

04162026 NEWS SPECIAL Don't miss Lev U'Neshama NOTE at end!

Please Note:

I am now home from having triple bypass surgery. I will attempt to start looking at the news and sending something out in the near future but it will be very abbreviated with only titles and links You can also subscribe to one of the many Israel reviews that are mailed out daily.

Thank you for your patience. rdb

Hegseth warns US ready to resume fighting 'with more power than ever' if Tehran spurns deal

Joint Chiefs head says US Navy will 'actively pursue' vessels in service of Iran anywhere in the world; Hegseth lashes out at press, accuses them of acting like 'Pharisees' in New Testament

By [Tol Staff](#) and [Agencies](#) Today, 7:19 pm

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/hegseth-warns-us-ready-to-resume-fighting-with-more-power-than-ever-if-tehran-spurns-deal/>

PM says Israel ready for Iran war resumption, while US gears for another round of talks

White House says 2nd meeting, if one takes place, will again likely be in Islamabad; senior Iranian official says some progress has been made, but 'fundamental disagreements remain'

By [Agencies](#), [Nava Freiberg](#) and [Jacob Magid](#)

Today, 5:59 am Updated at 12:48 pm

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/pm-says-israel-ready-for-iran-war-resumption-while-us-gears-for-another-round-of-talks/>

Report: US-Iran deal may take months to finalize

Gulf states push for current ceasefire be extended to cover that period, as well as immediate reopening of Strait of Hormuz, warning privately that failure to within the next month could trigger a global food crisis
ynet|12:37

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/hkziacr311l>

Netanyahu on Lebanon ceasefire: 'I agreed to a timeout, a historic opportunity for peace'

Israel will keep forces in a 10-kilometer buffer zone, Netanyahu said he did not agree to Hezbollah's terms; Trump said US is going to meet Israeli and Lebanese leaders and that Iran 'wants to make a deal'

[Itamar Eichner](#), [News Agencies](#)|Updated:13:45

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/rk9nysrh11l>

Beirut said to balk as Trump pushes for 1st-ever call between leaders of Lebanon and Israel

President Aoun reportedly tells Rubio he won't speak to PM Netanyahu, with Lebanon pressing for a ceasefire before any talks while cross-border fighting continues in full force

By [Stav Levaton](#), [Jacob Magid](#), [Nurit Yohanan](#), [Emanuel Fabian](#) and [Agencies](#) Today, 3:55 pm

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/beirut-said-to-balk-as-trump-pushes-for-1st-ever-call-between-leaders-of-lebanon-and-israel/>

'A sentence for the next massacre': Northern Israelis slam ceasefire, accuse government

Netanyahu declined to hold a Cabinet vote on a 10-day Lebanon ceasefire as northern officials warned it was 'a sentence for the next massacre,' with residents calling it 'capitulation to Iran' and others branding it 'a disgrace'

Yair Kraus|Updated:14:24

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/r1jgnnchze>

US, Hamas reportedly hold direct talks, as Board of Peace disarmament plan stalls

Senior Trump official Lightstone meets with Hayya, as Hamas bucks ceasefire's 2nd phase requirement that it give up weapons, arguing that Israel violating truce's first phase

By [Toi Staff](#), [Jacob Magid](#) and [Emanuel Fabian](#)

Today, 3:19 pm

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-hamas-reportedly-hold-direct-talks-on-gaza-plan-first-since-ceasefire-began/>

Eisenkot unveils aliyah plan to bring two million olim by 2048, vows to cut bureaucracy

Eisenkot's Yashar! party has been gaining support in recent polls, with the former IDF chief of staff describing himself as a "very strong candidate."

By [KESHET NEEV](#) APRIL 16, 2026 18:33 Updated: APRIL 16, 2026 19:23

Bennett launches national disability inclusion plan, pledges accessibility reforms if elected

Bennett said at a Bnei Brak event that there are 1.2 million people with disabilities in Israel, and that the state has been failing to integrate them into society.

