

This article is long but most important. Everything is just sliding into prophetic place. rdb

## How Close Is Iran to the Bomb?

*Documents translated by The Free Press reveal the Islamic Republic could be closer to that day than many experts understand. Jay Solomon reports.*

By [Jay Solomon](#) September 3, 2024

If Iran ever builds a nuclear bomb, then we'll be living in a drastically more dangerous world. For more than two decades, avoiding that reality has motivated American foreign policy, with decidedly mixed results. Now, recent activities at a secretive office inside Tehran's Ministry of Defense is stoking fears that we're far closer to that day than many experts understand.

Two separate documents—about a half dozen pages written in Farsi—obtained by *The Free Press* reveal how Iran's parliament, or Majlis, is significantly expanding the funding and military pursuits of the [Organization of Defensive Innovation and Research](#), known by its Farsi language-based acronym, SPND. The pages of legislation, passed this summer, were downloaded from the parliament's website, but are being detailed for the first time in the Western press.

While the new Iranian legislation doesn't specifically mention nuclear bomb development, it clearly states that SPND's mandate is to produce advanced and nonconventional weapons with no civilian oversight. The legislation, which *The Free Press* translated, states that "this organization focuses on managing and acquiring innovative, emerging, groundbreaking, high-risk, and superior technologies in response to new and emerging threats."

The law essentially shields Iran's defense department from any domestic oversight—while giving it a seemingly unlimited budget, though no specific numbers were given. When Iran's parliament published the legislation on its website in May, it offered the most detailed accounting yet of SPND's structure, which was largely kept secret.

The Iranian law decrees that SPND reports directly to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who is also the chief commander of Iran's armed forces. It says the organization "has an independent legal [status] and operates as a government institution with financial, transactional, and administrative independence."

Ali Akbar Salehi, a former foreign minister and ex-head of Iran's Atomic Energy Organization, bluntly [told Iranian state television in February](#) that his country already has all the necessary components to build a bomb. "We have all the thresholds of nuclear science and technology," Salehi said in response to a question about Iran's nuclear capabilities. "I'll give you an example: What does a car want? It wants a chassis, an engine, a steering wheel, and a gearbox. You tell me, did you make the gearbox? I say yes. Did you make the engine? Yes, but each one is for its own purpose."

For more than a decade, American, Israeli, and United Nations officials have closely tracked SPND's operations due to their collective belief that it has played the leading role in covert nuclear weapons research for the Islamic Republic.

Starting in 2014, the [U.S. has sanctioned](#) a spiderweb of SPND officials, subsidiaries, and front companies in a bid to drain the organization's supply lines and resources. Israel was so alarmed by SPND's activities that its agents [assassinated the organization's former chief, Mohsen Fakhrizadeh](#), on the outskirts of Tehran in November 2020. Assassins, also believed to be backed by Israel, [killed five other Iranian scientists](#) between 2007 and 2012, and attempted to take out a sixth.

Now, in an apparent jab at Israel, this new Iranian law described in the documents reviewed by *The Free Press* honors SPND's fallen founder, stating that the organization's work will "continue and consolidate the path of the scientist, Martyr Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, and achieve the advanced technologies needed for current and future defense and security."

David Albright, a former UN arms inspector who has closely tracked SPND's activities for more than a decade, believes the documents show Tehran's brazenness and desire to make known its growing capabilities. "SPND seeks to develop all kinds of weapons systems and do all kinds of military-related research, and they want to worry their adversaries while ensuring an open spigot of money from the Iranian regime," Albright, who heads the [Institute for Science and International Security](#), told *The Free Press*. "This would come largely free of governmental or parliamentary oversight."

The expansion of SPND outlined in these documents coincides with a shift in the U.S. intelligence community's view of Iran's nuclear program. [A July report](#) released by the top U.S. intelligence body, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI), details how it can no longer verify that Iran's nuclear pursuits are strictly for civilian purposes. U.S. and Israeli intelligence officials have also detected Iran engaging in computer modeling and metallurgy experiments—possibly through SPND—that could be used in nuclear bomb development, according to people briefed on the classified information.

Some worry Iran could use the Middle East's instability, and the war in Gaza, as a pretext to further expand its nuclear capabilities—if not make a dash for a bomb.

“One decision [by Tehran] could get them very close to having that nuclear weapon—in which case, so many response options are taken off the table for the United States, for Israel, and for the world,” said Dana Stroul, who served as the Pentagon's point person on Mideast policy from 2021–2023, at a roundtable in August. She said the ease with which Israel, the U.S., and its allies intercepted a [wave of Iranian missiles and drones](#) launched at the Jewish state this past April could steer Iran's leaders to seek even greater military capabilities.

SPND, according to U.S. and Israeli officials, is the successor to a covert Iranian nuclear weapons program, called the [AMAD Plan](#), which Iran disbanded in 2003 after it was detected by Western intelligence agencies. U.S. and UN officials have told me that Iranian officials repeatedly denied SPND's existence as well as the involvement of its late director, Fakhrizadeh. Multiple past efforts to interview Fakhrizadeh and other SPND officials by weapons inspectors from the UN's nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency, were denied, according to current and former agency officials.

Iran's government officially claims that its nuclear program is for peaceful pursuits and [cites a religious fatwa](#), or decree, publicly issued in 2003 by Ayatollah Khamenei banning the development of atomic weapons. But in recent months a number of current and former Iranian officials, including Ali Akbar Salehi, have publicly questioned the utility of this military doctrine, pointing in part to the threats posed by the U.S. and Israel, both of which have nuclear weapons (though [Israel has never acknowledged](#) its arsenal). This debate about the right to develop nuclear weapons is also taking place inside Iran's elite military unit, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, according to people who have talked to senior IRGC officials in recent months.

Over the past two years, Iran has significantly expanded its stockpile of highly enriched uranium to the point it could be used to assemble a half-dozen bombs if this fissile material is refined further, according to Albright and other nuclear weapons experts. Senior U.S. officials now say that Tehran [could produce weapons-grade fuel in just a few weeks](#). Iran has also moved ahead with developing a potential delivery system for an atomic weapon: [test-firing the long-range Simorgh carrier rocket](#) in January.

The U.S. intelligence community's official position, going back to 2007, had been that Iran “isn't currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons development activities necessary to produce a testable nuclear device.” But in July, the ODNI significantly [shifted this language](#) to state that Tehran has “undertaken activities that better position it to produce a nuclear device, if it chooses to do so.”

SPND's operations are seen as central to any final Iranian decision to actually cross the weapons threshold. Its scientists, some of whom are tied to the original AMAD Plan, have been involved in developing triggering devices for a nuclear detonation, according to U.S., Israeli, and UN officials. But there remains uncertainty about just how far Fakhrizade's men have gotten.

In 2018, spies from Israel's intelligence service, Mossad, [exfiltrated a half-ton of documents](#) from a dilapidated warehouse in south Tehran, which Israeli officials say tell the broader tale of Iran's nuclear weapons activities. Known as the Atomic Archive, they identify dozens of undeclared sites where covert nuclear work allegedly took place. Some of these sites are also believed to house undeclared nuclear materials and equipment. Inspectors from the UN have repeatedly tried to gain access to these sites, but have largely failed.

A wild card in the Iran story, though, is the country's newly elected president, Masoud Pezeshkian. The 69-year-old cardiac surgeon [took office in July](#) following the death of his hard-line predecessor, Ebrahim Raisi, in a helicopter crash. Pezeshkian, a self-proclaimed reformist, has spoken about his desire to renew negotiations with the U.S. and other governments to constrain Iran's nuclear capabilities in exchange for a loosening of Western sanctions. He has placed on his staff a number of the diplomats who negotiated the [landmark 2015 nuclear deal](#) with the Obama administration, from which President Trump withdrew the U.S. three years later.

President Biden has sought—unsuccessfully—to revive the deal during his tenure, using European officials as intermediaries. The diplomatic process has been complicated, though, by [the suspension last year](#) of the White House's point man on Iran, Robert Malley, whom the FBI is now investigating for allegedly mishandling classified

information.

Vice President Kamala Harris hasn't yet spoken on the campaign trail about her position on the Iranian nuclear program. But her national security adviser, Phil Gordon, helped negotiate the original pact and has been among the most prominent Democrats calling for diplomacy with Tehran. His ties to individuals close to Tehran have already stoked criticism from the right, as *The Free Press* [reported in August](#).

U.S. and Israeli officials are deeply skeptical that Pezeshkian has the political heft to wrestle control of SPND and Iran's broader nuclear program from the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and Ayatollah Khamenei. But there's still a belief, even in Israel, that the U.S. and Iran will return to the negotiating table, particularly in a Harris administration—even at the risk of Tehran using diplomacy as a cover to continue its nuclear pursuits.

The sense that Iran was secretly seeking the bomb has, at times, seemed like a Western myth or outright paranoia. But the simple passage of this new Iranian law could mark the end of this story of intrigue.

