

02162026 NEWS SPECIAL Don't miss Lev U'Neshama NOTE at end!

Please Note: Due to family circumstances and time constraints the news will be less detailed with fewer highlighted areas and comments and more referrals to the Article resource sites for your further perusal. RDB

Top Netanyahu aide: Hamas will have 60 days to disarm or IDF will 'complete' mission

Cabinet secretary does not specify start date for 2-month period, echoes PM in saying Hamas must give up AK-47 rifles; IDF: troops kill 6 more terrorists from Rafah tunnels

By [Lazar Berman](#), [Emanuel Fabian](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 5:38 pm



File: Members of the al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, take part in a parade as they celebrate a ceasefire agreement between Hamas and Israel in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, on January 19, 2025. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana, File)

Israel plans to afford Hamas a 60-day period to disarm, and if it does not, the Israeli military will go back to war in the Gaza Strip, a senior adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday. Cabinet Secretary Yossi Fuchs made the statement a day after the premier asserted that the terror group must give up its small arms as part of the disarmament process, including its AK-47 rifles — after some

reports that the terror group might be allowed to hold onto its rifles for now.

Speaking in Jerusalem to the Besheva Group conference, Fuchs said that the Trump Administration had asked for a 60-day period, and "we are respecting that."

Promoted: Ben Gurion University: Summer ProgramsKeep Watching

Fuchs clarified that he is unsure when the 60-day period starts, but it may begin with Thursday's [Board of Peace conference](#).

During that time, Hamas "will have to give up all of its weapons," including rifles, he said, asserting that the terror group's AK-47s "will be taken from them entirely."

"We will evaluate it," he said. "If it works, great. If not, then the IDF will have to complete the mission."

He added that it was a "reasonable estimate" that before Israel's next election — which is currently set for October but could be moved up to June — either Hamas will have given up its weapons or the IDF will be in the midst of an intensive new military campaign in Gaza.



Cabinet Secretary Yossi Fuchs speaks at the Besheva conference in Jerusalem on February 16, 2026 (Screencapture/YouTube)

Fuchs said there were many Gaza tunnels that also needed to be destroyed as part of the process.

Advertisement

"Today, whoever plows the fields in Be'eri sees the sea," he says of the Gaza border kibbutz invaded and brutalized by Hamas on October 7, 2023. "There is barely a building left standing in the Gaza Strip, but the work is not yet completed."

A day earlier, Netanyahu [said](#) that disarmament means Hamas "must give up its weapons, not [just] its main weapons,"

asserting that "the one that does the most damage is called an AK-47."

"That's what they used in the massacre of October 7," the prime minister said, adding that the group still holds some 60,000 rifles in Gaza.



FILE: Masked Hamas gunmen attend the funeral of Mahmoud al-Nabaheen, 24, in the Bureij refugee camp, in the central Gaza Strip, on January 23, 2019. (MAHMUD HAMS / AFP)

A [report](#) in The New York Times last week said Hamas would be allowed to keep “some small arms,” at least initially, while surrendering all weapons that are “capable of striking Israel,” according to a draft plan drawn up by officials involved in the US-led Board of Peace.

According to the report, a team including US envoys Steve Witkoff, Jared Kushner and Nickolay Mladenov, the Board of Peace’s Gaza envoy, plans on sharing the document in question with Hamas in the coming weeks.

IDF: Troops kill 6 terrorists from Rafah tunnels

Meanwhile, inside Gaza, the IDF on Sunday said it had killed six more Hamas terror operatives who have been holed up for months in a tunnel in southern Gaza’s Rafah, on the Israeli side of the ceasefire line.

Dozens of Hamas operatives [trapped](#) on the Israeli side of the so-called “Yellow Line” diving Gaza in accordance with the October 2025 ceasefire agreement were believed by the military to have been there since the collapse of a previous truce in the Strip in early 2025.

The IDF has reported killing or capturing some 50 of them in recent months.



IDF troops are seen as airstrikes are carried out in southern Gaza’s Rafah, November 23, 2025. (Emanuel Fabian/Times of Israel)

According to the military, troops of the 7th Armored Brigade carried out several “significant actions” in the tunnels in the eastern Rafah area in the past week, “in order to eliminate additional terrorists residing there.”

A week ago, the IDF said troops exchanged fire with several gunmen who emerged from a tunnel in the area.

In an update, the military said that on Sunday, during scans of the area, it was confirmed that three gunmen were killed in that exchange of fire, and the bodies of six more were located after they were “eliminated as part of the operations

carried out along the tunnel route.”

The IDF said it is continuing to operate in the area “to eliminate the terrorists in the tunnel routes.”



Young displaced Palestinians play on the ruins of destroyed buildings, carrying Ramadan lanterns used as decorations, in the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on February 15, 2026. (Eyad Baba / AFP)

Elsewhere in the Strip, the IDF said late Sunday night that it struck terror operatives who engaged in “suspicious activity on the ground” and approached troops in the northern Gaza Strip earlier in the day.

According to the IDF, troops of the Gaza Division’s Northern Brigade identified the operatives on the Israeli side of the Yellow Line. The army said that in addition to “carrying out suspicious activity on the ground,” the operatives approached the soldiers “in a manner that posed an immediate threat.”

Advertisement

After they were identified, the Israeli Air Force struck and “eliminated two of the terrorists to remove the threat,” the IDF said. It did not specify what happened to the others.

Since the start of the ceasefire in October, the IDF has said it has killed dozens of terror operatives and other “suspects” who have crossed the Yellow Line and approached troops. Such incidents have taken place on a near-daily basis. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/top-netanyahu-aide-hamas-will-have-60-days-to-disarm-or-idf-will-complete-mission/>

Indonesia says 8,000 troops ready to deploy to Gaza by June as Trump touts progress

US president says members of Board of Peace, meant to oversee the postwar Strip, pledging over \$5 billion toward reconstruction and ‘thousands of personnel’ to oversee security

By [AP, Jacob Magid](#)

and [Tol Staff](#) 15 February 2026, 7:02 pm



Indonesian soldiers are deployed following violent protests against lawmakers' perks and privileges, in Jakarta, Indonesia, September 2025. (AP/Tatan Syuflana, File)

Indonesia’s military said on Sunday that up to 8,000 troops are expected to be ready by the end of June for a potential deployment in a humanitarian and peace mission to Gaza, as US President Donald Trump said countries had committed “thousands of personnel” to a postwar force for the Strip.

Trump’s 20-point plan for Gaza envisions an International Stabilization Force overseeing the territory’s security as the Israel Defense Forces

gradually withdraws. But Trump has struggled to get countries to commit soldiers to the mission, amid uncertainty over whether Hamas will agree to disarm and conflict will again escalate in the territory.

On Sunday, however, he broadcast optimism over the force coming together. The Board of Peace, chaired by Trump and meant to oversee postwar Gaza, will hold its first meeting on Thursday in Washington, DC.

On Sunday, however, he broadcast optimism over the force coming together. The Board of Peace, chaired by Trump and meant to oversee postwar Gaza, will hold its first meeting on Thursday in Washington, DC.

