

## 02212026 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**

### **Israeli officials believe US, Iran at unbridgeable impasse as they near open conflict** *Report says US might allow Tehran 'token' nuclear enrichment, but gaps between sides widely seen as irreconcilable; one military scenario 'takes out the ayatollah and his son'; Congress may vote on curtailing Trump*

By [Reuters](#), [Jacob Magid](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 21 February 2026, 10:57 am



*This handout image from the US Navy shows Capt. Daniel Keeler, the commanding officer of the Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln, flying an MH-60R Sea Hawk helicopter in the Indian Ocean on Jan. 23, 2026. (Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Daniel Kimmelman/US Navy via AP)*

**Iran and the United States continued to slide rapidly toward military conflict at the weekend, as hopes faded for a diplomatic solution to their standoff over Tehran's nuclear program and regional actions, officials on both sides and diplomats across the Gulf and Europe said.**

**Israel and Iran's Gulf neighbors now consider a conflict to be more likely than a settlement, the sources said, with Washington building up one of its biggest military deployments in the region since the invasion of Iraq in 2003.**

**Israel's government believes Tehran and Washington are at an impasse and is making preparations for possible joint military action with the United States, though no decision has been made yet on whether to carry out such an operation, said a source familiar with the planning.**

It would be the second time the US and Israel have attacked Iran in less than a year, following US and Israeli airstrikes against military and nuclear facilities last June.

Regional officials say oil-producing Gulf countries are preparing for a possible military confrontation that they fear could spin out of control and destabilize the Middle East.

Two Israeli officials told Reuters they believe the gaps between Washington and Tehran are unbridgeable and that the chances of a near-term military escalation are high.



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

Some regional officials said Tehran was dangerously miscalculating by holding out for concessions, with US President Donald Trump boxed in by his own military buildup — unable to scale it back without losing face if there is no firm commitment from Iran to abandon its nuclear weapons ambitions.

“Both sides are sticking to their guns,” said Alan Eyre, a former US diplomat and Iran specialist, adding that nothing meaningful can emerge “unless the US and Iran walk back from their red lines — which I don't think they will.

“What Trump can't do is assemble all this military, and then come back with a 'so-so' deal and pull out the military. I think he thinks he'll lose face,” he said. “If he attacks, it's going to get ugly quickly.”

Two rounds of Iran-US talks have stalled on core issues, from uranium enrichment to missiles and sanctions relief.

When Omani mediators delivered an envelope from the US side containing missile-related proposals, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi refused even to open it and returned it, a source familiar with the talks said.

After talks in Geneva on Tuesday, Araghchi said the sides had agreed on “guiding principles,” but the White House said there was still distance between them.



***This handout photo released by Iran's Revolutionary Guards Corps's official website Sepanews on February 17, 2026, shows a rocket being fired during a military exercise by members of the IRGC and navy in the Strait of Hormuz. (SEPAH NEWS / AFP)***

Advertisement

He appeared to set a deadline of 10 to 15 days, drawing a threat from Tehran to retaliate against US bases in the region if attacked. The rising tensions have pushed up oil prices.

US officials say Trump has yet to make up his mind about using military force, although he acknowledged on Friday that he could order a limited strike to try to force Iran into a deal.

"I guess I can say I am considering that," he told reporters.

The possible timing of an attack is unclear. US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is due to meet Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on February 28 to discuss Iran. A senior US official said it would be mid-March before all US forces were in place.

Two US officials told Reuters that US military planning on Iran had reached an advanced stage, with options including targeting individuals as part of an attack and even pursuing leadership change in Tehran, if ordered by Trump.



***US President Donald Trump departs after speaking during a press conference in the Brady Press Briefing Room of the White House in Washington, DC, on February 20, 2026. (Mandel NGAN / AFP)***

### **"Thirty-two thousand killed"**

After the US and Israel bombed Iran's nuclear facilities and some military sites last June, Trump again began threatening strikes in January as Tehran crushed widespread protests with deadly force.

Referring to the crackdown on Friday, Trump said there was a difference between the people of Iran and the country's leadership. He asserted that "32,000 people were killed over a relatively short period of time," figures that could not

immediately be verified.

Time Magazine and opposition outlet Iran International have [reported such numbers](#), citing information from officials in the Islamic Republic. The US-based group HRANA, which monitors the human rights situation in Iran, has so far recorded 7,114 verified deaths and says it has another 11,700 under review.

"It's a very, very, very sad situation," Trump said, adding that his threats to strike Iran had led the leadership to abandon plans for mass hangings weeks ago.

"They were going to hang 837 people. And I gave them the word, if you hang one person, even one person, that you're going to be hit right then and there," he said.



***Women with Iranian flags take a group photo during a state-organized memorial ceremony for those killed during January's anti-government protests, at the Imam Khomeini Grand Mosque in Tehran, Iran, February 17, 2026. (AP/Vahid Salemi)***

Hours after Trump's statements on the death toll, Araghchi said that the Iranian government has already published a "comprehensive list" of all 3,117 killed in the unrest.

"If anyone doubts the accuracy of our data, please speak with evidence," he posted on X.

### **Token enrichment**

On Friday, a senior US official was [quoted by Axios](#) as saying the Trump administration was open to considering a proposal

that would allow Iran to retain a "token" nuclear enrichment capability if Tehran's route to an atomic bomb is fully sealed off.

The news site said that while there could be a small opening for a deal, US officials say the proposal that Iran is expected to submit in the coming days must clear a very high bar to win over skeptics in the administration and the Middle East.

“President Trump will be ready to accept a deal that would be substantive and that he can sell politically at home. If the Iranians want to prevent an attack, they should give us an offer we can’t refuse. The Iranians keep missing the window. If they play games, there won’t be a lot of patience,” the senior US official says.

Advertisement

Another senior Trump adviser quoted in the report stressed that the US president “hasn’t decided to strike yet. I know that because we haven’t struck. He might never do it. He might wake up tomorrow and say, ‘That’s it.’” According to the adviser, Trump has been presented with a range of military options for Iran.



*This handout image, released and taken by David Parody on February 20, 2026, shows the US aircraft carrier USS Gerald Ford heading through the Strait of Gibraltar as seen from Gibraltar. (David PARODY / DM Parody / AFP)*

“They have something for every scenario. One scenario takes out the ayatollah and his son and the mullahs,” the adviser elaborated, referring to Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei and his son Mojtaba. “What the president chooses no one knows. I don’t think he knows.”

Another adviser said, “Trump is keeping his options open. He could decide on an attack at any moment.”

*Mojtaba, son of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, center, attends the annual Quds, or Jerusalem rally in Tehran, Iran, on May 31, 2019. (AP/Vahid Salemi)*



Day

that  
round

using

official

A senior US official flatly denied an unsourced report in Iran International claiming Iran had presented a proposal during the latest of nuclear talks in which it agreed to halt nuclear enrichment for three years and commit to not its ballistic missiles to attack Israel.

Asked to confirm the report, the senior US called it “completely false.”