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## Watch: IDF returns to Rafah with low-grade attacks

*The IDF noted that Division 162 has eliminated around 200 terrorists in recent weeks.*

By [YONAH JEREMY BOB](#) SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 16:01 **Updated:** SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 17:04

**The IDF on Wednesday announced that it was continuing low-grade fighting against Hamas in the Tel al-Sultan area of Rafah in deep southern Gaza.**

**The IDF message did not mention any military activities in the northern, central, or Khan Yunis portion of southern Gaza.**

**In fact, since August 31, no land forces have been mentioned as carrying out attacks and the only Division mentioned has been 162 in Rafah, whereas before that Division 252 was operating in northern or central Gaza and Division 98 had been operating in Khan Yunis until August 31 when it formally withdrew.**

**On Sunday, the IDF sent out only one message about one attack in northern Gaza, seemingly an air strike.**



*A graphic of the area in which the weapons were located. (credit: IDF SPOKESMAN'S UNIT)*

**Division 162 in the thick of it**

**On Wednesday, the IDF noted that Division 162 had killed around 200 terrorists in recent weeks, but it was unclear how many of them had been killed on Tuesday or in recent days.**

It was noteworthy that the IDF said that Division 162 had **destroyed 10 long-range rockets, which could bring Hamas down to an extremely small inventory of remaining long-range rockets**, which sources had already told the *Jerusalem Post* was getting close to being spent.

### Nearing the end

**The IDF also noted some small individual incidents of locating terrorists who opened fire on them and who they then eliminated.**

Already on August 21, [Defense Minister Yoav Gallant](#) publicly said that the last elements of Hamas's Rafah battalions had been defeated.

**In fact, by late June, most of Hamas's four Rafah battalions had already been defeated.**

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-818714>



# Hezbollah pounds Galilee with over 100 rockets, causing heavy damage but no injuries

Home in Kiryat Shmona takes direct hit, with owner saying his parents' home was hit when he was a kid; firefighters tackle blazes sparked by rockets

By [Emanuel Fabian](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 4:33 pm



Israeli security forces at the scene where a missile fired from Lebanon hit a home in the northern city of Kiryat Shmona, September 4, 2024. (Ayal Margolin/Flash90)

**More than 100 rockets were fired from Lebanon at northern Israel on Wednesday, sparking fires and causing damage but no injuries, authorities said.**

**Within an hour, some 65 rockets were launched from Lebanon at the Galilee Panhandle area, according to the Israel Defense Forces.**

**Several rockets impacted the northern city of Kiryat Shmona, causing damage to at least one home,**

local authorities said.

**The IDF said some of the rockets were intercepted by air defenses.** Others hit open areas, sparking fires. Firefighters were working to extinguish the blazes.

**The Iran-backed Lebanese terror group Hezbollah took responsibility for the barrage,** claiming to have targeted Israeli military positions.

**Later in the day, one projectile was fired from Lebanon at the border community of Shtula, and another five rockets were launched at Zar'it** in the Western Galilee, according to the IDF.

There were no injuries in the attacks, also claimed by Hezbollah.



**The Iron Dome air defense system intercepts rockets fired from Lebanon at northern Israel, September 4, 2024. (Ayal Margolin/Flash90)**

**Israeli fighter jets struck also Hezbollah rocket launchers in southern Lebanon Kounine and Qabriqha,** which were used in previous attacks on Israel, the IDF said.

The military released footage of the strikes.

דובר צה"ל:

במהלך היום, מטוסי קרב של חיל האוויר תקפו משגרים של ארגון הטרור ח'זבאללה במרחבים כונין וקבריח'א שבדרום לבנון, אשר ביצעו ירי לעבר

שטח מדינת ישראל.

בהמשך להתרעות שהופעלו בשעה 13:40 במרחב שתולה, זוהה שיגור בודד שחצה משטח לבנון ונפל בשטח פתוח [pic.twitter.com/hDnc0eTl95](https://pic.twitter.com/hDnc0eTl95) אין נפגעים

— צבא ההגנה לישראל (@idfonline) [September 4, 2024](#)

**Eliezer Peretz, whose home was struck by a rocket, told the Walla news outlet that he had been in the northern city of Safed, where he runs a market stall, when he received a call from the Kiryat Shmona Municipality telling him that his home had taken a direct hit.**

Peretz said he had still not seen the damage but that officials told him it was heavy.

"This is **really hard**," Peretz said, explaining that it was a **brand new home** for him and his family.

"My wife and I put a lot of energy and money into it," he said. "This is a really harsh situation and you can't get used to it."

"The important thing is that we are healthy and well," he said. "What was destroyed we will rebuild."

As a child growing up in the city, he said his parents' home had also been hit by a rocket from Lebanon.

"I grew up in this reality," he said.

**The Peretz family, along with the rest of Kirya Shmona, was evacuated to a hotel in Tiberias** when fighting in the north started last year. Tens of thousands of northern residents were moved to safer areas and have still not returned to their homes.



*Security forces at the scene where a missile fired from Lebanon hit an open area near the northern city of Kiryat Shmona, September 4, 2024. (Ayal Margolin/Flash90)*

Since October 8, Hezbollah-led forces have attacked Israeli communities and military posts along the border on a near-daily basis, with the group saying it is doing so to support Gaza amid the war against the Hamas terror group there. More than 8,000 rockets have been fired at Israel from Lebanon since the start of the war.

So far, the skirmishes have resulted in 26 civilian deaths on the Israeli side, as well as the deaths

of 20 IDF soldiers and reservists. There have also been several attacks from Syria, without any injuries.

Hezbollah has named 432 members who have been killed by Israel during the ongoing skirmishes, mostly in Lebanon but some also in Syria. Another 76 operatives from other terror groups, a Lebanese soldier, and dozens of civilians have also been killed.

War in Gaza erupted when the Palestinian terror group Hamas led a devastating cross-border attack on Israel that killed 1,200 people, mostly civilians. The 3,000 terrorists who burst into the country also abducted 251 people who were taken hostage to Gaza.

Israel responded with a military campaign to destroy Hamas, topple its Gaza regime, and rescue the hostages.

International mediators are striving to reach a ceasefire and hostage deal between Israel and Hamas. Ending the fighting in Gaza is seen as a key step toward calming the situation in the north, where the spiraling violence has stoked fears it could explode into a full-blown war. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/hezbollah-pounds-galilee-with-over-70-rockets-causing-heavy-damage-but-no-injuries/>

## US announces charges against Sinwar, 5 more Hamas chiefs day after Goldberg-Polin burial

*Impact of criminal case may be mostly symbolic since terror chief on run and Haniyeh, Deif and Issa dead, but naming Mashaal suggests US may plan to pressure Qatar to hand him over*

*By Agencies and Jacob Magid Today, 5:10 am*



*Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh (L) and Hamas's leader in the Gaza Strip Yahya Sinwar wave during a rally marking the 30th anniversary of the founding of the Islamist terror movement, in Gaza City, on December 14, 2017. (Mohammed Abed/AFP)*

The US Justice Department announced criminal charges Tuesday against Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar and five other leaders in the terror group in connection with the October 7 onslaught in Israel, marking the first effort by American law enforcement to formally call out the masterminds of the attack.

The seven-count criminal complaint filed in federal court in New York City includes charges of conspiracy to provide material support to a foreign terrorist organization, conspiracy to murder US nationals and conspiracy to use weapons of mass destruction, resulting in death. It also accuses Iran and Lebanon's Hezbollah terror group of providing financial support and weapons to Hamas.

The impact of the case may be mostly symbolic given that Sinwar is believed to be hiding in tunnels in Gaza and the Justice Department says three of the six defendants are believed now to be dead. But officials say additional actions are expected as part of a broader effort to target the Gaza-based group that the US designated as a foreign terrorist organization in 1997 and has been linked to a series of deadly attacks on Israel, including suicide bombings.

The complaint was originally filed under seal in February to give the US time to try to take into



custody then-Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh, but the politburo chief's July 31 assassination along with other recent developments lessened the need for secrecy, the Justice Department said.

On **Monday, former American-Israeli hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin was laid to rest** in Jerusalem two days after his body was recovered by the IDF and returned to Israel. White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said Goldberg-Polin was "executed" along with five other hostages, confirming the IDF's account that the six were killed by their Hamas guards who suspected that Israeli troops were approaching.

"We **are investigating Hersh's murder, and each and every one of the brutal murders of Americans**, as acts of terrorism," US Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a video statement. "We will continue to support the whole of government effort to bring the Americans still being held hostage home."

The **other Hamas leaders charged were Haniyeh; Marwan Issa, the once-deputy leader of Hamas's armed wing in Gaza, who was killed by Israel in March; Khaled Mashaal, a Haniyeh deputy based in Doha and a former leader of the group; Muhammad Deif, the longtime Hamas military wing chief, who Israel killed in July; and Ali Baraka, the Beirut-based head of Hamas's external relations.**

"Those **defendants... led Hamas' efforts to destroy the State of Israel and murder civilians** in support of that aim in its attacks over the past three decades," Garland said.



*Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists are seen on their way to cross the Israel-Gaza border fence from Khan Younis during the Hamas-led onslaught of October 7, 2023. (Said Khatib/ AFP/ File)*

"**The charges unsealed today are just one part of our effort to target every aspect of Hamas' operations**," the attorney general added. "These actions will not be our last."

**A US official, who was not authorized to talk publicly about the case and spoke on condition of anonymity, told The Associated Press there was no reason to believe the charges would affect the ongoing negotiations for a ceasefire and hostage**

release deal.



*The head of Hamas's military wing Muhammad Deif in an undated photo (Israel Defense Forces)*

**Sinwar was appointed the overall head of Hamas after the killing of Haniyeh in Iran and sits atop Israel's most-wanted list.** He is believed to have spent most of the past 11 months since Hamas's October 7 massacre living in tunnels under Gaza, and it is unclear how much contact he has with the outside world. He was a long-serving Palestinian prisoner freed in a 2011

exchange of the type that would be part of a ceasefire and hostage release deal.