Trump wrote on Truth Social that over \$5 billion in pledges toward the reconstruction of Gaza will be announced at Thursday’s Washington summit.

The Times of Israel first [revealed](#) the planned donations last week, with two Arab diplomats saying that the US was aiming to announce donations from the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, and Kuwait at around \$1.25 billion each. The New York Times reported that the US is also planning on making a similar donation.

Get The Times of Israel’s Daily Edition by email and never miss our top stories

Newsletter email address

By signing up, you agree to the [terms](#)

Trump said in his Sunday Truth Social post that the Thursday meeting will also see countries announce plans to contribute “thousands of personnel to the International Stabilization Force (ISF) and local police to maintain security and peace for Gazans.”

“Very importantly, Hamas must uphold its commitment to full and immediate demilitarization,” Trump said.

Hamas officials have denied ever making such a commitment and have pledged to hold on to their weapons.

The Indonesian commitment, [first announced last week](#), marks a step forward for the peacekeeping force.

Spokesperson Brig. Gen. Donny Pramono said the Indonesian National Armed Forces, known as TNI, has finalized its proposed troop structure and a timeline for their movement to Gaza, though the government has yet to decide when the deployment will take place.

“In principle, we are ready to be assigned anywhere,” Pramono told the AP. “Our troops are fully prepared and can be dispatched at short notice once the government gives formal approval.”



Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto speaks during a signing ceremony on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada, on September 24, 2025. (Dave Chan / AFP)

Pramono said the Indonesian military prepared a composite brigade of 8,000 personnel, based on decisions made during a February 12 meeting about the mission.

Indonesia’s Foreign Ministry has repeatedly said any Indonesian role in Gaza will be strictly humanitarian. Indonesia’s contribution would focus on civilian protection, medical services and reconstruction.

Indonesian troops would not take part in any combat operations or actions that could lead to direct confrontation with armed groups, making it unlikely that the country would play a meaningful role in the effort to get Hamas to disarm.

Under the Indonesian military's schedule, troops will undergo health checks and paperwork throughout February, followed by a force readiness review at the end of the month, Pramono said. He also revealed that about 1,000 personnel are expected to be ready to deploy as an advance team by April, with the rest following by June.



Pramono said that being ready does not mean the troops will depart. The deployment still requires a political decision and depends on international mechanisms, he said. Last week, the Indonesian ministry denied reports in Israeli media that the deployment of Indonesian troops would be in southern Gaza's Rafah and Khan Younis.

Indonesian UN peacekeepers attend a ceremony to mark the 47th anniversary of UNIFIL Establishment Day, at the United Nation Peacekeepers headquarters in the southern Lebanese town of Naqoura, Lebanon, March 19, 2025. (AP/Mohammed Zaatari, File)

Indonesia, the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation, does not have formal diplomatic relations with Israel and has

long been a strong supporter of a two-state solution, which would see a Palestinian state established alongside Israel. It has been deeply involved in providing humanitarian aid to Gaza, including funding a hospital.

Indonesian officials have justified joining the Board of Peace by saying it was necessary to defend Palestinian interests from within, since Israel is included on the board but there is no Palestinian representation.

Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto is due to attend the meeting of the board this week. His spokesman Prasetyo Hadi said last week that there would be negotiations before Indonesia paid the \$1 billion being asked for permanent membership on the Board of Peace. He did not clarify whom the negotiations would be with.

The Southeast Asian country has experience in peacekeeping operations as one of the top 10 contributors to United Nations missions, including in Lebanon.

Addressing the UN General Assembly in September, Subianto said the world must respect Israel's right to live in security, and ended his speech saying, "Shalom."

Nava Freiberg and Reuters contributed to this story.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/indonesia-says-8000-troops-ready-to-deploy-to-gaza-by-june-as-trump-touts-effort/>

Top Netanyahu aide: Hamas will have 60 days to disarm or IDF will 'complete' mission

Cabinet secretary does not specify start date for 2-month period, echoes PM in saying Hamas must give up AK-47 rifles; IDF: Troops kill 6 more terrorists from Rafah tunnels

By Lazar Berman, Emanuel Fabian

and Tol Staff 16 February 2026, 5:38 pm



File: Members of the al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, take part in a parade as they celebrate a ceasefire agreement between Hamas and Israel in Deir al-Balah, Gaza Strip, on January 19, 2025. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana, File)

Israel plans to afford Hamas a 60-day period to disarm, and if it does not, the Israeli military will go back to war in the Gaza Strip, a senior adviser to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday.

Cabinet Secretary Yossi Fuchs made the statement a day after the premier asserted that the terror group must give up its small arms as part of the disarmament process, including its AK-47 rifles — after some reports that the terror group might be allowed to hold onto its rifles for now.

Speaking in Jerusalem to the Besheva Group conference, Fuchs said that the Trump Administration had asked for a 60-day period, and "we are respecting that."

Fuchs clarified that he is unsure when the 60-day period starts, but it may begin with Thursday's [Board of Peace conference](#).

During that time, Hamas “will have to give up all of its weapons,” including rifles, he said, asserting that the terror group’s AK-47s “will be taken from them entirely.”

“We will evaluate it,” he said. “If it works, great. If not, then the IDF will have to complete the mission.”

He added that it was a “reasonable estimate” that before Israel’s next election — which is currently set for October but could be moved up to June — either Hamas will have given up its weapons or the IDF will be in the midst of an intensive new military campaign in Gaza.



Cabinet Secretary Yossi Fuchs speaks at the Besheva conference in Jerusalem on February 16, 2026 (Screenshot/YouTube)

Fuchs said there were many Gaza tunnels that also needed to be destroyed as part of the process.

Advertisement

“Today, whoever plows the fields in Be’eri sees the sea,” he says of the Gaza border kibbutz invaded and brutalized by Hamas on October 7, 2023. “There is barely a building left standing in the Gaza Strip, but the work is not yet completed.” A day earlier, Netanyahu [said](#) that disarmament means Hamas “must give up its weapons, not [just] its main weapons,” asserting that “the one that does the most damage

is called an AK-47.”

“That’s what they used in the massacre of October 7,” the prime minister said, adding that the group still holds some 60,000 rifles in Gaza.



FILE: Masked Hamas gunmen attend the funeral of Mahmoud al-Nabaheen, 24, in the Bureij refugee camp, in the central Gaza Strip, on January 23, 2019. (MAHMUD HAMS / AFP)

A [report](#) in The New York Times last week said Hamas would be allowed to keep “some small arms,” at least initially, while surrendering all weapons that are “capable of striking Israel,” according to a draft plan drawn up by officials involved in the US-led Board of Peace.

According to the report, a team including US envoys Steve Witkoff, Jared Kushner and Nickolay Mladenov, the Board of Peace’s Gaza envoy, plans on sharing the document in question with Hamas in the coming weeks.

IDF: Troops kill 6 terrorists from Rafah tunnels

Meanwhile, inside Gaza, the IDF on Sunday said it had killed six more Hamas terror operatives who have been holed up for months in a tunnel in southern Gaza’s Rafah, on the Israeli side of the ceasefire line.