### Congressional involvement

The US Congress could vote as soon as next week on whether to block Trump’s ability to strike Iran without lawmakers’ approval.

Members of Congress, including a few of Trump’s fellow Republicans as well as Democrats, have tried — and failed — repeatedly to pass resolutions that would bar Trump from military action against foreign governments without lawmakers’ approval.

The US Constitution grants Congress, not the president, the power to send US troops to war, except for limited strikes for national security reasons. Reuters reported last week that the military is preparing for the possibility of sustained, weeks-long operations if Trump orders an attack.

Trump’s Republicans hold slim majorities in both the Senate and House and have blocked the resolutions, arguing that Congress should not restrict Trump’s national security powers.



Democratic Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia and Republican Senator Rand Paul of Kentucky filed a Senate resolution late last month to block hostilities against Iran unless explicitly authorized by a congressional declaration of war.

*Sen. Tim Kaine speaks during the Senate Democrat policy luncheon news conference at the Capitol, Tuesday, Feb. 10, 2026, in Washington. (AP Photo/Rod Lamkey, Jr.)*

“If some of my colleagues support war, then they should have the guts to vote for the war, and to be held accountable by their constituents, rather than hiding under their desks,” Kaine said in a statement.

An aide to Kaine said there was no timetable yet as to when the Senate might take up the resolution. In the House of Representatives, Republican Thomas Massie of Kentucky and Democrat Ro Khanna of California said they planned to force a vote on a similar resolution next week.

“Trump officials say there’s a 90% chance of strikes on Iran. He can’t without Congress,” Khanna said in a post on X.

The New York Times [reported](#) that hundreds of US troops had been evacuated from Al Udeid base in Qatar, citing unnamed Pentagon officials.

Troops have also been evacuated from bases in Bahrain that house the Navy’s 5th Fleet, The Times said, adding that there were no longer any American troops at bases in Iraq, Syria, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan and the United Arab Emirates.

Shortly after the story was published, however, Fox News said it was false, citing an unnamed, well-placed US official. News Nation also said CENTCOM flatly denied the report.

The move would be seen as a precautionary step ahead of a potential US strike on Iran, as Tehran is likely to retaliate to such an attack by targeting US personnel in the region.

### **The endgame**

Araghchi gave no specific timing as to when Iranians would get their counterproposal to the US, but said he believed a diplomatic deal was within reach and could be achieved “in a very short period of time.”

“What we are now talking about is how to make sure that Iran’s nuclear program, including enrichment, is peaceful and would remain peaceful forever,” he said.

He added that technical and political “confidence-building measures” would be enacted to ensure the program would remain peaceful in exchange for action on sanctions, but he gave no further details.

“The president has been clear that Iran cannot have nuclear weapons or the capacity to build them, and that they cannot enrich uranium,” the White House said when asked about Araghchi’s comments.



*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)*

European and regional officials believe the scale of the US deployment to the region would enable Washington to launch strikes on Iran while simultaneously defending its military bases, allies and Israel.

The core US demand remains unchanged: no uranium enrichment on Iranian soil. Iran, for its part, says it must keep its nuclear capability and refuses to discuss its ballistic missiles. It denies planning to build a nuclear weapons arsenal.

If talks fail, defense analyst David Des Roches said, US activity in the Gulf already signals how any strike would begin: blind Iran’s air defence and then hit the Revolutionary Guards Navy, the force behind years of tanker attacks and threats to close the Strait of Hormuz, the route for a fifth of global oil.

But some Arab and European officials say they are unsure what Trump’s endgame is, and European governments want the US to spell out what strikes would be meant to achieve — to degrade Iran’s nuclear and missile capabilities, deter escalation, or pursue something more ambitious such as “regime change.”

Some regional and European officials question whether military action can alter the trajectory of Iran’s ruling establishment, led by Khamenei and protected by the powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps.

Some say that, with no obvious alternative political force in Iran and the leadership’s resilience largely intact, it is perilous to assume strikes could trigger regime change.

Military action may be easier to start than to control, and much harder to translate into a strategic outcome, they say. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israeli-officials-believe-us-iran-at-unbridgeable-impasse-as-they-near-open-conflict/>

## **Report: IRGC running Hezbollah, preparing it for war with Israel if US strikes Iran**

*Israel said to see Hezbollah preparing rocket-fire capabilities, recent IDF strikes said aimed at degrading them; anti-Hezbollah outlet quotes ‘political sources’ saying Beirut must declare neutrality*

By [Noam Lehmann](#) 21 February 2026, 10:56 pm Updated at 11:53 pm



*Hezbollah supporters hold portraits of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a rally to show their solidarity with Iran, in the southern suburb of Beirut on January 26, 2026. (Anwar AMRO / AFP)*

**Officers from Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps have effectively taken charge of Hezbollah in anticipation of a war with the US and Israel, Saudi outlet Al-Arabiya reported Saturday, as Lebanese officials were said to assail the possibility of their country getting dragged into battle.**

**The IRGC officers, some of whom recently arrived in Lebanon from Iran, are tasked with rebuilding Hezbollah's military**

**capabilities, which were significantly degraded in the 14-month fighting with Israel that ended with a November 2024 truce, Al-Arabiya said, citing sources close to Hezbollah.**

**The Iranian officers have also been personally briefing Hezbollah operatives across Lebanon, said the unnamed sources cited by Al-Arabiya. They added that IRGC officers were meeting with members of Hezbollah's missile unit at a site in Lebanon's Beqaa Valley that was bombed by Israel overnight, amid a wave of airstrikes that wounded at least 50 people and killed 12, including a senior Hezbollah officer. The IDF said the strikes targeted Hamas and Hezbollah command centers.**

According to the Hezbollah-aligned sources, a wider Israeli military offensive against Lebanon is only a matter of time.

The report came as US President Donald Trump has amassed military forces in the region and repeatedly threatened to use them against Iran, first over the Islamic Republic's brutal crackdown on anti-regime protesters last month and more recently over its nuclear program.

Israel is readying to fight alongside the US and expects to be targeted by Iran if the US strikes there, according to Hebrew media.

The Kan public broadcaster reported Saturday evening that Israel has identified preparations by Hezbollah — particularly by its rocket forces — to strike if Iran is attacked, with the Lebanese terror group expected to target Israel together with the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, Iranian-backed Shiite militias in Iraq and Yemen's Houthi rebels.

Haaretz reported, quoting unnamed Israeli military sources, that recent Israeli airstrikes targeting Hezbollah were intended to degrade its capabilities amid the possibility of conflict. At least 10 people were reported killed and 50 wounded in [Israeli strikes](#) in eastern Lebanon on Friday, after the Israel Defense Forces said it had targeted Hezbollah command centers.

*An excavator clears rubble of buildings destroyed in IDF airstrikes in the village of Ali al-Nahri in the center of Lebanon's eastern Beqaa Valley region on February 21, 2026. (AFP)*



Channel 12 news reported Saturday that Trump was leaning toward attacking Iran, but had agreed to a request from his envoys Steve Witkoff and Jared Kushner to give Iran another day or two to submit a proposal in the indirect US-Iran nuclear negotiations that commenced earlier this month.

