

## IDF begins major Gaza City ground offensive targeting Hamas; dozens of Gazans said killed

*Thousands flee amid intensive airstrikes; army uses explosive-laden remote-controlled APCs to hit infrastructure; Rubio: 'Very short window of time' for hostage-ceasefire deal*

By [Emanuel Fabian](#), [Agencies](#) and [Nurit Yohanan](#) Today, 2:24 pm



*Displaced Palestinians flee northern Gaza along the coastal road toward the south, after Israel's military says its expanded operation in Gaza City has begun and warns residents to leave, Sept. 16, 2025. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)*

The Israel Defense Forces confirmed Tuesday that it had launched a controversial and long-expected major ground offensive in Gaza City, as local medics said dozens were killed and injured in strikes, and the desperate Israeli families of hostages held in Gaza said they were “terrified” for their loved ones.

The IDF said that it had “begun destroying Hamas infrastructure in Gaza City,” confirming the start of a major military push in the area after heavy bombing overnight.

The start of the operation was also confirmed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said that Israel “has begun an intensive operation in Gaza City.”

The premier made the statement at the start of a session in his corruption trial, as he requested to be excused from his regularly scheduled testimony due to the “important things happening.”

In a warning to Palestinian civilians, the military said that Gaza City was “considered a dangerous combat zone,” and once again instructed residents to evacuate the area immediately — as it had repeatedly done in recent days — and head for an Israeli-designated humanitarian zone in the Strip’s south, cautioning that they would be “at risk” if they remained in place.

According to the IDF statement, more than 40 percent of the city’s estimated one million residents have “left the city for their safety and the safety of their loved ones.”



*Displaced Palestinians carry their belongings as they flee northern Gaza along the coastal road toward the south, as Israel announced an expanded operation in Gaza City, Sept. 16, 2025. (AP Photo/Abdel Kareem Hana)*

IDF estimates from Tuesday morning indicated that more than 370,000 Palestinians had evacuated Gaza City. But that contradicted a UN estimate issued earlier in the day that said around 220,000 Palestinians had fled northern Gaza over the past month.

Thousands were estimated to have left the city overnight amid a heavy wave of airstrikes, an Israeli defense source said.

The source said that the rate of Palestinian civilians leaving Gaza City would likely increase as

the IDF’s ground offensive to conquer the city progresses.



*This picture taken from a position at Israel's border with the Gaza Strip shows smoke amid Israeli strikes on September 16, 2025 (Menahem KAHANA / AFP)*

**Last week, the IDF ordered Palestinians in all areas of Gaza City to evacuate immediately** ahead the offensive. However, moving can be costly, and space is at a premium in the overcrowded south of the Strip. Many had said they would not leave, exhausted from repeated displacement over the course of the 23-month-old war.

#### **Relentless bombing**

**Overnight, a large wave of airstrikes**

**was carried out in Gaza City**, as two divisions began to advance into new areas beyond those previously under Israeli control.

Witnesses told of relentless bombing of the city, some areas of which were already in ruins after nearly two years of Israeli strikes after the Hamas-led onslaught on October 7, 2023, triggered the war.

"The danger keeps increasing," witness Ahmed Ghazal said, adding that homes had been destroyed and residents were trapped under the rubble.

"We can hear their screams," the 25-year-old said.



*An Israeli armored vehicle moves along the Israeli-Gaza border as seen from southern Israel on September 16, 2025. (AP/Leo Correa)*

**Hospitals in Gaza City said that between midnight and 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, 39 people were killed as a result of IDF strikes in the city.** The highest number was reported at Shifa Hospital, where officials said 23 people were declared dead.

**The figures could not be independently verified. Health and rescue services in the Gaza Strip are tied to Hamas,** and the numbers do not differentiate between civilians and fighters.

"A very tough night in Gaza," Dr. Mohamed Abu Salmiya, director of Shifa Hospital, told The Associated

Press.

"The bombing did not stop for a single moment," said Abu Salmiya, who was arrested by IDF troops in November on suspicion of having allowed Hamas to use the Gaza City hospital as a center of operations, but was later released by security services due to a lack of prison space, in a [contentious](#) move.

"There are still bodies under the rubble," he said.

Videos circulating on social media showed families spending the night in the streets of Gaza City following the heavy Israeli strikes overnight.

The bombing was so intense that at times it could be heard in Tel Aviv (70 kilometers, or 44 miles, from Gaza City) and other areas of central Israel.

**Defense Minister Israel Katz said Tuesday that troops were "fighting valiantly to create the conditions for the release of the hostages and the defeat of Hamas."**

*Defense Minister Israel Katz speaks to press at the site of a missile impact in Holon on June 19, 2025. (Chaim Goldberg/FLASH90)*

**"Gaza [City] is burning. The IDF is striking the terror infrastructure with an iron fist," Katz said in a statement. "We will not relent and we will not back down, until the mission is completed."**

**Explosive-laden remote-controlled APCs**





**In addition to the strikes, Palestinian media reported that the Israeli military detonated several explosive-laden remote-controlled armored personnel carriers in the Gaza City neighborhoods of Tel al-Hawa and Rimal on Tuesday morning.**

**During the war, the IDF has repurposed decommissioned M113 APCs by packing them with explosives and attaching remote-control capabilities, in order to drive them into areas with Hamas infrastructure without risking the lives of troops.**

**The massive blasts from the APCs are used to destroy Hamas infrastructure, including booby trapped areas.**

#### **Two divisions expand ops, 3rd to join**

The early stages of the offensive, dubbed “Gideon’s Chariots B,” began several weeks ago with increased strikes on Hamas targets, including high-rise towers, and ground operations on the outskirts of Gaza City and in several neighborhoods in the east of the city.

The military said that the 162nd and 98th divisions were expanding their operations in Gaza City, and in the coming days, a third division, the 36th, would join, adding tens of thousands more soldiers to the offensive.

In the coming days and weeks, ground troops were set to push deeper into the city and encircle it as part of efforts to defeat Hamas’s forces there, according to the IDF.

The military has estimated that there are thousands of Hamas fighters in Gaza City, as well as some 600,000 civilians who have not yet evacuated.

Additionally, a number of hostages abducted from Israel are believed to be held in the city.



*Demonstrators hold photos depicting the faces of hostages who are being held in the Gaza Strip, during a protest demanding their release from Hamas captivity and against the Israeli offensive in Gaza City, in Jerusalem, Sept. 16, 2025. (AP Photo/Mahmoud Illean)*

**The military said IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir — who has said that he would keep the hostages and troops at the forefront of his mind during the operation, and has repeatedly urged ministers to agree to a ceasefire and hostage release deal — was commanding the offensive personally from Southern Command HQ.**

**Some 60,000 reservists have been called up for the operation, in addition to another 70,000 already in reserve service.** Despite reports of burnout, the IDF asserted that the reservist turnout rate was high, at 75%-85% in most units.

The reservists included three brigades and several more battalions, and many combat support soldiers, including in intelligence and logistics.

**Not all of the reservists are participating in the operation to capture Gaza City, as some are instead replacing standing army troops on other fronts.**

In addition to the Gaza City offensive, the IDF said the 99th Division was conducting defensive operations in Israel’s buffer zone in northern Gaza, while the Gaza Division was operating in the Strip’s south.

#### **Rubio: ‘Very short window of time’ for deal**

**Meanwhile, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio warned that there was a small window of opportunity for a ceasefire deal, and said that he would ask Doha to stay on as a mediator as he visited the Gulf ally, a week after Israeli airstrikes tried and failed to eliminate Hamas leaders in the emirate.**

Rubio was pessimistic about the chances of a ceasefire deal but said Qatar was in a unique position to help.

**“We’re going to ask Qatar to continue to do what they’ve done, and we appreciate very much, and that is, play a constructive role in trying to bring this to an end,”** Rubio told reporters as he flew out of Ben Gurion Airport to Doha after meetings with Netanyahu and other top officials.



