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US sends over 50 fighter jets to Middle East in military buildup against Iran - report

The American military buildup comes amid indirect negotiations with Iranian officials, in which "progress was made" on Tuesday in Geneva, a US official told The Post.

By **AMICHAEL STEIN, JERUSALEM POST STAFF** FEBRUARY 17, 2026 20:11



An F-35 pilot prepares for take off from the Vermont Air National Guard Base with the flag of the United States, in South Burlington, Vermont, US, May 22, 2020(photo credit: US AIR NATIONAL GUARD/MISS JULIE M. SHEA/HANDOUT VIA REUTERS)

The United States military has moved over 50 fighter jets to the [Middle East](#) in the last 24 hours as part of its buildup of air and naval assets near Iran, *Axios* reported on Tuesday, citing a US official.

A host of F-16, F-22, and F-35 jets were observed heading to the Middle East by independent flight trackers.

The American military buildup comes amid [indirect](#)

[negotiations](#) with Iranian officials, focusing on Iran's nuclear program.

US official: Iran to send detailed nuclear proposal in next two weeks

A US official told *The Jerusalem Post* that progress was made in talks held in Geneva earlier on Tuesday, stressing that many details "still need to be discussed."

The official said Iran relayed that it would make detailed proposals in the next two weeks to close gaps with the US. "The Iranians said they would come back in the next two weeks with detailed proposals to address some of the

open gaps in our positions," the official told the Post.

"There were good meetings, but the gaps are still wide. There's still a lot of work to be done to reach an agreement."

The top deck of US Navy's USS Gerald R. Ford aircraft carrier, with fighter jets, December 1, 2025; illustrative. (credit: Seaman Abigail Reyes/US Navy/Handout via REUTERS)

US sends massive aircraft carriers to Middle East

Last week, American media outlets reported that the US will [send its largest aircraft carrier](#), the *USS Gerald R. Ford*, to bolster its forces in the Middle East ahead of an anticipated clash with Iranian forces.

The *USS Gerald R. Ford* and its escort ships had previously been deployed in the Caribbean and, according to four anonymous US officials, were informed of their new destination on Thursday.

The [USS Abraham Lincoln](#), as well as other notable air and naval assets, were already deployed to the area in January.

Reuters contributed to this report.

<https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-886998>



Iranian officials moving to consolidate power for a post-Khameini era - report

The Institute for the Study of War assessed that, since June 2025, factions within the Iranian regime are working to secure positions of influence to shape future policies.

By **DANIELLE GREYMAN-KENNARD** FEBRUARY 17, 2026 20:10



A protestor burns an image of Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of Iran during a protest outside the Iranian Embassy on January 14, 2026 in London, England.(photo credit: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images)

Iranian Parliament speaker [Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf](#) and the Iranian Defense Council Secretary [Ali Shamkhani](#) are attempting to consolidate their power to defend their positions in a [post-Khamenei Iran](#), according to an analysis published Monday by the Institute for the Study of War.

The institute assessed that different factions within the Iranian regime are now working to secure positions of influence to shape the regime's future policies, a conclusion mirrored by Dr.

Hamidreza Azizi, a visiting fellow at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs in Berlin.

Attempts to consolidate power began shortly after the 12 Day War in June, when the regime established the [Defense Council](#). The council operates independently of the Supreme National Security Council, "at the insistence" of Ghalibaf, according to Iranian regime-affiliated analysts. The institute assessed that such a move was part of a pattern of Ghalibaf restructuring the decision-making apparatus since the war with Israel.



Iranian Parliament Speaker Mohammad-Bagher Ghalibaf looks on as parliament members chant in support of the IRGC while wearing military uniforms in Tehran, Iran, February 1, 2026. (credit: Hamed Malekpour/Islamic consultative assembly news agency/WANA/Handout via REUTERS)

Information about the council's independence has been largely suppressed to avoid signaling internal friction, according to the assessment based on Azizi's analysis.

Roger Macmillan, a former director of the Persian diaspora site Iran International and an expert in military affairs, told The Post that while the move wasn't quite the same as a full defection, it is a "real sign of a break" within the regime.

"It's an indication of regime stability," he continued, describing the news as "huge."

Information released by Iranian officials

More interesting to Macmillan was the knowledge that much of the information from the institute's analysis had been released by officials affiliated with Shamkhani. With the official being seen by many as "an internal-king maker within the regime," Macmillan suggested he was looking to "make himself out as the good guy" to keep his resources from Western sanctions.

"These guys are survivors, that's what they do," he said. "If the regime is going to fail, they will go for personal protection."

Annika Ganzeveld, the Middle East Portfolio Manager for the Critical Threats Project at the American Enterprise Institute, told The Post that she thought the move was less about regime change and more about preparing for Khamenei's inevitable death.

Ganzeveld said it became increasingly apparent during the 12-Day War in June, when Khamenei disappeared from much of his public duties and reduced his contact with regime officials, that it was necessary for senior members to secure a place under future leadership. Since then, she explained, various factions have been "vying for influence."

Tehran's elite have suspected that Khamenei would give Ghalibaf, a former Revolutionary Guards general, a more senior role in the regime, according to a November article from Iranian diaspora site Iran International. The upward trajectory of his position was made clear after the June war, when he was given a more senior role in the country's war efforts after much of the regime's top staff were killed in Israeli strikes.

Since the domestic protests in Iran fueled further tensions with the US, as the regime pointed blame at Israel and the Trump administration for the demonstrations over the country's economic crisis, Ghalibaf has been outspoken in his support for military action. Earlier this month, Ghalibaf led chants of "Death to America! Death to Israel!" in the Iranian parliament, dressed in the uniform of the IRGC. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-886999>

Khamenei's threat: Iran will hit US Navy so hard it 'cannot get up again'

Iran's supreme leader threatened US military power, rejected limits on Iran's missile program, and criticized Washington after US aircraft carriers were sent to the region.

By **JAMES GENN** FEBRUARY 17, 2026 14:46 Updated: FEBRUARY 17, 2026 20:59



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei waves during a meeting in Tehran, Iran, February 17, 2026. (photo credit: Office of the Iranian Supreme Leader/WANA (West Asia News Agency)/Handout via REUTERS)

Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei threatened the US military, saying that the "strongest military force may be struck so hard that it cannot get up again," in a post on X/Twitter on Tuesday.

In reacting to the US sending aircraft carriers to the region, he wrote, "Of course, a warship is a dangerous piece

of military hardware. However, more dangerous than that warship is the weapon that can send that warship to the bottom of the sea."

Trump has said that the US has not been able to "eliminate the Islamic Republic," he added, calling it a "good confession" and claiming that US President Donald Trump "will not be able to do this."