Advertisement

Dozens of Hamas operatives [trapped](#) on the Israeli side of the so-called “Yellow Line” diving Gaza in accordance with the October 2025 ceasefire agreement were believed by the military to have been there since the collapse of a previous truce in the Strip in early 2025.

The IDF has reported killing or capturing some 50 of them in recent months.



IDF troops are seen as airstrikes are carried out in southern Gaza’s Rafah, November 23, 2025. (Emanuel Fabian/Times of Israel)

According to the military, troops of the 7th Armored Brigade carried out several “significant actions” in the tunnels in the eastern Rafah area in the past week, “in order to eliminate additional terrorists residing there.”

A week ago, the IDF said troops exchanged fire with several gunmen who emerged from a tunnel in the area.

In an update, the military said that on Sunday, during scans of the area, it was confirmed that three gunmen were killed in that exchange of fire, and the bodies of six more were located after they were “eliminated as part of the operations carried out along the tunnel route.”

The IDF said it is continuing to operate in the area “to eliminate the terrorists in the tunnel routes.”



Young displaced Palestinians play on the ruins of destroyed buildings, carrying Ramadan lanterns used as decorations, in the Bureij refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip on February 15, 2026. (Eyad Baba / AFP)
Elsewhere in the Strip, the IDF said late Sunday night that it struck terror operatives who engaged in “suspicious activity on the ground” and approached troops in the northern Gaza Strip earlier in the day.

According to the IDF, troops of the Gaza Division’s Northern Brigade identified the operatives on the Israeli side of the Yellow Line. The army said that in addition to “carrying out suspicious activity on the ground,” the operatives approached the soldiers “in a manner that posed an

immediate threat.”

After they were identified, the Israeli Air Force struck and “eliminated two of the terrorists to remove the threat,” the IDF said. It did not specify what happened to the others.

Since the start of the ceasefire in October, the IDF has said it has killed dozens of terror operatives and other “suspects” who have crossed the Yellow Line and approached troops. Such incidents have taken place on a near-daily basis. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/top-netanyahu-aide-hamas-will-have-60-days-to-disarm-or-idf-will-complete-mission/>

Trump ally to Tol: Ayatollah staying in power would be ‘strategic victory for Iran’

Visiting Israel a day ahead of fresh nuclear talks in Geneva, GOP Sen. Lindsey Graham says US decision on Iran is ‘weeks, not months’ away; Tehran drills in strategic Hormuz Strait

By [Lazar Berman](#), [Ariela Karmel](#), [Michael Bachner](#), [Jacob Magid](#) and [Agencies](#) Today, 1:11 am



US Senator Lindsey Graham speaks during a press conference in Tel Aviv, February 16, 2026. (Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90)

A Republican senator seen as close to US President Donald Trump suggested Monday that an American decision on potential military action against Iran was “weeks, not months” away and opined that it would be a “strategic victory” for the Islamic Republic if its supreme leader isn’t toppled amid the current standoff.

Lindsey Graham made the comments during his latest visit to Israel, which came a day before a second round of nuclear talks between the US and Iran was set to be held on Tuesday in Geneva.

Speaking at a press conference in Tel Aviv, Graham said he was visiting the country “to reassure the Israeli people there is no light” between Washington and Jerusalem on Iran.

Keep Watching

“There are two lines in the water right now,” said Graham. “One’s a diplomatic line, trying to find a way to end this regime diplomatically that will advance our national security interests. The other line is the military option.”

Graham, who also met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday, said that he believed Trump “is looking for which line can catch the biggest fish. Bottom line is we’re in the weeks, not months, in terms of decision-making.”

The US senator said, “The Iranian ayatollah and his murderous regime are at their weakest point since 1979. Their economy is in shambles. Their military has been degraded. There are people in the streets.”

“The risk of regime change is real. There are unknowns. But let me just say this, I’m willing to take that risk. I think the Iranian people have the potential to be a great ally of the United States, Israel and the region,” Graham said.

Advertisement

While Graham is seen regularly with Trump, it is unclear the degree to which he influences the US president’s decision-making.

He is also part of the Republican party’s more hawkish wing, which is competing with more isolationist members of Trump’s inner circle who are more wary of military action against Iran.

‘Strategic victory for Iran’ if ayatollah not toppled

Graham held a phone interview with The Times of Israel later Monday, during which he said that the US must deliver on its pledges to aid Iranian anti-regime protesters.

“We promised that help would be on the way to the protesters,” he said after meeting with top Israeli officials in Jerusalem, including Netanyahu. “We have to deliver on that promise.”

“If having said all the things we’ve said and done all the things we’ve done,” he continued, “if the ayatollah is still standing after all this bluster, then it would be a strategic victory for Iran and the force of radical Islam.”

There is “no daylight” between Trump and Netanyahu on Iran, he stressed.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu hosts visiting US Senator Lindsey Graham in Jerusalem, February 16, 2026. (Maayan Toaf/GPO)

But Trump’s statement after his meeting last week with Netanyahu in Washington appeared to suggest otherwise. He wrote on Truth Social that he “insisted” to the Israeli prime minister that a chance be given to see if the ongoing nuclear talks succeed before military options are pursued. Netanyahu has been more skeptical of the negotiations.

Trump later last week opined that regime change in Iran “would be the best thing that could happen,” appearing to contradict



US Vice President JD Vance, who said hours earlier that Washington was not trying to topple the Islamic Republic and was focused on reaching an agreement that will prevent Tehran from obtaining a nuclear weapon.

Trump spoke to reporters on Monday night as his top aides Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner departed for Geneva.

“I’ll be involved in those talks indirectly, and they’ll be very important,” Trump said aboard Air Force One.

Calling the Iranians “tough negotiators,” Trump said he hopes “they’re going to be more reasonable” than they were during last year’s talks, which didn’t result in a deal and instead saw the US strike Iran’s nuclear facilities.

“I think they want to make a deal. I don’t think they want the consequences of not making a deal,” Trump said.

Huckabee: At some point, US will need to say enough is enough

Striking a similar tone to that of Graham, US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee said Monday that he hopes a diplomatic accord with Iran can be reached but is skeptical that military action can ultimately be avoided.

“Will there be anything that can come from that that will bring peace?” he asked, while speaking to Jewish leaders at a gathering of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations in Jerusalem. “I honestly don’t know. I know there’s a lot of significant and legitimate doubt that the Iranians will ever agree to something that would cause them to lay down any ambitions of nuclear weaponry.”

“At some point, the United States needs to say: enough is enough. We’re not going to continue to believe that they’re ever going to be different than they are. And it’s time for them to either make a radical change of their point of view and their direction, or for them to experience what we call in the south, the ‘second kick of a mule,’” the ambassador said.

Huckabee reiterated that Israel and the United States are “absolutely aligned in our understanding that Iran has to be dealt with and it cannot continue as it is.”

“They cannot remain a nuclear threat. They cannot continue to build extraordinary surpluses of ballistic missiles and aim them, not just at Israel, but also at the rest of the world,” he continued.

While Huckabee said he would be “delighted” if an accord could be reached — adding that the consequences of failing to do so for Iran would be “harsh and much worse” than Israel’s 12-day conflict with Iran last year — he expressed skepticism that Iran would be “serious” about making or keeping such a commitment.



