are slow, but present a significant threat due to their numbers as part of Iran's attempts to oversaturate Western air defense systems.*

By [DANIELLE GREYMAN-KENNARD](#) FEBRUARY 4, 2026 20:52 Updated: FEBRUARY 4, 2026 22:10



*Iranian Army drone fleet parades on the occasion of National Army Day on April 18, 2025 in Tehran, Iran. (photo credit: Majid Saeedi/Getty Images)*

**The Iranian Shahed-139 drone launch toward the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier in the Arabian Sea on Tuesday was part of Tehran's message to US President Donald Trump, an expert told The Jerusalem Post on Wednesday.**

**The Islamic regime is "trying to make good on its threat that, if there is another war, it will be a region-wide war," Behnam Ben Taleblu, the Iran Program Senior Director and Senior Fellow at the**

**Foundation for Defense of Democracies think tank in Washington, told the Post.**

**Recounting how Iranian officials, most recently among them Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, have threatened regional stability as a consequence of an attack, Taleblu said that Tehran was showing the "Persian Gulf stands to become a theater of conflict."**

"In the cycles of violence that we have seen in the region post-October 7, the Persian Gulf and [Strait of Hormuz](#) have not featured as prominently then as they did during max pressure 1.0 particularly 2019, to 2020 when the Islamic Republic was contesting American oil sanctions by threatening ships, taking tankers hostage, putting mines on ships, as well as striking oil facilities," he said.

*A map showing the Strait of Hormuz and Iran is seen in this illustration taken June 22, 2025. (credit: REUTERS/DADO RUVIC/ILLUSTRATION)*

"Max Pressure 1.0" refers to the sanctions and diplomatic isolation policy imposed on Iran by the first Trump administration in 2018 after the US withdrew from the [2015 nuclear deal](#).

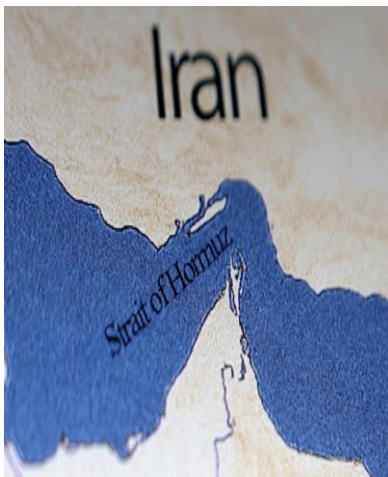
#### **Houthi tactics**

The Gulf and Strait of Hormuz have been quiet these past few years of conflict, especially compared to the maritime disruptions caused by the [Houthis](#) in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

"Those asymmetric harassment tactics that the Houthis employed post-October 7 were actually created and perfected by the Islamic Republic for the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz," he explained. "The regime used to often harass oil tankers and other vessels in the region with small boats, and then it shifted to doing so with drones..."

Taleblu said that the regime is "poking, prodding and testing Trump's resolve," and that was part of the reason the US needed to respond with "pure military professionalism."

**"The USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier and the F-35 jet that destroyed that drone passed their tests with flying colors," he asserted.**



**The oversaturation threat**

While the drone that approached the carrier was one of the regime's longer-range drones, other experts have warned that Iran may attempt a swarm strategy to overwhelm US and Israeli military defenses. Cameron Chell, CEO of Canadian drone company Draganfly, told Fox News Digital last week that there was a credible threat to high-value US naval vessels by Iran's use of low-cost one-way drones.

"If hundreds are launched in a short period of time, some are almost certain to get through," he said.

Responding to Chell's concern, Taleblu said that most of Tehran's drones are low and slow flying drones.

"The regime's suicide drones are popularly called one way attack drones, or kamikaze drones, function as a poor man's cruise missile, and could feature in a layered attack with other cruise missiles or fired before ballistic missiles, basically in an attempt to overwhelm defenses," he admitted, though noted that Tehran failed in its attempt to use this strategy in the June 12-day war with Israel.

While Israel's layered air and [missile defense systems](#) protected the country, he warned that assets closer to Iran's territory are more vulnerable, and the chance of a swarm attack succeeding does increase. The US tackled such a threat when it came to the Shia militias in Iraq, he continued, but has yet to face the volume of drones that Tehran could send.

"While the Islamic Republic is weak, it is still lethal, and it is still in charge of a spectrum of unmanned aerial threats, which on the low end include mortars, then rockets, then drones, then cruise missiles and ballistic missiles, and together, the unmanned aerial threat spectrum becomes the regime's biggest weapon of both punishment and deterrence," he concluded. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-885639>

## 'Dozens of Israelis helped boost Hamas': 12 suspects indicted in Gaza smuggling case

*Prosecutors say Israeli citizens, including reserve soldiers, helped funnel banned goods into Gaza post-ceasefire, aiding Hamas' military buildup;*

*Ilana Curiel, Roni Green Shaulov | Updated: 05:03*



**Southern District prosecutors filed 12 indictments Wednesday in a high-profile smuggling investigation tied to the Gaza Strip that includes allegations against Bezalel Zini, the brother of Shin Bet director David Zini.**

**The indictment against Zini is expected to be filed Thursday, a day after one suspect was released following 36 days in custody, senior police and security officials said.**

*Humanitarian aid convoy entering Gaza (Photo: REUTERS/Stringer)*

**The 12 indictments were filed against a group of Israeli citizens from across the country, including Eliran Algarabli, 38, of Kiryat Gat; his brother Avi**

**Algarabli, 41, of Kiryat Ata; Emad Eddin Abu Much, 55, of Baqa al-Gharbiyye; Ofer Sankar, 41; Yosef Yochananov, 39; Yuri Yakubov, 42; Menachem Abutbul, 39 and Nadav Halfon, 30, of Kiryat Gat; Meir Levi, 26, of Beitar Illit; Oshri Dahan, 39, of Talmei Eliyahu; Yaron (Benny) Peretz, 52, of Noam; Atar Even, 37, of Shaked; and Anuna Ltd., a company owned by Avi Algarabli and Yaron Peretz.**

Police and the Shin Bet said the suspects are Israeli citizens and Gaza residents believed to have smuggled goods banned from entry into the Hamas-run territory "by exploiting the ceasefire and the delivery of large volumes of humanitarian aid." Among those charged were reserve soldiers who were identified in operations by Shin Bet and the Southern District's central unit.