**Charging Hamas and Sinwar, who is in hiding, allows the federal government to add resources to tracking the group and subpoenaing individuals who are alleged to support it.** Naming Mashaal suggests the Biden administration may plan to pressure Qatar, one of a handful of countries that has relations with Hamas, to hand over its leaders based in the country.



*Former chief of Hamas' Political Bureau Khaled Mashaal speaks during a press conference in the Qatari capital, Doha on May 1, 2017. (Karim Jaafar/AFP)*

**"Since 2019, Hamas's military wing has used social media and other platforms to call for cryptocurrency contributions from supporters abroad, including in the United States, to Hamas-controlled virtual wallets, explicitly acknowledging that those payments would be used to fund Hamas' campaign of violence,"** the Justice Department said. "Through these mechanisms, Hamas has

received tens of millions of dollars in cryptocurrency payments to fund its activities."

**The charges notably were filed in the Southern District of New York, staffed with federal prosecutors who have for decades been leading terrorism prosecutions.**



*Marwan Issa, the deputy head of Hamas's military wing, circled in a photo circulated on social media in 2015. The photo or its source could not be immediately verified.*

**“Our commitment is clear: if you hurt one member of our community, you hurt all of us — and we stand with all victims of Hamas’ reign of terror,”** said the district’s US Attorney, Damian Williams. “We will bring justice to this terrorist organization from the top down for the atrocities they have committed.”

**During the October 7 onslaught, Hamas-led terrorists slaughtered some 1,200 people — including 40 American citizens —** and took 251 people hostage. Roughly 100 hostages remain, at least a third of whom have been confirmed dead by the IDF.

The **criminal complaint describes the massacre as the “most violent, large-scale terrorist attack” in Hamas’s history.** It details how Hamas operatives arrived in southern Israel with “trucks, motorcycles, bulldozers, speedboats, and paragliders” and engaged in a brutal campaign of violence that included rape, genital mutilation and machine-gun shootings at close range.



*Ali Baraka of Hamas (Screenshot)*

**The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry says more than 40,000 people in the Strip have been killed or are presumed dead in the fighting so far, though the toll cannot be verified and does not differentiate between civilians and fighters. Israel says it has killed some 17,000 combatants in battle and another 1,000 terrorists inside Israel on October 7.**

Israel has said it seeks to minimize civilian fatalities and stresses that Hamas uses Gaza’s civilians as human shields, fighting from civilian areas including homes, hospitals, schools, and mosques. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/us-unseals-charges-of-sinwar-5-other-hamas-leaders-day-after-goldberg-polin-burial/>

## **Terrorist leader's death sparks shifts in Palestinian refugee camp dynamics**

***With over 150 homes damaged and 30% of residents fleeing, some in Nur Shams welcome elimination of local terror leader, who, despite his symbolic status, caused harm; Palestinians believe Israel close to defeating terror groups, as calls grow for PA control***

[Elisha Ben Kimon](#)|06:45

**Five days have passed since the IDF concluded its latest operation in the Nur Shams refugee camp in Tulkarm, during which several terrorists, including high-profile figures, were killed, and terror infrastructure was destroyed.**

**According to Israeli security assessments, the operation has been deemed effective, particularly after the elimination of Muhammad Jaber, also known as Abu Shujaa, who led the local terror network in Nur Shams.** There now appears to be growing satisfaction within the camp.



**Jaber, once seen as a symbol of resistance in the camp, had caused significant harm to its residents.** Security officials have observed that, since his death, many in the refugee camp have expressed a desire to reduce hostilities between Israeli forces and local gunmen.

### ***Nur Shams refugee camp***

**Discussions on Palestinian social media platforms indicate increasing opposition to terrorist activities within the camp, including the planting of explosives and the use of civilian structures for terror purposes.**

**Within Palestinian society, particularly in the refugee camps, there is a growing perception**



that the Israeli military is nearing victory over the terror groups in Nur Shams and Tulkarm. This has led to a sense of uncertainty among residents, with many hoping that the Palestinian Authority will regain control and restore governance in the camp.

On Friday, the Palestinians witnessed the extent of the damage inflicted on the camp during the Israeli operation. According to local sources, over 150 homes were damaged, at least 30 significantly. Following the operation, Palestinian media has focused on the widespread damage and the lack of essential supplies. Reports suggest that around 30% of the camp's residents have fled in recent months.

Israeli security officials have highlighted a stark contrast between the popularity of terrorists on social media, particularly in the refugee camps, and the relatively low level of support they receive the people on the street. For terror organizations, social media plays a key role in glorifying terrorism, aiming to recruit young followers.

However, Abu Shujaa, who was killed last week, was a divisive figure in terms of support within the camp. Known for being relatively quiet, he often relied on spokespeople to deliver speeches at gatherings of armed terrorists.



*Muhammad Jaber*

The disparity between his social media clout and the situation on the ground was evident at his funeral in Tulkarm, which only around 200 people attended, including very few gunmen, likely due to fears of a confrontation with Israeli forces.

Jaber had been involved in numerous attacks, including the June 2023 killing of 67-year-old Amnon Mukhtar in Qalqilya. As the head of the local terror network, he commanded about 30 operatives.

Last Wednesday evening, Israeli forces attempted to arrest him in Nur Shams, but the mission was aborted when it was discovered he was not at the target location.

Later that night, new intelligence revealed Jaber's whereabouts in a building near a mosque. Israeli forces surrounded the area, but Jaber refused to surrender and opened fire. The troops fired shoulder-launched missiles at the structure, and Jaber was eventually shot dead as he tried to flee. Two other terrorists were killed nearby, and Jaber's deputy later surrendered to Israeli authorities.

Also killed during the operation was Jibril Jibril, a 20-year-old from Qalqilya affiliated with Hamas' military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades. He had been released from Israeli prison in a hostage exchange deal with the terror group in November and became a wanted man shortly after, following several shooting attacks.

<https://www.ynetnews.com/article/h1xnvph30#autoplay>

## Israel assured Qatar IDF would fully pull out of Philadelphi in ceasefire's 2nd phase

*Pledge came hours before PM vowed military will stay on Gaza-Egypt border indefinitely; Barnea said to have told mediators of willingness to withdraw, subject to parameters set by Israel*

By [Jacob Magid](#) and [Tol Staff](#) Today, 12:32 pm



*IDF troops operate along the Philadelphi Corridor at the Gaza-Egypt border in August 2024. (IDF)*

Israeli negotiators told mediators in recent days that they still support a complete withdrawal of the IDF from the Philadelphi Corridor in the second phase of a potential hostage deal, despite Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's assertion that Jerusalem must maintain a military presence there indefinitely, according to Hebrew media reports Tuesday.

Confirming a report in the Israeli newspaper Haaretz, an Arab diplomat told The Times of Israel that hours before Netanyahu gave a press

conference Monday, Mossad chief David Barnea flew urgently to Doha in order to inform Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani of Jerusalem's position regarding the Philadelphi



Corridor, which runs along the Egypt-Gaza Strip border.

A **source familiar with negotiations told Haaretz that the final US proposal will call for reduced Israeli forces to remain on the corridor in the first six-week stage** and then pull out in the second, apparently in accordance with a [framework](#) submitted by the US at the end of May.

In a **live primetime address on Monday, Netanyahu argued that allowing troops to withdraw from the 14-kilometer (nine-mile) border stretch would result in arms, along with equipment for making weapons and digging tunnels, again being smuggled into the Strip and the possibility of hostages being smuggled out.**

He **said Israel would retain control of the Philadelphi Corridor for the foreseeable future**, describing its presence there as crucial to preventing Hamas from rearming and again carrying out a massive attack on Israel like the devastating October 7 assault that opened the ongoing war in Gaza. Netanyahu said that remaining in control of the corridor was “vital” to Israel’s future. While he was vague about the long-term conditions of Israeli control, he indicated that it would include a presence on the ground.

**However, in recent days, Israeli negotiators have told mediators that Israel is prepared to reduce its military presence in the corridor in the first stage of a three-phase deal under discussion and pull out completely in the second phase**, the Kan public broadcaster reported, citing an official involved in the talks.

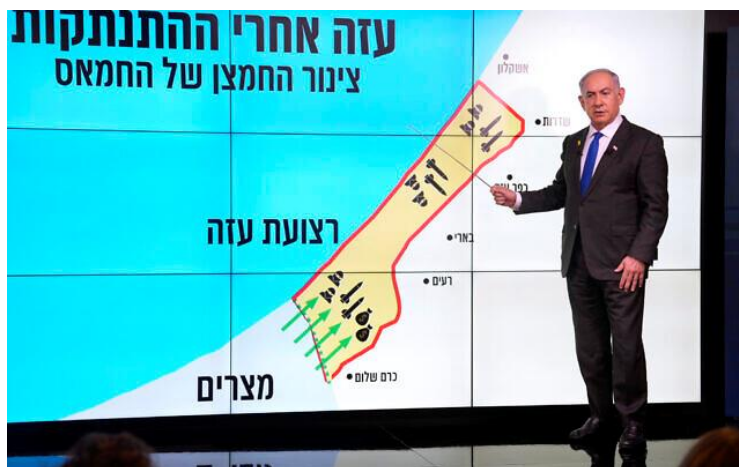
**Haaretz reported that negotiation chief Barnea told mediators in Doha of Israel’s willingness to withdraw from the corridor, subject to operational requirements set by Israel. Previous reports have said those would include surveillance equipment under Israel’s control as well as a US-funded subterranean wall to prevent weapons smuggling.**

Notably, **Netanyahu’s office did not deny the reports, but instead issued a statement on Tuesday evening claiming the security cabinet has not yet discussed the second phase** of the deal.