Khamenei: 'Corrupt' US's decline signaled by its 'irrationality'

"A sign of the decline of the corrupt, oppressive US empire is its irrationality, such as interfering in our country's internal affairs," he wrote.

"They say, 'limit your missiles to this range.' What's that to do with you? Without deterrent weaponry, a country will be crushed by the enemy," Khamenei stated, denying that Iran would give up its ballistic missile capabilities.



Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei speaks during a meeting in Tehran, Iran, February 17, 2026. (credit: Office of the Iranian Supreme Leader/WANA (West Asia News Agency)/Handout via REUTERS)

Khamenei also commented on Iran's nuclear ambitions.

"Peaceful nuclear energy is not for war; it is for running the country - for agriculture, for treatment and healthcare, and for everything that depends on energy. This is among the nation's rights. What does it have to do with you Americans?" he commented.

"The fact that nuclear energy is our undeniable right has also been included in the guidelines of the International Atomic Energy Agency. That is, all countries have the right to own nuclear and enrichment installations. This is among a nation's rights. Why does the US interfere?" he added. [https://www.jpost.com/middle-](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-886964)

[east/iran-news/article-886964](https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-886964)

Iran issues nuclear gambit in US talks, ignoring reality of 2025 strikes, mass protests - analysis



Two critical events have changed everything since 2025, and the Islamic Republic appears dedicated to living in an alternate reality in which those events have not transpired.

By **YONAH JEREMY BOB** FEBRUARY 17, 2026
20:18 Updated: FEBRUARY 17, 2026 20:25

An anti-US mural on a building in Tehran, Iran, February 17, 2026 (photo credit: MAJID ASGARIPOUR/WANA (WEST ASIA NEWS AGENCY) VIA REUTERS)

Iran must have missed the memo.

In mid-2025, if it had offered Washington a complete freeze in uranium nuclear enrichment for three years and transporting its highly enriched uranium out of the country in exchange for lifting financial sanctions, US President Donald Trump probably would have jumped at the opportunity, ignoring Israeli objections.

This seems to be what Iran is offering the US now, including at Tuesday's talks in Geneva. But the world is not the same as it was in mid-2025.

Most importantly, Iran is much weaker, and its leverage is gone.

Two critical events have changed everything, and the Islamic Republic appears dedicated to living in an alternate reality in which those events have not transpired.



People gather near a missile on display during the 47th anniversary of the Islamic Revolution in Tehran, Iran February 11, 2026 (credit: MAJID ASGARIPOUR/WANA (WEST ASIA NEWS AGENCY) VIA REUTERS)

First, in June 2025, Israel and the US destroyed most of Tehran's operational nuclear program, including not only three major nuclear sites, but dozens of others, and also killed most of Iran's top nuclear scientists. In that same operation, the IDF destroyed around half of the ayatollah's ballistic missile apparatus, the vast majority of its radar and anti-aircraft defenses, and blew up dozens of its top commanders and some of its key IRGC bases.

Put bluntly, [Iran](#) hasn't been able to enrich uranium now for eight months, and there are no signs it will be able to in the near future.

If all it is giving away is what the US and Israel already achieved by the June 2025 strikes, what is it giving?

If it would take a few years to rebuild enough centrifuges to enrich uranium in any meaningful volume, then a deal seems more like just a public relations excuse, which Iran can use domestically for the next few years for why it has no nuclear program back yet.

By destroying so much of Tehran's other sources of threats and power, Jerusalem and Washington also showed that it could be done, and potentially without the catastrophic costs which many had worried the Islamic Republic could impose on anyone who might dare to attack it.

If Trump was afraid to attack before because of the potential cost and was willing to take a deal short of eliminating Iran's nuclear program, why would the ayatollahs think the US president would make the same calculation now when it seems like the cost of attacking is much lower?

Iranian protests weaken regime, grant US attack legitimacy

And all of that is only one event that changed the balance of power.

Starting on December 28, the largest protests the ayatollahs have ever faced erupted, leading them to order the IRGC and the Basij to kill somewhere between 5,000 and 30,000 demonstrators.

These protests and the crackdown have weakened the regime in a myriad of ways and granted Trump far more legitimacy for [attacking Iran](#).

Whatever his true agenda might be, he can add the claim that he had to intervene to prevent a larger genocide by the regime against its own people.

So how could Iran possibly ignore these new realities? Does it not realize that without a deal, Trump could decide to topple the regime, or at a minimum, re-bomb its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities?

Most analysts seem to believe that those Iranian leaders still alive who are running the regime, and most of the top leaders from mid-2025 other than Supreme Leader [Ayatollah Ali Khamenei](#) were killed during that war, have entered a fanatical phase where they deny how badly their decades of meticulous strategy has crumbled.

Unable to accept how far they have fallen, they are said to try to grasp on to the situation before June 2025 as if nothing has changed,

Of course, it is still possible that they will offer Trump enough on the nuclear program, such as an extended nuclear enrichment freeze followed by a consortium for uranium enrichment occurring outside of Iran, which Tehran would participate in, and possibly some private unofficial commitments on ballistic missile limits, in order to avoid war.

But absent such a shift by Khamenei or a stunning surrender by Trump of his leverage, Iran seems to be running headfirst into a major conflagration. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-887000>

Iran's FM says 'guiding principles' agreed on with US after 2nd round of nuclear talks

After Trump and Khamenei traded threats, Araghchi calls Geneva talks 'constructive'; Iran insists dialogue will only cover nuclear program, sanctions, as it holds Gulf exercise

By [Agencies](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 5:02 pm



Iranians walk past an anti-US billboard installed on a building on Enqelab Square in Tehran on February 17, 2026. (ATTA KENARE / AFP)

Iran and the United States held a second round of talks over Iran's nuclear program in Geneva on Tuesday, with Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi saying afterward that an understanding had been reached on the main "guiding principles" but work still needed to be done. The talks were being mediated by Oman, which hosted the first round in Muscat on February 6. The negotiations commenced amid a significant US military buildup in the region, which Trump has repeatedly [threatened](#) to use, first

over a deadly crackdown on protesters last month and then more recently over Tehran's nuclear program.

The progress does not mean an agreement will be reached soon, but the path has started, Araghchi told Iranian media after the talks concluded. He called the talks "constructive" but added that no date has been set for a third round of negotiations.

"Ultimately, we were able to reach broad agreement on a set of guiding principles, based on which we will move forward and begin working on the text of a potential agreement," Araghchi told state TV.

"It was agreed that both sides would work further on draft texts for a potential agreement, after which the drafts would be exchanged, and a date for a third round would be set," he said.