All 12 indictments charge a range of offenses, including aiding the enemy during wartime, prohibited activity involving terror-related property, fraud in aggravated circumstances and bribery. Tax and anti-terror law violations were also included.

Prosecutors allege that Menachem Abutbul offered bribes to Zini and co-suspect Aviel Ben David, both of whom served in reserve duty with "Team Uriah" and had authority to move convoys of equipment into Gaza. In one instance, Abutbul is accused of placing a carton of cigarettes into Zini's vehicle, which Zini and Ben David then transported into the Gaza Strip.





**Bezalel Zini** (Photo: from social media)

According to police and security officials, the arrests were based on intelligence indicating that a range of individuals — including Israeli citizens, West Bank residents and Gaza locals — were exploiting the post-ceasefire environment and increased aid deliveries to smuggle prohibited goods into the enclave by various means.

Investigators say evidence gathered in Shin Bet and central unit inquiries pointed to dozens of Israelis and West Bank residents participating in smuggling activity that directly boosted Hamas and other terror organizations. “These activities were carried out with deliberate disregard for their direct contribution to the strengthening of terror groups in Gaza, especially Hamas,” authorities said.

Police and the Shin Bet described the alleged smuggling operations as a “significant threat to the security of the State of Israel,” saying that the proceeds from banned goods help sustain Hamas’ civilian and military infrastructure.

“During the fighting, and especially after the ceasefire, Hamas and terror groups have worked to rebuild and strengthen their military and civilian systems, including restoring damaged military infrastructure, recruiting and training operatives and resuming logistical and command functions,” officials said.



**Shin Bet Director David Zini** (Photo: Olivier Fitoussi)

Authorities further warned that smuggled goods could aid “production systems, technological capabilities and even the potential smuggling of weapons,” and that smuggling routes could be used as platforms for future offensive military activity aimed at Israeli forces and civilians.

Shin Bet and police vowed to continue efforts to thwart smuggling operations they characterize as a direct threat to national security.

One of the suspects was released on Tuesday, with police citing insufficient evidence to bring charges. The man had been held for 36 days by the Shin Bet internal security service without conditions, his attorney said. “We were able to clarify and convince authorities that there was no substance to the accusations against him,” the lawyer said.

Authorities initially revealed that 16 suspects had been detained in the case, which began as an inquiry into alleged smuggling of cigarettes and other goods that can have both civilian and dual-use applications, items that can be used for legitimate purposes but also for terror.

Prosecutors had been expected to file indictments Wednesday against 13 of the suspects. However, police decided to release one of them, and the indictment against Zini and two others — accused of aiding the enemy during wartime — is now expected on Thursday.

The suspect released Tuesday faced a range of serious allegations, including dealing in weapons for terror purposes, supplying dangerous drugs, contact with a foreign agent and prohibited activity involving terror-related property. His lawyer, Wassim Abu Amar, said his client was held for 36 days, including 18 days without access to an attorney.

**Wassim Abu Amar**

“He was arrested on suspicion of serious security offenses, including smuggling goods to the Gaza Strip,” Abu Amar said. “After a long and exhaustive review of the investigation materials, we were able to demonstrate that the accusations had no basis, and accordingly he was released without conditions. This decision underscores that even in sensitive and serious cases, authorities must examine the evidence

carefully, fairly and responsibly.”

Police filed a formal prosecutorial declaration against Zini on Tuesday, indicating that criminal charges are

expected to be brought against him in the coming days. Zini, who was arrested last month, will remain in custody at least until Thursday.

In addition to Zini, similar declarations were filed against Amir Dov Halperin and Aviel Ben David, signaling expected indictments in their cases as well.

Zini's father, Rabbi Yosef Zini, defended his son and rejected the allegations leveled against him. "This is all fabricated, without any real concern," he told ynet. "They're not targeting him — they're going after his brother. Thank God the public understands this clearly." Another relative, Shmuel, added: "The truth will come out."

Judge Yaniv Ben Haroush of the Ashkelon Magistrates' Court sought to temper public speculation, saying: "It's important the public knows no tanks or drones were smuggled — otherwise, people believe what they read on social media. I've allowed publication of the nature of the suspicions in order to dispel the cloud surrounding the case."

Addressing the decision to lift the gag order on the suspects' names, Judge Ben Haroush said the timing was appropriate given the stage of the proceedings. "Considering the positions of the parties, the filing of a prosecutorial declaration, and legal precedent that favors transparency as indictment nears, the time has come to publish the respondents' names," he ruled.

Responding to concerns raised about potential harm to the individuals, the judge noted that the objections were vague and not beyond what is typically expected when a suspect's identity is made public. "These three are suspected of multiple serious offenses, all tied to the smuggling of cigarettes from Israel into Gaza," he said.

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

## **Deputy Supreme Court chief sets panel to hear petitions demanding Oct. 7 state probe** *Sohlberg picks four other conservatives and two more liberal judges, after chief justice deferred authority on matter since he would appoint members of inquiry if established*

By [Jeremy Sharon](#)

Today, 9:09 pm



*Supreme Court Deputy President Noam Sohlberg at a hearing at the court, in Jerusalem, February 2, 2026. (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)*

**Deputy Supreme Court President Noam Sohlberg on Wednesday announced the panel of justices that will hear petitions to order the government to establish a state commission of inquiry into the October 7, 2023, Hamas invasion and atrocities.**

**The panel consists of Sohlberg himself, along with Justices David Mintz, Yael Wilner, Ofer Grosskopf, Alex Stein, Chaled Kabub and Yechiel Kasher, who will act in the capacity of the**

### **High Court of Justice.**

Sohlberg said the composition of the panel was in part determined by the fact that some Supreme Court justices were legally blocked from hearing the petitions for various reasons.

Sohlberg, Mintz, Wilner, Stein, and, to some degree, Kasher, are all considered conservatives to varying degrees, while Kabub and Grosskopf are more liberal.



A date is yet to be set for the hearing.

Supreme Court President Isaac Amit [said](#) Tuesday that he was giving Sohlberg the authority to hear petitions on the matter because the chief justice is already tasked with selecting the members of the panel if a state commission of inquiry is established.