*US Secretary of State Marco Rubio boards a plane as he departs Tel Aviv for Qatar following an official visit, at Ben Gurion International Airport, September 16, 2025 (Nathan Howard / POOL / AFP)*

“Obviously they have to decide if they want to do that after last week or not, but we want them to know that if there’s any country in the world that could help end this through a negotiation, it’s Qatar,” he said. **Stop playing suck up to a group of terrorist Rubio. They have sheltered and enabled the vile leadership of Hamas for years. They are in fact accessories to Hamas crimes. - rdb**

Rubio also said that there was short period of time for a potential hostage-ceasefire deal to be reached. “The Israelis have begun to take operations there,” Rubio said. “So we think we have a very short window of time in which a deal can happen. We don’t have months anymore, and we probably have days and maybe a few weeks to go.”



*Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al-Thani greets US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, back to camera, at Amiri Diwan, in Doha, Qatar, Sept. 16, 2025. (Nathan Howard/Pool Photo via AP)*

**Rubio, who met Monday in Jerusalem with families of hostages in Gaza, acknowledged that Hamas had leverage by holding them.**

**“If there were no hostages and no civilians in the way, this war would have ended a year and a half ago,” he said.**

**The group representing the vast majority of hostages’ families, the Hostages and Missing**

**Families Forum, said they were “terrified” for their loved ones with the start of the operation. “[Netanyahu] is doing everything to ensure there is no deal and not to bring them back,” the Forum charged in a statement.**

**Overnight and into Tuesday, families of hostages still held in Gaza gathered outside Netanyahu’s residence, pleading with him to stop the Gaza City operation.**

**Some pitched tents and slept outside his home in protest.**



**Families of hostages held in Gaza, including Einav Zangauker seated on the floor, and their supporters protest outside the Prime Minister’s Residence in Jerusalem, calling for their release, September 16, 2025 (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)**

**“I have one interest — for this country to wake up and bring back my child along with 47 other hostages, both living and deceased, and to bring our soldiers home,” Einav Zangauker, whose son Matan is being held in Gaza, shouted outside Netanyahu’s residence.**

**“If he... sends our precious, brave, heroic soldiers to fight while our hostages are being used as human shields**

**— he is not a worthy prime minister,” said Zangauker. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-begins-major-gaza-city-ground-offensive-targeting-hamas-dozens-of-gazans-said-killed/>**

## **Arab, Muslim leaders urge review of Israel ties after attack on Hamas leaders in Doha**

**Top officials from UAE, Bahrain, Morocco attend summit on 5-year Abraham Accords anniversary; Iran**

**president: Any ‘Islamic capital’ could be next target; Trump: Israel won’t hit Doha again**

By [AFP](#), [Tol Staff](#) and [Jacob Magid](#) Today, 3:02 am



*This handout picture released by the Qatar News Agency (QNA) shows Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani (C) chairing the 2025 Arab-Islamic emergency summit in Doha on September 15, 2025. (Qatar News Agency / AFP)*

**DOHA, Qatar — Arab and Muslim leaders called for a review of ties with Israel after emergency talks in Doha on Monday following last week’s IDF strike on Hamas members in the Qatari**





**capital. The only reasonable ties to Israel for this group is to renounce Islam as their religion because it calls for the execution of Jews and any non Muslim who doesn't convert to their pagan practices. - rdb**

The **Arab League and Organisation of Islamic Cooperation joint session, which brought together nearly 60 countries, sought to take firm action after Israel's attack on Qatar-hosted Hamas officials as they discussed a Gaza ceasefire proposal. [Please note this! The arab league and OIC has 60 countries so why do they need another one in the middle of Israel which is the land whose title is held by the creator of the universe and has been bequeathed to the Jewish people????? Just what kind of sense does that make. The only reason there is a problem in the ME is because these pagans refuse to allow citizenship and full rights to the group of people they told to get out of Israel in 1948 while they were going to kill all the Jews and send them into the sea. Historically this group IS the problem. Fortunately there is a Righteous God in heaven who created everything and ultimately will mete out justice to all. This will occur during the tribulation times when there will be a huge purge on the earth. You don't want to be here then. - rdb**

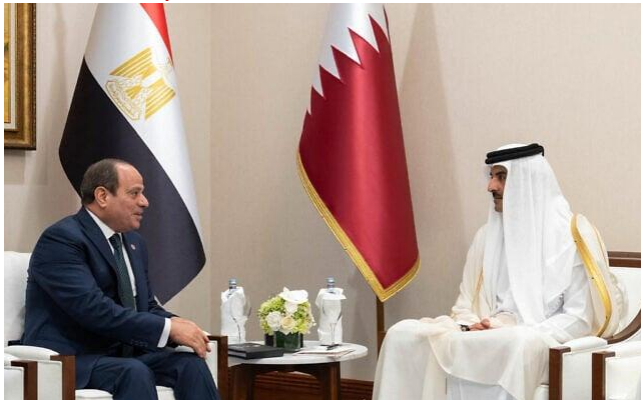
A **joint statement from the summit urged "all states to take all possible legal and effective measures to prevent Israel from continuing its actions against the Palestinian people,"** including "reviewing diplomatic and economic relations with it, and initiating legal proceedings against it."

It was **not immediately clear, though, what practical steps participating countries might take against Israel.**

**Qatar's fellow Gulf nations, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, along with Egypt, Jordan and Morocco, were among those present that recognize Israel.**

The leaders of the UAE, Bahrain and Morocco, which signed the Abraham Accords recognizing Israel five years ago to the day, did not attend Monday's talks, sending senior representatives instead.

The **statement also urged member states to "coordinate efforts aimed at suspending Israel's membership in the United Nations."**



*This handout picture released by the the Qatar News Agency (QNA) shows Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani (Right) meeting with Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on the sidelines of the 2025 Arab-Islamic emergency summit in Doha on September 15, 2025. (Qatar News Agency / AFP)*

**US Secretary of State Marco Rubio will arrive in Qatar on Tuesday, after pledging "unwavering support" for Israel's goal of eradicating Hamas during a visit to the country.**

The attack strained ties between Washington and key allies in the Gulf, raising concerns over US security guarantees in a region housing major US assets, including a major military

base in Qatar. **It is past time for Washing to tell the arab world which is the world's foremost perpetrators of terror just how the cow eats the cabbage and all those borders drawn at the end of WWI with the collapse of the Ottoman empire could be redrawn . rdb**

The State Department said Rubio would "reaffirm America's full support for Qatar's security and sovereignty" after last week's strike.

Back in Washington, US President Donald Trump was asked in the Oval Office whether Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had given him any guarantees that he won't strike Qatar again.

"He won't be hitting Qatar," Trump replied.

The US president reiterated that Doha has "been a very good ally, and a lot of people don't know that.

Netanyahu "won't be hitting Qatar, but he will be maybe going after..." Trump added, indicating that he expects Israel to continue trying to target Hamas elsewhere before pivoting to discuss a related issue.

Trump was also asked about an Axios report citing unnamed Israeli officials who said that Netanyahu tipped off Trump on the Doha strike in advance and with enough time for the US to order it be called off.

The US president denied the report, sticking to his account that he was only alerted of the attack at a point last week when it was too late to reverse.

**Mounting pressure over Gaza**

**Qatar had called for a coordinated regional response after the Israeli attack, which had been**

**intended to take out the senior leaders of Hamas as they gathered in Doha, and which stunned the usually peaceful [???], wealthy peninsula.**

The September 9 airstrike, which Hamas says killed five of its members but not its leadership, drew widespread international condemnation, including from Gulf monarchies allied with the United States and Washington itself.

The summit organized by Qatar aimed to pile pressure on Israel, which is facing mounting calls to end the war and humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

The host country's emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, accused Israel of trying to scupper ceasefire talks by firing on Hamas negotiators in Qatar, a key mediator.