He also called on Washington to immediately desist from threatening the use of force against Iran.

Araghchi's optimistic tone following the talks came in stark contrast to threats exchanged earlier between US

President Donald Trump and Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi delivers a speech during a session of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, on the sideline of a second round of US-Iranian talks nuclear talks, in Geneva, Switzerland, on February 17, 2026. (Valentin Flauraud / AFP)



"I don't think they want the consequences of not making a deal," Trump told reporters aboard Air Force One ahead of the talks. Days earlier, Trump said regime change in Iran "would be the best thing that could happen."

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Khamenei snapped back, saying Trump would not succeed in destroying the Islamic Republic, and threatening to sink a US warship deployed in the Gulf.

"In one of his recent speeches, the US president said that for 47 years, America has not succeeded in destroying the Islamic Republic... I tell you: You will not succeed either," said Khamenei in a speech Tuesday.

"We constantly hear that [the US] has sent a warship toward Iran. A warship is certainly a dangerous weapon, but even more dangerous is the weapon capable of sinking it," Khamenei declared.

The USS Abraham Lincoln is in the region along with a strike group that includes guided-missile destroyers. A [second](#) aircraft carrier, the USS Gerald R. Ford, is also on its way to the region from the Atlantic Ocean, and is expected to arrive in a number of weeks.

Iran closed the Strait of Hormuz for several hours Tuesday as its military held live fire military exercises. Iran also held a live fire drill in the Strait of Hormuz several weeks ago but did not announce closures.



This handout picture provided by the office of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei shows him during an address in Tehran on February 17, 2026. (Handout / KHAMENEI.IR / AFP) Representing Washington in the talks with Araghchi were Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff and the US president's son-in-law Jared Kushner.

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On Monday, Araghchi met with his Omani counterpart Badr Albusaidi in Geneva to discuss his country's position "regarding nuclear issues and sanctions relief," and stressed Tehran's "seriousness in using result-oriented diplomacy to secure

the legitimate interests and rights of the Iranian people" and preserve peace in the region, according to a ministry statement.

Araghchi also [held a meeting](#) with Rafael Grossi, head of the United Nations nuclear watchdog, which the diplomat said covered "deep technical discussions" accompanied by nuclear experts. It was the first meeting between Tehran and the International Atomic Energy Agency chief since Iran suspended all cooperation with the agency following a 12-day war with Israel in June.

Iran has insisted that the discussions with the US be limited to the nuclear issue, though Washington has previously pushed for other topics to be discussed, including Tehran's ballistic missiles program and its support for terror groups in the region, including Hamas in Gaza, Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Key to the chance of agreement, a senior Iranian official said Tuesday, was the US's seriousness about [lifting sanctions](#), and the avoidance of "unrealistic" demands, such as those relating to missiles and proxy groups.



A cleric talks on his phone as he walks in front of domestically-built missiles during an annual rally marking 1979 Islamic Revolution at the Azadi, or Freedom, square in Tehran, Iran, February 11, 2026. (AP Photo/Vahid Salemi)

The official, who declined to be named, claimed Tehran is coming to the negotiating table with "genuine and constructive proposals."

Echoing the official's emphasis on sanctions relief as the key to an agreement, Iran's foreign ministry spokesman said that "sanctions lifting is part and parcel of any deal on the nuclear issue."

Iran has faced crippling international sanctions for decades, and such measures have ramped up in recent years, contributing to the near-collapse of the Iranian economy. Iran, whose leaders are sworn to destroy Israel, denies seeking to acquire nuclear weapons, but has enriched uranium to levels that have no peaceful application, obstructed international inspectors from checking its nuclear facilities, and expanded its ballistic missile capabilities.



People walk across a large banner on the street depicting the US and Israeli flags defaced with footprints during a rally marking the 47th anniversary of the 1979 Islamic revolution, in Tehran on February 11, 2026 (AFP)

Last week, after returning from a meeting with Trump at the White House, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu [said](#) that any agreement with Iran must cover "not only the nuclear issue, but also ballistic missiles and Iran's regional proxies."

The premier expressed "general skepticism about the possibility of reaching any agreement with Iran," but said Trump believes the Iranians could be forced into "a good deal."

The US is also hosting talks between envoys from Russia and

Ukraine in Geneva on Tuesday and Wednesday, days ahead of the fourth anniversary of the all-out Russian invasion of its neighbor. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/irans-fm-says-guiding-principles-agreed-on-with-us-after-2nd-round-of-nuclear-talks/>

Vance: Nuclear talks showed some progress, but Iran won't acknowledge Trump's red lines

Israeli officials said to think negotiations likely doomed, US president determined to strike, as flight trackers show dozens of American fighter jets move toward Mideast in past day

By [Jacob Magid](#)

and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 12:53 am



US Vice President JD Vance speaks on Fox News, February 17, 2026. (Screen capture: Fox News)

US Vice President JD Vance said some progress was made in the second round of nuclear talks with Tehran in Geneva on Tuesday, even as Hebrew media said Israeli officials think the indirect talks are likely doomed and that US President Donald Trump and his close advisers seek to strike Iran.

“In some ways it went well. They agreed to meet afterward,” Vance told Fox News of the Geneva round. “But in other ways, it was very clear that the president has set some red lines that the Iranians are not yet willing to actually acknowledge and work through.”

Among those red lines is that Iran must not obtain a nuclear weapon, said Vance, arguing that a nuclear Islamic Republic would lead to an arms race across the world that would be dangerous for America. While Iran claims it is not seeking nuclear arms, “there a number of things that make it clear that they are interested in acquiring a nuclear weapons,” said Vance.

“The president of the United States is very much trying to find a solution here, whether it’s through diplomatic options or through another option, that means the Iranians cannot have a nuclear weapon,” Vance said.

“We’re going to keep on working it, but of course, the president reserves the ability to say when he thinks that diplomacy has reached its natural end,” he said. “We hope we don’t get to that point, but if we do, that, will be the president’s call.”

A US official, who declined to be identified, said Iran agreed Tuesday to make detailed proposals in the next two weeks to close gaps in the talks.

“Progress was made, but there are still a lot of details to discuss,” said the official. “The Iranians said they would come back in the next two weeks with detailed proposals to address some of the open gaps in our positions.”

The comments came after Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi called the Geneva talks “constructive” and [said](#) an understanding was reached on “guiding principles.”

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Referring to Araghchi’s upbeat assessment, a senior Israeli official quoted by Channel 13 news said that “our impression is that it’s a smokescreen” and that “the odds for a deal are low.”

A security official was also quoted by the network as saying it was “very soon” to declare the US and Iran had reached an agreement on curtailing the Islamic Republic’s nuclear program.