US Ambassador Mike Huckabee addresses the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations’ Leadership Mission in Jerusalem, February 16, 2026. (Courtesy)

Huckabee said he told Trump last week at the White House that it would be “miraculous if some deal could be reached that would thwart the need, the necessity, the absolute certainty of some military action,” but also that he was “willing to do whatever must be done to stop this threat that I’ve had to listen to for 47 years since 1979.”

Iran says US stance now ‘more realistic’

Meanwhile, Iran said on Monday that the US position on its nuclear program “has moved toward a more realistic one.”

“A cautious assessment is that, from the discussions that have taken place in Muscat to date, at least what we have been told is that the US position on the Iranian nuclear issue has moved towards a more realistic one,” said foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei, the official IRNA news agency reported.

Washington has ordered a second aircraft carrier group to the Middle East in the latest standoff with Tehran, in addition to other US warships and aircraft that have already been deployed.

Adding to the tension, Iran began a military drill on Monday in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital international waterway and oil export route from Gulf Arab states, who have been appealing for diplomacy to end the dispute.



This handout natural-color image acquired with MODIS on NASA's Terra satellite taken on February 5, 2025, shows the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz (upper left). (NASA Earth Observatory / AFP)

Iran has repeatedly threatened to close the Strait of Hormuz in retaliation against any attack, which would choke a fifth of global oil flows and send crude prices sharply higher.

The waterway connects the biggest Gulf oil producers, such as Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq and the United Arab Emirates, with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards have conducted a drill named “Smart Control of the Strait of Hormuz,” to test the readiness of the

guards' naval units to protect the waterway, the semi-official Tasnim news agency said on Monday.

“Intelligently utilizing the geopolitical advantages of the Islamic Republic in the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman are among the main objectives of this exercise,” Tasnim said.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi [met with](#) International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) head Rafael Grossi in the Swiss city on Monday. The IAEA has been calling on Iran for months to say what happened to its stockpile of 440 kilograms (970 pounds) of highly enriched uranium following US strikes on three key Iranian nuclear facilities during a 12-day Israel-Iran war in June, which put an end to previous US-Iran talks.

Araghchi's direct meeting with Grossi came after Iran suspended all cooperation with the IAEA following the June war. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/trump-ally-to-toi-ayatollah-staying-in-power-would-be-strategic-victory-for-iran/>

Iran FM meets with UN nuclear chief ahead of 2nd round of US talks, as IRGC holds drill



Araghchi vows 'no submission before threats,' as IRGC navy drills in Hormuz Strait amid US buildup; deputy Iranian FM says compromise on nuclear issue possible if US discusses sanctions relief

By [Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 16 February 2026, 3:24 pm

Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, left, shakes hands with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director-General Rafael Grossi during their meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, February 16, 2026. (Iranian Foreign Ministry via AP)

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi met with Rafael Grossi, head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog, in Geneva on Monday, ahead of a second round of indirect nuclear talks there with the United States on Tuesday.

Araghchi said he would also meet with Omani Foreign Minister Badr al-Busaidi, whose country is mediating the talks and hosted their first round in Muscat on February 6.

The negotiations commenced amid a US naval buildup that sought to pressure Iran into reining in its nuclear program. On Monday, Iran's Revolutionary Guards navy held a drill in the Hormuz Strait to test the readiness of operational forces in the face of “possible security and military threats,” semi-official Iranian news agency Tasnim reported.

Writing on X, Araghchi said he was in Geneva “with real ideas to achieve a fair and equitable deal” in the renewed indirect talks with US Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff and White House adviser Jared Kushner, President Donald Trump's son-in-law.

“What is not on the table: submission before threats,” added Araghchi.

The meeting with Grossi was set to include “deep technical discussions” accompanied by nuclear experts, said Araghchi.

The IAEA has been calling on Iran for months to say what happened to its stockpile of 440 kilograms (970 pounds) of highly enriched uranium following US strikes on three key Iranian nuclear facilities during the 12-day Israel-Iran war in June, which put an end to previous US-Iran talks.

Araghchi’s direct meeting with Grossi is a significant step after Iran suspended all cooperation with the IAEA following the June war. The two also met briefly on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in September.



Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi, right, meets with International Atomic Energy Agency Director-General Rafael Grossi in Geneva, Switzerland, February 16, 2026. (Iranian Foreign Ministry via AP)

Iran’s stockpile of uranium enriched to 60 percent could allow the country to build as many as 10 nuclear bombs, should it decide to weaponize its program, Grossi previously told The Associated Press. He added that it doesn’t mean that Iran has such a weapon.

On Friday, Grossi told the Munich Security Conference that IAEA inspectors had returned to Iran since the war but have been unable to visit any of the facilities targeted by the US. He also said reaching a deal with Iran on inspection of its

processing facilities was possible but “terribly difficult.”

While Iran, whose leaders are sworn to destroy Israel, denies seeking nuclear arms, it has enriched uranium to levels with no peaceful application, obstructed international inspectors from checking its nuclear facilities, and expanded its ballistic missile capabilities.

Iranian deputy FM: ‘The ball is in America’s court’

The second round of US-Iran talks comes after [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) rushed to Washington last week to urge Trump to ensure that any deal would curtail Iran’s ballistic missile program and end its funding for proxy terror groups in the Middle East.



According to a [CBS report](#) Sunday, US-Israel discussions on possibly striking Iran’s missile facilities are ongoing, and Trump told Netanyahu in December that the US would back an Israeli strike on Iran’s ballistic missile program should talks fail.

Iran, for its part, has agreed to discuss only its nuclear program in the indirect talks with the US. The Islamic Republic has also refused to stop enriching uranium outright, as demanded by the US.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (L) meets US President Donald Trump at the White House, February 11, 2026. (Avi Ohayon/GPO)

Iran’s Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi signaled

Sunday that Tehran could be open to compromise on the nuclear issue, but is looking for an easing of US-led international sanctions.

“The ball is in America’s court. They have to prove they want to have a deal with us,” Takht-Ravanchi told the BBC.

“If we see a sincerity on their part, I am sure that we will be on a road to have an agreement.”

“We are ready to discuss this and other issues related to our program, provided that they are also ready to talk about the sanctions,” he added.

Trump initially threatened to take military action over Iran’s bloody crackdown on nationwide protests last month, but then shifted to a pressure campaign in recent weeks to try to get Tehran to make a deal over its nuclear program.

Trump said Friday the USS Gerald R. Ford, the world’s largest aircraft carrier, was being sent from the Caribbean to the Mideast to join other military assets the US has built up in the region. He also [said](#) a change in power in Iran “would be the best thing that could happen.”

Iran has threatened to attack Israel and US bases in the region in response to a US strike.

Father and son shot dead while driving in Umm al-Fahm; no suspects arrested

Mayor laments ‘shocking’ double homicide, which takes annual death toll in Arab community to 50; police find burnt car near scene, possibly belonging to killers

By Charlie Summers

16 February 2026, 2:22 pm



Paramedics and police gather at the scene of a shooting that killed two men in Umm al-Fahm on February 16, 2026. (Magen David Adom)

A father and son were shot to death Monday morning while driving in Umm al-Fahm as violent crime continued at an unprecedented rate in Arab society.