"Whoever works diligently and systematically to assassinate the party with whom he is negotiating intends to thwart the negotiations," the emir told the summit.

*Reporters follow Qatar's Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani's address at the media center during the opening of the 2025 Arab Islamic emergency summit in Doha on September 15, 2025. (MAHMUD HAMS / AFP)*

**Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, was among those present on Monday, as were Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian, Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Syrian interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa, and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.**

Israel has long maintained ties with Egypt and Jordan, and brokered ties five years ago with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, while it has pushed to expand its relations with Saudi Arabia and recently even Syria.

"Tomorrow, it could be the turn of any Arab or Islamic capital," said Pezeshkian, whose country fought a 12-day war with Israel in June, at one point attacking a US base in Qatar in retaliation for strikes on its nuclear facilities.

**"The choice is clear. We must unite."**

**President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi of Egypt, the first Arab country to recognize Israel, warned that its attack in Qatar "places obstacles in the way of any opportunities for new peace agreements and even aborts the existing peace agreements with countries in the region". [Sound like the Psalm 83 war to anyone???? Rdb]**



Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused Israel of adopting a "terrorist mentality," as countries took turns slamming it over Gaza.

*This handout picture released by the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA) shows, (L-R) Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Secretary-General Jassim al-Budaiwi, Kuwait's Crown Prince Sheikh Sabah Khaled al-Hamad al-Sabah, Qatar's Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Oman's Deputy Prime Minister for Defense Affairs Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, Bahrain's King's Personal Representative Abdulla bin Hamad Al Khalifa, and the UAE's Vice President and Deputy Prime Minister Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al-Nahyan, posing for a group picture during the 2025 Arab-Islamic emergency summit in Doha on September*

*15, 2025. (Saudi Press Agency/AFP)*

**The rich Gulf countries also met on the sidelines of the summit, urging the US to use its "leverage and influence" to rein in Israel, Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General Jasem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi told a press conference.**

**"We also expect our strategic partners in the United States to use their influence on Israel in order for it to stop this behaviour," he said. "They have leverage and influence on Israel, and it's about time**



that this leverage and influence be used.” <https://www.timesofisrael.com/arab-muslim-leaders-urge-review-of-israel-ties-after-attack-on-hamas-leaders-in-doha/>

## Netanyahu told Trump about Doha strike in advance, he ‘didn’t say no’ – report

**Amid diplomatic firestorm, officials tell Axios there was still time to call off attack on Hamas leaders in Qatar when PM called US president; Trump, Netanyahu deny it**

By [Lazar Berman](#) and [Tol Staff](#) 15 September 2025, 11:22 pm



*US President Donald Trump, left, greets Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House, April 7, 2025, in Washington. (AP/Evan Vucci)*

**Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told US President Donald Trump last week about the impending strike on Hamas leaders in Doha some 50 minutes before the attack, according to a Monday report.**

**Seven Israeli officials told Axios that the White House knew about the attack last Tuesday before missiles were launched. Trump said after the attack that the US was not given meaningful warning of the Doha strike, that he tried but**

did not have time to convey a warning to Qatar, and that he was “[very unhappy](#)” about the incident. He also [told reporters](#) on Sunday that Israel must be “very, very careful” about how it handles Qatar, which he called a “great ally.” **[Me thinks The Don is lying to try to cover his backside-rdb]**

**In fact, the Israeli notice left Trump enough time to call off the strike, according to three officials with direct knowledge cited in the report, saying Netanyahu called Trump at around 8 a.m. Washington time. The first reports of the explosions in Doha came some 50 minutes later.**

“First, there was a discussion on the political level between Netanyahu and Trump, and afterwards through military channels. **Trump didn’t say no,” a senior** Israeli official told Axios.

“If Trump had wanted to stop it, he could have,” said a second official. “In practice, he didn’t.”

The **strike — which killed five non-leading members of Hamas and a Qatari security officer**, but apparently none of its five key intended Hamas leadership targets — elicited fury from Arab governments, which convened for an emergency gathering Monday over the attack. The gathering, which was attended by leaders of states with full diplomatic ties to Israel, saw harsh condemnations of the Jewish state.



*Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani (L) and Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani talk to US President Donald Trump, ahead of his departure at the end of the Qatari leg of his regional tour, at the Al-Udeid air base southwest of Doha on May 15, 2025. (Brendan SMIALOWSKI / AFP)*

**It was not clear from the Axios report what exactly was said on the Trump-Netanyahu call, nor was it clear whether Trump informed the Qataris while there was still time to avert the attack.**

Israel had gone along with the White House version of events out of diplomatic considerations, said a third

official, while a fourth said, “The Americans are putting on a show.”

**A fifth official said the US administration had reasons to distance itself from the strike, and so “what they say publicly should be taken with a grain of salt.”**

**A sixth official said this was not the first time Trump had “made things up,” for political reasons, about his conversations with Israeli leaders.**

However, in a statement released on X on Monday, Netanyahu insisted that Trump had not known in advance. **[Trump should have insisted that Qatar and Turkey and Egypt all exile the Hamas leadership years ago and then their funding and power would have collapsed. They wouldn’t like it but otherwise no support from the US and big penalties. If you cut off the head of the snake it can’t continue to bite and kill people. Threatening the Islamic powers with huge sanctions if they continue to support them**

**should be effective. - rdb**

“The White House rendition of events is correct,” he wrote. “Israel’s action against Hamas leaders in Doha was a wholly independent Israeli operation. Israel initiated it, carried it out, and takes full responsibility.”



*This handout picture released by the Qatar News Agency (QNA) shows Qatar’s Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani (C) chairing the 2025 Arab-Islamic emergency summit in Doha on September 15, 2025. (Qatar News Agency / AFP)*

**Speaking in the Oval Office on Monday, Trump also reiterated that he had not had knowledge of the attack in time to stop it and adding that Netanyahu “won’t be hitting Qatar” again.**

Qatar is a key US ally in the Mideast, and hosts the largest American military base in the region. Doha has also been a main mediator in long-running negotiations for the release of hostages held by terror groups in Gaza, a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, and a post-conflict plan for the Strip.

The senior Hamas leaders who were targeted last week had reportedly gathered to review a framework for such a deal, proposed by the US.

On Friday, in the wake of the strike, Qatari Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani had dinner with Trump and US Vice President JD Vance, as well as US Mideast envoy Steve Witkoff.

The session followed an hour-long meeting that al-Thani had at the White House that day with Vance and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.

Rubio traveled to Israel on Monday in the wake of the strike. On Tuesday, he will stop in Qatar, on his way to London for a state visit, a US official said.



*A composite image of five members of Hamas’s leadership targeted by Israel in Qatar on September 9, 2025, L-R: Zaher Jabarin, Khaled Mashaal, Khalil al-Hayya, Muhammad Ismail Darwish, Nizar Awadallah. (Mahmud Hams/Louai Beshara/KHAMENEI.IR/AFP) PM, next to Rubio, reiterates Israel ‘did it on our own. Period.’*

**In a gesture apparently meant to reduce blowback to Washington, Netanyahu repeated Monday, at a press conference alongside Rubio, that Israel’s decision to act against Hamas in Qatar was a “wholly independent decision.”**

“We assume full responsibility,” he said. “We did it on our own. Period.”

**Netanyahu also appeared to acknowledge that Israel did not kill its targets in the strike**, but said it did not “fail” because it sent a message to Hamas leaders that nowhere is safe for them.

The US State Department said Monday that Rubio “will reaffirm America’s full support for Qatar’s security and sovereignty following Israel’s strike in Doha,” though the secretary of state also had said that the attack will not shake the US-Israel relationship.



*Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, right, and US Secretary of State Marco Rubio give a press statement, after their meeting at the Prime Minister Office in Jerusalem, on September 15, 2025. (Chaim Goldberg/ Flash90)*

**The Gulf state has called on Washington to use its leverage to rein in Israel following the attack.**

“We also expect our strategic partners in the United States to use their influence on Israel in order for it to stop this behavior... They have leverage and influence on Israel, and it’s



about time that this leverage and influence be used,” Gulf Cooperation Council Secretary General Jassem Mohamed Al-Budaiwi said in a press conference following a summit in Doha that was called in response to the incident.

Agencies and Jacob Magid contributed to this report. <https://www.timesofisrael.com/netanyahu-told-trump-about-doha-strike-in-advance-he-didnt-say-no-report/>

**Rubio visits contentious Jerusalem archeological site, boosting Israeli claim to area**  
In closed ceremony attended by PM, top US diplomat inaugurates newly completed Pilgrims' Road in City of David archaeological park, which is also located in Palestinian Silwan neighborhood  
By [Nava Freiberg](#), [Reuters](#) and [Jacob Magid](#) Today, 2:19 am



*US Secretary of State Marco Rubio speaks at the inauguration of Pilgrims' Road, in the City of David archeological park in Jerusalem, on September 15, 2025. (Koby Harati/City of David)*

**Secretary of State Marco Rubio on Monday visited a contentious archaeological site beneath Jerusalem, giving US backing to a Jewish settler-led project that critics say undermines prospects for a future Palestinian state.**

The visit, from which international and local media were barred, marked the latest endorsement by the Trump administration of initiatives that opponents say are aimed at cementing Israel's claims to East Jerusalem, which Palestinians view as

the capital of a future state.

The ceremony was attended by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee, the City of David Foundation said in a statement.

The City of David archaeological park sits in the shadow of the elevated compound known to Jews as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, or the Noble Sanctuary, a flashpoint that has triggered outbreaks of violence over the decades and remains at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The global heritage body UNESCO opposed construction of the park in the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan, outside of what most of the world recognizes as Israel's territory.

Rubio said he would be inaugurating a site attached to the park known as Pilgrims' Road, believed to have been traversed by visitors to Judaism's Second Temple around 2,000 years ago.

"It's one of the most important archaeological sites in the world," Rubio said before departing Washington on Saturday. "I understand people want to involve politics in it. I understand everything in this region is political to some extent. But at the end of the day, it's an extraordinary archaeological site."

Speaking at a press conference alongside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday, Rubio called the park "one of the most important archaeological sites on the planet — one that has deep meaning to so many people in the United States as well."



*Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (R) speaks alongside US Secretary of State Marco Rubio at the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem, on September 15, 2025. (Haim Zach/GPO)*

"It's an honor to be here and be a part of that," he said.

**While parts of Pilgrims' Road had previously been opened, it has now been fully excavated by the Israel Antiquities Authority, allowing visitors to walk from one end to the other.**

In a brief clip shared by the City of David Foundation from the event, Rubio said that standing "on the very road where 2,000 years ago, so many from everywhere ventured

to fulfill that desire to be closer to the Creator is a humbling and honoring experience."

**Netanyahu added that "two thousand years after the destruction of the Second Temple, we are**

rediscovering our past and building our future—based on the Jerusalem of 2,000 years ago.”

He appeared to hit back at past remarks by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who in 2020 implied that Jerusalem belonged to Turkey, given the Ottoman Empire’s control over the city for much of the modern era.

**“This is our city, Mr. Erdoğan. It’s not your city. It’s our city. It will always be our city. It will not be divided again,” Netanyahu said now.**

“That’s why I so much appreciate the leadership of [US] President [Donald] Trump in this area as well,” he went on.

He said that **when the president declared Jerusalem as Israel’s capital in his first term — “something that should have been acknowledged by every leader in the world”** — and moved the US embassy to Jerusalem, Netanyahu told the president that any fallout “will be primarily directed at us, and we are definitely ready. So he just did it.”

“And I welcome today [Rubio,] who understands that this is the foundation of our common Judeo-Christian heritage...This is our city. It is forever our city. It will never be divided again,” he declared.



*US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee speaks at the inauguration of Pilgrims' Road, in the City of David archeological park in Jerusalem, on September 15, 2025. (Koby Harati/City of David)*

**Huckabee also hailed Jerusalem as Israel’s “undivided” capital, saying:** “The Jewish people never forgot that this was their land, their home, their undivided, indisputable, indigenous capital from eternity.”

According to the City of David Foundation, the tunnel was discovered at the Pool of Siloam at the base of the City of David, an archaeological site just south of the Old City, and runs 600 meters (1,970 feet) to the Temple Mount.

**The top US diplomat was expected to knock down a temporary wall built near the Southern Wall excavations to “open” the Pilgrims’ Road to the Temple Mount, a source with knowledge said.**

**Former US ambassador to Israel David Friedman previously sparked controversy over his use of a sledgehammer to knock down a temporary wall unveiling a different part of the site,** though he rejected criticism that the move signaled US recognition of Israeli sovereignty in the contested area.

The Trump administration’s 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital and the subsequent move of the US embassy to the city from Tel Aviv marked a departure from decades of American policy that Jerusalem’s status should be determined through Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

**The visit comes ahead of a meeting of world leaders at the United Nations in New York this month, where Britain, France, Canada, Australia and Belgium are expected to formally recognize a Palestinian state, which Israel rejects. There are few if any other locations in Israel that so beautifully demonstrates that the Land of Israel is GOD’S land and the world can scream and throw tantrums all they want but in the end HIS will, WILL be done when it comes to Jerusalem, the city of The Great King. - rdb**

**Rubio has said that the move will only encourage Israel to take its own actions to prevent the formation of a Palestinian state.**

Residents and Israeli advocacy groups say the excavations under Silwan have been conducted beneath Palestinian homes without consulting residents and do not meet the standards of professional archaeology.

The office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu did not respond to a request for comment.

**Ze’ev Orenstein, director of international affairs at the City of David, said: “All the archeological excavations are carried out by the Israel Antiquities Authority according to the highest standards.” He declined to answer further questions.**

Fakhri Abu Diab, an activist from Silwan, said the excavations were conducted without transparency and contravened international law.

Rubio’s visit would embolden Israel and its settler movement, he said. “This act by the United States gives the green light for more settlement expansion, demolitions, ethnic cleansing, and all the practices carried out by Israel,” he said.



## Park run by Israeli settler group

**The battle over Jerusalem's archaeological and religious sites reflects the struggle over sovereignty since Israel's founding in 1948. The city's east and Old City, with its Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Armenian quarters, fell under Jordanian control after Israel's 1948 War of Independence, with Jews barred from its holy sites until 1967.**

**Since Israel captured the area during the Six-Day War, Palestinian residents regularly face home demolitions, restrictive building permits, and what advocacy groups describe as systematic discrimination.**

The City of David park has been operated since the early 2000s by Elad, a settler group that has appropriated land, acquired Palestinian homes and pushed for the eviction of Palestinian families in Silwan, according to a July report by the UN's Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory.

"Despite its rich, heterogeneous history, the narrative presented at the City of David site focuses only on the site's Jewish history (primarily the period of the Kingdom of Judea in the tenth century B.C.E. and the period of the Second Temple), disregarding all other periods and cultures," the panel's report said.

Rubio's visit to Jerusalem began on Sunday when Netanyahu led him and US Ambassador Mike Huckabee on a tour of the Western Wall, one of Judaism's holiest sites. They also visited the nearby Western Wall tunnels, another Israeli excavation that has been criticized by the UN.