Iran’s Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi delivers a speech during a session of the United Nations Conference on Disarmament, on the sideline of a second round of US-Iranian talks nuclear talks, in Geneva, Switzerland, on February 17, 2026. (Valentin Flauraud / AFP)

Meanwhile, Channel 12 news said in an unsourced report that Israel was preparing for the talks to collapse and that the White House gave Israel the impression that further progress in the negotiations was unlikely because the Iranians would not agree to Trump’s demands.

According to the network, Israeli officials assess that Trump and other top American officials want to attack Iran, and that the US president needs to

show he has let the negotiations run their course in order lend legitimacy to a potential attack.

High-level Israeli consultations seek to prepare for the possibility that Iran will launch a preemptive strike, and reflect an understanding that Israel will find itself operating alongside the US in case Trump decides to attack Iran, Channel 12 said.

US sends dozens of fighter jets to region, flight trackers show

The negotiations began in Oman’s capital Muscat earlier this month amid a significant US military buildup in the region, which Trump has repeatedly threatened to use, first over Iran’s deadly crackdown on protesters last month and more recently over its nuclear program.

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On Tuesday, as the US and Iranian negotiators met for the second time, open-source flight tracking data showed showed that the US military had moved dozens of fighter jets toward the Middle East over the past day.

The aircraft included F-22, F-35, and F-16 jets. Several refuelers were also spotted on the move, according to social media accounts dedicated to tracking military flights.

A US official also confirmed to the [Axios](#) news site that more than 50 fighter jets were moved to the region in the past 24 hours.

Trump on Friday said regime change in Iran “would be the best thing that could happen” and confirmed sending a second aircraft carrier to the region “in case we don’t make a deal.” Ahead of the talks on Tuesday, he told reporters aboard Air Force One: “I don’t think they want the consequences of not making a deal.”

Iran’s Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei retorted that “A warship is certainly a dangerous weapon, but even more dangerous is the weapon capable of sinking it.”

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Washington has demanded Iran cease enrichment activities and relinquish its stockpile of uranium enriched to up to 60% fissile purity, a small step away from the 90% that is considered weapons grade.

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said in an interview published Tuesday that Tehran is open to “verification” that it is not seeking an atomic weapon, but insisted that it has the right its nuclear program for peaceful purposes. “We are absolutely not seeking nuclear weapons,” said Pezeshkian, citing Khamenei’s 2003 religious ruling that nuclear weapons were forbidden in Islam. “If anyone wants to verify this, we are open to such verification to take place.”

Iran whose leaders are sworn to Israel’s destruction, consistently denies seeking nuclear weapons, but has enriched uranium to levels with no peaceful application, obstructed international inspectors from checking its nuclear facilities and expanded its ballistic missile capabilities.

Emanuel Fabian and agencies contributed to this report.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/vance-nuclear-talks-showed-some-progress-but-iran-wont-acknowledge-trumps-red-lines/>

Hezbollah rejects Lebanese government’s four-month plan for phase 2 of disarmament

Hezbollah lawmaker says terror group ‘cannot be lenient’ on matter after its leader decries ‘major mistake’ that ‘serves the goals of Israeli aggression’

By [Agencies](#) and [Emanuel Fabian](#)

17 February 2026, 9:37 pm



A Hezbollah flag flutters above the rubble of a building that was hit in January by an Israeli strike in the southern Lebanese village of Qannarit, on February 16, 2026. (Joseph EID / AFP)

The Iran-backed Hezbollah terror group rejected on Tuesday the Lebanese government’s decision to grant the army at least four months to advance the second phase of a nationwide disarmament plan, saying it would not accept what it sees as a move serving Israel.

Lebanon’s government last year committed to disarming Hezbollah, which was badly weakened in a recent war with Israel, and tasked the army with drawing up a plan to do so.

The military announced last month that it had completed the first phase of the plan, covering the area between the Litani River and the Israeli border, about 30 kilometers (20 miles) farther south. Promoted: Stand with Us, VIP MissionKeep Watching

The second phase concerns the area between the Litani and the Awali rivers, around 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of Beirut.

Lebanon’s Information Minister Paul Morcos said during a press conference late on Monday after a cabinet meeting that the government had taken note of the army’s monthly report on its arms control plan that includes restricting weapons in areas north of the Litani River up to the Awali River in Sidon, and granted it four months.

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“The required time frame is four months, renewable depending on available capabilities, Israeli attacks and field obstacles,” he said.



Lebanese army vehicles secure the street as residents gather during a visit by Lebanon's prime minister to the heavily-damaged southern village of Kafr Kila, near the border with Israel on February 8, 2026. (Rabih DAHER / AFP)

Hezbollah lawmaker Hassan Fadlallah on Tuesday said, “We cannot be lenient,” signalling the group’s rejection of the timeline and the broader approach to the issue of its weapons.

The comment came after Hezbollah Secretary-General Sheikh Naim Qassem said in a speech on Monday that “what the Lebanese government is doing by focusing on disarmament is a major mistake because this issue serves the goals of Israeli aggression.”



Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem, current leader of the Lebanese Shiite movement Hezbollah, addresses mourners through a screen in a televised address during a ceremony marking the first anniversary of Israel's assassination of the group's longtime leader Hassan Nasrallah and other group leaders, in the town of Deir Qanoun al-Nahr near Tyre in southern Lebanon on September 27, 2025. (Mahmoud ZAYYAT / AFP)

Hezbollah has rejected the disarmament effort as a misstep while Israel continues to target Lebanon, and Shiite ministers walked out of the cabinet session that made the decision last year in protest.

Israel, which accuses Hezbollah of rearming, has criticized the army’s progress as insufficient, and has kept up regular strikes on Lebanon despite a November 2024 ceasefire that

sought to end more than a year of hostilities with the Iran-backed terror group, citing Hezbollah violations of the truce’s terms.

Israel has also kept troops in five south Lebanon areas it deems strategic, while Hezbollah has rejected calls to surrender its weapons north of the Litani.



IDF soldiers observe southern Lebanon from a lookout point near the border, January 25, 2026. (Ayal Margolin/Flash90)

Israeli officials say any disarmament plan must be fully and effectively implemented, especially in areas close to the border, and that continued Hezbollah terror activity constitutes a violation of relevant international resolutions.

While visiting Beirut on Monday, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier urged Lebanon to keep up the disarmament of Hezbollah, saying it would help ensure the withdrawal of the IDF from Lebanese territory, during a press conference with his Lebanese counterpart, Joseph Aoun.

Aoun said Lebanon has asked Germany to “demand the Israeli side implement the ceasefire agreement and withdraw from the territories it occupies.”