An unnamed US official was quoted by the network saying that the 10- to 15-day deadline Trump gave Iran on Thursday was “not scientific.”

Trump has demanded Iran give up entirely on its nuclear enrichment program, but is reportedly

open to letting the Islamic Republic preserve some “token” enrichment capabilities.

Speaking to pro-Iran demonstrators in Lebanon last month, Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem [said](#) the terrorist group would not be neutral if the US struck Iran, but stopped short of explicitly threatening Israel.



*Supporters watch a televised speech by Hezbollah chief Naim Qassem during a rally to show their solidarity with Iran, in the southern suburb of Beirut on January 26, 2026. (Anwar AMRO / AFP)*

Meanwhile, the Ynet news site said in an unsourced report this week that Iran was [pressuring](#) Hezbollah to fight alongside it in the event of a war with Israel. The report also said the IDF had prepared a plan to “significantly strike” Hezbollah and had conveyed to it “that if it decides to intervene, this time the blow will be very painful.”

On Saturday, anti-Hezbollah Lebanese outlet Nidaa al-Watan cited “prominent political sources” in the country as saying Beirut must declare its neutrality in case of a US-Iran war, and refuse to let Hezbollah drag Lebanon into war

with Israel.

“Hezbollah thought it could confuse Israel and the US by saying it would not be neutral if Iran were struck, so Israel responded by saying that as soon as it’s informed by Washington of the zero hour, it will preemptively strike Hezbollah. Israel won’t let Hezbollah have the initiative,” Nidaa al-Watan quoted its sources as saying. “Hezbollah will drag Lebanon into this war.”

Hezbollah, previously a formidable force in Lebanon’s government, has been politically sidelined with the accession in January 2025 of Lebanon’s US- and Saudi-backed President Joseph Aoun, a former army chief who has vowed to uphold a state monopoly on arms — a thinly veiled threat against Hezbollah’s extensive arsenal. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/report-irgc-running-hezbollah-preparing-it-for-war-with-israel-if-us-strikes-iran/>

## Iran university students hold anti-regime rallies at campuses in Tehran, Mashhad

*Head of top Tehran engineering school calls for criminals to be ‘dealt with’ after Basij officers reportedly clash with students, who greet them with calls of ‘death’ to Khamenei*

By [Tol Staff](#) and [Agencies](#) 21 February 2026, 6:18 pm

*Footage shows Iranian students chanting anti-government slogans in Tehran, Iran, February 21, 2026. (UGC / AFP) [Go to website for video rdb](#)*

**Iranian students chanted anti-government slogans at rallies for people killed in the regime’s bloody crackdown on protesters last month, local and diaspora media reported Saturday, as groups opposed to the clerical leadership faced off with its supporters and security forces.**

**Videos geolocated by AFP to Tehran’s top engineering university showed fights breaking out in a crowd as people shouted “bi sharaf,” or “disgraceful” in Farsi.**

**Footage posted by the Persian-language dissident TV channel Iran International, which is based outside the country, also showed a large crowd chanting anti-government slogans at Sharif University of Technology.**

According to Iran International, protesters clashed with members of the regime’s Basij paramilitary force, chanting “death” to Iran’s Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, and “long live the king,” referring to the monarchy toppled in Iran’s 1979 Islamic Revolution.

Local news outlet Fars said that what was supposed to be a “silent and peaceful sit-in” of students killed last month was disrupted by people chanting anti-regime slogans. A video posted by Fars showed a group chanting and waving Iranian flags facing off with a crowd wearing masks and being held back by men in suits. Both groups were holding what appeared to be memorial photographs.

Iran International quoted Sharif University President Masoud Tajrishi calling for perpetrators of “illegal acts” to be “dealt with.”

“The enemy wants the university to become virtual, but we will not allow it,” Tajrishi was quoted as saying. “We want to show that we can manage the university. Anyone who carries out illegal acts at the university must be dealt with.”

Meanwhile, students at Tehran’s Beheshti University held a sit-in in solidarity with the people slain or imprisoned during the regime’s protest crackdown, according to a statement by the student union cited by Iran International.

And in the city's Amirkabir University of Technology, demonstrators yelled "long live the king," according to footage published by the outlet, which cited the student union later saying that security forces blocked the school's exit and detained students.

Other footage published by Iran International showed students at Mashhad University of Medical Sciences chanting "freedom."

Iranians reprised their protest slogans this week to mark 40 days — the traditional Shiite mourning period — since the killing of thousands of protesters in a crackdown that peaked on January 8 and 9.

The unrest first broke out in December over prolonged financial strain, but exploded into mass anti-government demonstrations.

The death toll from the protests cannot be verified.

The US-based Human Rights Activists News Agency (HRANA) has recorded more than 7,000 killings in the crackdown, the vast majority protesters, though the toll may be far higher.

Iran International itself has put the death toll at over 36,000.

Iranian authorities, who have undercounted deaths in previous rounds of unrest suppressed by the regime, acknowledge more than 3,000 deaths, but say the violence was caused by "terrorist acts" fueled by Iran's enemies.



*In this frame grab from footage circulating on social media shows protesters dancing and cheering around a bonfire as they take to the streets despite an intensifying crackdown as the Islamic Republic remains cut off from the rest of the world, in Tehran, Iran, January 9, 2026. (UGC via AP)*

The demonstrations came as Iran's authorities are under pressure to make a deal on the country's nuclear program with the United States, which has amassed forces within striking distance.

US President Donald Trump has repeatedly threatened military action against Iran, first over its protest crackdown last month and more recently over its failure to rein in its nuclear program.

"World powers are lining up to force us to bow our heads...

but we will not bow our heads despite all the problems that they are creating for us," Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian declared Saturday in a speech carried live by state TV. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/iran-university-students-reportedly-hold-anti-regime-rallies-at-campuses-in-tehran-mashhad/>

## Trump's options on Iran: US weighs 'token' Iran enrichment in narrow nuclear compromise - report

The potential concession would test the limits of longstanding US demands that Iran's nuclear program not leave any possible path to a bomb.

By **JERUSALEM POST STAFF** FEBRUARY 21, 2026 21:45 Updated: FEBRUARY 21, 2026 23:06



*US President Donald Trump speaks during a press briefing at the White House, following the Supreme Court's ruling that Trump had exceeded his authority when he imposed tariffs, in Washington, DC February 20, 2026. (photo credit: REUTERS/ELIZABETH FRANTZ)*

**The Trump administration is considering an Iranian proposal that would allow so-called "token" uranium enrichment, according to senior US officials cited by Axios.**

**The potential concession would test the limits of longstanding US demands that Iran's nuclear program not**

**leave any possible path to a bomb.**

**Under the scenario outlined, Washington would evaluate a written Iranian offer in which Tehran retains minimal enrichment capacity but with strict safeguards to prevent any route to weaponization.**

The report suggests this represents a narrow diplomatic opening between the red lines of the two sides, even as pressure mounts on the possibility of wider conflict.