The victims of the double homicide were identified as Ahmad Fares Abu Ghazaleh, a 46-year-old electrical engineer, and his 22-year-old son Abdelqader, a nurse.

At around 9 a.m., paramedics received a report of the shooting and arrived at the scene to find both victims unconscious, without vital signs. They were pronounced dead on the spot.

The pair’s car had flipped over as a result of the shooting, trapping one of the victims in the vehicle, Ynet reported. The car’s windshield was found partially shattered, with 17 bullet holes.

Later, police located a burned-out car on the outskirts of the city, in a wooded area close to the al-Arayish neighborhood, abutting a nearby highway. Law enforcement suspected that the scorched vehicle belonged to the criminals and was set alight after the homicide.

Police announced that launched an investigation and were searching for the perpetrators. No suspects were immediately arrested.

Umm al-Fahm’s mayor, Samir Mahamid, called the killing “shocking.”

“We’re talking about a father, an electrical engineer, and his son, a registered nurse, both normal, law-abiding citizens,” he told The Times of Israel. “We all need to take responsibility, both the government and police, but also us as Arab citizens.”

The killings bring this year’s number of Arab homicide victims up to 50 within just two months. The soaring death toll follows the deadliest year on record for Arab Israelis, in which 252 were killed in crime-related incidents over the course of 2025.

If killings continue at their current pace, 2026 stands to be much deadlier for Israel’s Arab minority than the preceding year.

The spiraling homicide rate in Arab society, which is largely fueled by mafia-style organized crime, has recently been the focus of escalating protests.

On Sunday, relatives of Arab homicide victims met with President Isaac Herzog, who noted that there has been a “very large awakening” over the issue of violent crime in the past month.

Sitting next to the president, Qasem Awad, whose son Abdallah was shot dead while at work in February 2025,

lamented that Arab citizens are “in the backyard, the police and the current government threw us into the backyard.”

The families presented a list of demands to Herzog and urged him to secure them a meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the issue.

The first among their demands was the sacking of far-right National Security Minister Itamar Ben Gvir, whose tenure has seen a twofold rise in Arab community homicides.

President Isaac Herzog meets with bereaved relatives of Arab homicide victims, including Qasem Awad (right) and Sawsan Sultan (left), in Jerusalem on February 15, 2026 (Yonatan Sindel/FLASH90)



The families also called for a consistent police presence in Arab towns, with officers who are trained to ensure Arab citizens' safety, as well as regular communication between law enforcement and local officials.

At the same time, the relatives demanded an end to highly militarized police raids, in which special forces enter and sometimes cordon off entire towns for a period of time, and then leave the area again without any law enforcement activities. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/father-and-son-shot-dead-while-driving-in-umm-al-fahm-no-suspects-arrested/>

New settlement to 'expand Jerusalem' for first time since 1967

Left-wing group accuses government of 'backdoor annexation'; West Bank regional council head lauds 'realization of the settlement vision,' says more such steps on the way

By [Jeremy Sharon](#)

16 February 2026, 2:20 pm



The East Jerusalem neighborhood of Neve Yaakov (foreground) and the Palestinian neighborhood of al-Ram (background) are seen separated by Israel's West Bank security barrier on February 16, 2026. (AHMAD GHARABLI / AFP)

A recent development agreement signed by the state and the West Bank's Mateh Binyamin Regional Council will, once given final approval, see the establishment of a new settlement that would in practice constitute the first expansion of Jerusalem since 1967.

The proposed settlement announced earlier this month would technically be a westward expansion of the Adam settlement, which lies very close to

Jerusalem's northeast boundary. It includes plans for the construction of some 2,780 housing units in a new "neighborhood" for Adam.

But the land on which the new settlement would be built is physically separated from Adam, first by Route 437, a major traffic artery, and second by the security barrier.

The proposed settlement would therefore have much greater territorial contiguity with the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Neve Yaakov, which is inside Jerusalem's municipal boundaries, than with Adam.

It would not be a formal part of Jerusalem, and would officially be a neighborhood of Adam, although officials from the Peace Now organization claim that the new settlement would likely obtain at least some municipal services from Jerusalem.

The settlement would be built on 500 dunams of land between the Palestinian towns of Hizma and Al-Ram, and would involve an investment by the government of some NIS 120 million (\$39 million) in order to construct the necessary infrastructure, public spaces and community institutions for the new development.



An Israeli boy throws water mixed with cement powder into a mixer in the Jewish settlement of Adam, several kilometers from the Palestinian city of Ramallah on September 1, 2010, in a defiant move to protest the killing of four settlers the previous night. (MARCO LONGARI / AFP)

The plan has yet to be deposited with the Civil Administration's Higher Planning Committee, meaning that full authorization could still take as long as two years.

Nevertheless, 500 housing units have already been marketed for the first phase of development, the Housing Ministry said.

"The agreement constitutes a significant step in continuing the development of the settlement and

strengthening the settlement continuity in the area, while providing a response to the demand for housing in and around Jerusalem, and integrating a phased and balanced planning of new neighborhoods alongside the existing fabric," the Housing and Construction Ministry said in a statement on February 3 announcing the development.

The Peace Now organization, which campaigns against the settlements, said that the new plans constituted a further form of annexation by the government and an unprecedented expansion of Jerusalem. Following Israel's conquest of East Jerusalem and the West Bank in the 1967 Six Day War, Knesset legislation and ministerial directives formally expanded the capital's boundaries to their current position, taking in what had been Jordanian-controlled East Jerusalem. All neighborhoods built by Israel in East Jerusalem since that time, considered settlements by most of the international community, have been constructed inside those boundaries. "This is the first time since 1967 that Jerusalem has been expanded into the West Bank," asserted Peace Now. "Under the pretext of a new settlement, the government is carrying out a backdoor annexation here. The new settlement will function for all intents and purposes as a neighborhood of the city of Jerusalem, and its planning as a 'neighborhood' of the Adam settlement is just an excuse and an attempt to conceal the move, the implication of which is the application of Israeli sovereignty to territories in the West Bank," it said.

Democrats MK Gilad Kariv also condemned the move, describing it as "another unprecedented act of annexation that draws us closer to an explosion in the West Bank."



Head of the Mateh Binyamin Regional Council Israel Ganz speaks at a "conference of appreciation" for illegal farming outposts in the West Bank, February 2, 2026. (Courtesy Arutz 7)

Kariv said that he had written to Housing and Construction Minister Haim Katz about "the plan to expand Jerusalem over the Green Line and to de facto annex territory," adding, "Annexation will bring about a security catastrophe."

Mateh Binyamin Regional Council head Israel Ganz lauded the new development, describing it as "the realization of the settlement vision" for his region.

"The new plan will allow us to build thousands of housing units, while at the same time dramatically upgrading the quality of life of the residents," said Ganz, adding that his council is "already working on additional agreements" that will "herald dramatic change on the ground."