*Protesters with pictures of slain hostages call for a state commission of inquiry and for the release of the last hostage, Ran Gvili, at a demonstration near the Knesset in Jerusalem on January 19, 2026 (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)*

In November, the High Court issued a conditional order requiring the government to justify why it is not establishing a state commission of inquiry. In its response, the government [argued](#) that the authority to establish a state commission resided with the government alone, and



pointed to previous High Court decisions which ruled in accordance with that opinion.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his government have resisted pressure to establish a state commission of inquiry for more than two years since the deadly Hamas onslaught.

Netanyahu has claimed that, because a state commission is appointed by the judiciary – whose powers it has sought to curb – it would be biased against the government. However, the government did not make this argument in its formal response to the petitions submitted to the court.

The petitioners, including government watchdog groups, have argued that a state commission is the only tool available to investigate the catastrophe in a politically independent and comprehensive manner.

Instead of forming a state commission, the government is advancing a bill that would create what the government calls a “national-state commission of inquiry,” where the coalition and opposition would get to handpick the members of the commission.

The opposition is, however, boycotting the committee process for that legislation, and has vowed to boycott any process for creating such an inquiry should that bill pass. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/deputy-supreme-court-chief-sets-panel-to-hear-petitions-demanding-oct-7-state-probe/>

## Three men killed in highway shooting that police link to blood feud

*Victims, residents of Arab Israeli town of Tira, apparently lose control of their car and smash into bus after being shot at; police arrest three suspects*

By [Charlie Summers](#)

and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 8:49 am



*The remains of a car that collided with a bus after the occupants were shot amid a feud between warring crime families, February 3, 2026. (Magen David Adom)*

Three men **were killed in a highway shooting in central Israel Tuesday night, in an incident police said was linked to a blood feud between warring crime families.**

**The victims, in their mid-20s from the central Arab Israeli town of Tira, were in a car when assailants shot at them. They apparently tried to escape, and a chase developed until the victims lost control of their vehicle and collided with a bus**

**driving on the highway near Sde Warburg. No injuries were reported on the bus, but the impact appeared to destroy half of the car and crush its passengers.**

**The three were without vital signs by the time firefighters managed to pull them from the vehicle. Paramedics declared them dead at the scene.**

The Abraham Initiatives, which tracks Arab homicide victims, named them as Asil Kassem, Hadi Nassar, and Jubran Nassar.

Police forces launched a major manhunt for the perpetrators after reaching the scene and soon arrested three suspects, also from Tira.

“The triple homicide tonight should shock the entire country,” the Initiatives said in a statement.

According to the group, 32 members of the Arab community have died in violent crime since the beginning of the year.

“Arab citizens are being murdered en masse on the streets every day,” it said in a statement.

*A car that collided with a bus after the occupants were shot amid a feud between warring crime families, February 3, 2026. (Magen David Adom)*

The Kan public broadcaster, citing a senior police official, reported that the shooting was part of a deadly war between the Nassar and Hariri crime families.

“Once again, we are witness to murder against the backdrop of a long and bloody feud that could have been



prevented if the justice system would enable police to use the tools it has in order to eradicate the phenomenon and root out the criminals from society,” the unnamed official said.

The source urged easier use of administrative detention — the controversial policy of holding suspects without charge — saying it would have enabled the prevention of murders.

Opposition MK Gilad Kariv, who is a member of the Knesset National Security Committee, in a post to X wrote that Israel is “abandoning 2 million Arab citizens to organized crime, to tens of thousands of illegal weapons, to a power vacuum, to a crumbling police force and to indifferent and heartless politicians.”

Hours before the triple death, a 26-year-old Arab Israeli man was [shot dead in I’billin](#), in the second such incident in the northern town in under a day.

Last year was Arab society’s deadliest year on record, having seen 252 people were killed in crime-related incidents. Many Arab leaders accuse law enforcement of neglect.

The proliferation of deadly crime has sparked protests in Arab cities and towns over the past two weeks, which reached a high point over the weekend with a mass Arab-Jewish protest in Tel Aviv demanding the government rein in the violence.

Critics have blamed National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, who oversees police, for the worsening situation. Since he took office in 2023, the homicide rate in Arab society doubled and has continued to rise since.

According to data from the Abraham Initiatives, only 32 indictments were filed last year against suspects in Arab society killings. The group said the data is evidence of chronic under-policing when it comes to the community and “points to fundamental discrimination in enforcement.”

The Nassar and Hariri feud has seen murders both inside and outside Israel. In 2023, Shaufik Nassar, an Israeli citizen in his mid-30s, [was shot in Cape Town](#), South Africa.

The death of Nassar, a resident of Tira, came almost a year after his cousin Abdel Fattah Nassar was also [shot and killed](#) while visiting Cape Town. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/three-men-killed-in-highway-shooting-that-police-link-to-blood-feud/>

## **WATCH: Haredim block roads near Tel Hashomer in protest of IDF draft, deemed unlawful by police**

N12 reported that the protests arose because around 80 haredim are scheduled to enlist in combat support roles.

By [JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#) FEBRUARY 4, 2026 08:27 Updated: FEBRUARY 4, 2026 13:58

[Go to website for video rdb](#)

*Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) protesters gather outside of the IDF recruitment center in Jerusalem, February 4, 2026. Credit: Marc Israel Sellem.*

**Haredi (ultra-Orthodox) protesters began gathering next to the recruitment center in Tel Hashomer on Wednesday morning, protesting the drafting of haredim into the IDF.**



**N12 reported that about 80 haredim are scheduled to enlist in combat-support roles. They were able to exit the recruitment center and board a bus, though the protesters attempted to block the bus.**

**Police were recorded dragging the protesters out of the road, where they were blocking traffic. They also declared the protest an unlawful gathering and arrested one protester.**

**Additional protests also began outside the recruitment center in Jerusalem later in the day.**

*AN IDF soldier walks past two haredim at a protest outside the Jerusalem recruitment center, February 4, 2026. (credit: MARC ISRAEL SELLEM)*

**Haredi draft necessary to plug IDF manpower hole**

The IDF said on Tuesday that it must be able, by March, to mobilize a significantly larger number of soldiers – particularly from the haredi community – to avert an impending [manpower crisis](#) in January 2027.