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He also asked Germany to assist the Lebanese army and to play a “key role” after the departure of United Nations observers, whose mandate expires this year.

IDF says Sunday strike killed 2 Islamic Jihad operatives crossing from Lebanon to Syria

Meanwhile, on Tuesday, the military announced that two Palestinian Islamic Jihad operatives who were en route to crossing the border from Lebanon into Syria on Sunday night were killed in an airstrike.

The strike took place near the village of Majdal Anjar, which is located in Lebanon’s eastern Beqaa Valley, on a road leading from Beirut to Damascus, some 40 kilometers (nearly 25 miles) north of Israel’s border.

According to Lebanon’s health ministry, the [strike](#) killed four.

The IDF said it targeted the Islamic Jihad operatives while they were attempting to cross the Syrian border, “after in recent months they had been working to advance terror activities against the State of Israel from Lebanese territory.”

“The terrorists’ actions posed an immediate threat to the citizens of the State of Israel and to IDF troops operating in the Syrian arena,” the army added.

The military also issued footage of the strike.

While Israel regularly launches strikes in Lebanon against Hezbollah operatives and infrastructure, attacks on the allied Gaza Strip-based Islamic Jihad are rarer.

Islamic Jihad — which has a significant presence in both Lebanon and Syria — carried out the October 7, 2023, terror onslaught alongside Hamas from the Gaza Strip, and was involved in numerous attacks on Israel from Lebanon alongside Hezbollah.

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/hezbollah-rejects-lebanese-governments-four-month-plan-for-phase-2-of-disarmament/>

Smotrich announces intention to abolish Oslo Accords, dismantle PA during next term

Smotrich suggested the dismantling of the PA in favor of creating a new military administration to govern the area, with the ultimate aim of applying full Israeli sovereignty over the region.

By **AVRAHAM BLOCH, JERUSALEM POST STAFF** FEBRUARY 17, 2026 23:37 Updated: FEBRUARY 18, 2026 00:26



Minister of Finance and Head of the Religious Zionist Party Bezael Smotrich leads a faction meeting at the Knesset, the Israeli parliament in Jerusalem, February 16, 2026. (photo credit: YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90)

Finance Minister Bezael Smotrich announced that one of his goals for his next government term is to abolish the Oslo Accords, a move he believes would lead to the dismantling of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

The announcement was made during a Tuesday conference with West Bank settlement leaders.

"I am now presenting to you one of our goals for the next term: the destruction of the idea of an Arab terror state, the cancellation of the cursed Oslo Accords, and moving onto the path of sovereignty," Smotrich said at the conference.

In his statement, Smotrich suggested the dismantling of the PA in favor of creating a new military administration to govern the area, with the ultimate aim of applying full [Israeli sovereignty](#) over the region.

He additionally highlighted additional goals, including encouraging Jewish emigration to the West Bank and [Gaza Strip](#), as well as reintroducing Israeli military rule to the Gaza Strip.



Finance Minister Bezael Smotrich at a Religious Zionist Party meeting in the Knesset, December 1, 2025; illustrative. (credit: CHAIM GOLDBERG/FLASH90)

Government reopens Area C land registration

The announcement came two days after the government approved a move put forward by Smotrich, Justice Minister Yariv Levin, and Defense Minister Israel Katz to reopen land registration in Area C of the West Bank for Jewish Israelis.

A statement regarding the policy outlined that it would make it simpler for the government and individuals to acquire land in the area with fewer bureaucratic hurdles, which previously led to long delays for proposed projects in Area C.

Katz said of the policy that "the renewal of settling land in Judea and Samaria is an essential security and governance measure designed to ensure control, enforcement, and full freedom of action for the State of Israel in the area."

"For the first time since the Six Day War, we are restoring order and governance in the management of land in Judea and Samaria," Smotrich stated. "Regulating settling land prevents disputes, creates legal certainty, blocks unilateral steps, and enables lawful and responsible development."

Yonah Jeremy Bob contributed to this report.

Ultra-Orthodox rioters to remain in custody after chasing female IDF soldiers, clashing with police

The suspects' arrests were extended until Wednesday, and one additional suspect, aged 12, was granted conditional release, the statement added.

By [JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#) FEBRUARY 17, 2026 19:19 Updated: FEBRUARY 17, 2026 19:53



Ultra-Orthodox Jewish men clash with police following an assault on two female Israeli soldiers in Bnei Brak, central Israel, February 15, 2026. (photo credit: FLASH90)

Israel Police extended the detention of four suspects arrested during Sunday's haredi riots, according to a Tuesday statement.

The suspects' arrests were extended until Wednesday, and one additional suspect, aged 12, was granted conditional release, the statement added.

Also on Tuesday, the police presented new tefillin and a new siddur (prayer book) to an officer

whose tefillin, siddur, and cell phone were destroyed during the Sunday riots when his motorcycle was set on fire. He was also presented with a new tallit (prayer shawl).

The police department also stated that it will issue a replacement vehicle and a new cell phone.

Israel Police rescue two female IDF soldiers chased by ultra-Orthodox mob in Bnei Brak

Two female soldiers were rescued from a haredi (ultra-Orthodox) mob in [Bnei Brak](#) by Israel Police, police said in a Sunday afternoon statement.

The police officer's destroyed tefillin are seen in this video from the haredi riots in Bnei Brak on February 15, 2026 (CREDIT: ISRAEL POLICE SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT).

"A report was received about a gathering of a small group of lawbreakers on Hagai Street in Bnei Brak, who had surrounded two female soldiers after they arrived to conduct a welfare activity as part of their service in the IDF," the police said.

Officers from the Bnei Brak and Ramat Gan stations arrived on scene to escort the soldiers to safety, police said, noting that as forces arrived on scene, the mob began "confronting the officers and throwing trash bins into the path of the patrol vehicle."

According to footage circulating on social media, the mob flipped over a car during its chase, and continued to follow the soldiers as police escorted them further away and around a corner to safety.

"Police are working to restore public order in Bnei Brak using various measures," a police statement read, adding that some 26 rioters were arrested. Reports in Israeli media suggested a police helicopter was en route to the scene.

Three police officers sustained minor head injuries while confronting rioters and were evacuated to the Sheba Medical Center in [Ramat Gan](#), police said.

Miriam Sela-Eitam and Tobias Siegal contributed to this report.

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/crime-in-israel/article-886992>

EU in worst crisis ever – Fico

The bloc's troubles go beyond economic indicators and reflect a lack of clear vision in Brussels, according to the Slovak prime minister

17 Feb, 2026 21:02



Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico © Simona Granati / Corbis/Corbis via Getty Images

The EU is facing the deepest crisis in its history, with economic problems compounded by a lack of leadership and long-term vision in Brussels, Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico has warned.