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/new-settlement-to-expand-jerusalem-for-first-time-since-1967/>

US ambassador to Belgium urges nation to drop charges over illegal circumcisions

Accusations against three mohels for acting without medical license are 'antisemitic,' Bill White says; European Commission also seeking a solution to impasse over Jewish ritual

By [Zev Stub](#)

16 February 2026, 5:01 pm



Illustrative photo of a ritual circumcision (Yonatan Sindel/Flash90)

US Ambassador to Belgium Bill White has called on the country to drop all investigations against three mohels (individuals who perform circumcision) arrested last summer in a raid, calling the case antisemitic in a sharply worded post on X.

In May, police in Antwerp rounded up mohels suspected of illegally conducting the ritual Jewish circumcisions. Officials conducted early morning raids on three locations in Antwerp's Jewish Quarter and nearby Green Quarter seeking knives and other equipment used in circumcisions, according to reports at the time.

Three mohels have been charged for performing a medical intervention without a medical license, and prosecutors now believe they have enough evidence to get a conviction, Belgian MP Michael Freilich, the country's only Orthodox Jewish lawmaker, told The Times of Israel. A trial date has not yet been set, he said, noting it may take several months to do so.

At the time of the raids, Jewish community representatives charged that the raids were part of a larger campaign of intimidation against Jewish religious figures in Belgium. Police said they were concerned that circumcisions were being performed on Jewish baby boys by unlicensed mohels. Belgium has laws mandating that all medical procedures must be performed by a licensed doctor.

“The problem is that there is no clear law regarding circumcision at the moment,” Freilich explained at the time. “It’s not that brit milah is not allowed; it’s that there needs to be a clearer law about who can perform the procedure.”

In his post on X Monday, White called the charges against the mohels “ridiculous and antisemitic ‘prosecution.’” The mohels “are doing what they have been trained to do for thousands of years,” he wrote.

Indicating that he had the backing of US President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance, and other leading officials, White called on Belgian Health Minister Frank Vandenbroucke to stop the country’s “unacceptable harassment of the Jewish community” and deregulate the ritual, which is commonly done in many countries and has documented health benefits.

“It’s 2026, you need to get into the 21st century and allow our brethren Jewish families in Belgium to legally execute their religious freedoms!” he wrote.

White said he will meet with the mohels in Antwerp next week, and called on Vandenbroucke to join him.

“It’s disgusting what’s happened to these fine men and their families,” White wrote.

The statement shows that “America continues to uphold a promise that Europe also pledged to keep: safeguarding Jewish life and ensuring that Jews can live openly and securely,” said Ralph Pais, vice-chair of the Jewish Information and Documentation Centre (JID). “We expect Belgium to fully comply with the very principles and democratic values it professes to uphold.”

Meanwhile, European Commissioner of Health Olivér Várhelyi is also putting pressure on Vandenbroucke to find a solution, without any success yet, Freilich noted. Várhelyi is scheduled to meet with the Jewish community in Antwerp in the coming weeks, he added.

“I repeat my call to the health minister to accept the outstretched hand of the Jewish community to try to find a solution and regulate the practice,” Freilich added. “We need to see how we can implement the highest levels of health and medicine within the requirements of religious freedom. Other countries such as Sweden, Germany, and the United Kingdom have shown it is possible, and we must do the same here.”



Belgian MP Michael Freilich speaking to an audience in a synagogue in Belgium. (Courtesy)

Germany, for example, has a law allowing for a mohel accepted by the Jewish community to perform circumcision, Freilich noted. The UK has a 300-year-old Mohel Initiation Society regulating the practice, and the Conference of European Rabbis has a Union of Mohels of Europe [working](#) to develop a system of self-regulation and licensing for mohels that will make government oversight unnecessary.

Most countries do not have any specific legislation regarding circumcision, so the Jewish ritual can continue as a religious ritual

without intervention, Freilich explained. While there are fears that Belgium could one day ban circumcision completely, Freilich insisted that such a thing would never happen.

Unlicensed circumcisions are under increased scrutiny in Europe, however. In 2024, authorities in Ireland [arrested](#) a rabbi from London for allegedly performing circumcision without required medical credentials.

Circumcision is relatively uncommon among the general population of Europe, with only 10-20 percent of males having gone under the knife, compared to over 70% in the United States.

Muslims generally undergo circumcision at a hospital, not in a religious ceremony, so the legislation is primarily a Jewish issue.

Pais said White’s post was a “huge bomb,” positioning Belgium’s fight against antisemitism as an American priority in the country.

Antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiments have skyrocketed in Belgium since Hamas launched its war against Israel on October 7, 2023. Attacks such as verbal abuse, intimidation, physical violence, and graffiti continue to occur in the 30,000-strong Jewish community on a weekly basis, Pais has [said](#). <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-ambassador-to-belgium-urges-nation-to-drop-charges-over-illegal-circumcisions/>

Anti-Zionist groups in Canada target Jewish children’s summer camps

Activists accuse youth programs of supporting a ‘genocidal state’; campaign marks new front in global campaign targeting Israel

By Luke Tress



Anti-Zionist protesters in Toronto, Canada, August 31, 2025. (Doron Horowitz/ Flash90)

Anti-Zionist groups in Canada last week launched a campaign against Jewish children's summer camps, marking a new front in activists' global effort to dismantle the Jewish state and demonize its supporters.

A coalition of Canadian leftist and pro-Palestinian organizations announced the campaign seeking to strip accreditation from Jewish children's summer camps due to their support for "a genocidal state."

The campaign targeted at least 17 camps across Canada, in Ontario, Quebec, Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia.

"They pose a problem because they encourage support for a genocidal, settler-colonial state," the campaign [said](#) of the camps, which serve children in elementary school, middle school and high school.

The campaign cited the camps for alleged offenses, such as celebrating Israel's Independence Day and Memorial Day, staffers visiting Israel, and employment of IDF veterans.

A camp in Quebec, for example, employed a woman as a counselor who had served as a social worker in the IDF. Another camp's director was decried as a "Zionist who publicly supports Israel." A camp in Ontario was attacked for cultural "appropriation" for using za'atar, a Middle Eastern spice.

The groups supporting the effort included the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign targeting Israel, the Palestinian Canadian Congress, the anti-Israel group Just Peace Advocates, the Ontario Palestinian Rights Association, and PAJU Montreal.

Children's camps in Canada must meet a set of standards to gain accreditation from provincial camp associations. The accreditation is a stamp of approval that means the camps meet standards for safety, health, staffing, and programming.

The campaign against the Jewish camps instructed supporters to contact provincial camp accreditors to demand that the Jewish camps lose their accreditation.

Organizers [said](#) more than 800 letters had been sent to camp associations.

Anti-Zionist groups have widened their net in recent years to targets including Jewish and Israel-affiliated nonprofits, university clubs, comedy shows, and synagogues.

The latest campaign appeared to mark the first time anti-Zionist activists held an organized, concerted effort targeting Jewish children's camps.

The campaigners argue they are fighting against "genocide" by Israel, while opponents say the activities amount to de facto stigmatization of Jews.

Anti-Zionist activists have incessantly accused Israel of "genocide" since the Hamas invasion of Israel in October 2023. Genocide is an international crime with a strict legal definition, and international courts have not found that Israel committed the crime.