In January 2027, around 2,500 mandatory service combat soldiers will be released all at once, putting the military at risk of major holes without an immediate, correspondingly large influx of new soldiers.

Yonah Jeremy Bob contributed to this report. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-885528>

## Haredi extremists pay grants to draft evaders after their release from military prison

*Group linked to Jerusalem Faction hands one dodger NIS 60,000, says ‘the goal is to strengthen all yeshiva students so they won’t be afraid to go to jail’*

By [Sam Sokol](#)

Today, 6:26 pm



*Draft evader Meir Yonah addresses an event held in honor of his release from military prison, January 26, 2026. (Notnim Gav/The Jerusalem Faction)*

**In recent months, as lawmakers have struggled over a proposed law regulating ultra-Orthodox military conscription, activists affiliated with some of the Haredi community’s most extreme sects have been distributing tens of thousands of shekels to yeshiva students arrested for draft evasion in a community-wide effort to discourage enlistment.**

**The issue made headlines across Israel last week when an organization affiliated with the hardline Jerusalem Faction calling itself “Notnim Gav” (Got Your Back) announced that it had held a “ceremony of appreciation” to celebrate the release of yeshiva student Meir Yonah after 18 days in military prison.**

**An extremist ultra-Orthodox group numbering some 60,000 members, the Jerusalem Faction regularly demonstrates raucously against the military enlistment of yeshiva students.**

**According to the group, Yonah was presented at the event with NIS 60,000 (\$19,500) by rabbis and activists who had “decided to express the Haredi public’s appreciation for those who sacrifice themselves in a unique way.”**

**It added that the grant was significantly higher than that offered to other draft evaders — who often receive NIS 1,000 (\$323) per day from the Satmar Hasidic sect.**

“We wish donors would contribute for every young man. Furthermore, we tried to launch a grant program for every detainee but for various reasons, it hasn’t materialized yet,” a spokesman for the group lamented in an email.



*An ultra-Orthodox Jew takes part in a parade in the Mea Shearim neighborhood of Jerusalem for a Haredi draft dodger who was released from military prison, December 18, 2025. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)*

Speaking with The Times of Israel, representatives of the Jerusalem Faction described a variety of activities meant to support draft dodgers and their families, including legal aid, certificates of appreciation and other initiatives whose goal is to “encourage the youth” to stay in yeshiva.

“The truth is, it usually doesn’t start with us,” said Notnim Gav activist Naftali Schlesinger, explaining that other Haredi groups or philanthropists will sometimes approach them to facilitate the transfer of funds but so far there has not been an

organized effort.

“We wanted there to be one. For now, there isn’t,” Schlesinger continued, claiming that only six or seven young men have received cash grants so far.

“The goal is generally to strengthen all the yeshiva students who haven’t yet gone to jail. If they see that there are people who appreciate them to the point that they sometimes agree to give money for it, then it strengthens everyone. It’s not necessarily always for the boy himself.”

Among Notnim Gav’s programs are anti-enlistment [hotlines](#) in English and Hebrew, regular protests outside of enlistment centers and even a raffle for yeshiva students who refuse conscription orders. (Another organization also affiliated with the Jerusalem Faction runs a [“national alert system”](#) to mobilize the community

when the Israel Defense Forces engages in enforcement activities against Haredi draft dodgers.)

### Encouraging evasion

Under Israeli law, someone inciting others to evade service during wartime is [liable to a prison term](#) of 15 years. Asked if he was concerned about legal repercussions, Schlesinger was sanguine, declaring that if the authorities want “they can frame any average citizen for 5 to 10 criminal things they’ve done” but that he sees his activities as low risk.

Some 80,000 ultra-Orthodox men aged between 18 and 24 are currently believed to be eligible for military service, but have not enlisted.



**Haredi men block the road outside the IDF recruitment center in Jerusalem on November 12, 2025. (Sam Sokol/Times of Israel)**

Another Notnim Gav activist who asked only to be identified as Moshe described a support network for evaders and their families ranging from offering legal aid to providing the families of incarcerated yeshiva students with food, fruit platters and certificates of appreciation signed by a rabbi.

“There is no encouragement of evasion here,” he said. “On the contrary, we give [yeshiva students] support and backup for doing what he understands is the right thing to do.”

Asked about the legality of the group’s activities, Ran Cohen Rochverger, the IDF’s former chief military defense counsel, said that they “raise a heavy suspicion of the offense of incitement to evasion under Section 109 of the Penal Law,” calling the payment to Yonah “an institutionalized mechanism defining a financial ‘tariff’ for breaking the law.”



The linkage between the sum granted and the length of time spent in prison makes the payment appear to be “criminal remuneration intended to serve as a direct incentive and solicitation for other designated soldiers to avoid reporting for duty,” he continued — noting, however, that “on a practical level, prosecution for this offense involves significant evidentiary and legal complexities.”

**Police use a water cannon to disperse ultra-Orthodox demonstrators during an anti-conscription demonstration in Jerusalem, May 23, 2024. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)**

“Enforcement authorities in Israel are often reluctant to enter this sensitive minefield out of concern that prosecution will be interpreted as religious persecution and create a snowball effect that increases evasion

rather than deterring it,” Rochverger stated.

### A lack of enforcement

Indeed, the police and Attorney General’s Office have [declined to take action](#) against a growing ecosystem of anti-conscription organizations that has flourished since the High Court of Justice ruled in 2024 that that decades-long blanket exemptions from army duty traditionally afforded to full-time Haredi yeshiva students were illegal.

These include an advice helpline linked to former Jerusalem Affairs minister Meir Porush (United Torah Judaism), which a [Times of Israel investigation](#) found was counseling callers to “just ignore” summonses to the IDF’s recruitment bureau, as well as a call center operated by the “[Vaad HaYeshivot](#)” (Yeshiva Committee) which insists that yeshiva students “not report [to the army] under any circumstances.”

In addition, the IDF has claimed that police have been [systematically preventing](#) Military Police from arresting draft evaders in ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods, asserting that, “in practice, Military Police officers do not receive, as a general rule, clearance from Israel Police to carry out operations in Haredi or mixed neighborhoods.”