An **unnamed Israeli official told Haaretz that “Netanyahu long ago agreed to the complete withdrawal of soldiers from the Philadelphi axis and the complete evacuation of the forces.”**

The official said that Netanyahu’s recent actions have caused “just a lot of damage to the negotiations.”

The official charged that Netanyahu’s Monday night press conference was intended “to jam the deal for political reasons. If these demands had not suddenly emerged, there would have been a deal a long time ago.”



*Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stands before a map of the Gaza Strip, telling viewers how Hamas has imported arms into the territory since Israel’s withdrawal in 2005, during a news conference in Jerusalem, Monday, Sept. 2, 2024. The Hebrew on the screen reads, “Gaza after the disengagement, oxygen pipe of Hamas”. (AP Photo/Ohad Zwigenberg, Pool)*

**Netanyahu was asked during his Monday press conference to explain how his talk of indefinite IDF control of the Philadelphi Corridor squared with his authorization of a proposal in late May that included a full IDF withdrawal from the entirety of Gaza in the second**

phase of the deal.

Netanyahu responded that he was only speaking about the deal’s first phase.

**“The proposal I agreed to talks about a first phase of 42 days, after which we can return to fighting if an agreement is not reached in the negotiations,”** the premier said. The deal still requires the sides to hold talks during phase one to determine the exact terms of phase two, which is a permanent ceasefire. Phase one is also allowed to extend beyond six weeks if the sides are still negotiating in good faith, and Israel’s ability to resume the war does not appear to be as definitive as Netanyahu presented it.

**“If a permanent settlement is reached for someone else to deal... with securing of the borders of Gaza, [that would be welcome]. I currently don’t see it on the horizon,”** he continued, quipping that he hoped a credible alternative to the IDF’s presence on the Philadelphi will be found before the Messiah comes.

**“We’re currently talking about phase one. Phase two is still before us,”** Netanyahu said.

**The premier left the door open for a phase two withdrawal from the Philadelphi, but the rest of his speech focused on why Israel has an existential need to remain there** — one that wouldn't likely dissipate in just six weeks when the phase is supposed to end. He made very clear that he didn't think a viable alternative would be established to replace Israel in securing the border, and stressed that the IDF would need to be there indefinitely — a timeframe that doesn't jive with the deal's envisioning of a full Israeli withdrawal after just six weeks.

That **six week phase one can be extended if the sides are negotiating in good faith, and the proposal commits the mediators to ensuring that Israel and Hamas remain at the negotiating table** in order to finalize the terms of the phase two permanent ceasefire.

Netanyahu explained that he agreed to reduce the number of Israeli troops stationed along the Philadelphi Corridor during phase one of the deal because there is currently a division and a half deployed there, which is far more than what the IDF will need.

**"We don't need to be there with a massive force, just with a sufficiently sized one," Netanyahu said, adding that the Israeli troops would be stationed at a number of points** along the route and have the ability to patrol throughout its entirety from the Mediterranean Sea to the Kerem Shalom Crossing.

There is **no replacement for the IDF's physical presence along the corridor** — neither sensors nor alternative forces — Netanyahu said.



*Israel's Mossad Director David Barnea speaks during the International Institute for Counter-Terrorism (ICT) World Summit in the central coastal city of Herzliya on September 10, 2023. (Gil Cohen-Magen/AFP, File)*

**Egypt's Foreign Ministry issued a statement Wednesday rejecting Netanyahu's comments regarding the need for Israel to indefinitely maintain control over the Egypt-Gaza border stretch.**

**"Cairo rejects the statements of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and deems him responsible for increasing tensions in the region,"** the statement said.

The **Egyptian statement additionally rebuffed Netanyahu's claims that Cairo has allowed Hamas to smuggle weapons from the Sinai Peninsula to Gaza** and accused the premier of attacking Egypt in order to distract the Israeli public from its mounting criticism of his handling of the war. **[Sorry Egypt but those allegations have been proven to be true. Once more you get Islamic Taqiyah Lies to cover their agenda which it appears is still the destruction of Israel. – rdb]**

**The US said Tuesday that Israel has agreed to the latest deal proposal**, which requires the IDF to withdraw from heavily populated areas along the Philadelphi Corridor during the first, six-week phase of the deal.

**The statements from Biden administration spokespeople left open the possibility for Israeli troops remaining in other parts of the corridor** that are not adjacent to heavily populated areas of the Egypt-Gaza border stretch.

**After US President Joe Biden said Sunday that he was close to presenting a final proposal to the sides by the end of the week, Kan reported that Washington plans to do so by Friday.**



*Large crowds of Israelis call for an urgent deal to secure the release of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza, outside the Defense Ministry headquarters in Tel Aviv, September 1, 2024. (Chaim Goldberg / Flash90)*

**Several unnamed sources told Haaretz that the US proposal is going to be a "take it or leave it" with the administration not prepared to make any changes. If no deal is reached, negotiations are expected to end, the sources said.**

**The Walla news site reported that during Barnea's Monday meeting with Al-Thani, the Qatari premier told the Mossad**



**chief to urge Netanyahu to show more flexibility on several** key issues, including the Philadelphi Corridor. **[How about if Hamas shows some flexibility which they really haven't – rdb]**

An Israeli official told Walla that the US proposal will include clauses that upset both Israel and Hamas and that both sides will be pushed to accept it. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-assured-qatar-idf-would-fully-pull-out-of-philadelphia-in-ceasefires-2nd-phase/>

**Smuggled in car with yellow hostage ribbon: Police arrest five illegal Palestinian entrants**  
**Border police officers subsequently examined the car and found that the driver had illegally entered Israel from the West Bank.**

By [JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#) SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 08:55 **Updated:** SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 16:49



*Border police officers found Israeli flags along with a wig, among other objects the Police announced on September 4, 2024. (photo credit: POLICE SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)*

**Border police officers arrested a Palestinian who attempted to illegally smuggle four additional Palestinians into Israel while they were crossing the az-Za'ayem checkpoint in the vicinity of Jerusalem, Israel Police said on Wednesday.**

**Security forces noted that the vehicle, which came from the West Bank, sported a yellow ribbon symbolizing support for the hostages detained in Hamas captivity and a car air freshener with an Israeli flag.**

**Police said the Border police officers subsequently examined the car and found that the driver attempted to illegally enter Israel from the West Bank. With her were an additional four Palestinians, with one being hidden in the trunk.** In addition, troops



found in the vehicle Israeli flags, a Yarmulke, a wig, and Palestinian license plates.

**Indictment filed**

**The police specified that these license plates had been exchanged with Israeli license plates** taken from an Israeli car.

*Israeli soldiers check cars at a checkpoint near the West Bank City of Jericho (credit: REUTERS)*

**An indictment was filed against four of the Palestinians** on charges of attempting to enter or reside in Israel illegally. The arrest of the

driver of the vehicle was prolonged. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/article-818664>

**Israelis pessimistic about chances of a hostage, ceasefire deal occurring soon - IDI poll**  
**A poll by the Israel Democratic Institute shows the majority of Israelis are pessimistic about a ceasefire deal for hostage release, while opinions on Netanyahu's motives are split.**

By [EVE YOUNG](#) SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 17:12

**Jewish Israelis are pessimistic about the chance of a ceasefire deal that would lead to the release of the hostages being reached soon, with 78.5% reporting this pessimism in the Israel Democracy Institute's August Israeli Voice Index.**

**Some 15.5% of Jews expressed optimism about such a deal occurring soon. Israeli Arabs, on the other hand, are split, with 48% expressing optimism over such a deal and 49% saying they are pessimistic.**

**Looking at the total sample, 73.5% are pessimistic and 22% are optimistic.**

**It is important to note that the survey was conducted between August 26 and 28, meaning that the impact of the news on the retrieval of the bodies of six slain hostages from Gaza, reported early this week, and the ensuing mass protests was not measured in the survey.**

**The poll also examined where Israelis believe Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's demand to remain in the Philadephi Corridor stems from, with respondents asked to say whether the motivation was based largely on military and strategic concerns or on Netanyahu's political reasons.**

**Some 51% said that they believed that this demand is largely based on military and strategic considerations, while 39% of respondents reported that they believe that Netanyahu's demand is**

intended to prevent a hostage deal for Netanyahu's own political reasons.

Jewish respondents were more likely to believe that the demand is based on military motivations, with 58.5% choosing this option and 33% saying it is based on an attempt to prevent a deal for political motivations.

A majority of Arab Israelis believe that the demand is based on preventing a deal for political reasons (66.5%).

The poll also examined whether Israelis agreed with the assertion that this is the last chance for a hostage deal, made by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and others.

Respondents were evenly split, with 44.5% believing that it is the last chance and 44.5% believing that it is not.

Looking at the impact of the threat of an Iranian attack on Israel on Israelis moods and daily lives, 67% said that the looming threat of an attack is only impacting their daily behavior a little or not at all. Some 55% said it impacts their mood only a little or not at all.

#### **The northern border**

On the topic of Israel's northern front, 67% of Israelis support intensifying fighting against Hezbollah, while 77% of Arab Israelis support a diplomatic agreement.

Some 47% of Left-wing Jewish Israelis support pursuing "a diplomatic agreement with Hezbollah despite the chance of an additional conflict with Hezbollah in the future." Some 21.5% of centrist Israelis supported this diplomacy, while 10% supported continuing the fighting in its current form without increased aggression. Some 7% of Right-wing Israelis supported diplomacy, and 8% supported continuing the current strategy; 61% supported launching "a deep offensive, including targeting Lebanese infrastructure."