A State Department spokesperson said Sunday's visit reaffirmed "America's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's eternal capital." <https://www.timesofisrael.com/rubio-visits-contentious-jerusalem-archeological-site-boosting-israeli-claim-to-area/> **The UN is simply the organization of God Haters. rdb**

## More time to pray: IDF updates General Staff orders on religious observance

**The military is currently updating the General Staff order regarding religion, kashrut, and the rights of religious soldiers in the IDF as a whole; Among the changes that are expected: religious soldiers will be released home earlier before Shabbat, weekday prayer times will be extended, and priests will not be required to enter cemeteries**

[Shilo Freid](#) | Yesterday | 22:34

**alongside new orders specifically designed for ultra-Orthodox units, the Israel Defense Forces is also working on an updated directive governing religion, kashrut and the rights of observant soldiers throughout the military, not just for those in religious or Haredi units.**

**According to the draft version of the directive, any donation or gift of food will require approval from the Chief military rabbi. The current directive does not address this issue. In addition, every dining hall, kitchen and food vending machine on base will need to be approved by the IDF Rabbinate.** Currently, only notification is required, not approval.

**Under the revised policy, military kashrut supervisors will be restricted to religious oversight only and will no longer be allowed to perform kitchen duties**—a significant change expected to ease tensions for many observant soldiers.



*In prayer on the Gaza border (Photot: Amir Levy / Getty Images)*

**Another notable update concerns the observance of Passover. Under the existing rules, bases can ban leavened products (chametz) weeks before the holiday. The new directive will prohibit such restrictions until the morning before Passover eve, aligning with Jewish law.**

**Soldiers also will be released for Shabbat in a way that ensures they can arrive home at least two hours before sundown, an increase from the current one-hour requirement. A lieutenant colonel will be authorized to reduce this time to one hour**

only with the approval of a senior military rabbi.

**Observant soldiers who remain on base for Shabbat will be given 30 minutes to organize themselves after Shabbat ends before being required to participate in any activity.** Those who spend Shabbat at home may only be ordered to return to base starting 30 minutes after the conclusion of Shabbat.

The directive also mandates that **all IDF bases adhere to the laws of the sabbatical year (Shmita)**, which applies every seven years in Jewish law and affects agricultural activity.



*Chief of the Military Rabbinate Col., Rabbi Chaim Weisberg Image (Photo: IDF Spokesperson's Unit)*

**New provisions also address situations previously unregulated: Kohanim (descendants of the priestly class) will not be required to enter cemeteries; soldiers will not be forced to enter the Temple Mount or a house of worship of another religion unless it is operationally necessary, and only with proper authorization.**

**Time allotted for daily prayers will be extended from 40 to 45 minutes on weekdays.**

In a recent letter to all military rabbinate staff, Col. Rabbi Chaim Weisberg, head of the IDF Rabbinate Department, wrote: "After years of thorough work, we have completed a comprehensive and significant validation of the IDF directive on religious matters. Our goal was to update the orders to reflect the current reality in the army and, most importantly, to instill them among all IDF soldiers and commanders. Together, we will continue to strengthen the IDF spirit and fulfill the vision of the Military Rabbinate in the field."

<https://www.ynetnews.com/jewish-world/article/rk5chlioxl>

## **UN panel claims genocide underway in Gaza; Israel blasts members as ' Hamas proxies'**

**Commission of inquiry into Israel cites statements by officials, IDF's 'pattern of conduct' as evidence of intent to 'destroy Palestinians in Gaza'; barely mentions October 7**

*By Ariela Karmel, Agencies and Tol Staff Today, 4:19 pm*



*UN commissioners Chris Sidoti, left, Navi Pillay, center, and Miloon Kothari, right, discuss their probe into Israel and the Palestinians at the United Nations in New York, October 27, 2022. (Luke Tress/Times of Israel)*

**United Nations investigators on Tuesday accused Israel of committing "genocide" in Gaza in a bid to "destroy the Palestinians," blaming Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other top officials for incitement.**

**The report was immediately rejected by Israel as "distorted and false," with Jerusalem noting its authors' history of vehemently anti-Israeli positions.**

The **UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry (COI) does not speak on behalf of the UN, and has faced harsh Israeli criticism.** While it is not a legal body, its reports can influence diplomatic pressure and serve to gather evidence for later use by courts.

The commission announced it had concluded that Israel has carried out four of the five genocidal acts defined by the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide: "Killing, causing serious bodily or mental harm, deliberately inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about the destruction of the Palestinians in whole or in part, and imposing measures intended to prevent births."

The UN itself has not labeled the situation in Gaza a genocide, although the body's aid chief urged world leaders in May to "act decisively to prevent genocide," while its rights chief last week denounced Israel's "genocidal rhetoric."

**Tuesday's report was published after a two-year investigation by the commission following the Hamas-led October 7, 2023, terror onslaught, to which it only made a fleeting reference, while not including any details on the attack that caused the war in Gaza.**

**According to the Commission, explicit statements by Israeli "civilian and military authorities," as well as a "pattern of conduct" by the military, "indicate that the genocidal acts were committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, Palestinians in the Gaza Strip as a group."**





*Palestinians take cover during an Israeli strike on a building in Gaza City, September 7, 2025, after the Israeli army issued a prior warning. (AP Photo/Yousef Al Zanoun)*

**“The Commission finds that Israel is responsible for the commission of genocide in Gaza,” said Navi Pillay, chair of the commission. “It is clear that there is an intent to destroy the Palestinians in Gaza through acts that meet the criteria set forth in the Genocide Convention.”**

The report accused Israel’s leadership — including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Isaac Herzog and former defense minister Yoav Gallant — of having “incited the commission of genocide.”

Defense Forces began a major ground offensive in Gaza City, additionally accused Israel of numerous crimes against Palestinians in Gaza, including starvation, mass killing, systemic sexual and gender-based violence, and the direct targeting of children, among other things.

“The responsibility for these atrocity crimes lies with Israeli authorities at the highest echelons,” stated Pillay.

“The international community cannot stay silent on the genocidal campaign launched by Israel against the Palestinian people in Gaza,” insisted Pillay, presenting her final report.

“The absence of action to stop it amounts to complicity,” she warned.

The commission urged Israel to “end the genocide in Gaza” and called on UN member states to halt arms transfers to Israel and to prosecute individuals or corporations under their jurisdiction complicit in genocide.



*From left, Tomer Bar, Commander of the Israeli Air Force, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Isaac Herzog, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant and IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi at a graduation ceremony for soldiers who have completed the IAF Flight Course, at the Hatzerim Air Base in the Negev Desert, June 29, 2023. (Oren Ben Hakoon/Flash90)*

#### Foreign Ministry decries ‘distorted’ report

**The Foreign Ministry immediately hit back at the report, which it said came from “ Hamas proxies, notorious for their openly antisemitic position.”**

**“The report relies entirely on Hamas falsehoods, laundered and repeated by others,” the ministry wrote in a statement on X.**

**“These fabrications have already been thoroughly debunked, including in an independent, in-depth academic study by BESA (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies), which refuted every single false claim regarding genocide,” the ministry said.**

**“Needless to say, the three authors made no attempt to address the clear findings of the BESA study,” it said. “Israel categorically rejects this distorted and false report and calls for the immediate abolition of this Commission of Inquiry.”**

Israel has refused to cooperate with the commission, and has not granted it entry into Israel or access to Palestinian-controlled areas in the West Bank and Gaza.

Pillay told AFP the commission was also cooperating with prosecutors for the International Criminal Court, which litigates acts committed by individuals. “We’ve shared thousands of pieces of information with them,” she said.



*Chairwoman of the the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel, South Africa’s Navi Pillay, speaks during a briefing to UN member states about ongoing investigations of the Commission at the UN offices in Geneva, on April 16, 2024. (Fabrice COFFRINI / AFP)*

**Last year, the separate International Court of Justice, which prosecutes nations, ordered Israel to prevent acts of “genocide” in Gaza.**

The ICC later issued warrants for Netanyahu and Gallant on suspicion of ordering war crimes during Israel’s campaign against Hamas in Gaza following the October 7, 2023, massacre.

ICC warrants were also issued against three Hamas leaders, all of whom have since been killed by Israel.