At the same time, US President Donald Trump has been presented with military options that involve directly targeting the supreme leader, and US naval and air forces [continue to arrive](#) in the Middle East.



*A billboard with Iranian centrifuges illustrations and portraits of nuclear scientists killed in Israeli strikes is displayed on a street in Tehran, Iran August 29, 2025 (credit: MAJID ASGARIPOUR/WANA (WEST ASIA NEWS AGENCY) VIA REUTERS)*

### **Potential US-Iran bargain on enrichment**

Publicly, US officials have maintained that zero enrichment remains the standard for any deal with Tehran.

But US sources told *Axios* that the administration is open to a limited compromise, as long as it can be verified that any uranium enrichment is purely civilian and cannot be used as a stepping-stone toward nuclear weapons development.

Tehran's own position on enrichment appears to have evolved in recent talks. While Tehran has maintained a rigid stance on the issue, [vowing that no external pressure will impact negotiations](#), Iranian officials have signaled willingness to reduce the level and perhaps the purity of uranium already enriched to 60 percent, a level far above what is needed for civil nuclear power but below weapons-grade. This approach would hinge on

monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)).

On Monday, Iran's foreign minister, Abbas Araghchi, [met](#) the UN nuclear watchdog chief, Rafael Grossi, ahead of US-Iran nuclear talks to tackle their dispute over Tehran's nuclear program.

Days later, in an interview with MS NOW's Joe Scarborough, Araghchi claimed that Iran was willing to implement "confidence-building measures" to "ensure that Iran's program cannot even be diverted to non-peaceful purposes" such as the possible construction of nuclear weapons.

Iran is said to be preparing a written counterproposal to send to Washington after approval in Tehran, *Axios* reported. The timing and details are unclear, but diplomats have indicated that the offer could outline limits on the number of centrifuges and the level of enrichment, framed to demonstrate compliance with peaceful use only.

### **Military options still on the table**

Despite these diplomatic maneuvers, the US military buildup in the region continues to fuel uncertainty in Tehran and allied capitals. US officials have presented Trump with a series of operational options intended to either compel Iran to accept US terms or, if diplomacy fails, degrade Iran's nuclear and military infrastructure.

On Thursday, US Senator Lindsey Graham said that planning was underway for a possible joint US-Israel attack on Iran. Trump later added that the US was considering an initial, limited strike on Iran to force Tehran to agree to his demands regarding a deal.

"President Trump will be ready to accept a deal that would be substantive and that he can sell politically at home," one senior official said, warning that if Tehran "plays games, there won't be a lot of patience."

*Tobias Siegal contributed to this report. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/article-887405>*

## **Trump's Mar-a-Lago could be targeted if US attacks Iran, says Iranian MP - report**

*No immediate US official response to these remarks was identified in the reports reviewed by The Jerusalem Post at the time of publication*

*By JERUSALEM POST STAFF FEBRUARY 21, 2026 23:15*

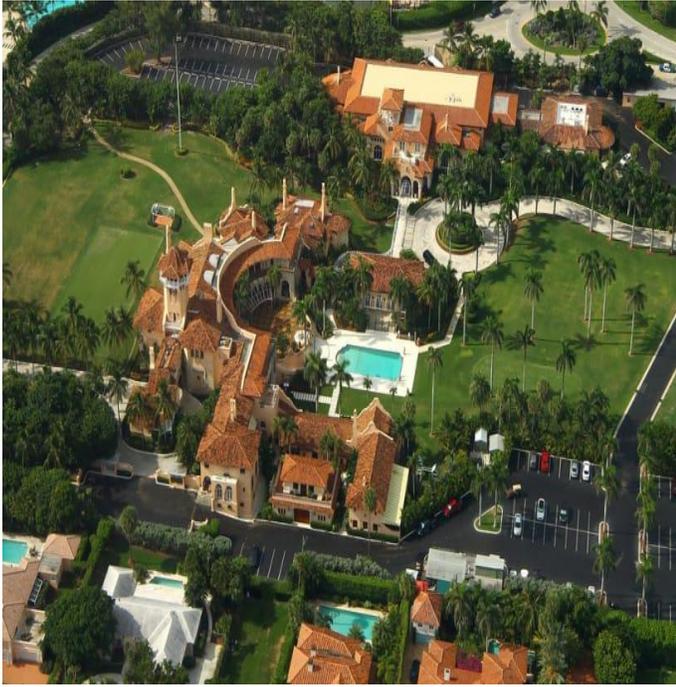


*A portrait of former US President Donald Trump over the White House is seen on a stairway of his Mar-a-Lago estate. (photo credit: REUTERS/JONATHAN ERNST)*

**An Iranian member of parliament warned that Iran could expand any wartime response beyond the Middle East and said that even US President Donald Trump's "own palace" could be targeted, according to remarks published by Iranian outlet Didban Iran and later translated by Iran International.**

**The lawmaker was identified as Amir Hayat Moghaddam, a member of Iran's parliament and its national security and**

**foreign policy commission. Iran International quoted him as saying Iran would deliver a "crushing response" if attacked by the United States.**



According to the report, Moghaddam said Iran could sink a US [warship](#) in the Sea of Oman, strike US bases in the region, and target American forces, including “soldier, officer, or general.”

#### **Attacks might not be limited to the Middle East**

He also said Iran’s attacks might not remain limited to the Middle East and could reach the US itself, adding that “Trump’s own palace” could one day be hit, in an apparent reference to Mar-a-Lago.

*Didban Iran’s* homepage listing shows the interview headline carrying the same language and identifies Moghaddam as a member of the parliamentary committee.

*An aerial view of the Mar-a-Lago property in Florida (credit: FLICKR)*

No immediate US official response to Moghaddam’s specific remarks was identified in the reports reviewed by *The Jerusalem Post* at the time of publication. *Reuters* coverage on Friday focused on the broader [US-Iran escalation](#), including President Trump’s warning that Iran must make a deal within 10 to 15 days and Tehran’s

threats to retaliate against US bases in the region if attacked. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/iran-news/article-887413>

## **Arab and Muslim states fume after Huckabee says Israel has biblical right to much of Mideast**

***Saudis, Jordan, PA, Arab League slam US envoy for saying it ‘would be fine’ if Israel took over lands promised in Bible during Carlson interview; he then clarified ‘hyperbolic’ statement***

*By Tol Staff and Agencies 21 February 2026, 11:00 pm Updated at 11:24 pm*



*US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee speaks to Channel 12, in an interview that aired January 31, 2026. (Screenshot)*

**Arab and Muslim nations on Saturday sharply condemned comments by the US ambassador to Israel, Mike Huckabee, who said in a recent interview that “it would be fine” if Israel took over a large swath of the Middle East.**

**Huckabee made the comments during his contentious interview with right-wing American commentator Tucker Carlson which aired Friday, after Carlson said that according to the Bible, the descendants of Abraham would receive land that today would include large parts of the Middle East, and asked Huckabee if Israel had a right to that land.**

**Huckabee responded: “It would be fine if they took it all.” However, he said that Israel was not looking to expand its territory and has a right to security in the land it legitimately holds.**

His comments sparked immediate backlash from Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the League of Arab States, which in separate statements called them extremist, provocative, and not in line with the US position.