Fico made the remarks on Tuesday while speaking at a conference on affordable rental housing in country's capital Bratislava, saying the difficulties confronting ordinary Europeans are part of a wider malaise affecting the entire bloc.

"The European Union has never been in such a crisis as it is now," Fico said, adding that the situation is "not only about economic indicators, but also about leadership and vision."

Without a coherent strategy on competitiveness, the EU could "become a cultural open air museum," and risk further decline on the global stage, he cautioned. Some regions of the world, such as China, are now 15-20 years ahead of the EU in key sectors, he added.

Fico has repeatedly criticized Brussels over its policies, particularly on energy and Russia sanctions, saying the restrictions are "only hurting" the bloc. Commenting on the European Commission's 20th sanctions package earlier this month, he said the EU should prioritize dealing with its internal problems over imposing new restrictions on Moscow.

He has also sharply criticized the EU's plan to completely phase out Russian gas imports by November 2027, describing the scheme as "suicide" for dependent economies, and announced that Bratislava would sue EU institutions.

The sharp decline in cheaper Russian pipeline gas imports following the escalation of the Ukraine conflict in 2022 and ensuing Western sanctions, has driven wholesale prices and living costs higher across the EU, while undermining the bloc's industrial competitiveness.

Fico, who survived an assassination attempt by a pro-Ukraine activist in 2024, has described Kiev as a "black hole" of corruption that has swallowed billions of euros in EU funds. Last month, he called for the removal of the EU's foreign policy chief, Kaja Kallas, known for her hardline anti-Russian stance.

<https://www.rt.com/news/632685-eu-crisis-leadership-fico/>

What was Soros up to in Munich?

At Western Europe's most important security conference, Alex Soros checked in with his most promising investment: Gavin Newsom 17 Feb, 2026 18:59



By RT newsroom, a team of multi-lingual journalists with over a decade of experience in Russian and international reporting, delivering original research and insights often missing from mainstream coverage

Alex Soros (R) embraces Gavin Newsom at the Munich Security Conference in Munich, Germany, February 14, 2026 © Instagram / alexsoros

Alex Soros, heir to his father's empire, met with some of US President Donald Trump's leading opponents at the Munich Security Conference. Looking behind the hugs and handshakes, it's clear that the eye of Soros is fixed on the 2028 election.



Soros' weekend in Munich was a whirlwind of photo opportunities with NATO leaders, NGO chiefs, and other neoliberals aligned with his family's causes: EU expansion, open borders, and increased military aid to Ukraine. Among the photos posted on his social media pages, one collection of images stands out: a get-together between Soros, Hillary Clinton, Nancy Pelosi, California Governor Gavin Newsom, and Senators Mark Kelly and Chris Murphy.

That these Democrats would meet Soros is no surprise. His family's Open Society Foundations is the party's largest donor, funnelling \$128 million to Democrat candidates through their Democracy PAC in 2022, and \$67.5 million in 2024, on top of donations to left-wing prosecutors and smaller liberal organizations.

However, none of the five Democrats he met in Munich need his money this year. Clinton and Pelosi are retired from politics, Newsom has already served two terms as governor and cannot seek another, and Kelly and Murphy are both safe in the Senate until 2028. It is far more likely that any talk of funding and strategy focused on a far more consequential political battle: the 2028 presidential election.

Eyes on the prize

Newsom and Kelly have both positioned themselves as contenders for the Democratic nomination in 2028. Newsom is widely believed to be the leading candidate, and although he has dodged questions about his presidential ambitions, he has hired a social media team to needle President Donald Trump online, and used his trip to Munich to cement himself as a left-wing 'Anti-Trump', going as far as signing a clean energy agreement between California and the UK, and entering a similar partnership agreement with Ukraine.

In a discussion on climate change on Friday, Newsom told European leaders that *"he'll be gone in three years,"* referring to Trump. The message was clear: for Europeans hesitant to deal with Trump's White House, Newsom's California is an alternate center of power in the US.

Kelly's trip to Munich also gave him an opportunity to take his message from American cable TV to the world stage. The retired astronaut, who recently urged US troops not to carry out *"illegal"* orders to strike alleged drug boats in the Caribbean, railed against Trump's foreign policy, accusing the president of *"destroying"* NATO and making the US *"poorer and less safe."*

Less than a day after meeting Soros, Kelly told the BBC that he would *"seriously consider"* a run for the presidency.

Soros' choice

Newsom and Kelly have both taken money from the Soros family and Democracy PAC before, with George Soros spending \$1 million to protect Newsom from a 2021 recall attempt and writing a \$10 million check for his California redistricting campaign last year. If successful, the redistricting campaign could push six Republicans out of the House of Representatives.



Alex Soros (L) meets Mark Kelly at the Munich Security Conference in Munich, Germany, February 14, 2026 © Instagram / alexsoros

George Soros, 95, handed over control of his philanthropic empire to his son Alex in 2023. Open Society Foundations has since scaled back its operations in Europe, with Alex telling the Wall Street Journal that he intended to focus primarily on American elections. *"As much as I would love to get money out of politics, as long as the other side is doing it, we will have to do it too,"* he told the newspaper.

According to Forbes' most recent figures, Alex Soros controls a \$7.5 billion fortune, and spent more than \$1 billion on political causes in 2024, making

him the US' fifth-most prolific philanthropist.

Soros has dropped some not-so-subtle hints that he would favor Newsom in a hypothetical 2028 primary. *"Great catching up with the real star of the 2026 World Economic Forum, my friend Gavin Newsom,"* he wrote on social media after last month's summit in Davos. *"World leaders could take a page out of Newsom's book. It's time to stand tall, stand firm, and stand united – before it's too late."*

Curiously absent from the meeting in Munich was New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a figure Soros described last year as a *"great"* candidate to lead the Democratic party. Ocasio-Cortez spoke at the Munich Security Forum about the *"rise of populism,"* but skipped Soros' get-together. Her absence may reflect a tactical exclusion by Soros: although AOC is arguably the figurehead of the party's progressive wing, her description on Friday of Israel's war in Gaza as a *"genocide"* may have rattled pro-Israel donors.

The bottom line

With more than two years to go until the 2028 election, it remains unclear whether Newsom will even enter the race. If he does, it's even less clear whether he could win a Democratic primary. Current opinion shows former Vice President Kamala Harris leading in a hypothetical primary with 38% of the vote, followed by Newsom with 13%, and Kelly trailing with 3%.