Some groups have sought to [expand the legal definition](#) of genocide to condemn the Jewish state.



Anti-Zionist protesters outside a synagogue in New York City, January 8, 2026. (Luke Tress/Times of Israel)

The rhetoric used by the anti-Zionists has steadily escalated. In recent months, protesters [chanted for Hamas](#) outside a New York synagogue for the first time, and demonstrators in Philadelphia [hanged effigies](#) of Israeli soldiers.

The escalating rhetoric also illustrated the international nature of the campaign against Israel, where tactics adopted in one country are often followed elsewhere. After a hip-hop group in the UK [led a crowd](#) in chants of "Death to the IDF" last year, for example, the chant [began appearing](#) at protests in the US.

Jews are [targeted in hate crimes](#) more than any other group in Canada, a figure that [surged](#) following the start of the Gaza war. Recent incidents include [gunfire at synagogues](#), [violent chants](#) at a Holocaust museum, [antisemitic](#)

[bullying](#) of schoolchildren, [support for terrorism](#) on college campuses, and [attempted kidnappings](#) of Jewish women.

The announcement targeting the summer camps sparked alarm from Jewish groups.

The UJA Federation of Greater Toronto called the campaign an attempt to “bully and harass” the camps.

“This direct targeting of Jewish campers and staff is a deliberate act of intimidation,” the federation said in a [statement](#).

The Ontario Camps Association, a non-Jewish group that accredits camps, [decried](#) the statements as “deeply concerning.”

“...Certain characterizations and claims, we believe, reflect rhetoric that is discriminatory and antisemitic in nature,” the association said in a statement. “Campaigns such as these can be a dangerous expression of the singular demonization and wholesale attempt at the delegitimization of one minority group and have no place in camp culture or elsewhere.”

The association said it was engaging with Jewish groups to evaluate the situation.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/anti-zionist-groups-in-canada-target-jewish-childrens-summer-camps/>

Scotiabank unit sells stake in Israeli arms supplier Elbit following backlash

Scotiabank, at one point Elbit's biggest foreign investor, dissolved the 165,000 shares it held in the arms manufacturing company.

By **REUTERS** FEBRUARY 17, 2026 00:49



A man walks past a smashed window on the office building of Bain & Company after it was vandalised by pro-Palestine protesters during a demonstration over alleged ties to Israeli drone manufacturer Elbit Systems in London, Britain, September 16, 2025. (photo credit: JAIME JOY/REUTERS)

Scotiabank's 1832 Asset Management subsidiary has dissolved its stake in Israeli arms manufacturer Elbit Systems ESLT.TA, ESLT.O, regulatory filings showed, after the Canadian bank faced sharp criticism for the investment.

Activists angered over Elbit's role in supplying

military equipment used by Israel during the war with Hamas had pressured the Scotiabank BNS.TO investment arm, which at one point was the biggest foreign investor in the weapons maker.

The investment arm no longer holds shares in Elbit, a change from its reported holding of about 165,000 shares in November, according to the filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission on Friday.

The Canadian bank did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment on the stake sale.

Protests erupted at Scotiabank branches, prestigious gala

Scotiabank's exposure to the weapons maker had triggered a number of protests at the bank's branches, *Reuters* reported in 2023. It had also disrupted Canada's prestigious Giller Prize Gala, a literary award that was sponsored by Scotiabank.



People walk past the office building of Bain & Company after it was damaged by pro-Palestine protesters during a demonstration over alleged ties to Israeli drone manufacturer Elbit Systems in London, Britain, September 16, 2025. (credit: JAIME JOY/REUTERS)

The contract between the Giller Prize and Scotiabank ended in February 2025.

The Defense Ministry said in January that it had signed a multi-year agreement for air munitions with Elbit worth \$183 million.

Elbit reported sharply higher third-quarter profit in November, fueled by sales to Israel's military during the [Israel-Hamas war](#) and by higher global defense spending.

US-listed shares of Elbit more than doubled last year.

<https://www.jpost.com/international/article-886887>

Investigative Reporter Nick Shirley Exposes Massive Voter Fraud in California (VIDEO)

by [Cristina Laila](#) Feb. 16, 2026 6:20 pm

Investigative reporter Nick Shirley traveled to California to expose voter fraud.

California does not require voter ID, and the state's elections go on and on for weeks after Election Day.

With ballot harvesting, ballot curing, a lack of voter ID laws, and mass mail-in ballots, California's elections are rife with fraud.

Last year, an Orange County, California, woman was arrested and charged with illegally registering her dog to vote and casting mail-in ballots in her dog's name.

Laura Lee Yourex, 62, of Costa Mesa, illegally registered her dog to vote in California and cast ballots in her dog's name in the 2021 Gavin Newsom recall election and the 2022 primary election.

According to Orange County DA Todd Spitzer, the dog's vote was successfully counted in the 2021 election but was rejected in the 2022 primary.

Nick Shirley visited locations from California's voter rolls and not one location could even verify its voter rolls.

A short list of issues Nick Shirley discovered:

- Irregularities in voter numbers per location
- 30+ people registered to one mail store
- Voters inaccurately aged at 125 years old

"Without any voter ID and negligence from the state government to update their voter rolls, California's one-party state has created a complex system where fraud is inevitable in their voting process," Nick Shirley said.

WATCH:

⚠ California is the breeding ground for voter fraud in America, as millions of people vote with no ID, month-long election processes, inaccurate voter rolls, dead people caught voting, even a dog successfully registered to vote, and voter verification is all based on your...

pic.twitter.com/7nOlZe5x9D

— Nick shirley (@nickshirleyy) February 16, 2026

Harmeet Dhillon, Assistant Attorney General for the Civil Rights Division, recently [filed](#) a lawsuit against Orange County Registrar of Voters Robert Page for refusing to hand over records showing non-citizens are registered to vote and receiving ballots in federal elections. <https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2026/02/investigative-reporter-nick-shirley-exposes-massive-voter-fraud/>

Student facing 10 years in jail for stating scientific fact about gender

By [Bob Unruh](#)

[February 16, 2026](#)



A student reportedly is facing up to a decade in jail because she stated the scientific facts regarding transgenderism instead of the approved social engineering ideologies demanding by her government.

The case, now developing in Brazil against student Isadora Borges, is over her failure to spout the false ideologies of the movement there.

For example, she cited the scientific fact on social media that "transgender women" "were obviously born male, and the additional science that a person can identify as the gender which they are not, but they still retain the DNA of their birth and no surgery, chemicals, or treatment changes that.

The [Christian Post](#) said Borges is being prosecuted for the statements posted on X a few years ago.

"The online comments drew attention and prompted a report to federal police by politician Erika Hilton," the report said. The politician apparently denies science and now identifies as transgender and her complaint triggered an investigation and prosecution, the report said.

Each charge of "transphobia" carries a potential maximum sentence of five years.

A hearing recently was held in court for arguments to be presented in the case.

Julio Pohl, a legal counsel for ADF International, which is working on the student's behalf, said, "Weaponizing Brazil's expansive 'transphobia' laws to punish peaceful expression is a profound violation of freedom of speech."