By [KESHET NEEV](#) APRIL 16, 2026 21:12

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-893307>

170 soldiers added to list of Israel's fallen since last Memorial Day

In addition, 54 veterans died due to injuries sustained during service, taking total since 1860 to 25,644; ceremonies may be pre-recorded due to wartime guidelines

By [Stav Levaton](#)

Today, 4:02 pm

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/170-soldiers-added-to-list-of-israels-fallen-since-last-memorial-day/>

'They are champions at lying': Ex-defense official warns against US-Iran nuclear deal

The central issue in any such agreement would still be Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium. According to Vilan, Tehran currently holds about 450 kilograms of enriched uranium produced since 2018.

By [103FM](#) APRIL 16, 2026 13:08

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-893222>

US Senate foils effort to nix Israel arms sales, but record 85% of Democrats support the move

Sanders' resolutions to stop bulldozer, bomb deliveries gain unprecedented Democratic support, demonstrating major shift in party's approach toward Israel over wars in Gaza, Lebanon

By [Jacob Magid](#)

and [Agencies](#) Today, 8:44 am

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-senate-foils-effort-to-nix-israel-arms-sale-but-75-of-dems-vote-to-block-it/>

Israeli ambassador said to meet discreetly with French far right's Marine Le Pen National Rally party leader's reported meetings with Israeli, Lebanese envoys come amid her criticism of Macron's stance on Israel, and as Jerusalem sidelines Paris from Lebanon talks

By [Stav Levaton](#)

and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 12:41 pm

OP ED

Lebanon: From 'Switzerland of the Middle East' to Iran's Puppet

by [Khaled Abu Toameh](#)

April 16, 2026 at 5:00 am



Lebanon has effectively become a protectorate of Iran. The consequences for the Lebanese people have been devastating. Hezbollah has dragged Lebanon into two calamitous confrontations with Israel in just the last three years. ***Pictured: Hezbollah supporters hold an anti-government protest on April 11, 2026 in Beirut, Lebanon. (Photo by Chris McGrath/Getty Images)***

This week, as the Lebanese government was preparing to participate in US-mediated talks with Israel in Washington, DC, Hezbollah, the Iran-backed terrorist organization, delivered its verdict: No negotiations, no compromise. Only war.

The talks, which took place on April 14, aim to [ensure](#) "long-term security of Israel's northern border" while supporting Lebanon's efforts to "reclaim full sovereignty over its territory."

In a televised [speech](#), Hezbollah Secretary-General Naim Qassem [dismissed](#) the talks as "futile" and reaffirmed that his organization will not disarm. Referring to [statements](#) by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that Hezbollah's weapons must be dismantled and that Israel wants a real peace agreement with Lebanon, Qassem [declared](#):

"We will not rest, stop or surrender. We will let the battlefield speak for itself. We will remain in the field until our last breath."

Qassem [added](#):

"We reject negotiations with the usurping entity... We call for a historic and heroic stance by canceling this negotiating meeting."

Wafiq Safa, a senior Hezbollah official, [told](#) *The Associated Press* that his organization will refuse to abide by any agreements that may result from the direct Lebanon-Israel talks:

"[A]s for the outcomes of this negotiation between Lebanon and the Israeli enemy, we are not interested in or concerned with them at all.... We are not bound by what they agree to."

These statements are not simply rhetoric. They are a proclamation that Hezbollah, *not* the Lebanese government, will determine whether Lebanon goes to war or pursues peace.

Lebanon today bears little resemblance to the country it once was.

Before the 1975-1990 civil war, Lebanon was [known](#) as the "Switzerland of the Middle East." During the 1960s and 1970s, it [enjoyed](#) significant prosperity, strict banking secrecy laws, and a reputation as a safe, neutral financial hub for regional and international capital. Its banking sector was among the most sophisticated in the Arab world. It attracted foreign investment and established Beirut as one of the world's leading financial centers.