When asked if Israel has achieved all it can militarily in Gaza, 64% of Jewish Israelis and 52% of Arab Israelis disagreed with this claim.

Some 66% of respondents said that tensions between Netanyahu and Defense Minister Gallant are harming the management of the war.

Overall, Israelis reported increased optimism in August, with those expressing optimism about the future of democratic rule in Israel rising to 36% from 30% in July. Optimism in national security rose even more, with 39% reporting they were optimistic in July compared to 26% in August.

<https://www.jpost.com/israel-hamas-war/article-818720>

## **Court seizes NIS 160 million from PA as part of bereaved families' lawsuit**

*Court orders frozen funds to be seized by state following accusations Palestinian Authority continues to fund and direct terror against Israelis*

[Gilad Cohen](#)|09:11

The Jerusalem District Court on Wednesday issued a seizure order for NIS 160 million from funds intended for the Palestinian Authority (PA) as part of a lawsuit filed against it by the families of victims of Hamas' October 7 attack. If the bereaved families win their lawsuit, the amount will be allocated for their compensation.

Dozens of bereaved families, including those who lost loved ones in the past year, filed a lawsuit against the PA in the Jerusalem District Court back in July demanding NIS 210 million from the authority.



*Palestinian Authority Chair Mahmoud Abbas (Photo: AP)*

The funds were seized under the 2018 Law on Freezing Revenues Designated for the Palestinian Authority which includes the Payments to Prisoners and Families of Terrorism Offenders clause.

According to the 2018 law, Israel's defense minister submits a report to the Security Cabinet at the end of each year detailing the total amount paid by the Palestinian Authority's Martyrs Fund to terrorists and their families in the previous year. The following year, an amount equal to 1/12 of the reported sum is frozen from the tax revenues Israel transfers to the PA each month.

Currently, NIS 2 billion is frozen in the state's treasury due to this law. The court has now decided to seize money from the fund and allocate it to the plaintiffs who sued the Palestinian Authority.





*Memorial ceremony for victims of the Nova Music Festival (Photo: Adam Kutub)*

The lawsuit claims the Palestinian Authority initiates, supports and encourages terrorism against Israeli citizens and financially rewards terrorists through payments to them and their families. The lawsuit argues that the PA uses the "more blood equals more money" paradigm in these payments.

This is the first lawsuit by terror victims filed since the new Fund for Victims of Terror Law was

passed in March. The law allows terror victims to sue those who fund terrorism and encourage attacks via payments to terrorists, granting NIS 10 million in compensation to families of those murdered in terrorist attacks and NIS 5 million to those injured.

The PA appealed against the law's constitutionality, but the appeal was dismissed in a highly contentious hearing. The plaintiffs included bereaved families whose relatives were murdered in recent terrorist attacks including infiltrations into settlements, bombings in major cities and the October 7 massacre, including the one at the Nova Music Festival.



*Arie Arbus, Barak Kedem (Photo: Adi Lam, Shahar Cohen)*

The law, along with the shift in approach by Israeli authorities, gains additional significance when considering the vast sums of money seized by the IDF in Gaza and the West Bank which are used by Hamas and other terrorist organizations. Therefore, the law is seen as another step in the state's fight against terror financiers.

Attorneys Barak Kedem and Arie Arbus from the Arbus Kedem Zur law firm said in a statement, "The court's decision to seize significant sums from the Palestinian Authority is an important first step toward delivering terror financing funds to terror victims and a crucial contribution to the fight against terror." <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/h1e11yyi2r>

## UTJ threatens Knesset boycott amid Education funding standoff

United Torah Judaism (UTJ) has threatened to boycott the Knesset plenum until their concerns over Haredi education funding are addressed.

By [ELIAV BREUER](#) SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 17:44 Updated: SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 18:12



*UTJ MK Yisrael Eichler points at a fellow lawmaker in the Knesset plenum. (photo credit: YONATAN SINDEL/FLASH90)*

The Ashkenazic-Haredi party United Torah Judaism announced to Coalition whip MK Ofir Katz (Likud) that they will boycott the Knesset plenum until their "education issues are resolved," a spokesperson for one of the party's MKs confirmed on Wednesday.

The coalition intends to introduce a number of bills on Thursday for a vote in a plenum session scheduled for Monday – a UTJ boycott will make it harder to ensure that

the bills pass.

The main bill is an amendment to the 2024 budget bill, which proposes to increase state spending for 2024 by NIS 3.4 billion in order to fund evacuees from the North and South until the end of the calendar year.

According to Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, the change will not increase the state's budget deficit, since it will be offset by higher-than-expected national income from taxes.



### Education issues?

The UTJ spokesperson did not specify which “education issues” he was referring to, nor what would constitute their “resolution.”

However, the central issue is likely related to the teachers in the two major semi-private haredi school systems, Hinuch Atzmai, which is associated with the Lithuanian faction within UTJ, and Bnei Yosef, associated with Shas.

The haredi parties have demanded that the two education systems be included in a salary agreement called “Ofek Hadash” (Hebrew for “New Horizons”) that would significantly increase their teachers’ salaries.

Ofek Hadash, which began in the public school system in 2008, determined teachers’ salaries based on their level of academic and professional training, introduced non-frontal teaching, such as paid one-on-one lessons and set standards for schools’ infrastructure and teaching environments.

Ofek Hadash also requires that schools teach the full core curriculum by trained teachers based on education ministry standards; present a yearly plan for study based on clearly defined standards; provide the ministry with information regarding all of its staff and their professional background; “open their gates to close ministry oversight”; and take standardized national and international tests to gauge progress.

Despite Education Minister Yoav Kisch’s attempts to pass new regulations in order to implement the haredi systems’ entry into Ofek Hadash, the move has been held up due to legal concerns from officials in both the finance and justice ministries. The main concern was about a clause in the regulations instituting a four-year interim period, in which the two systems would receive the Ofek Hadash benefits while training teachers to meet its demands.

Finance and Justice Ministry officials argued that this essentially enabled the haredi systems to receive the Ofek Hadash benefits without meeting the full core curriculum standard for the next four years; rather than enable this, the schools should only be allowed to enter the program after they have met the standards.

For this and other reasons, the finance ministry’s legal advisor said that the regulations were not “legally viable,” and Kisch has yet to sign them. <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/politics-and-diplomacy/article-818726> [Israel has a duplicitous educational system with Israeli Public schools and religious schools which are also funded by the state and not private tuition. The religious schools do not necessarily abide by all the educational rules of the private schools and their preparation of students for the private business environment is often lacking. This has been a hot contentious topic for years. – rdb]

## Anti-Israel activists try to stop first Columbia U classes with protests, vandalism

*Separate from a picket line protest, the Alma Mater Statue was drenched in red paint in protest of the administration's failure to comply with anti-Israel demands.*

By [MICHAEL STARR](#) SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 11:44 Updated: SEPTEMBER 4, 2024 16:40



Protesters gather at a main entrance in front of Columbia University during convocation, in New York City, US, August 25, 2024 (photo credit: REUTERS/CAITLIN OCHS)

Anti-Israel activists attempted to stop Columbia University’s first day of classes on Tuesday with a picket line and vandalism against a monument, according to statements by Columbia University Apartheid Divest (CUAD), Columbia/Barnard Hillel, and pro-vandalism group Unity of Fields.

CUAD established picket lines at the Morningside Heights campus gates, calling on students, faculty, and staff not to cross the protest boundary. The activist coalition contended that there should be no sense of normalcy as the Israel-Hamas war progressed and Gazan students could not continue their education because Palestinian academic institutions had been destroyed in the fighting.

“Do **not enter campus**,” CUAD said on social media. “Do not go to classes. Do not hold classes.”

Palestinian Youth Movement New York City claimed on Instagram that administrators called



the New York Police Department to arrest the picketers.

**Sending a reminder**

CUAD said that it was reminding the Columbia administration of the protest demands the coalition established the previous tumultuous academic year – that the university divest from any institutions with a connection to Israel, establish an academic boycott of the Jewish state, and call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.



**“Instead of heeding the cries of its student body to end our complicity in genocide, Columbia spent the last year doubling down on its commitment to being a war-profiteering corporation that criminalizes dissent and sanctions the death of thousands of Palestinians,” said CUAD. “Until Columbia commits to full financial disclosure and complete divestment from Zionist apartheid, occupation, and genocide – we do not deserve a first day of school.” [Why do the ignorant liberal school administrators allow so called “students’ who supposedly are matriculated there to learn about things with which they are ignorant try to run their**

**school? This is the inmates running the asylum. Expel the troublemakers with no refund and the push to get foreign activists at the campus deported. L- rdb]**

**Columbia Hillel said on Facebook that it was disheartened** that the excitement of the first day of classes had been impacted by the protests. **[ I wouldn’t be disheartened I would be outraged. rdb]**

“Although we affirm the right to peaceful protest, we want to name that the rhetoric outside the gates today is jarring and upsetting for many of us,” said Hillel. “The signs we saw at the picket line were harassing and intended to intimidate students. This is simply unacceptable.” **They are not there to protest they are supposedly there to learn. Every class they miss is an F which then means they flunk them out. – rdb]**

**Hillel said** that it was in contact with the administration and encouraged students to **report any acts of antisemitism**. The campus Jewish life organization empathized with Jewish students who were distressed by the murder of Hamas’s six hostages, and that the Hillel team was available for support.

The **Columbia Alma Mater Statue was also defaced** in a separate action on Tuesday, according to pro-vandalism Unity of Fields, formerly known as Palestine Action US.