Borges said, "I commented on the issue because I care about the truth and protecting women. No one should ever fear going to prison for recognizing biological reality. I hope that my case can serve as a turning point in fighting censorship in Brazil. Brazilians deserve the freedom to speak openly without punishment."

Brazil's highest court, ever since a politicized ruling in 2019, has imposed a legal framework not recognized by its Congress, that "homophobia" and "transphobia" equal the crime of racism.

It's become a mantra in Brazil, the organization reported, with social media influencer Isabella Cepa last year facing investigations for her online post about gender ideology.

Further, Nine Borges (not related to Isadora Borges) also is being investigated for "transphobia" for posting an Instagram video drawing attention to concerns about the financing and influence of pro-LGBT organizations in Brazil.

And a pastor, Douglas Baptista, faced charges for writing a book with a Christian perspective on human sexuality. ADF International said it also represents five Brazilian legislators before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in a fight over government violations of their free speech.

Isadora Borges, 34, is a veterinary student from Paraiba.

<https://www wnd com/2026/02/student-facing-10-years-jail-stating-scientific-fact/>

Virginia Begins Criminalizing Opposition to Islam

Sun, 15 Feb 2026 12:30 PM PST by Daniel Greenfield



Senator Saddam claims that Virginia is in the middle of an 'Islamophobia' crisis. The second Muslim selected for the state senate, after Ghazala Hashmi, who is now acting as Virginia's Lt. Governor, the Bangladeshi immigrant, from a country where non-Muslims are being murdered in the streets, has made complaining about 'Islamophobia' in his new home his signature issue.

Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim's first priority has been a bill to define 'Islamophobia'. The most notable thing about his bill SB 624 'Assault and battery; definition of "Islamophobia", penalty' is how completely unnecessary it is. Virginia already has multiple layers of hate crimes enhancements for assaults motivated by race, ethnicity and religion. During Gov. Glenn Youngkin's term, the legislature has already passed SB 7 (Senate Bill 7) and its counterpart enhancing the assault charge for anyone who "intentionally selects the person against whom a simple assault is committed because of his race, religious conviction, gender, disability, gender identity, sexual orientation, color, or ethnic or national origin."

That should cover Islam and Muslims. And yet Sen. Saddam introduced a 3 page bill with 10 clauses in its first section a whole lot of whom do nothing more than add (including Islam) where it isn't remotely needed or useful. For example "because of his race, religious conviction (including Islam), gender, disability, gender identity" or "because of his race, religious conviction (including Islam)". Islam appears to be the only religion being singled out this way.

Why provide Islam with this privileged status? Because it makes Islam distinct, which is a step towards making it superior, and making Islam distinct and superior is the religious mission of all believing Muslims.

This isn't about making sure that attacks on Muslims are prosecuted, but about providing Islam with special privileges.

And it's about using supposed crimes against Muslims as bait for Islamophobia indoctrination. The Islamophobia 'switch' in SB 624 comes after the 'bait' about assaults. First, the bill sets out a definition of 'Islamophobia' which transforms a term created by Islamists seeking to impose their religion on society into an official legal term.

Notably, the definition in SB624 states that "Islamophobia means malicious prejudice or hatred directed toward Islam or Muslims." This distinction is legally significant as 'prejudice' towards Islam distinct from prejudice towards Muslims. For example, in the UK burning a Koran has been prosecuted as a form of hate towards Islam. And that opens the door to blasphemy law.

Having malicious prejudice towards Muslims is perfectly sufficient in prosecuting an assault or a case of discrimination. Islam however is a religion and just like any religion or any other belief system, people have the right to be opposed to it as long as they don't mistreat others.

The use of “Islam or Muslims” embeds the first stage of blasphemy law inside Virginia law.

But that’s the whole reason why ‘Islamophobia’ was manufactured as a political term. Unlike ‘racism’ or ‘antisemitism’, it’s not hatred towards a group, but towards an ideological abstraction. ‘Islamophobia’ legislation isn’t protecting persecuted individuals, but the status of an ideology. And those forms of ‘protection’ invariably turn out to ban ‘blasphemy’ against Islam by censoring cartoons, art (at least one art professor was fired for showing paintings of Mohammed in class) and any public criticism of the Islamic persecution of women, minorities and all non-Muslims.

SB 624 claims that it’s not trying to “regulate or restrict any speech, expression, or belief”, but by including a definition of ‘Islamophobia’ that mentions ‘Islam’ and puts it first, it’s laying the groundwork for doing exactly that.

Compare this to HB 2261 under Gov. Youngkin, which Islamist and leftist groups urgently opposed, which defined antisemitism and which did not mention ‘Judaism’, but rather defined it as a “hatred toward Jews and includes rhetorical and physical manifestations of hostility or hatred that may be directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals or their property, the Jewish community, or Jewish institutions and religious facilities.” In all of these cases, antisemitism involved hatred against Jews, synagogues or other facilities, not ‘Judaism’.

Why doesn’t Sen. Saddam’s ‘Islamophobia’ bill use that as a model? Because it’s not about protecting Muslims from violence, but about imposing Islam as a legal concept on Virginia.

The object of SB 624 and every effort to define ‘Islamophobia’ isn’t Muslims, it’s Islam. The pretense that Muslims are facing violence and need a new bill to protect them falls apart because the very definition is aimed at protecting ‘Islam’, the religion, not the individuals.

Virginia’s extensive hate crime codes already amply protect Muslims from anything and everything. The only ‘gap’, from the Islamist perspective, is the status of Islam.

The ‘Islamophobia’ definition of SB 624 gives a distinct and special status to Islam, it defines Islam as an entity that must be protected by the government and the law enforcement agencies whom the bill obligates to use this definition of ‘Islamophobia’ when prosecuting hate crimes. And that paves the way for criminalizing Koran defacement and Mohammed paintings.

It’s telling that Virginia’s highest profile ‘Islamophobia’ case was a lie. And it happened in Fairfax County, which is represented by Sen. Saddam Azlan Salim. Darwin Martinez Torres, an illegal alien MS-13 gang member, [killed Nabra Hassanen, a Muslim teenage girl](#), and rather than blaming Fairfax’s sanctuary policies that enabled Torres to be there roaming the streets, Islamist groups and their radical allies falsely blamed ‘Islamophobia’ and intimidated local authorities, including prosecutors, into propping up their hoax. Police initially [correctly stated](#) that it was road rage before being forced to spread the lie that it had been motivated by Islam.

The evidence that it was a ‘hate crime’?

In the words of a Washington Post reporter “hitting a 17-year-old girl with a bat and dumping her body in a pond would be an act born of hate.” Perhaps, but not of Muslims or of Islam.

Nabra Hassanen’s murder was used to promote the myth that there was an ‘Islamophobia’ crisis in Virginia and SB 624 is the next stage in which Islamists profit by creating a distinct legal status for Islam. That is how one lie about ‘Islamophobia’ becomes a state law.

[Daniel Greenfield is a Shillman Journalism Fellow at the David Horowitz Freedom Center. This article previously appeared at the Center's Front Page Magazine.](#)

<https://bkdkvk-zgpvh.campaign-view.com/ua/viewinbrowser>



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 mortsмо@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