**Pillay, a South African jurist, was the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights from 2008 to 2014, during which time she frequently criticized Israel’s actions.**

**In 2014, over 100 members of US Congress signed a letter to Pillay decrying the UNHRC’s bias against Israel under her leadership, saying the council “simply cannot be taken seriously as a human rights organization” while it was probing Israel but not Hamas.**

*Illustrative: Israeli soldiers walking next to the destruction caused by Hamas terrorists in Kibbutz Nir Oz on October 7, 2023, near the Israeli-Gaza border, in southern Israel, November 21, 2023. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)*

**She chaired the commission of inquiry, which Jewish groups, Israel, the US and other countries have condemned for its alleged bias, until she and its other two members resigned in July.**

During her time chairing the commission, it released multiple reports bearing similar accusations of genocide, violations of human rights, and sexual and gender-based violence against Israel.

**The commission overwhelmingly blames Israel for the war with Hamas and accuses the Jewish state of other misdeeds, such as stealing natural resources.**

**Miloon Kothari, another member of the commission who resigned alongside Pillay, caused a firestorm of controversy in 2022 when he said that social media was “controlled largely by the Jewish lobby,” a common antisemitic trope, and questioned why Israel was allowed in the UN.**

Pillay defended the comment, saying it was intentionally taken out of context.



*Miloon Kothari, member of the United Nations Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, briefs reporters on the first report of the Commission, June 14, 2022. (UN Photo/Jean Marc Ferré)*

The war in Gaza was sparked by Hamas’s October 7, 2023, onslaught in Israel, in which terrorists murdered some 1,200 people, mostly civilians, and took 251 hostages amid horrific instances of brutality and sexual violence.

The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry says more than 64,000 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 vehemently rejects allegations that it has committed crimes against humanity amid the ongoing offensive in Gaza, which began with Hamas’s October 7, 2023, massacre in southern Israel.

It says 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/un-panel-claims-genocide-underway-in-gaza-israel-blasts-members-as-hamas-proxies/> **The UN should be defunded and thrown out of the US. It has accomplished very little if any productive actions. rdb**

**Spain axes Elbit arms deal amid growing economic boycott of Israel**



## Madrid scraps major deal for Israeli PULS artillery systems; Israeli defense firm's stake estimated at €140 million through partnership with two Spanish firms

Yuval Azoulay/Calcalist|Yesterday | 20:39

Against the backdrop of Spanish protests over Israel's actions in Gaza, Spain has canceled an arms deal with Elbit Systems under which it was to acquire PULS precision artillery systems. The deal, agreed upon about two years ago, was valued at roughly 700 million euros. Two Spanish companies were also involved, with Elbit's share accounting for about 20%, or approximately 140 million euros or 547 million shekels.

Elbit's PULS system is designed to launch different types of rockets with varying ranges from the same launcher. Systems of this kind have in recent years been sold to the armies of the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark, and other European countries, with the aim of improving their offensive capabilities in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.



A PULS precision artillery system(Photo: Courtesy of Elbit)

About three months ago, Spain announced the suspension of a deal worth roughly 1 billion shekels for the procurement of Spike anti-tank missiles from Rafael, an Israeli defense company. Despite official Spanish statements regarding that deal, Rafael later clarified that no official notice of cancellation had been received. Neither Rafael nor Elbit Systems provided any comment on the current developments.

Last week, Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez announced that, in addition to the arms embargo on Israel, ships assisting its war effort would no longer be allowed to dock at Spanish ports. Since declaring the embargo, [Sánchez has escalated his rhetoric against Israel, accusing it of committing "genocide" in Gaza](#). He added: "Spain does not have nuclear bombs, aircraft carriers, or large oil reserves, and on its own it cannot stop the Israeli attack." <https://www.ynetnews.com/business/article/s1xbp4lill>  
<https://www.ynetnews.com/jewish-world/article/sjte5xislg> **Have you ever wondered about the description in The Revelation by John concerning the beheadings? It is because much of the EU is infected with islamics who will be more than happy to take off the heads of individuals per the instructions of the Satanic leaders. - rdb**

## Three-quarters of Jewish students worldwide hide their religious identities — survey

A new report by ADL and WUJS shows Jews feel increasingly scared and isolated on university campuses

By [Zev Stub](#) Today, 1:19 pm



File: Protesters inside the encampment set up by pro-Palestinian students and activists wrap scarves on their faces as they demonstrate on the campus of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) in Los Angeles, California, on May 1, 2024. (Etienne LAURENT / AFP)

As antisemitism continues to rise on university campuses, more than three-quarters of Jewish students around the world are afraid to share their identities publicly, a new study has found.

Some 78 percent of Jewish students now conceal their religious identity and 81% hide their Zionist identity on campus, according to a survey of 1,727 students in more than 60 countries conducted during the 2024–

2025 academic year by the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the World Union of Jewish Students (WUJS).

The findings are in line with others that have shown a growing culture of fear and intimidation in educational institutions since Hamas launched the Gaza war with its deadly attack against Israel on October 7, 2023. A recent survey by B'nai B'rith International and the European Union of Jewish Students [found](#) that antisemitic and anti-Israel narratives are becoming normalized on campuses across Europe. In the US, 83% of Jewish American college students have experienced or witnessed antisemitism firsthand since October 7, ADL has [found](#).

“We are distressed and disappointed by the results of this survey, but not at all surprised,” said WUJS president Josh Cohen. “Since October 7th, Jewish students around the world have been speaking to the rise in antisemitism and ostracization in their regions. This survey only further highlights how striking the treatment of Jewish students is on campus.”

The survey found a global Jewish student population that is scared and isolated. One in three respondents said they knew Jewish peers who had been physically threatened, and nearly one in five knew peers who were physically attacked. Orthodox Jewish students reported double the rate of discrimination compared to others, while Jewish women were significantly more likely than men to conceal their identity.

Nearly one in three Jewish students (29%) said they experienced discrimination from their classmates, and 9% faced it from professors and other university employees, the survey found.



*On the anniversary of the October 7, 2023, Hamas onslaught, anti-Israel, pro-Palestinian protesters march in support of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement against Israel, on the Los Angeles campus of the University of Southern California, October 7, 2024 in Los Angeles. (Sarah Reingewirtz, Los Angeles Daily News/SCNG, via JTA)*

**Illustrating the fear many students feel, the survey gave the example of an anti-Israel protest at the University of Vienna last year.**

**“There was an ‘Intifada Camp’ glorifying Hamas on campus, and our building already had antisemitic graffiti on it,” recalled Victoria B., a Jewish Studies student.**

**“One day, I was terrified to attend a seminar — there were only 10 of us in the lecture hall, and there were rumors that camp participants would roam campus looking for ‘Zionists.’** We canceled the seminar and fled through the back exit. For a moment, I felt like it was the 1930s, and Jewish students were being chased from their universities.”

The report recommended that universities adopt and implement the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism, as well as appointing designated coordinators for combating antisemitism and supporting Jewish and Israeli students, staff and faculty. They should also conduct campus climate research, implement peer-to-peer training programs, and offer clear and accessible accommodation policies for religious observances, the report said.

“This survey exposes a devastating reality: Jewish students across the globe are being forced to hide fundamental aspects of their identity just to feel safe on campus,” said Marina Rosenberg, ADL senior vice president of international affairs.

“When over three-quarters of Jewish students feel they must conceal their religious and Zionist identity for their own safety, the situation is nothing short of dire. As the academic year begins, this data provides essential insights to guide university leadership in addressing this campus crisis head-on.”

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/three-quarters-of-jewish-students-worldwide-hide-their-religious-identities-survey/>

### **Israel arms thousands of Druze in southern Syria amid US push for peace talks**

**Druze leaders told Reuters that Israel is supplying weapons and salaries to 3,000 fighters in Sweida as Washington pressures Damascus and Jerusalem to reach a deal ahead of the UN General Assembly**  
[Lior Ben Ari](#)|09:37

**Two senior Druze officials said Tuesday that Israel has been arming and financing Druze militias in Sweida, a stronghold of the minority community in southwest Syria. According to the officials, Israel has provided rifles, ammunition and salaries to thousands of fighters, part of an effort to unify fragmented Druze factions.**

**The move, reported by Reuters and confirmed by a Western intelligence source, comes as tensions rise in the province, where Syrian forces have been accused of executing civilians.** Druze leaders are demanding greater autonomy and a humanitarian corridor linking Sweida to the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights — a direct challenge to [Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa's](#) pledge to reassert control over all Syrian territory.