Saudi Arabia’s foreign ministry described Huckabee’s comments as “extremist rhetoric” and “unacceptable,” and called for the State Department to clarify its position on them.

Egypt’s foreign ministry called his comments a “blatant violation” of international law, adding that “Israel has no sovereignty over the occupied Palestinian territory or other Arab lands.”

The Palestinian Authority said on X that Huckabee’s words “contradict US President Donald Trump’s rejection of [Israel] annexing the West Bank.”

Kuwait decried what it called a “flagrant violation of the principles of international law,” while Oman said the comments “threatened the prospects for peace” and stability in the region.

In its statement, the Arab League condemned Huckabee's "extreme" comment, in which he "asserted Israel's right to control the Middle East, citing religious texts from the Old Testament."

The comments "violated all the basic principles and established norms of diplomacy, as well as defying logic and reason," the group of 22 Arab nations said, adding that the US envoy's words "contradict US policies and positions across the board, aimed at currying favor with the right-wing public in Israel."

"Such extremist and baseless statements inflame religious and nationalistic sentiments at a time when Arab states are meeting under the auspices of the Board of Peace to discuss ways to implement the Gaza peace agreement and seize this opportunity to launch a serious peace process," it added.

The Organization of Islamic Cooperation, which is made up of 57 mostly Muslim-majority nations, including the entire Arab League, issued a similar statement, saying it "condemns the dangerous and irresponsible" comments made by Huckabee.

The OIC said the US envoy's comments were "an unacceptable call for the expansion of Israel" that were "based on a false and rejected historical and ideological narrative."

Such remarks "fuel extremist ideological rhetoric, which would fuel extremism and encourage" Israel to "continue its illegal measures based on displacement, settlement, and attempts to impose annexation" on Palestinian territory, the group said.

There was no immediate response from Israel or the United States.



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

Huckabee, a devout Christian and outspoken Zionist, commented being pressed by Carlson on his assertion that a part of the Jewish people's right to the land stemmed from God's promise to Abraham, while noting that that promised land spanned a far larger territory than that of today's Israel, encompassing much of present-day's Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. He asked whether it did not follow then that Israel had a right to take land from neighboring Arab countries.

After initially avoiding the matter, Huckabee eventually said, "It would be fine if they took it all," while swiftly adding that this was not on the table as "They're not asking to take it over."

Carlson then asked the US ambassador to confirm he was fine with Israel taking over "all of Syria, all of Lebanon." Huckabee responded, "That's really not exactly what I'm trying to say," adding that "It was somewhat of a hyperbolic statement."

In a subsequent back-and-forth, Carlson demanded to know whether Huckabee believes Israel "has a moral right to take over what are now other people's countries," as the envoy insisted he had not said that. Eventually, Huckabee said: "If they end up getting attacked by all these places and they win that war and they take that land, then, okay, that's a whole other discussion." <https://www.timesofisrael.com/arab-and-muslim-states-fume-after-huckabee-says-israel-has-biblical-right-to-much-of-mideast/>

## Islamic State begins new phase of operations against Syrian regime with two terror attacks



The terrorist group said on its Dabiq news agency that it had targeted "an individual of the apostate Syrian regime" in the city of Mayadin in Deir al-Zor province using a pistol. )

*By*REUTERS*FEBRUARY 22, 2026 00:26**Updated: FEBRUARY 22, 2026 01:33*

*A member loyal to the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) waves an ISIL flag in Raqqa June 29, 2014.(photo credit: REUTERS/STRINGER*

**Islamic State claimed responsibility on Saturday for two attacks targeting Syrian**

**army personnel in northern and eastern Syria, as the terrorist group signaled what it described as a new phase of operations against the country's leadership.**

**The terrorist group said on its Dabiq news agency that it had targeted "an individual of the apostate Syrian regime" in the city of Mayadin in Deir al-Zor province using a pistol, and attacked two other personnel with machine guns in the northern city of Raqqa.**

Syria's Defence Ministry said in a statement that a Syrian army soldier and a civilian were killed on Saturday by "unknown assailants." A military source told *Reuters* the soldier belonged to the army's 42nd Division.

The attacks come amid a sharp escalation by IS against Syria's leadership under President Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former al-Qaeda leader who broke with the group in 2016 before leading a coalition of Islamist factions that overthrew President Bashar al-Assad at the end of 2024.

On Saturday evening, IS released a recorded statement by its spokesperson, Abu Hudhayfa al-Ansari, who said Syria had "moved from Iranian occupation to Turkish-American occupation."



*A soldier in an ISIS uniform prepares ammunition. (credit: SHUTTERSTOCK)*

The group said it had begun a "new phase of operations" in Syria, describing Sharaa as a "watchdog" of the global coalition and vowing that his fate would be no different from that of Assad.

Sharaa signed Syria's accession to the global coalition to defeat IS during a visit to the [US](#) last November, when he met President Donald Trump.

### **Islamic State intensifying attacks on Syrian regime**

The latest incidents come two days after IS claimed responsibility for another attack in Deir al-Zor that killed a member of the Interior Ministry's internal security forces and wounded another.

Several social media accounts and Telegram channels supporting IS have in recent hours called for intensified attacks using motorcycles and firearms.

[IS](#) has carried out six attacks against Syrian government targets since the fall of Assad.

A report by the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism released last week said Sharaa and two senior cabinet ministers had been targeted in five foiled assassination attempts by IS. <https://www.jpost.com/middle-east/isis-threat/article-887414>

## **Four wounded in rare shootout and drone grenade attack in northern Israel**

*The confrontation followed an ongoing dispute between two families in the town of Kfar Kanna that began a day earlier, according to initial information*

*Hassan Shaalan|13:01*

**Four people were wounded, including a man in his 30s who was seriously injured, in a violent clash in the northern town of Kafr Kanna that involved gunfire and grenades dropped from drones, police and medical officials said.**

**The incident followed an escalating dispute between two families in the town that began a day earlier, according to authorities.**

*Scene of the shootout  
by Taboola*

**Police said the case is being treated as criminal in nature.**

**"Israel Police have opened an investigation into a shooting at a person and the throwing of a grenade in Kafr Kanna," police said in a statement. "Large forces from the Northern District are at the scenes conducting operations to locate the suspects and have launched an investigation while collecting evidence."**

According to the Magen David Adom emergency service, a report of the incident was received at 8 p.m. Paramedics and medics provided treatment at the scene and evacuated four wounded to hospitals.



A man in his 30s was listed in serious condition. Three others were listed in moderate condition: an 18-year-old woman, an 80-year-old man and a 40-year-old woman.