The **Alma Mater Statue was drenched in red paint** in protest of the administration’s failure to comply with anti-Israel demands.

In a manifesto published by Unity of Fields, the vandals' further actions, which it said were in support of the “Palestinian resistance” in an effort to translate their “resilience in Gaza to unrest and violence in America.”

“Divestment is not an incrementalist goal. True divestment necessitates nothing short of the total collapse of the university structure and American empire itself,” said the vandals, adding that it wanted economic revolution and “eradicate America as we know it.”

CUAD had led protests last Sunday at the gates of Columbia in an [attempt to disrupt the convocation](#) by banging drums and pots. On Monday, one of the groups involved in the protest, Columbia Students for Justice in Palestine, announced that it had been [suspended from Instagram](#). Anti-Israel groups denounced the move as censorship ahead of the fall semester.



**Eye of the anti-Israel storm**

**Columbia University had been the epicenter of the anti-Israel campus protest movement the previous academic year**, with an encampment on its grounds that was emulated around the world. The April encampment was cleared by the NYPD in early May, but then-Columbia University president [Minouche Shafik resigned](#) on August 14 due to the intense controversy and protests her tenure suffered.

As anti-Israel campus protests and activism disrupted the campus, Jewish students and faculty alleged that they had suffered increasing discrimination at the hands of their peers. On Friday, the university’s [Task Force on Antisemitism released a second report](#) describing how identifiably Jewish students were spat on, berated, and chased off campus in “crushing encounters that have crippled students’ academic achievement.”

Interim president Katrina Armstrong said in a Friday statement that the incidents in the report were “distressing,” and that with the new academic year the university was “focused on ensuring their safety, supporting their well-being, and protecting their ability to learn.”

Armstrong said that they had expanded training, created a new office to better address harassment complaints, reestablished a public safety advisory committee, and updated campus conduct guidelines. <https://www.jpost.com/diaspora/article-818673> Looks to me that it is time to either take drastic action in order to take control back of the university or simply close it down if those in charge can't maintain a reasonable educational environment by allowing terrorists to inhabit the place. - rdb

## **Zelensky vows to ‘hold’ occupied Russian territory**

***Control over part of Kursk Region is crucial for Kiev’s “victory plan,” the Ukrainian leader has said***

4 Sep, 2024 07:31

**Ukraine intends to occupy part of Russia’s Kursk Region indefinitely, Vladimir Zelensky has said. Officials in Kiev earlier signaled that they plan to use this as a bargaining chip** in potential negotiations with Moscow.

In an **interview with NBC News released on Tuesday, the Ukrainian leader was asked what he plans to do with the internationally recognized Russian territory Kiev has captured** as a result of a large-scale cross-border incursion that began last month.

While Zelensky stressed that Ukraine “*does not need [Russian] land*” and “*[does not] want to bring our Ukrainian way of life there,*” it intends to “*hold*” the territory because it is crucial to Kiev’s “*victory plan*” to end the conflict. “*For now, we need it,*” he said.

He **declined to say whether Ukraine plans to seize more Russian land**. “*With all respect, I can’t speak about it,*” Zelensky said, citing the same considerations that forced Kiev to keep preparations for the Kursk offensive secret.

Ukraine launched a large-scale attack on Kursk Region on August 6, reportedly committing some of its best brigades equipped with Western-supplied armor. While it made some initial gains, Moscow says the advance has been halted. The **Russian Defense Ministry has estimated Kiev’s losses in the Kursk offensive at more than 9,300 troops and 700 armored vehicles**.

**Mikhail Podoliak, a senior aide to Zelensky, has said that the purpose of the attack was to secure a stronger position during potential peace talks** with Moscow and to instill fear in the Russian population.

**Russian President Vladimir Putin has denounced the incursion as a provocation, accusing Ukraine of indiscriminately targeting civilians** and pledging that Moscow will eventually “*deal with the Ukrainian bandits*” who entered Kursk Region. He signaled that Russia has no plans to engage in talks until the incursion is completely defeated, adding, however, that Moscow does not reject negotiations in principle.

<https://www.rt.com/russia/603488-zelensky-hold-occupied-russian-territory/>

## **IMF to pressure Ukraine to raise taxes and devalue currency – Bloomberg**

***The agency will reportedly demand more effort from Kiev to cover the country’s budget gap***

4 Sep, 2024 16:13

**The International Monetary Fund is expected to ratchet up pressure on the Ukrainian government to cover the country’s budget gap in order to continue receiving aid, Bloomberg reported on Wednesday, citing people familiar with the matter.**

**An IMF team is set to visit Kiev later this week to review whether the government is hitting targets that include cutting interest rates, strengthening tax-raising efforts, and devaluing the currency.** Pursuing these steps is required for Ukraine to receive the next \$1.1 billion tranche from a \$15.6 billion loan program.

**Ukraine’s state finances have been backed by around \$122 billion in international aid from the US, EU, and IMF.** However, Kiev still faces a \$15 billion budget gap in 2025 that has not yet been covered by financial commitments from creditors, Prime Minister Denis Shmigal said last month.

**To help bridge the deficit, the Washington-based institution is reportedly planning to urge the National Bank of Ukraine to devalue the hryvnia at a faster pace** and ease its monetary policy amid moderate inflation, the sources told the news agency. The measures are expected to boost Ukraine’s budget



revenues in the local currency and make borrowing cheaper for the Finance Ministry.

The **regulator has reportedly opposed further depreciation of the national currency, which has lost more than 30% against the US dollar since the escalation of the Ukraine conflict** in February 2022. In October, Ukraine's central bank eased the fixed exchange rate as part of a broader effort to support the economy. Allowing the currency to weaken further would challenge the central bank's ability to maintain price stability, the sources said.

In **addition, the IMF has reportedly criticized Kiev's tax raising efforts as being too lenient and urged the authorities to consider increasing a broader range of taxes**. Raising the value added tax from the current 20% is among the potential proposals, people familiar with the matter told Bloomberg.

The proposed measures are reportedly a serious cause for concern for officials in Kiev, as currency depreciation along with higher taxes would be politically damaging amid wartime mobilization drives, state corruption concerns, constant blackouts, and soaring energy prices. <https://www.rt.com/business/603519-imf-ukraine-currency-devaluation-tax/>

## **COLLAPSE OF UKRAINE \*\*GOVERNMENT \*\* HAS BEGUN . . .**

[Hal Turner World](#) September 03, 2024

**Important: The collapse of the Ukraine government has started; the** following ministers have resigned:

**Vitaliy Stanislavovych Koval** - Head of the State Property Fund of Ukraine [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitaliy\\_Koval](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vitaliy_Koval)

**Ruslan Strilets** - Minister of Environmental Protection and Natural Resources of Ukraine [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruslan\\_Strilets](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ruslan_Strilets)

**Denys Maliuska** - Minister of Justice of Ukraine [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denys\\_Maliuska](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Denys_Maliuska)

**Oleksandr Kamyshin** - Minister of Strategic Industries [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oleksandr\\_Kamyshin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Oleksandr_Kamyshin)  
their resignations still have to be processed by the Verkhovna Rada (parliament).

One source told me "The rats have begun to flee the sinking ship."

**UPDATE 7:43 PM EDT --**

**Parliament announces reshuffle day: 50% of Cabinet of Ministers to be replaced**

The Ukrainian government is planning a personnel reshuffle, with more than 50% of the Cabinet of Ministers to be replaced.

**In particular, tomorrow, September 4, will be a "day of dismissals", according to the head of the Servant of the People faction, Davyd Arakhamia.** "As promised, a major government reboot can be expected this week. Over 50% of the staff of the Cabinet of Ministers will be changed," Arakhamia wrote.

According to him, "tomorrow will be a day of dismissals, and the day after tomorrow—a day of appointments." The final list will be determined at the faction meeting on September 4.

**Personnel changes in the Cabinet of Ministers**

**Recently, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy mentioned that he is discussing potential government changes with Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal. Specifically, he emphasized the need to address the issue with the large number of acting ministers in the Cabinet Today**, the sources of RBC-Ukraine in the government reported that significant personnel changes are expected in the Cabinet of Ministers this week. Rotations are also possible in the Presidential Office. <https://haltunnerradioshow.com/index.php/news-selections/world-news/important-collapse-of-ukraine-government-has-begun>

## **Trump accuses Ukraine of lying about death toll**

*The former US president has blamed the conflict on the Biden administration and renewed his pledge to bring peace if reelected*

4 Sep, 2024 13:52

**US Republican presidential candidate Donald Trump has accused Ukraine of intentionally covering up the true number of deaths in the conflict with Russia. In an interview on the Lex Fridman podcast published on Tuesday, Trump claimed that "the death numbers are going to be a lot higher than people think" when the time comes to "iron out" the casualties.**

Ukraine **rarely publishes reports on the official civilian death toll**, and the numbers are difficult to assess as no independent count has been made due to lack of access to the front line. The latest figures released in June last year put the number of civilian deaths at around 10,000 – however, Oleg Gavrych, a top aide to Vladimir

Zelensky's chief of staff, said at the time that the true figure could be five times higher.

**Information about troop losses has also been hard to confirm, with Zelensky claiming earlier this year that it stood at around 31,000, while both Russian and foreign estimates indicate that it could be much higher.**

**"They lie about the numbers,"** Trump claimed in the podcast. He did not explain why he believes Kiev is doing so, though it is considered standard practice for countries to overestimate enemy losses and underestimate their own during wars.