IDF forces in Syria  
(Video: IDF)

**Last month, several Druze factions announced the creation of the “National Guard,” a new military body endorsed by senior spiritual leader Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri. The group is described as representing the Druze community in Sweida.**

#### **Talks under US pressure**

**Indirect talks between Israel and Syria began in April in Abu Dhabi after al-Sharaa’s visit to the UAE, then continued in Baku in July.** But the discussions

quickly faltered when Syrian troops entered Sweida to quell clashes between Druze and Bedouin fighters. Israel said the move violated long-standing security arrangements and retaliated with strikes on Syria’s Defense Ministry in Damascus. Al-Sharaa accused Israel of seeking pretexts to intervene in the south.



*IDF forces with Druze leaders in Syria*

**A US-brokered ceasefire eventually halted the fighting, and the negotiations resumed in Paris, where Syria for the first time publicly acknowledged direct talks with Israel.**

**The Paris meetings were tense. Israel signaled it would not relinquish military gains it had made since the collapse of the 1974 disengagement agreement** — abandoned after Bashar Assad’s fall in December, when Israeli forces advanced to within 20 kilometers of Damascus.

“The Americans are pushing hard — this is personal for Trump,” an Israeli security official said, but noted Israel was not offering much. Washington sees the talks as a way to expand the Abraham Accords.

The Golan Heights has not been discussed, six sources familiar with the talks told Reuters. Israel, they said, is unwilling to negotiate a withdrawal, even in the long term, after President Donald Trump recognized the plateau as Israeli territory in a unilateral move.

According to the sources, Israel floated a proposal through Washington — a southern withdrawal in exchange for Syria’s formal renunciation of the Golan — but Damascus rejected it. “Any concession on the Golan means the end of al-Sharaa’s rule,” a Syrian source said.



#### **Damascus pushes back**

Syrian Foreign Minister Assad al-Shibani rejected Druze demands for a humanitarian corridor, calling it a “violation of sovereignty.” He said Syrian Interior Ministry forces would deploy checkpoints in Sweida to maintain stability.

#### *IDF forces at the Syrian side of the Golan Heights*

**At a press conference in Damascus alongside Jordan’s Foreign Minister Ayman al-Safadi and U.S. envoy Thomas Barrack, al-Shibani declared: “Sweida belongs to all its residents. We are**

**working to restore normal life there, away from conflict.”**

Al-Safadi added: “Stability in southern Syria is vital for the whole region. We reject any foreign interference, especially by Israel, and we condemn Israeli strikes against Syria.”

Barrack said Washington supports Damascus’ reconciliation efforts: “These are historic steps addressing past mistakes. Building trust in Syria may take years.”

A Syrian officer stationed near the Israeli border told Reuters that patrols avoid direct contact with Israeli troops, who routinely raid villages, collect population data, and search for weapons. Syrian analyst Wael Alwan

said Israel is now enforcing a de facto buffer zone in southern Syria, similar to its posture in northern Gaza and southern Lebanon.

Israel has also established a new military outpost on Mount Hermon. Defense Minister Israel Katz has vowed it will not be relinquished.

Western officials say al-Sharaa's options are shrinking. Israeli military activity and support for Druze militias are fueling popular resistance to concessions, but Israel's territorial gains also make a de-escalation deal increasingly urgent.

"Avoiding confrontation is central to his plan to rebuild and govern," a close aide to al-Sharaa said.

The United States is pressing for rapid progress ahead of the UN General Assembly later this month, seeking a breakthrough announcement by President Donald Trump.

American officials said Trump made clear during a May meeting in Riyadh that he expects Syria to advance toward peace and normalization with Israel and its neighbors. Diplomats believe al-Sharaa may speed up talks to secure economic aid and attract investment, but warn he faces a delicate balancing act between U.S. demands and domestic legitimacy. <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/bkdpc1dseg#autoplay>

## IDF strikes upwards of 10 Houthi targets in Hodeidah Port, Yemen

**IDF Arabic Spokesperson Col. Avichay Adraee warned of an upcoming strike on Hodeidah Port in Yemen on Tuesday, and ordered the evacuation of the area.**

By [JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#) SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 15:12 Updated: SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 18:33



*Thick smoke billows from a raging fire at oil storage tanks a day after Israeli strikes on the port of Yemen's Houthi-held city of Hodeida on July 21, 2024. (photo credit: AFP VIA GETTY IMAGES)*

**The IDF struck the Houthi-controlled Hodeidah Port in Yemen on Tuesday, which is the main supply port of the Houthi terror regime, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement.**

**"The strike was carried out in response to the repeated attacks by the Houthi terrorist regime against the State of Israel, including the launch of UAVs and surface-to-surface missiles towards the State of Israel," read the statement.**

Al Masirah TV, a station affiliated with the Houthis,

said that 12 Israeli strikes targeted the port's docks.

Two sources at the port told *Reuters* the strikes targeted three docks restored after previous Israeli hits. Residents in the area told *Reuters* the attack lasted about 10 minutes.

The strike comes after [the Arabic Spokesperson Col. Avichay Adraee](#) warned civilians to evacuate the area. Adraee urged ships anchored at the port to evacuate, and warned that anyone who remains "puts their life in danger."

### **Israel responds to attacks on Eilat airport**

The strikes come after a series of IDF attacks on Sanaa at the beginning of September, which targeted Houthi army camps, the headquarters of the Houthis' propaganda department, and a fuel storage site that was used for the regime's military activity.

This new campaign is a part of an operation that's centered around stopping the recent Houthi attacks on the [Ramon Airport in Eilat](#), which caused the temporary closing of the city's airspace after a drone hit the airport.

The strike represented the longest flight made by an Israeli pilot since the beginning of the war, covering a total of 2,350 km. to complete the mission.

Sanaa residents told *Reuters* that the attack was on a hideout between two mountains that is used as a [Houthi](#) command and control center. The extent of the damage was not immediately clear.

*Reuters contributed to this report.* <https://www.jpost.com/israel-news/defense-news/article-867640>

## **Columbia hires prof. who supported Palestinian 'indigenous resistance' to lead cultural programs**



**Kahn is meant to “build and lead initiatives that cultivate curiosity, civic purpose, and meaningful dialogue - facilitating student engagement with faculty outside the classroom.”**

By [JERUSALEM POST STAFF](#) SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 07:34 Updated: SEPTEMBER 16, 2025 08:06



*Columbia student demonstrators show support as others chain themselves to the gates of St. Paul's Chapel at Columbia University to denounce the arrest of Mahmoud Khalil in New York City, US, April 2, 2025. (photo credit: REUTERS/DANA EDWARDS)*

**Columbia University selected Jonathon Kahn, a professor who had previously signed a 2021 statement in support of Palestinians’ “indigenous resistance movement,” to lead campus-wide dialogue and cultural programs earlier this month.**

**In light of Kahn's rejection of "the fiction of a 'two-sided conflict,'" the Columbia Jewish and Israeli students organization**

**posted the announcement of Kahn's selection to its X/Twitter page and questioned whether he had been vetted for the job.**

**JPost Videos**

**“Did anyone even bother vetting him before hiring? Or was this done on purpose?”** The organization asked.

**University Dean Josef Sorett announced the decision in early September. Sorett had been previously caught in a 2024 scandal in which three administrators' antisemitic texts were leaked.**



*Pro-Palestinian protesters demonstrate outside the main campus of Columbia University during the commencement ceremony in Manhattan in New York City, May 21, 2025. (credit: REUTERS/JEENAH MOON)*

**In his new role at Columbia, Kahn is meant to “build and lead initiatives that cultivate curiosity, civic purpose, and meaningful dialogue - facilitating student engagement with faculty outside the classroom.”**

**Vassar College letter says Israel is an 'apartheid' state**

**The 2021 statement from Vassar College students and staff that Kahn signed stated that signees “affirm that the Palestinian**

**struggle is an indigenous resistance movement confronting settler colonialism, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing,”** according to a screenshot of a student newspaper article posted by [Columbia Jewish and Israeli students](#).