The injured were taken to the Italian Hospital in Nazareth and to the North Medical Center in Tiberias.

Images from the scene showed damage to a residential structure, with one grenade reported to have penetrated through the roof.

Police said the investigation is ongoing.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/s1z5lfvu11l#autoplay>



## Arab crime wave surges as Shin Bet signals readiness to step in, police launch new dedicated unit

*In Lod alone, 68 people have been killed since 2020; police are launching a dedicated 40-officer unit as local leaders push for Shin Bet involvement to combat organized crime and illegal weapons*

*Meir Turgeman* | 14:40

**Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu arrived in Lod following yet another killing that has shaken the city. He was joined by the minister in charge of police, and together they attended a city council meeting and delivered firm statements. "I am not prepared for Lod to be the Wild West," Netanyahu declared. "We will not allow crime, violence and lawbreakers to run rampant. The goal is to restore security here to Lod. The commitment of any government to its citizens is security."**

**Those remarks, however, were not delivered this week. Netanyahu made them in October 2010. More than 15 years have passed, and residents of Lod say they are still waiting for those promises to be fulfilled.**



*(Photo: MDA, Meir Turgeman by Taboola)*

According to data from the Abraham Initiatives, 68 people were killed in Lod between 2020 and 2026. Thirteen were killed last year. Two more have been killed since the beginning of the current year.

The latest victim was Hussein Abu Rakiq, 64, a father of three and grandfather, who left his home last Thursday at 5:15 a.m. for what was supposed to be another routine day at work as a cleaner at a bank campus in the city's northern industrial zone. As he crossed a crosswalk on his way to work, assailants who

appeared suddenly opened fire and fled.

At 5:49 a.m., Magen David Adom received a report of a man bleeding at the scene. Medical teams pronounced Abu Rakiq dead shortly afterward. Family members said he was not involved in crime and was mistakenly identified as belonging to a family embroiled in a violent feud with another family in Lod.

"He was a family man. His life was work and home," said his wife, Kamla Abu Rakiq. "Such a good person. He never bothered anyone. He would not even scold the children."

She said a neighbor called her after the shooting to ask if he was safe. "I called him and he did not answer. I ran there and saw him lying dead on the road," she said. "He lay there for three or four hours before they evacuated him."

Police patrol officers sealed off the scene to prevent contamination, hoping forensic investigators would find evidence leading to the gunmen. Cmdr. Meidad Lavi, 46, who had been promoted only days earlier and taken command of the Lod police station, arrived at the scene. It was his first homicide scene in the city.

Lod's skyline is dotted with cranes, reflecting rapid development. High-rise buildings are being constructed around the old city, urban renewal projects are underway, and commercial and leisure zones are expanding. Nearly 100,000 residents now live in Lod, about one-third of them Arab citizens. Yet criminal elements continue to disrupt that growth.

"There is a sense of fear," one resident told ynet at the scene of another recent killing, that of Omar Taisir al-Shamali, who was shot near the district court and a shopping mall three weeks ago. Gunmen chased his vehicle until it crashed into a pole at a central intersection, then opened fire in front of passersby. Two others were wounded.

"There is no law and no judge," said the resident, who lives above the intersection and asked not to be named. "A murder can happen here at any time. The crime must be eradicated with a firm hand, and I expect police to think outside the box."



**Revivo and Lavi (Photo: Mickey Schmidt)**

That expectation is shared by district police commander Amir Cohen, who assumed his post two and a half months ago, and by Lavi, whom he appointed to Lod. At a recent change-of-command ceremony, Cohen told Lavi: "I am placing great responsibility in your hands. Lawbreakers will feel pursued by the law, and the normative citizen will receive service with silk gloves. The kindergarten will not only be open, but safe."

The two have worked together before. On Oct. 7, 2023, Cohen fought and was wounded in the battle at the Sderot police station and gave the order to collapse the building on Hamas terrorists barricaded inside. Lavi later took command of that station, whose officers suffered eight fatalities in the fighting. Mayor Revivo said he hopes to see that same "fighting spirit" brought to Lod.

Lavi's first decision as commander was to relocate from Sderot to Lod with his family. "As a station commander, I cannot arrive at a murder scene when I am no longer relevant to the event," he said. The move also answered Revivo's longstanding complaint that Lod has seen nine station commanders in 13 years. In November 2025, the mayor wrote an angry letter to National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, demanding that the next commander commit to serving at least three years.

"This may be the first time in 30 years that a police station commander will live in the city," Revivo said. "He will hear the muezzin, the bursts of gunfire and meet the residents. He is saying in action, not just words, 'I am here with you.'"

Over the years, Revivo has sharply criticized what he describes as a lack of governance and declining personal security. While Lod is not exceptional in rates of theft, robbery, sexual offenses or car theft compared with other cities, it has been deeply affected by cycles of blood feuds within the Arab community.

"Our city is bleeding because of dozens of disputes between families in the Arab community, which pull in relatives from third, fourth and even more distant circles," said city council member and attorney Abd Azbaraga. "Sometimes a victim's only 'crime' is distant family ties."

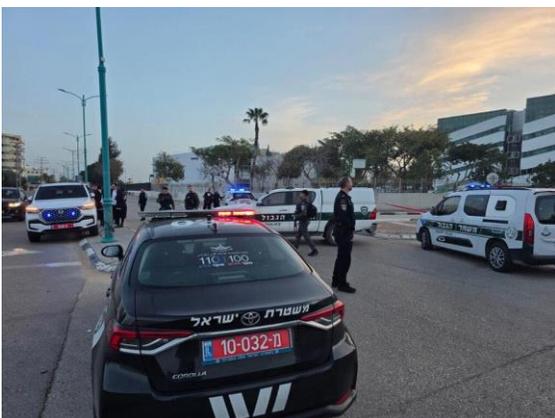
"Most Arab residents in the city are normative citizens who oppose the murders in Lod and across Israel," Azbaraga said. "Hundreds of Arab families in Lod are in the circle of bereavement from criminal murders. Every

such killing devastates the immediate and extended family economically and socially. Today, an Arab resident of Lod does not know when a bullet will hit him."

**(Photo: Israel Police)**

Asked about police expectations that residents file complaints or testify, Azbaraga said: "As of today, this is unrealistic. You can complain today and get a bullet tomorrow. A small complaint can open a new blood feud. Police have intelligence and the ability to solve these crimes, but as an Arab resident, I do not feel protected around the clock."

Lavi said he understands the complexity and acknowledged



shortages of officers and patrol vehicles. One senior municipal official said that demolishing illegal construction or staging large Border Police raids does not create a sense of personal security for residents who rarely see patrol cars on daily errands.

To address manpower shortages, a housing initiative called “Project Key” has been launched. Two eight-story buildings have been designated for rental to police officers, including single officers, who will pay 430 shekels per month for shared apartments. In exchange for serving in Lod, Ramle or the traffic police, they will also work four days a week.