Army officials also noted that according to police policy, “members of the Haredi community detained in random arrests by the police — who turn out during the detention to be deserters or evaders — are in fact released.”

**Haredim protesting against military conscription stand by a bonfire on a street in Jerusalem, January 6, 2026. (Sam Sokol/Times of Israel)**





According to the Haaretz daily, police are concerned about the potential for riots in response to increased enforcement operations against draft evaders.

A number of recent Haredi protests have turned violent, leading to injuries, property damage, and even death, with critics alleging that the police's response to such behavior has been [inconsistent and insufficient](#).

"In the State of Israel, there is a law, and those who need to enforce the law are the legal authorities and the police, which they aren't doing," complained Yisrael Beytenu MK Evgeny Sova, whose right-wing party last year filed a [criminal complaint](#) against several senior Haredi rabbis for

encouraging evasion.

"Neither the Military Police nor the IDF are enforcing [the law] against all the draft evaders, those who dodge service, and those who incite against enlistment" and "as long as there is no [command] from the top giving a clear directive to stop not just the evaders, but also those inciting evasion, nothing will change," Sova charged.

### Lobbying the Americans

In addition to encouraging draft evaders at home and pushing hard for [legislation to exempt yeshiva students](#) from military service, the Haredi leadership is taking the fight abroad.



*A member of the extremist ultra-Orthodox Jerusalem Faction holds up a sign calling on US President Trump to 'please save us,' at a rally against the arrest of draft-dodging yeshiva students outside of the military prison at Beit Lid, August 14, 2025. (Sam Sokol/Times of Israel)*

Top Haredi rabbis have already [gone to United States to raise money](#) from local Jews to support yeshivas whose budgets have been cut since the High Court's ruling, but now the ultra-Orthodox community is attempting to enlist American politicians directly in a bid to pressure Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to soften proposed sanctions preventing yeshiva students exempted from service from traveling abroad.

According to the Ynet news site, late last year UTJ MK Meir Porush met with senior rabbinic leaders in the US to convince them to push American politicians to get involved in the issue ahead of the 2026 congressional midterm elections.

This has led, so far, to letters from two congressmen, Rep. Mike Lawler (Republican of New York) and Rep. Pat Ryan (Democrat of New York), calling on Netanyahu not to impose sanctions on yeshiva students.

"The international opposition to the harming of Torah scholars in Israel even crosses party lines in the US," said Porush in a statement.

"This is another expression of the uncompromising struggle we will wage in every way possible against the arrests and sanctions targeting yeshiva students and *kollel* scholars," he declared, adding that additional steps would be taken abroad to address what he called the "violation" of the Haredi community's "fundamental rights." <https://www.timesofisrael.com/haredim-paying-grants-to-draft-evaders-after-release-from-military-prison/>



### Israel banks on Christian pilgrims and faith-based travel to drive tourism recovery

Tourism Ministry plans a digital campaign geared to Evangelicals and pro-Israel communities; AI app for Holy Land trips launches with support of US Ambassador Mike Huckabee

By [Sharon Wrobel](#)

Today, 11:35 am

*Tourism Minister Haim Katz (middle) and US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee (first on the right) at the opening ceremony of the*

*International Mediterranean Tourism Market (IMTM) fair in Tel Aviv, Feb. 3, 2026. (Courtesy of Ronen Horesh)*

**Israel is betting on Christian pilgrims, faith-based Holy Land travelers, and Jewish communities to serve as a springboard to kickstart the recovery of a tourism industry ravaged by two years of war and held back by the ongoing geopolitical uncertainty.**

**The Tourism Ministry said Tuesday that it is allocating more than NIS 20 million (\$6.5 million) to a digital campaign focused on North America.**

**“The uncertainty and travel warnings have hurt tourism activity, but with the improvement in flight availability in 2026, there is reason for optimism that the seeds of a recovery are already here,” said Tourism Minister Haim Katz at the International Mediterranean Tourism Market fair in Tel Aviv.**

“Hence, we are increasing our investment in marketing and will soon launch a new flagship campaign in the US named ‘I AM ISRAEL’ to appeal to audiences that are Israel supporters, Evangelicals, and Jewish communities.”

The two-day international tourism exhibition, which is expected to be attended by about 12,000 visitors, features over 180 exhibitors. Among the countries that set up pavilions are Greece, China, Vietnam, Georgia, Canada, Slovakia, Hungary, Taiwan, and Azerbaijan.

Speaking to The Times of Israel, Tourism Ministry Director General Michael Izhakov said that the ministry’s campaign aims to show life in Israel after two years of war with Hamas, Iran and Iran’s regional proxies, which has deterred foreign tourists. Many have also stayed away due to rising anti-Israel sentiment around the globe, fueled by anger over the country’s conduct during the war in Gaza and images of Palestinian suffering.

While the war in Gaza wound down following a ceasefire agreement signed in October, current tensions over a potential US attack on Iran are stoking uncertainty over the security situation. Tehran has said it would strike US allies in the region, specifically Israel, if attacked by Washington.



*Visitors at the annual International Mediterranean Tourism Market (IMTM) fair in Tel Aviv, Feb. 3, 2026. (Sharon Wrobel/Times of Israel)*

“With the campaign, we want to show that there is life on the streets and beaches in Israel, and that we are not a country that is dangerous or unsafe,” said Izhakov. “Many people want to come and visit the Land of the Bible.”

Izhakov said that 140,000 visitors have already entered Israel so far this year, more than double the 63,000 entries during the same period in 2025. But it will take time before tourists and visitors begin returning to Israel in the large numbers seen before the outbreak of war in October 2023, reviving the tourism industry and

contributing to the recovery of the economy.

In 2023, before the Hamas attack on October 7, the country had been projected to draw 5.5 million visitors, a million more than 2019’s record high of 4.5 million. In the end, 3 million people visited in 2023, according to Tourism Ministry data.

In 2024, the number of visitors failed to crack 1 million, and only about 1.3 million visited in 2025.

“We cautiously estimate that 2 million to 3 million tourists will visit Israel in 2026, which is a nice recovery,” said Izhakov.