*"They try and keep [the numbers] low. They knock down a building that's two blocks long, and they say one person was mildly injured. No, no, a lot of people were killed... millions of people,"* Trump said.

The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has put the number of civilian deaths, or non-armed individuals, in Ukraine from the start of the conflict in February 2022 to July 31, 2024 at 11,520. The agency noted that the real numbers could be higher. Anonymous US officials told the New York Times last month that the number of Ukrainian soldiers killed throughout the conflict is 70,000.

In the [podcast](#), Trump said the conflict with Russia is *"a war that shouldn't have happened."* He accused the administration of US President Joe Biden of failing to prevent it and said the situation is now so out of hand that a peace agreement *"is a much tougher deal to make than it would've been before it started."*

Trump renewed his earlier [pledge](#) to end the conflict and *"have a deal made"* if reelected in November.

<https://www.rt.com/news/603503-trump-ukraine-lies-casualties/>

## **BULLETIN \*\*\*\*\* RUSSIA ISSUES DIRECT WARNING TO U.S.**

[Hal Turner World](#) September 03, 2024

**BULLETIN: Russia has now issued a DIRECT warning to the United States and to NATO "If Western weapons are used to strike deep inside Russia, the consequences will affect both sides of the Atlantic."**

**The direct warning was HAND DELIVERED by Diplomatic Courier, to the White House.**

This comes after Ukraine began using west-supplied weapons to attack targets slightly over 1,000km into interior Russia, and after U.S. said THIS WEEK "we are near to an agreement to provide Ukraine with long-range cruise missiles capable of reaching deep into Russian territory."

This is a quickly-developing story. Check back for updates.

**UPDATE 3:45 PM EDT --**

**Russian ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Antonov, HAS NOW ALSO STATED PUBLICLY: "If Western weapons are used deep inside Russia, the consequences will affect both sides of the Atlantic."** <https://haltunnerradioshow.com/index.php/news-selections/world-news/bulletin-russia-issues-direct-warning-to-u-s>

## **US knows Russia's red lines – Lavrov**

***Moscow takes the supply of long-range missiles to Ukraine very seriously, the foreign minister has said***

4 Sep, 2024 14:01



*Sergey Lavrov holds a press briefing at the United Nations headquarters in New York City, July 17, 2024 © Getty Images / Adam Gray*

**The US is well aware that any decision to supply Ukraine with long-range missiles crosses Moscow's "red lines" and could trigger a third world war, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has warned.**

**American officials are "close" to approving the supply of long-range cruise missiles to Kiev, Reuters reported on Tuesday, citing anonymous sources. The missiles in**

**question – Joint Air-to-Surface Standoff Missiles (JASSM) – have a range of up to 900km and can be fired from Ukraine's Western-supplied F-16 fighter jets.**

**"The Americans have already stepped over the red line that they set up,"** Lavrov told reporter Pavel Zarubin on Wednesday, referring to Washington's long-standing reluctance to provide Ukraine with weapons capable of striking deep inside Russian territory.



**“They’re emboldened, and [Ukrainian leader Vladimir] Zelensky certainly sees this and uses it,”** Lavrov continued. *“But they need to understand, they’re joking about our red lines. Don’t joke about our red lines. They know perfectly well what they are.”*

**Last month, Lavrov declared that the US and its allies would be “asking for trouble”** if they lifted their rules prohibiting Ukraine from launching long-range strikes against Russia.

**“I’d like to again quote a statement by [White House National Security Council spokesman John] Kirby, who said that [the US] should be very careful about increasing support for Ukraine so as to avoid World War III,”** Lavrov told Zarubin.

**Back in June, Kirby said that a major escalation of the Ukraine conflict could have “disastrous consequences, potentially across the European continent” and would harm US interests in the region.**

**Zelensky maintains that the West shouldn’t fear escalation from Russia, and that Ukrainian forces’ incursion into Russia’s Kursk Region proves that Moscow has no “red lines.”** However, while Russia has typically been loath to respond to provocation by either Kiev or the West, it has continued to fight in a manner that favors its strengths – namely its massive advantages in artillery, missile stocks, and manpower.

**Kiev’s attacks on the Crimean Bridge, for example, were met not by reciprocal attacks on Ukrainian civilians, but by massive and crippling missile strikes on the country’s energy infrastructure.** Likewise, the presence of Western military instructors in Ukraine has been met with precision strikes on their positions, which the Russian Defense Ministry usually [announces](#) days later.

**While Ukraine’s top military commander hoped that the Kursk operation would trigger an overreaction from Russia and force Moscow to pull troops from a busy sector** of the front line near Donetsk, Russia did not take the bait. Instead, Moscow surged more troops to Donetsk, where they have [breached](#) Ukrainian lines and closed in on several key strongholds. <https://www.rt.com/russia/603516-lavrov-missiles-red-lines/>

## Russia warns NATO about response to ‘terrorism’

***Further aggression by Kiev will be met with an immediate and extremely painful response from Moscow, Russia’s Foreign Ministry cautioned***

4 Sep, 2024 13:30



**Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova © Ekaterina Chesnokova; RIA Novosti**

**Russia will initiate an immediate and painful response to any further act of terrorism committed by Kiev, Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova warned on Wednesday, directing her comments to EU and NATO leaders.**

**Speaking on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum (EEF) in Vladivostok, Zakharova stressed that Western leaders are “losing touch with reality” and are “absolutely not thinking about the risks of further dangerous escalation of the conflict, even in the context of their own interests.”**

**“We would like to warn such irresponsible politicians in the EU, NATO and across the ocean, that if the Kiev regime takes corresponding aggressive steps, Russia’s response will follow immediately,”** Zakharova said, adding that this response will be “extremely painful” and that “much of this” has already been visible in recent days, apparently referring to Russia’s recent long-range strikes on targets across Ukraine.

**Over the past several days the Russian Defense Ministry has reported carrying out a number of massive strikes on Ukrainian energy and defense-industry facilities,** and claimed to have destroyed a number of buildings being used for the production and repair of aircraft, missiles, and UAVs, as well as storage sites, and deployment points for “nationalist formations and foreign mercenaries.” It also reported destroying a training facility housing foreign instructors.

**During her address, Zakharova also suggested that Western officials have been ignorant of the potential consequences of their continued support of Kiev.**

**“I think the Europeans don’t fully understand what they are being dragged into,”** the spokeswoman said. *“They are being dragged in by the US, the Anglo-Saxons. It seems to me they haven’t yet understood what a plague they have created with their own hands in the form of the terrorist Kiev regime.”*

**Zakharova warned that the battalions that will be created from Ukrainian citizens recruited from**

Europe will eventually also strike back at Western European countries themselves. “They have fattened up there, sat it out, and recovered. They will strike in the same way as all international terrorist cells previously created by the West did,” she said.

“For the first time in history, Europe itself has given birth to an international terrorist cell,” the spokeswoman said, warning that “this terrorist monster will operate all over the world” and will strike Western Europe because “they always return to those who created them.” <https://www.rt.com/russia/603515-zakharova-warns-nato-response/>

## There Are No Licensed COVID Vaccines for Kids Under 12 — But CDC Wants Babies to Get 3 Pfizer Shots by Age 9 Months

According to the latest CDC guidance, 9-month-old babies must receive multiple doses of an unlicensed mRNA COVID-19 vaccine to be considered “up to date” with their COVID-19 vaccination.

by [Ray L. Flores II, Esq.](#) [Suzanne Burdick, Ph.D.](#) September 3, 2024



Nine-month-old babies must receive multiple doses of an unlicensed mRNA COVID-19 vaccine to be considered “up to date” with their COVID-19 vaccination, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The CDC’s updated guidance, issued Aug. 30, states that children — as young as 6 months old — should get either two doses of the 2024-2025 Moderna vaccine or three doses of the 2024-2025 Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

If getting the new Pfizer shot, the baby is supposed to receive the first dose at 6 months, the second dose three weeks later and the third dose at least eight weeks after the second dose — meaning, that by 9 months old, babies are supposed to have received three Pfizer shots.

If getting the latest Moderna shot, the CDC recommends babies get the first dose at age 6 months and the second dose a month later.

**The latest Pfizer and Moderna COVID-19 shots for children under 12 are unlicensed in the U.S.** The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has granted only emergency use authorization (EUA) for the vaccines.

[Children’s Health Defense](#) (CHD) CEO Mary Holland told [The Defender](#), “**The earlier COVID shots have been proven unsafe and ineffective. Now we’re asked to believe that newer versions are miraculously safe and effective?**”

“**This is an insult to people’s intelligence,” she said**, “I pray that parents will have the good sense **to say no to these dangerous and unnecessary shots for babies.**”

As of July 28, **37,814 deaths** following COVID-19 vaccination had been reported to **VAERS, the Vaccine Adverse Event Reporting System, run by the FDA and CDC.**

Of those, **187 reports** were for children and teens under 18. Nearly 13,000 reports listed the age as “unknown.”

VAERS analyst and expert Albert Benavides recently told [The Defender](#) he believes VAERS is “**throttling**” and underreporting deaths of all ages following COVID-19 vaccination.

Meanwhile, the CDC continues to tell the public that [COVID-19 vaccines](#) are “[safe and effective](#).”

**CDC ‘absolutely misleading’ public on safety of EUA vaccines**

Holland said the CDC is “absolutely misleading” the public by asserting that COVID-19 EUA vaccines are safe and effective because EUA vaccines are not held to the same safety or efficacy standards as licensed vaccines.



“By law,” she explained, “EUA products ‘may be effective,’ and they have not undergone the [safety testing](#) required to permit licensing.”