Currently, Lod police have only 15 registered volunteers, and Lavi wants to expand that number. “Step under the stretcher,” he urged residents. “Help me strengthen the police.”

At the same time, Lavi announced the establishment of a dedicated riot-control unit for Lod consisting of 40 officers equipped with vans, motorcycles and advanced tactical gear. Unlike regional units operating across multiple cities, this unit will be assigned specifically to Lod. The goal, he said, is to confront key drivers of crime, particularly illegal firearms.

Gunfire incidents are not limited to targeted killings. Last Friday, residents preparing for the Sabbath heard bursts of celebratory gunfire at a wedding. Within minutes, the bride, groom and several guests were taken in for questioning, and the wedding tent was dismantled.

Revivo said that in such incidents his phone “collapses with messages,” reflecting widespread anxiety. He added that residents are calling the police hotline less frequently because of declining public trust. Local WhatsApp groups have become the primary source of updates after each burst of gunfire, often from long firearms audible across the city.

Lavi urged residents to report incidents directly. “Call 100 for any suspected criminal event,” he said. “Writing in WhatsApp groups is not a substitute.”



*(Photo: Israel Police)*

The violence in Lod is part of a broader surge in homicides within the Arab community. In 2025 alone, a record 252 people were killed, and most cases remain unsolved.

Revivo has called for the Shin Bet to assist in combating crime organizations and illegal weapons. He said he and his brother recently met with incoming Shin Bet chief David Zini.

“He was the first to say he is ready to step under the stretcher,” Revivo said. “But he also said that to do so, he would need expanded resources, such as establishing a division to deal with the issue. The Shin Bet has technological capabilities and field personnel who can provide an appropriate response.”

Expanding those resources would take time, and many within the police are not convinced Shin Bet involvement is the solution. A senior police officer said the agency has no “magic wand” and argued that with enhanced technological tools and legal authorities, police could address the problem just as effectively. Legislation that would allow police to resume use of spyware remains stalled in parliament.

“On the day Hussein was killed, five people were murdered across the country,” friends of Kamla Abu Rakiq said as they sat with her at home. “People no longer argue — they come and kill. This must stop. Where does all this weaponry come from? Our children go to work in fear. Sadly, Hussein’s murder does not move anyone.”

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/r1udi9vuzg>

## Iran ‘not going to get bogged down in talks’ – source



***A response to a potential US attack would be “broad and unlimited,” according to defense official***

22 Feb, 2026 00:11

***Iran marks the anniversary of the 1979 Revolution, Tehran, February 11, 2026. © Majid Saeedi / Getty Images***

**Iran will not give in to US blackmail over its nuclear program, an Iranian defense source told RT on Saturday. The official warned that any potential US or Israeli attack on Iran would be met with a “broad and unlimited response.”**

**The source said the US is “well aware of Iran’s capability and determination to respond,” and that President Donald Trump is “buying time to try to force Iran to accept his terms by increasing military and political pressure.”**

*“Iran is not going to get bogged down in a long and fruitless negotiation process. A negotiation where the prospect of lifting sanctions is weak has no value for Iran,”* the source said.

Tensions between the US and Iran continued this week as Omani-mediated talks between Iranian and US officials in Geneva produced no breakthroughs.

Trump, who tore up the 2015 UN-backed nuclear deal during his first term in office, has repeatedly demanded that Iran completely dismantle its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. On Thursday, he gave Iran between 10 and 15 days to reach an agreement.

The US has deployed two aircraft carrier strike groups and additional bombers to the Middle East. Multiple media outlets claim that Trump is considering strikes on Iran.

Iran has responded to the military buildup by holding snap live-fire drills, while the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has said it would target American bases in the region if attacked.

Tehran maintains that its nuclear program is entirely peaceful and a sovereign right. Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi told MSNBC on Friday that Iran would submit a new draft proposal soon, adding that although the country prefers a diplomatic path, it remains *“prepared for war.”*

[RTExclusive https://www.rt.com/news/632882-iran-not-going-get-bogged/](https://www.rt.com/news/632882-iran-not-going-get-bogged/)

## **Epstein ranch under criminal investigation after ‘buried bodies’ claim – Reuters** ***A newly released email reportedly alleges that two foreign girls were strangled during “fetish sex” and buried in New Mexico***

21 Feb, 2026 14:13



© Sotheby's International Realty

**Public land near what was once Jeffrey Epstein’s Zorro Ranch has gone under criminal probe after a newly released email alleged that two foreign girls were buried there after being killed during violent sexual acts, Reuters reported Thursday.**

**The probe follows the release of the Epstein files, totaling over 3.5 million pages, which has prompted a wave of resignations and renewed investigations worldwide into alleged human trafficking and other crimes linked to Epstein’s network.**

A key focus of the probe is the previously classified 2019 email sent to New Mexico radio host Eddy Aragon, the news agency noted. The sender, claiming to be a former Zorro Ranch employee, reportedly alleged that two foreign girls had been buried on Epstein’s orders. The message reportedly claims the girls were buried *“somewhere in the hills outside the Zorro”* and had died *“by strangulation during rough, fetish sex.”*

Aragon said he believed the email was legitimate and forwarded it to the FBI. A 2021 FBI report included in the latest release says he visited the bureau’s office to report an email offering seven abuse videos and burial coordinates in exchange for one bitcoin.

Epstein bought Zorro Ranch, located near New Mexico’s town of Stanley, in 1993 and built a hilltop mansion. Nearby was a private airstrip with a hangar and helipad. The property also included a ranch office, a firehouse and a seven-bay heated garage.

New Mexico’s Department of Justice announced Thursday that a criminal investigation, closed back in 2019, was reopened after reviewing previously sealed FBI files included in the release. A spokesperson told Reuters that the state had requested an unredacted copy of a 2019 email containing the allegations and that authorities *“are actively investigating this allegation and conducting a broader review in light of the latest release.”*

New Mexico state prosecutors said in a statement that the review will focus on preserving any remaining evidence and following the facts *“wherever they lead,”* while carefully evaluating jurisdictional matters.

Epstein, who pleaded guilty in 2008 to soliciting prostitution and was sentenced to 18 months in prison for

raping a minor, was arrested again in 2019 on charges of human trafficking and exploiting victims for prostitution. He died in jail ahead of his trial. The US Department of Justice has gradually released relevant materials under the Epstein Files Transparency Act. <https://www.rt.com/news/632862-epstein-burials-zorro-ranch/>

## Trans lawmaker wants you to believe porn sites are 'educational' for 'queer kids'

By [Harold Hutchison, Daily Caller News Foundation](#)

[February 21, 2026](#)



**Democratic Minnesota state Rep. Leigh Finke claimed during a Thursday hearing that pornography could be "educational" for "queer" children while arguing against a law requiring age verification to access adult web sites.**

**The legislation HF 1434, would require age verification for sites deemed "harmful to minors," with sites failing to do so being subject to civil action from the state attorney general and private citizens. Finke, a biological male who identifies as a**

**transgender woman, claimed current sex education was not being provided for LGBT youth.**

### WATCH:

"The AGs in many states are, are very clear about that they're almost jubilant about being able to use these laws to ban young people from accessing content that could be educational if they are queer," Finke claimed during the Thursday hearing. "And you're a principal, you have LGBT students in your school, and we also know that they're not receiving sex education for queer kids. We know that. Prurient interest could be for many people the very existence of transgender kids. More and more people are saying there simply are no transgender kids."