French journalist Julien Ricour-Brasseur [wrote](#) in *Middle East Eye* in 2021:

"Lebanese citizens unwilling to attempt the desperate crossing of the Mediterranean are flocking to public offices to obtain visas to any possible destination. They are looking to somewhere beyond the sea, where the glow of green is beckoning, the green light of hope - and the dollar...."

"The story of Lebanon could open like this: Once upon a time, there was a nation known as the Switzerland of the Middle East. And frankly, the story ends there."

Lebanon was also distinguished by its sectarian diversity and religious pluralism, a place where multiple Muslim and Christian communities coexisted within a relatively open political system. Its geography, combining snow-capped mountains suitable for winter sports with a Mediterranean coastline, made it a major tourism destination. At its peak, Lebanon enjoyed one of the highest GDP per capita levels in the region and was regarded as a rare oasis of stability in a turbulent Middle East. This Lebanon, however, no longer exists.

Decades of civil war, corruption, and political paralysis have been a main driving force behind its decline. Yet Hezbollah's emergence as an armed state within the state, and its repeated wars with Israel on behalf of its patrons in Iran, are key factors that have contributed to Lebanon's collapse.

Lebanon is currently a failing state. In 2022, the United Nations [wrote](#):

"The destructive actions of Lebanon's political and financial leaders are responsible for forcing most of the country's population into poverty, in violation of international human rights law, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Olivier De Schutter, said in a report published today...

"'Impunity, corruption, and structural inequality have been baked into a venal political and economic system designed to fail those at the bottom, but it doesn't have to be that way,' said De Schutter, an independent expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council.

"'The political establishment knew about the looming cataclysm for years but did little to avert it. Well-connected individuals even moved their money out of the country..'

"'Central Bank policies, in particular, led to a downward spiral of the currency, the devastation of the economy, the wiping out of people's lifetime savings and to plunging the population into poverty.'"

Worse, Lebanon has effectively become a protectorate of Iran. The consequences for the Lebanese people have been devastating.

Hezbollah has dragged Lebanon into two calamitous confrontations with Israel in just the last three years.

The first took place after the October 7, 2023 Hamas-led invasion of southern Israel, when Hezbollah opened fire on Israel from Lebanon as a "support front" for its terrorist allies in the Gaza Strip.

The second war Hezbollah launched against Israel came after Israeli and American strikes against Iranian targets in June 2025. Hezbollah again initiated rocket and drone attacks on Israel in "solidarity" with the Iranian regime. Both rounds of fighting brought renewed destruction, displacement, and economic collapse on the Lebanese people.

The pattern is now clear: Hezbollah chooses death and destruction, and the Lebanese people pay the price.

Created, funded, and armed by the Iranian regime, Hezbollah continues to operate as Iran's most powerful proxy in the Middle East. Its leaders [pledge](#) allegiance not to Lebanon, but to mullahs in Iran. Its weapons are not under the control of the Lebanese state. Its decisions on war and peace are dictated by Iran's regional strategy rather than Lebanon's national interests.

While not formal peace negotiations, the meeting in Washington this week signaled a possible step toward more structured dialogue and normalization between Israel and Lebanon.

Peace between Lebanon and Israel would, above all, benefit the Lebanese people. It would stabilize Lebanon, open the door to economic recovery, attract investment, and begin reversing decades of state collapse. More significantly, it would restore to Lebanon what Hezbollah has taken away: the ability to act as a sovereign state pursuing its own national interests.

The Hezbollah leader's call to cancel the Washington talks reflects the terrorist organization's fear that diplomacy could succeed and that Lebanon might begin to break free from the grip of the Iranian regime. For the Lebanese people, peace with Israel could offer something more basic: a chance to reclaim their country from the cycle of war, death and destruction. Until that reality changes, Lebanon will remain trapped not only in conflict with Israel, but in a deeper crisis of sovereignty, identity, and survival.

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

- *Follow Khaled Abu Toameh on [X \(formerly Twitter\)](#)*



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