Speaking at the launch event of [HolyLandTravel.ai](https://holylandtravel.ai), a new AI-driven pilgrimage planning app to help bring back Christian tourists, held at the IMTM fair, US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee expressed confidence that incoming tourism will come roaring back, while acknowledging that it will take time.

**US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee speaks at the launch of AI-driven platform HolyLandTravel.ai at the International Mediterranean Tourism Market (IMTM) fair in Tel Aviv, Feb. 3, 2026. (Courtesy of HolyLandTravel.ai)**

“I tell my friends back in the US, if you ever thought about coming to Israel, come right now,” said Huckabee. “Tourism is down so substantially because of the war and



all of the tension in the area, but places that I'm walking right into, whether it's a restaurant, or a hotel, or one of the incredible biblical sites, there are no lines."

He added, "But the question I always get asked is whether it is safe? And I say, I feel completely at home and safe in Israel, there may be tension in various places, but we have that in the US too."

Huckabee recounted that over the past half a century, he has led countless groups of American pilgrims on more than 100 trips to the Holy Land as an evangelical pastor, before moving to Jerusalem as the US ambassador.

"There are 80 million Evangelical Christians in America, and all of them would want to travel here," said Huckabee. "I have seen hundreds of all ages make the journey and experience a trip of a lifetime."

"Once you have come to Israel and walked the land, for the rest of your life you will read the Bible in 4K living dynamic color," he enthused.

HolyLandTravel.ai is an initiative by American-Israeli philanthropist Jack Gottlieb, the founder of World

Jewish Travel, a platform dedicated to promoting Jewish heritage and culture globally.

*Christian pilgrims light candles during the Holy Fire ceremony, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the site where according to tradition Jesus was crucified and buried, in Jerusalem's Old City, Saturday, April 19, 2025. (AP Photo/Mahmoud Illean)*

"This is one of the most practical tools that I've ever seen for people who are planning to make a trip to the Holy Land," said Huckabee.

The free interactive AI travel app, developed together with computer science students at Reichman University in Herzliya, is geared to help Evangelical Christians easily build tailor-made pilgrimage itineraries, including destination, dates, and budget.

The app auto-generates customized podcasts and video tours with an AI guide teaching about the sites, themes and faith journeys selected by the user, alongside an integrated Google Maps-based layer.

"Whether at home or already in the land, pilgrims can bring the Bible alive by planning their journey and logistics in seconds, then kick back for days learning about each and every place with their own specially generated AI podcasts and videos," said Gottlieb. "We have begun by showcasing the city of Jerusalem, and within months we will have the entire land at click's length."

"We are first gifting this to the Evangelical Christian world, Israel's largest and most loyal audience, with plans to improve the experience to give every person from all denominations and faiths the opportunity to see Israel in the best possible light," he said. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-banks-on-christian-pilgrims-and-faith-based-travel-to-drive-tourism-recovery/>

## Italian Senate advances bill to codify IHRA definition, ban antisemitic rallies

Italy's Senate approved the base text of a bill that would allow bans on antisemitic rallies and codify the IHRA definition into law, sparking debate over free speech and protest.

By **MATHILDA HELLER** FEBRUARY 4, 2026 19:14



*Pro-Palestinian protestors hold a banner during a demonstration demanding an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, as the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian Islamist group Hamas continues, in Rome, Italy, January 27, 2024. The banner reads: "Cease fire! Justice for Palestine, peace for two peoples (photo credit: REUTERS/CLAUDIA GRECO)*

**The Italian Senate has approved the base text of a bill which will – if passed – allow authorities to ban antisemitic rallies, and codify the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism into Italian law. The enactment of such a law would make Italy among the first countries to**

**criminalize antisemitic hate speech according to the IHRA definition.**

**The legislation is considered by many in Italy to be the most divisive bill regarding antisemitism, not least because the IHRA definition is contested by many, but also because banning**

**demonstrations would be possible when there is an “assessment of a serious potential risk related to the use of symbols, slogans, messages, and any other antisemitic act.” Some have argued that this is undemocratic and could blur the line between fighting antisemitism and limiting criticism of the Israeli government.**

The base text was approved by the Senate committee on [Holocaust Remembrance Day](#). The bill was brought by the right-wing Lega parliamentary leader, Massimiliano Romeo. Partito Democratico, Movimento 5 Stelle, and Alleanza Verdi e Sinistra voted against it.

#### **Roman salutes, Celtic crosses, and swastikas**

“The Romeo bill is deeply wrong; it risks placing the legitimate fight against antisemitism on the same level as criticism of the Israeli government,” explained Peppe De Cristofaro of AVS. “We decided not to present our own bill because we believe the current legislation is adequate: there is the Mancino Law, it just needs to be enforced, for example, by punishing all apologies for fascism, Roman salutes, Celtic crosses, and [swastikas](#). If the majority really wants to fight antisemitism, it should start by dissolving fascist organizations.”



**A general view of the Palazzo Montecitorio, seat of the Italian Chamber of Deputies, on October 16, 2020 in Rome, Italy. (credit: Antonio Masiello/Getty Images)**

The Mancino Law is existing legislation that makes racist, antisemitic, and fascist hate illegal, and some supporters advocate for applying it more rigorously, rather than replacing it.

“They chose the worst possible text,” Alessandra Maiorino of M5S said. “It could have been done better if there had truly been a desire to seek unity, especially on a day like today. That was not the intention. This text also comes from a political force, the Lega, which this week is hosting [neo-Nazis](#) in the Chamber of Deputies. It’s hard not to see an ideological use of an issue that should unite rather than divide.”

Despite opposition, many members of the Jewish community

and several politicians are optimistic that it will pass.

“We will soon arrive at an agreement,” Liliana Segre – the Italian Holocaust survivor and senator for life – told the Senate. “Antisemitism should not be a field for partisan speculation. It concerns the quality of our democracy.”