**“This is one more horrific example of the CDC putting profits before people and acting as an unethical arm of Big Pharma’s marketing operation,” Holland added.**

CHD Chief Scientific Officer Brian Hooker agreed. **“It is criminal that these untested vaccines are being recommended to infants and children, especially given the fraudulent tactics to market them to an unsuspecting public,” Hooker told The Defender.** [More--](#)

<https://childrenshealthdefense.org/defender/babies-three-pfizer-covid-vaccine-doses-cdc/>

**This is unconscionable criminal malpractice by CDC and Big Pharm. Someone needs to totally clean house of the entire CDC/NIH and FDA rdb**

## **[A High Sodium Diet is Bad For You - Should We Take This Advice With a Pinch of Salt?](#)**

***Sodium intake and life expectancy.***

[NE - Naked Emperor Newsletter](#) Sep 3

**It’s difficult to trust the ‘experts’ when one piece of advice after another turns out not to be true.**

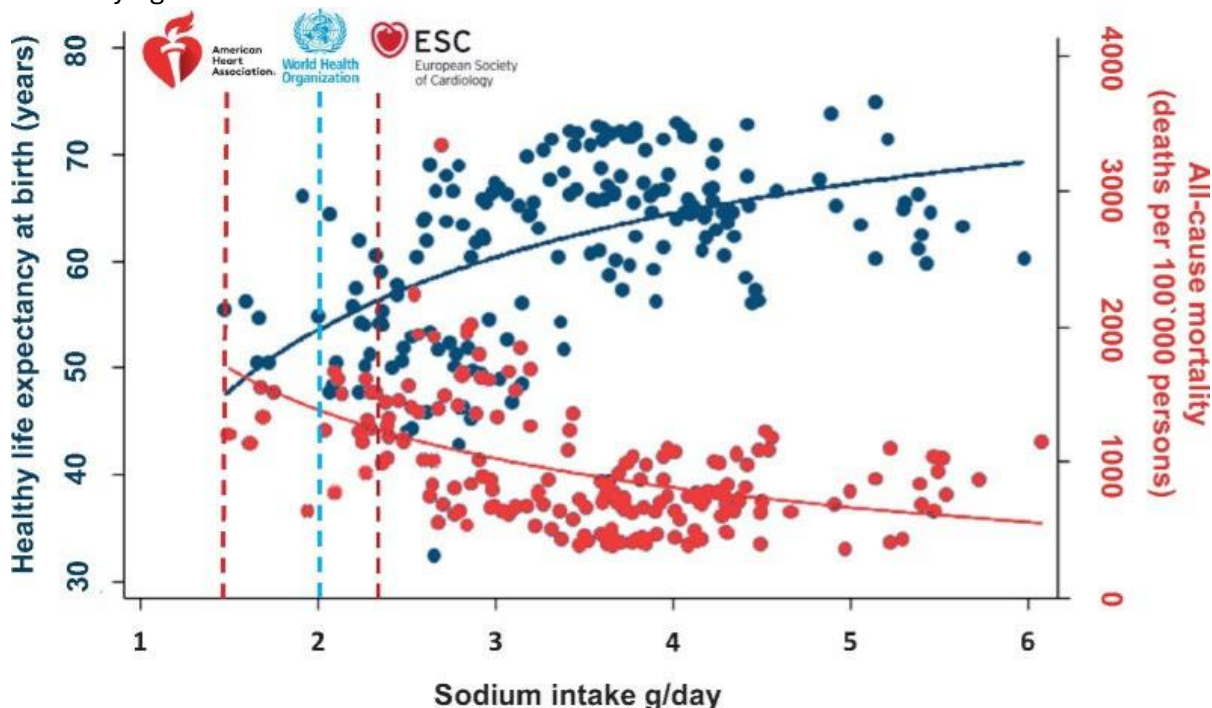
**This time salt is in the cross-hairs. For almost a century we have been told that eating too much salt is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease and premature death but is this really true?**

We have been told that by reducing dietary salt by 3g per day it would reduce annual numbers of new cases of coronary heart disease in the US by 60,000 to 120,000, strokes by 32,000 to 66,000 and myocardial infarctions by 54,000 to 99,000. Furthermore, deaths from any cause would drop by 44,000 to 92,000 saving \$10 billion to \$24 billion in health care costs annually. But have we seen this in practice?

A study published in the [European Heart Journal](#) tested the hypothesis that a high sodium intake is expected to curtail life span by analysing the relationship between salt consumption and life expectancy in 181 countries worldwide.

The authors of the study found that daily sodium intake correlates positively with healthy life expectancy at birth as well as healthy life expectancy after age 60. This means that people in countries with higher sodium consumption tend to live healthier lives for longer periods.

They also found an inverse correlation with mortality, suggesting that people in counties that eat a lot of salt have a lower risk of dying from various causes.



**Life expectancy increased when sodium intake rose to about 4-5 grams per day (which is the equivalent of 10 - 12.5 grams of salt). Beyond this level, the benefits start to decrease slightly.**

The authors found **similar results across all their models** with the relationship between salt intake and health remaining consistent, even when adjusting for factors such as BMI, which could influence health outcomes.

Despite the common belief that lower sodium intake reduces blood pressure and improves health, this study suggests that very low sodium intake might actually increase risks.

**Whilst the authors caution that their findings are observational and should not be used to make personal dietary recommendations**, is the low sodium diet yet another piece of 'health advice' that we should take with a pinch of salt? <https://substack.com/@nakedemperor/p-148463533>

## OP ED

# Who's Running the Country?

Thomas Gallatin September 4, 2024



**Why, according to the White House, did Joe Biden have to end his reelection bid?** This is the question that the Biden/Harris

administration has danced around ever since Biden announced he was withdrawing from the race and endorsing Kamala Harris over a month ago.

Biden, in his written withdrawal announcement, gave a rather coy and limited explanation for his decision to drop out. He [wrote](#), "While it has been

my intention to seek reelection, I believe it is in the best interest of my party and the country for me to stand down and to focus solely on fulfilling my duties as President for the remainder of my term."

There was [no explanation](#) for the sudden turnaround when, just days earlier, the entire White House team, including Harris herself, insisted that Biden was sharp as a tack and fully ready for another four-year term.

Reeling from his [historically terrible debate performance](#), Biden resisted the pressure to step aside, asserting that only "[the Lord Almighty](#)" could convince him to end his campaign.

The truth, however, is it was no longer a secret that Biden was in serious cognitive decline and that he was in no state to preside as president for another four years, let alone another five months. But instead of immediately stepping aside and allowing Harris to take over, Biden has remained in office while effectively disappearing from the scene.

This naturally raises an important question: Who, exactly, is running the country these days? If Biden is in no condition to continue, then why has he not stepped down? Harris has repeatedly insisted that Biden has remained cognitively sharp and in control, but does anyone really believe her?

In her [lone interview](#) since being nominated by the Democrats, CNN's Dana Bash asked Harris about her staunch defense of Biden and his reelection campaign. Harris simply reiterated the White House talking point that Biden "is so smart and — and loyal to the American people," claiming that she'd spent so much time with him that she could personally attest to his mental acuity.

Unfortunately, Bash, who is clearly in the tank for the Democrats, didn't push back and ask the obvious question: Why, if Biden is so fit and capable, did Harris not encourage him to continue running for the presidency? Furthermore, what does she have to offer the country that Biden doesn't?

Here's where the White House and Democrats are trying to have it both ways. They are gaslighting the American public by tacitly recognizing that Biden is no longer mentally fit for office while at the same time claiming that he is sharp as a tack and fully capable of leading the country over the next several months.

There is also the matter of Biden essentially having gone quiet since he ended his campaign. The reason, of course, is simple: Harris is campaigning not as an incumbent, as one would expect of someone who's held the second-highest office for three and a half years, but as an outsider. She's trying to distance herself from her own record with Biden because it reminds Americans just how bad the country has had it under his leadership.

Going forward, it appears that Biden will continue to hide as Harris plays the role of the outsider utterly disconnected from the miserable Biden/Harris record. Instead of stepping up to run the country in Biden's absence, Harris is running from that responsibility to campaign on, er, running the country.

I'll ask it again: Who's running the country? <https://patriotpost.us/articles/109888>



B"SD

**From: Lev U'Neshama - Tzfat Israel**

Sufficient and generous donations from many generous and concerned people enabled Lev U'Neshama to provide school supplies shopping coupons to every Lev U'Neshama family. The parents and children are redeeming the coupons now and very excited to be getting ready for school in Tzfat. The family-owned office supply store in Tzfat is delighted to participate and also to have the business, especially now during wartime.

However, the school supplies coupons were Part One of the Education Fund project and now we face Part Two; the mounting requests for sport shoes and eye exams/eyeglasses for the children in need of them. A child can be sponsored for a pair of sport shoes for \$40 and \$75 will sponsor a child for an eye exam and eyeglasses. Eyeglasses are an obvious need and students are not allowed to wear rubber flip-flop sandals to school. Our Lev U'Neshama families tend to have many children and it becomes an impossible situation to get the shoes and eyeglasses for many children from an already tight budget.

Help is urgently needed; school begins in two to three weeks, depending on the school system opening date.

Donations may be made to Dr. Ron Beals' organization or checks made payable to:

Simcha Smolensky

and sent to: Rabbi Simcha Smolensky  
6933 N Kedzie Ave  
Unit 116  
Chicago IL 60645

Yaffa Smolensky, Volunteer Program Manager Email: [mortsmo@aol.com](mailto:mortsmo@aol.com)