However, Soros would likely bankroll whatever nominee the Democrats select. Soros donated nearly \$3 million to the main super PAC backing former President Joe Biden and Harris in 2024, and his Open Society Foundations have donated \$4.5 million to People For the American Way, the organization running Harris' recently-relaunched 'Headquarters' social media account.

For a donor as prolific as Alex Soros, there are no bad outcomes. Every one of the five Democrats he met in Munich, plus Harris, owe their careers to him to some degree. But while any of these candidates would advance his interests domestically, Newsom has demonstrated one critical advantage: he has achieved superstar status on the international stage.

"So glad he's here calling out world leaders for believing appeasement works when it comes to Trump," Soros wrote after meeting Newsom in Davos. If there's a reason Newsom got the hug and everyone else got the handshake, it's that right now, the governor is Soros' most promising investment.

<https://www.rt.com/news/632688-soros-newsom-2028-munich/>

Texas showdown: City-council meeting erupts over immigration and jobs

By [Amanda Bartolotta](#)

February 10, 2026



(Photo by Joe Kovacs)

In a dramatic display of growing concern over the future of American labor and community character, a packed Frisco, Texas, City Council meeting erupted this week into a heated confrontation over immigration, H-1B visas and what activists have dubbed an "Indian takeover" of the booming North Texas suburb.

The controversy has been fueled by deep frustrations with federal immigration policy, particularly the H-1B visa program, which in fiscal year 2024 saw nearly three-quarters of visas issued to nationals of one country: India. Critics argue that constitutional authority over immigration has been ceded to foreign labor interests at the expense of American workers and communities.

Voices of concerned citizens

What began as a regular local meeting quickly turned into a battleground of competing visions for Frisco's future. Longtime residents and activist critics took to the podium to condemn the federal H-1B visa program as a vehicle not for "specialized talent" as originally intended, but as a mechanism for displacing American workers and reshaping the city's makeup.

"This city was once a peaceful American suburb," said one speaker, reflecting a sentiment shared by many in the audience. "We want legal immigration, but we also want *American jobs for American citizens first!*"

Similar concerns have rippled across the state, notably after Texas [Attorney General Ken Paxton launched investigations into H-1B visa fraud](#) and "ghost office" schemes, and [Gov. Greg Abbott froze new H-1B filings](#) by state agencies and universities until lawmakers can enact protective guardrails.

These state actions, born of legitimate concerns about rampant misuse and abuse of visa programs, underscore a broader movement to reclaim American workers' rightful place in the economy. Fiscal justice and sovereignty over national borders are not fringe ideas, insist Americans like those in Frisco; they are foundational to a secure, prosperous nation.

Pushback from establishment voices

Yet not everyone at the meeting agreed with the America First perspective. A large contingent of Indian-American residents defended their right to live, work and contribute to their community without being labeled a threat.

Members of this community argued that collective blame based on ethnicity or nationality undermines the unity that built the United States. On its face, that argument resonates with a long-standing establishment narrative:

America is strongest when it embraces diversity, and criticism of immigration outcomes is often framed as intolerance rather than policy scrutiny.

However, critics of the H-1B system countered that this debate did not arise in a vacuum, nor is it rooted in ethnicity. Rather, they argue, it has arisen because the data overwhelmingly points to a nationality-concentrated outcome, one driven not by random "diversity" but by intentional, structural capture of America's H-1B program by a narrow set of foreign labor pipelines and corporate interests.

This would not be a nationality issue if the facts did not show that one country now dominates H-1B approvals, employment-based green card backlogs and U.S. tech staffing pipelines, while American workers, regardless of their race, gender or background, are systematically displaced. When massive layoffs of U.S. citizens coincide with continued visa hiring from a single source country, the issue ceases to be theoretical and becomes undeniable and measurable.

America First advocates argue that "diversity" cannot be used as a shield when, in practice, it means fewer Americans in their own labor market. A system that replaces domestic workers with foreign labor tied to visa dependency, wage suppression and employer control is not diversity; it is labor substitution.

They further argue that calling attention to this imbalance is not an attack on immigrants or Indian-Americans as individuals. Rather, it is a challenge to a federal visa regime that has been captured by corporate users, foreign-aligned staffing firms and outsourcing models that benefit shareholders while hollowing out the American workforce.

True patriotism does not mean ignoring uncomfortable realities or silencing debate with moral-sounding accusations. It means confronting systemic failures honestly, especially when those failures undermine the economic security, social cohesion and future prospects of American citizens.

In Frisco, that tension was laid bare: not between neighbors, but between lived economic reality and a political narrative that insists the real-world outcomes must never be questioned.

The heart of the debate: Jobs and fairness

At its core, the Frisco meeting revealed something very big: *Americans are fed up with a system that prioritizes foreign labor over American labor.* When legal pathways like H-1B are perceived to be exploited or misused, public confidence in both immigration and economic policy erodes.

For years, America First advocates have warned that outsourcing talent and importing foreign labor under expansive visa programs are hollowing out the middle class, suppressing wages and weakening communities. Thus, the Frisco meeting was not just about one city; it was a reflection of a nationwide awakening. Frisco's debate wasn't simply a clash of cultures; it was a confrontation between those who believe in prioritizing the American worker and those content with the status quo. The rising tide of concern over H-1B visas, demographic change and local self-determination demands serious public policy reform – not dismissive platitudes.

The American people are simply saying, with urgency amidst all their suffering, that their nation's immigration system needs to facilitate legal immigration while at the same time respecting and protecting Americans' jobs – basically, ensuring that American workers come first. That would be the true heart of patriotic governance.

<https://www.wnd.com/2026/02/texas-showdown-city-council-meeting-erupts-immigration-jobs/>

Islamic Prayer Is Now Broadcasting on the Streets of NEW YORK CITY – 5 Times per Day

by [Jim Hoft](#) Feb. 16, 2026 8:00 pm



The Islamic call to prayer is now blaring on the streets of Manhattan and New York City five times a day.

With Mamdani as Mayor residents are reporting hearing the "Islamic Call to Prayer" on the streets of Manhattan.

Five times a day!

Amy Mek added:

My lord, America – the conquest we've warned about is exploding now. The Adhan isn't a "beautiful call to prayer"; it's a militant declaration: "Allahu Akbar" (Allah is greater than your gods, laws, freedoms), "There is no god but Allah" (all other faiths are false).

Blared 5x daily from loudspeakers – 5 AM wake-ups included – it's forced submission on non-Muslims, pure civilizational jihad straight from the Muslim

Brotherhood playbook.

THIS IS NOT NORMAL – but they're aggressively normalizing it.

In Astoria, Brooklyn, Manhattan residents are horrified: Noise complaints flood in, yet the broadcasts grow louder and more frequent.