<https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-885625>

### **Antisemitic hate crimes in NY surge by 182% in January 2026 compared to previous year NYPD figures show antisemitic hate crimes surged in New York City in January, with Jews targeted in the majority of reported bias incidents**

**. By**[JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#)**FEBRUARY 4, 2026 20:09Updated: FEBRUARY 4, 2026 21:53**



*The skyline of Lower Manhattan is seen at dawn from across the Hudson River in New York City, US, October 18, 2025.(photo credit: REUTERS/KEVIN COOMBS/FILE PHOTO)*

**Antisemitic hate crimes in New York increased by 182% in January 2026 compared to January 2025, according to figures released by the New York City Police Department on Monday.**

**A total of 31 reported antisemitic hate crimes took place in January, compared to 11 in the same month last year, one hate crime**

**per day.**

#### **Jews targeted**

With a recorded 58 hate crimes citywide in January, incidents targeting Jews accounted for 54% of all reported bias crimes, making antisemitism the most prevalent form of hate crime during the period.

Among some of the notable incidents in January were the assault on a rabbi in Queens on January 27, International [Holocaust Remembrance Day](#), and the ramming of the entrance of the Chabad headquarters in Brooklyn.

There was one hate crime for Hispanic and white people, two for black people, seven for Muslims, and five for people of Asian origin.





**“January’s data underscores a clear reality: Even as overall crime continues to fall, antisemitism remains the most prevalent form of hate crime in New York City, surging sharply at the outset of a new mayoral administration,” said the Combating Antisemitism Movement.**

CAM was one of several Jewish groups to note the relevance of January being the first month under [Mayor Mamdani](#).

“From swastikas at a playground in Borough Park to a car-ramming at Chabad headquarters in Crown Heights, the Jewish community in NYC is very much on edge,” said the Anti-Defamation League’s NYC chapter. “In the face of this, we urge Mayor Mamdani to quickly name the next

head of the Mayor’s Office to Combat Antisemitism and to appoint a leader who will both represent this diverse Jewish community and confront ALL forms of antisemitism.”

Despite the rise in antisemitism, New York City saw an overall decline in violent crime, including shootings, robberies, felony assaults, and homicides. <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-885636>

## Orthodox Jewish man punched, insulted in antisemitic attack in Zurich

*The attack left the victim with wounds to his body and neck. Zurich mayor says, "We all stand by our Jewish fellow citizens."* By [MATHILDA HELLER](#) FEBRUARY 4, 2026 16:21 Updated: FEBRUARY 4, 2026 18:12



*Swiss flags are seen on the Swiss Parliament building (Bundeshaus) in Bern, Switzerland, November 6, 2024. (photo credit: REUTERS/DENIS BALIBOUSE)*

**Zurich Mayor Corine Mauch and the city council have condemned an antisemitic attack on a religious Jewish man as “shocking.”**

**On Monday evening, a 26-year-old Orthodox man was punched after leaving his house in Wiedikon, Zurich. The attacker – a 40-year-old Kosovan – made antisemitic statements during the assault. Several passersby intervened, overpowered the attacker, and held him on the ground until the police arrived. He continued to make antisemitic comments even with the police present.**

**The victim suffered wounds to his body and neck.**

### City council responds

“The cowardly act deeply affects the city council,” the council said, adding that “the commitment against antisemitism and the protection of Jewish fellow citizens must remain priorities.”

According to the council, the victim has expressed thanks to passersby for their civil courage.



*Zurich's Mayor Corine Mauch addresses a news conference about the situation of refugees from Ukraine in Zurich, Switzerland April 5, 2022. (credit: REUTERS/ARND WIEGMANN)*

Mauch also expressed her sympathy to the victim.

“The attack shows in a shocking way that the commitment against antisemitism remains enormously important,” she said. “This requires all of us. As an open, solidary society, we all stand by our Jewish fellow citizens.”

The attack was not a random act, but was specifically directed against a Jewish person, said the [Swiss](#) Federation of Jewish

Communities SIG. “The incident thus joins the series of antisemitic attacks that have increased sharply in Switzerland since October 2023. Jewish people are the target of insults and physical violence simply because of their appearance and Jewish identity.

“The SIG expects antisemitic violence to be consistently prosecuted and clearly named.”

<https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/antisemitism/article-885600>

## Breaking: Would-Be Trump Assassin Ryan Routh Learns His Sentence

By [Jack Davis](#) February 4, 2026 at 12:22pm

**Ryan Routh, who was convicted last year of attempting to assassinate President Donald Trump in a September 2024 incident, has been sentenced to life in prison**

**U.S. District Judge Aileen Cannon tacked on seven years for a firearm offense, according to NBC News.**

**Routh spoke in court, saying he was a good person who tried to help Ukraine's army, according to Fox News.**

**Cannon, however called him an evil person who wanted to kill Trump.**

**Cannon said in her sentencing memo that Routh's actions "undeniably warrant a life sentence," according to the BBC.**

"[H]e took steps over the course of months to assassinate a major Presidential candidate, demonstrated the will to kill anybody in the way, and has since expressed neither regret nor remorse to his victims," she wrote.

Prosecutors said Routh "remains totally unrepentant" and that "the heinous nature of this assassination attempt — his selfish, violent decision to prevent the American voters from electing President Trump by killing him first — that warrants severe criminal punishment," according to NBC News.

Routh represented himself during the trial but was given an attorney for the sentencing.

Attorney Martin Roth said Routh did not "commit an act of terrorism"

He asked for a 20-year sentence, to which the seven years for the firearms charge would be added.

Routh would "be in custody into his eighties and would not pose any threat to cause harm to the public," Roth said.

Roth said he will appeal the sentence, the BBC reported.

Routh did not shoot at Trump, but was spotted hiding in the trees with a weapon as Trump was playing golf.

Routh had attempted to stab himself in the neck with a pen after a jury found him guilty.

Routh had told the jury at his trial he was only guilty of "caring too much," according to the [Palm Beach Post](#).

"To merely have a weapon in the presence of another is not intent," Routh said.

After his conviction, Routh asked Cannon to be sentenced to "a state that has assisted suicide, since I am a constant failure." [Breaking: Would-Be Trump Assassin Ryan Routh Learns His Sentence](#)

## OP ED

# The Trump Administration's Delusional Gaza 'Master Plan'

by [Khaled Abu Toameh](#)



February 3, 2026 at 5:00 am

**At the recent annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Jared Kushner presented his "New Gaza" master plan that outlines a post-war vision to transform the territory into a hub for "coastal tourism" and commerce. However, building skyscrapers and an airport in the Gaza Strip will not change the Palestinians' views on Israel. Hamas is not going to recognize Israel's right to exist or give up its Jihad (holy war) against the "Zionist entity" because of new homes, luxury apartments and tourist resorts. Pictured: Kushner presents his plan in Davos on January 22, 2026. (Photo by Mandel Ngan/ AFP via Getty Images)**

At the recent annual meeting of the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos, Jared Kushner, President Donald J. Trump's son-in-law, presented his "New Gaza" [master plan](#) that outlines a post-war vision to transform the territory into a hub for "coastal tourism" and commerce.