President Donald Trump [signed](#) an executive order declaring the government's recognition of the "biological reality of sex" and defining terms like male, female, man, woman, boy and girl within hours of taking the oath of office on Jan. 20, 2025. He later issued an [order](#) targeting child sex change procedures.

In [2023](#), Finke authored [legislation](#) that would remove an exception for pedophiles when it came to [protections](#) against discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, later [claiming](#) that the backlash was from people who "used the opportunity to amplify the hatred of trans people."

Finke [received](#) a "Children's Health Hero" award from the Children's Minnesota hospital system for [authoring](#) HF146, the "trans refuge" legislation for child sex change procedures. Democratic Gov. Tim Walz of Minnesota, who was his party's nominee for vice president in 2024, [signed](#) the legislation into law on April 27, 2023.

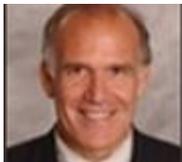
*Content created by The Daily Caller News Foundation is available without charge to any eligible news publisher that can provide a large audience. For licensing opportunities of our original content, please contact [licensing@dailycallernewsfoundation.org](mailto:licensing@dailycallernewsfoundation.org).*

<https://www.wnd.com/2026/02/trans-lawmaker-wants-you-believe-porn-sites-are/>

**The world and the educational system is infested with very sick evil people. Time for the Messiah. rdb**

### OP ED

## Why Exactly Did They Destroy the Border?



[Victor Davis Hanson](#) | Feb 19, 2026

*The opinions expressed by columnists are their own and do not necessarily represent the views of Townhall.com.*

*AP Photo/Eric Gay*



**Why would any president destroy the U.S. southern border?**

**The Left typically "pounces" on anyone daring to suggest that the Biden administration had green-lighted illegal immigration to gain new constituents for agendas that otherwise were without public support.**

**The Left smears critics of open borders as racist conspiracists spreading the "Great Replacement Theory."**

Yet for years, Democrats and leftists themselves had written triumphalist books with titles like "The Emerging Democratic Majority." And often they crowed that "demography is destiny."

A few left-wing globalists even boasted of a new borderless world in which anyone could live anywhere they wished.

Not too long ago, Texas State Representative Gene Wum, D-Houston, chair of the Texas House Democratic Caucus, jumped the shark to say out loud what is usually left unsaid about the Democratic agenda: "The day the Latino, African American, Asian and other communities realize that they share the same oppressor is the day we start winning, because we are the majority in this country now. We have the ability to take over this country and to do what is needed for everyone."

The same unapologetic left-wing weaponization of illegal immigration is occurring in Europe. Sheer numbers there have already radically changed the demography – and political constituencies – of the continent.

Recently, the former Spanish "Minister of Equality," an energized Irene Montero, offered an unambiguous rant: "I hope for 'replacement theory,' I hope we can sweep this country of fascists and racists with immigrants. Whatever their skin color, whether 'Chinese, Black, or Brown.'"

The climax of the new hubris in the U.S. was the Biden administration's destruction of the southern border and even rudimentary enforcement of federal immigration law.

On some days, the Biden influx exceeded anyone's wildest imagination, at a rate of 10,000 illegal entrants per day. The Homeland "Security" Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas, in Baghdad Bob-style, occasionally pontificated that the border was "secure" – as thousands in the background illegally swarmed the border, without health, or even rudimentary background checks.

The Left's political agenda for illegal immigration was to be realized either immediately through compromised ballot integrity or soon enough by warping the census-based reapportionment of congressional districts.

No wonder there is now near-hysterical Democratic opposition to even basic national requirements of a photo ID to vote. Yet, traditionally liberal polls like Gallup and Pew show that 83-84 percent of Americans support mandatory presentation of a voter photo ID.

Usually, the Left fawns over European protocols. But it now grows quiet when reminded that 46 of 47 European nations, even those governed by the Left, require IDs to vote.

Apparently, Democrats assumed that once 10 million more of the world's poorest had illegally crashed the southern border, without audit or English proficiency, they would filter throughout American society and become impossible to repatriate.

Soon, open borders would flip more states blue, as well as increase their congressional seats. Illegals were to be redefined as mere "residents," and often recipients of mail-in ballots.

The reality that millions of new poor would by needs grow the welfare state, expand government at all levels, require far more taxes, and fuel the DEI binary of oppressed/oppressors were added benefits.

The nexus between the 9 billion dollar Somali welfare fraud and Minnesota Democratic officials offers a sharp reminder of how the immigration/welfare/DEI exemption industry was created and protected by authorities.

Former President Joe Biden's new 10 million unlawful entrants may have increased the existing pool of illegal aliens (20 million?) to 30 million. That total, in turn, radically grew the existing group of 20 million legal foreign-born citizens and legal residents of various categories.

So when Trump took office in January 2025, the U.S. had admitted a record high of foreign-born residents. They now make up some 16 percent of the population and perhaps 53 million in actual numbers.

The influxes came at a time when too often the melting-pot tradition of integration, assimilation, and acculturation were reviled, and to be superseded by salad-bowl ethnic chauvinism and separatism.

Yet the triumphant Left never imagined a Trump reelection.

Nor could it grasp fully Trump's counterrevolutionary effort to secure the border and undo the Biden nihilism.

Even more surreal to Democrats were Trump's efforts to reinstate the integrity and supremacy of federal immigration law.

No one really believed Trump would seek to find and deport millions who had filtered through 50 states. Most were enjoying de facto immunity via hundreds of left-wing lower district court judges and blue-state officials of the Tim Walz/Gavin Newsom sort.

There is only one way that the Left would ever oppose a return to legal, measured, and diverse immigration.

Namely, if any of its immigrant constituencies in the future – such as the 55 percent of Hispanic males who voted for Trump in 2024 – dared to vote on criteria other than federal entitlements, ethnic solidarity, and Democratic coercion.

Do that, and the Left would close the border quickly.

**Victor Davis Hanson is a distinguished fellow of the Center for American Greatness. He is a classicist and historian at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, and the author of "The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won," from Basic Books. You can reach him by emailing [authorvdh@gmail.com](mailto:authorvdh@gmail.com).**

<https://townhall.com/columnists/victordavishanson/2026/02/19/why-exactly-did-they-destroy-the-border-n2671581>



BS”D

#### STEP BY STEP

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Eye Exam/Eyeglasses: \$60 per child.

Your support is urgently requested.

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

US Donors may also send checks made payable to

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

Rabbi Simcha Smolensky, 6739 N Mozart St Chicago IL 60645

**Your support will be appreciated.**

Yaffa Smolensky