It began under Adams in 2023 (permit-free Fridays & Ramadan), but Mamdani's regime has supercharged it – daily calls spreading unchecked in Muslim-heavy areas.

In Islam, there is no reciprocity: Try church bells or hymns in Mecca – arrested. Yet in 9/11-scarred NYC, we submit.

[The Jewish Defense League](#) and [Amy Mek](#):

NYC FALLS: Adhan Blasts Through Streets – Zohran Mamdani's Sharia Dawn is Here!

(TURN YOUR VOLUME UP)

My lord, America – the conquest we’ve warned about is exploding now. The Adhan isn’t a “beautiful call to prayer”; it’s a militant declaration: “Allahu Akbar” (Allah is... pic.twitter.com/9Vq4DfpZxW)
— Amy Mek (@AmyMek) February 15, 2026

<https://www.thegatewaypundit.com/2026/02/islamic-prayer-is-now-broadcasting-streets-new-york/>

OP ED

UN Claims It’s Bankrupt and Freezing

Mon, 16 Feb 2026 3:33 PM PST by Daniel Greenfield



The UN is facing “imminent financial collapse”, Secretary General Antonio Guterres clamored. “I cannot overstate the urgency of the situation we now face.”

Promises, promises.

To drive home the seriousness of it, they’re turning off the escalators and turning down the heat in the United Nations digs in Geneva. That’s the sort of thing that the UN’s global warming propaganda and agreements seek to force everyone to do anyway, but the only time the global body of globalists gets around to doing it is when they cry poverty to the rest of the world.

How seriously should we be taking the UN’s thermostat theater? About as seriously as an Idaho amateur high school boys’ production of Harriet Tubman. The UN’s tricks depend on its pawns having no more memory than fruit flies and that’s usually a pretty reliable bet with politicians.

But back in 2024, Secretary Guterres made a point of (supposedly) ordering the heat turned down at the UN headquarters in New York because there was (supposedly) no more money. His spokesman took to wearing a scarf reading “It’s Cold” in French while denying it was a stunt.

What they did not mention was that the heat had been turned down from 22 to 21 celsius or, for those in the lands of the Fahrenheit freedom movement, from 70 to around 71 degrees.

That year, New York temps in February were in the forties (Fahrenheit) or 7 (Celsius.)

But wait a minute. Why turn down the thermostat one degree in New York in 2024 and Geneva in 2026? Why not the other way around? That’s because New York City is in the middle of a severe snowstorm and temperatures have hovered in the single digits (Fahrenheit) while in Geneva, the weather has been in the 30s and 40s (also Fahrenheit) and not all that cold.

When it’s freezing in Geneva and mild in New York City, the UN staff make a big show of turning down the thermostat one degree in New York, and when it’s freezing in New York City and mild in Geneva, they turn down the thermostats in Geneva because the UN is one big scam.

The UN wants to pretend that it’s suffering but not so much that it actually gets even a little cold.

In 2024, the UN (which somehow survived mild temperatures outside and 70 degree temperatures inside) got its billions of dollars and the secretary general got his \$418,348 salary which allowed his spokesman to stop wearing his prop scarf and go back to flying private jets.

Air travel accounts for an estimated quarter of the UN’s budget. While the UN would like you to think that its budget is the reason small children aren’t dying of malaria in the third world, it’s really more like cutting down the wait time for the drink cart by 15 minutes. For example, former World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Margaret Chan Fung Fu-Chun spent [\\$370,000 on travel expenses](#) in one year while allegedly often flying first class. That period, the UN’s WHO spent more on travel than on AIDS or Malaria. But we still get fooled again.

The UN Secretary General’s spokesman [did](#) explain that they really are trying to cut costs and “the Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General also often travel business when first class... because an increasing number of flights, planes, in fact, do not have first class, so they often also do travel business.”

Move over starving kids, Antonio flies business when first class isn’t available.

But Antonio and the UN have been putting on a dog and pony show, turning down the heat (again) and claiming that they massively cut the UN. In reality, they cut department heads [by 3%](#) and 19% ‘across the board’. The lower staff cuts however are theater because the moment the money comes through, they can be hired back. And hardly anyone at the top gets cut.

And the shenanigans are just getting started.

Last year, the UN claimed it was so low on cash that the “crisis stricken organization” might have to leave Geneva. Then the UN announced that Secretary Guterres had received “a generous financial package of support to the United Nations presence in Geneva” from the Swiss government, hopefully in crypto or gift cards, and will stay on for the greater good.

UNICEF will make a show of moving some jobs from Geneva to Rome into the World Food Programme (WFP) building. (Moving buildings without leasing new ones is another giveaway that this is just more theater.) WFP is the organization that faked the Gaza famine and every famine you can think of. The WFP building appears to have its own swimming pool. Neither UNICEF nor WFP is servicing Rome, so why not move its HQ to Gaza, Afghanistan or Yemen?

Same reason the United Nations turns down the temps in the city that is the least cold.

Meanwhile the Secretary General is complaining that he has to give back unspent money which he can't do because he never received it. “We are trapped in a Kafkaesque cycle expected to give back cash that does not exist.” Orwellian would be more appropriate than Kafkaesque. A Jewish man who wrote about the nightmarish dangers of fictional government bureaucracies would probably not be the model for a nightmarish antisemitic fictional government bureaucracy.

All of this theater is a roundabout way of demanding we cover 22% of the UN's budget.

The Trump administration is less enthusiastic about paying for over a fifth of the budget of an organization that hates the United States and seeks to destroy it while eating pricey lunches in Manhattan. And so every year or so the UN puts a gun to its head, takes itself hostage and screams that unless it gets more money it faces “imminent financial collapse” and frostbite.

But let's have the UN secretary general's quote in context rather than in the media headlines.

“Either all Member States honour their obligations to pay in full and on time – or Member States must fundamentally overhaul our financial rules to prevent an imminent financial collapse,” Antonio intoned. Translated into English from UNese, that means the United Nations faces “imminent financial collapse” unless it spends less money or stops asking the U.S. for 22%.

It's the equivalent of ‘either we stop flying first class or we face imminent financial collapse.’

There is a simple solution to all this. If the UN wants to take billions in American money to save the third world, it should go there. Let the UN leave New York, Geneva, Rome and the entire West, and take its headquarters down to whichever third world hellhole it's sending money to.

Real estate in Gaza, Somalia and Afghanistan are still fairly cheap. More so than Manhattan.

“Put your money where your mouth is,” an old gambler once said. The UN runs its mouth, but all it will ever do is turn down the thermostat when it's 45 degrees and sunny outside the office.

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://bkdvk-zgpyh.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 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