The plan features 180 luxury skyscrapers, new logistics corridors, a port, an airport, and 100,000 housing units, along with significant industrial zones/data centers.

This is the second economic plan presented by Kushner since the 2019 "Peace to Prosperity: A New Vision for the Palestinian People and the Broader Middle East," also known as the "[Deal of the Century](#)." The economic portion of that plan was a \$50 billion investment to transform the Palestinian economy over 10 years. The deal



aimed to fund 179 projects across the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, and neighboring countries.

That "Deal of the Century," sadly, failed to materialize: it was rejected as a "[conspiracy](#)" by Palestinians, who said they viewed it as a heavily biased, pro-Israel proposal that violated international law, and denied them a Palestinian state and the "right of return," which means flooding Israel with millions descendants of Palestinian refugees, and turning the Jews into a minority in their own country -- the same plan, in fact, as the current effort to Islamize Europe and the United States by demography.

"There is not one positive thing about the 'Deal of the Century,'" Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas [said](#) in February 2020.

"No one could accept this plan for a population of 13 million people. There is no real opportunity in it. This deal is categorically rejected and has no place at the negotiating table."

Hamas also rejected the "Deal of the Century." Then Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh [denounced](#) the deal as a "blatant violation against our land, people, and the Islamic Ummah [nation]," adding:

"We declare our absolute rejection of all items included in the deal announced by Trump. We confirm that accepting any plan that abdicates or gives up the rights of the Palestinian people or the Palestinian national principles is forbidden. Palestine and its just cause will never be compromised or divided. We confirm that all options are open for the Palestinian people to face off the aggressive 'Deal of the Century' that targets the Palestinian existence: land, people, history, and Arab and Islamic identity."

The PA and Hamas, however, have so far refrained from commenting on Kushner's new Gaza master plan. That is probably because they are convinced that the plan is not feasible and will meet the same fate as the "Deal of the Century."

Moreover, the PA and Hamas apparently do not want to alienate Trump by outrightly dismissing his son-in-law's plan. In their view, Trump is the only one who can stop Israel from resuming the war in the Gaza Strip and destroying Hamas's military and terror infrastructure.

Although Kushner has demanded that Hamas and the other terror entities in Gaza disarm to ensure the success of his plan, the leaders of the terror group continue to reject all calls to lay down their weapons.

Last week, senior Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzouk [said](#) that his group had never agreed, at any stage, to hand over its weapons. He insisted that the issue of the "resistance weapons" had never been subject to negotiations at any stage. "We agreed in the Trump plan [to end the Gaza war] on a general framework for ending the war, but the weapons issue has not yet been raised in negotiations," Abu Marzouk [told](#) Qatar's state-owned Al-Jazeera TV network.

Even if Hamas does agree to surrender some of its weapons as part of a façade to appease Trump, the terror group will undoubtedly continue to keep or replace as many as possible to maintain a military, political and security presence in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas is not worried about the newly established Palestinian technocratic committee that is supposed to govern the Gaza Strip: the committee does not pose a direct threat to the terror group. The committee is primarily tasked with [managing](#) civilian affairs, delivering essential services such as water, electricity, healthcare and education, and rebuilding infrastructure. Security will remain in the hands of Hamas, whose members will undoubtedly continue to rule through a shadow government. With thousands of Hamas militiamen still roaming the streets of the Gaza Strip, the technocratic committee, conversely, will be at the mercy of the terror group.

Back to Kushner's master plan. The assumption that boosting the Palestinian economy would have a moderating effect on the Palestinians has already proven delusional. After the signing of the Oslo Accord between Israel and the PLO in 1993, the international community poured billions of dollars on the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This beneficence, however, did not prevent Hamas, whose stated goal is the destruction of Israel, from gaining popularity and winning the 2006 PA legislative election.

The international aid, in addition, did not prompt then PA President Yasser Arafat or his successor, Abbas, to make far-reaching concessions to Israel during the peace negotiations. Both Arafat and Abbas placidly rejected several peace proposals made by Israeli leaders.

The Palestinians first rejected an offer by then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak at the 2000 Camp David summit. The offer included a Palestinian state in most of the West Bank and Gaza Strip with parts of east Jerusalem.

In 2008, then Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert proposed a plan that would have provided over 90% of the West Bank and a land swap for the remaining territory. The Palestinians rejected the proposal.

In 2010, former Israeli President Shimon Peres, during a meeting with then Russian Prime Minister Vladimir

Putin, [talked about](#) his vision for turning Gaza into the "Singapore of the Middle East":

"Right now, we have virtually withdrawn from Gaza which is not being occupied. We are currently implementing a restoration program.... All border crossings have been opened. We are determined to turn Gaza into the same kind of prosperous entity as Singapore. "

In May 2024, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu laid out a [plan](#) for lasting peace and reintegrating the Gaza Strip into the regional economy through large infrastructure and economic investment. The Palestinians also [rejected](#) that plan.

Building skyscrapers and an airport in the Gaza Strip will not change the Palestinians' views on Israel. The Palestinians are not going to give up the "right of return" because of foreign investment in the Gaza Strip. Hamas is not going to recognize Israel's right to exist or give up its *Jihad* (holy war) against the "Zionist entity" because of new homes, luxury apartments and tourist resorts. The only way to change the hearts and minds of Palestinians is through a deep and thorough process of re-education and actual serious pressure, for once, from the outside world. This requires brave, strong and pragmatic leadership -- both from the Palestinians and the international community -- an attribute that, unfortunately, does not seem to exist.

***Khaled Abu Toameh is an award-winning journalist based in Jerusalem.***

<https://www.gatestoneinstitute.org/22245/gaza-master-plan-delusion>



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