**“This is not a symmetrical battle,”** it continued, adding that it agreed with the United Nations’ classification of apartheid.

The letter went on to classify Gaza as an "open air prison" and classified parts of Israeli-Palestinian history as "ethnic cleansing."

However, in an interview in early September, Kahn said that he no longer resonated with the 2021 Vassar letter.

Kahn told the *Washington Free Beacon* that he is a Zionist who "believe[s] deeply in Israel’s right to exist and thrive as a Jewish state" and also "deeply value[s] Palestinian life and [Palestinians’ aspirations for statehood](#)."

"My beliefs are not fully captured in this letter that was authored more than four years ago," he said, as reported by the *Washington Free Beacon*.

"I didn’t agree with every sentence then, and I still don’t. But I put my name to that letter at a time when I felt in deep disagreement with actions taken by the Israeli government, and I wanted to signal my support for the Palestinian civilians who were suffering."

"My role is to help students understand what matters deeply to them and, as importantly, to understand what matters deeply to their fellow classmates. I believe that’s the most effective way to build healthy dialogue and community." <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-867590> **It is time to strip more funding away from Columbia. The US has to take radical steps to stop the Universities from indoctrination of their students into anti-semitic anti USA ideologies. Time for a major purge or you are going to get more and more assassinations. -rdb**

# 'Disown your dad, you little [bleep]!' JD Vance says even his own young children are torched by vicious hate from leftists

By [Joe Kovacs](#)

[September 15, 2025](#)



Vice President JD Vance hosting the Charlie Kirk Show on Monday, Sept. 15, 2025

**(WARNING: Comments by Vice President JD Vance in this story contains an obscenity.)**

**Vice President JD Vance says his own young children have now become victims of raging vitriol being spewed by leftists in a politically charged America.**

**As Vance hosted "The Charlie Kirk Show" on Rumble on Monday, the vice president, who was a close friend of the assassinated civil-rights leader, recounted how he and his family were viciously hollered at during a recent visit to Disneyland in California.**

"There was a loud and very cruel minority that would shout at my children who are 8, 5 and 3 whenever they got the opportunity," Vance began.

"'You should disown your dad, you little sh\*\*!' one middle-aged woman yelled at my 5-year-old. 'Tell the Secret Service to protect the Constitution – not your father!' screamed another.

"Are these women violent? Probably not. Are they deranged? Certainly. And while our side of the aisle certainly has its crazies, it is a statistical fact that most of the lunatics in American politics today are proud members of the far left."

WTF?! JD Vance just revealed a leftist woman screamed at his 5 YEAR OLD at Disneyland

"You should disown your dad, you little SHIT!"

**THIS IS THE MODERN DAY DEMOCRAT PARTY. All of America is seeing this now.**

"Tell the Secret Service to protect the Constitution — not your... [pic.twitter.com/CnhOclDKD7](https://pic.twitter.com/CnhOclDKD7)

— Nick Sortor (@nicksortor) [September 15, 2025](#)

**Vance, who was broadcasting from his office in the West Wing of the White House, continued: "After Charlie died, one of his friends and one of our senior White House staffers had left-leaning operatives in his neighborhood passing out leaflets telling people what he looked like and where he lived, encouraging neighbors to harass him or, God forbid, to do worse.**

**"While he was mourning his dead friend, he and his wife had to worry about the political terrorists drawing a big target on the home he shares with his young children. Are these people violent? I hope not. But are they guilty of encouraging violence? You damn well better believe it!"**

Vance also went "scorched earth" on individuals celebrating Kirk's assassination.

"There is no unity with people who scream at children over their parents' politics," Vance said. "There is no unity with someone who lies about what Charlie Kirk said in order to excuse his murder.

"There is no unity with someone who harasses an innocent family the day after the father of that family lost a dear friend.

"There is no unity with the people who celebrate Charlie Kirk's assassination!"

"There is no unity with the people who fund these articles, who pay the salaries of these terrorist sympathizers, who argue that Charlie Kirk, a loving husband and father, deserved a shot to the neck because he spoke words with which they disagree."

**JD Vance goes scorched earth on people celebrating the assassination of Charlie Kirk, says there can be no unity with these sick people.**

"There is no unity with people who scream at children over their parents' politics."

"There is no unity with someone who lies about what... [pic.twitter.com/MiJLKZBmRE](https://pic.twitter.com/MiJLKZBmRE)

— Collin Rugg (@CollinRugg) [September 15, 2025](#)





Vance concluded: "I can't promise you that this is gonna be easy. I can't promise you that all of us will avoid Charlie's fate.

"I can't promise you that I will avoid Charlie's fate, but the best way to honor him is to shine the light of truth like a torch in the very darkest places. Go do it!

"We owe it to our friend to ensure that his killer is not just prosecuted, but punished. And the worst punishment is not the death penalty, but the knowledge that Charlie's mission continues after he's gone. St. Paul tells us in [Ephesians](#) to put on the full armor of God."

Elon Musk saw Vance's statement, and [noted](#): "Unity is impossible with evil fanatics who celebrate murder." <https://www.wnd.com/2025/09/disown-your-dad-you-little-bleep-jd-vance/>

## OP ED

# Mamdani and the Muslim Invasion of New York

Mon, 15 Sep 2025 6:51 AM PST by Daniel Greenfield



**In 2023, Mohammed made its appearance on the list of the top 10 most popular names for boys in New York City. Anyone paying attention to this seemingly minor statistic could have predicted the emergence of Zohran Mamdani as the Democrat nominee in the upcoming mayoral election.**

Mohammed had appeared as the sixth most common baby among 'Asians' in New York City in 2013. By 2017, the name of the genocidal warlord of Islam had become the most common baby name among 'Asians' in the city. The rapid growth showed the power of demographics.

Nearly 300 Mohammeds (under various spellings) were born in New York City in 2021 accompanied by over 150 Ahmeds, and dozens of Alis, Omars, Adnans and many others.

The Muslim population of New York City is still undetermined. While Islamist groups claim that there are over 1 million Muslims, they tend to exaggerate to build up their influence, but a Pew survey estimated Muslim settlers as making up 3% of the population of New York City.

Mamdani only won the votes of [5% of the population](#) of New York City. That's within 2% of the estimated Muslim population of the city. Whatever the actual size of the Muslim population of the city may be, it was more than enough to make the difference in a mayoral primary that few New Yorkers bothered to vote in because they found all the candidates repugnant even while mosques successfully turned out the bloc vote to rig an election for their candidate.

Mamdani was not a popular candidate, but he toured the city's mosques and told the members of one Hamas-supporting mosque that this is "an opportunity — to tell the world that Muslims don't just belong in New York City but that we belong in City Hall."

That message, delivered in a mosque, combined tribal nationalism and Islamism.

How many mosques are there in the city? There were 285 in 2015. Some current estimates place the number at over 500 now. While Islamist groups do build mosques that they don't need and can't fill in order to build up influence with projects like the Ground Zero Mosque and other mosques in Manhattan (which unlike Brooklyn, Queens and the Bronx, does not have a significant Muslim population below 125th Street) they reflect a growing Muslim population.

The vast majority of that growth happened after 9/11. The old Arab Muslim population which cheered on the rooftops after the September 11 attacks and was responsible for pre 9/11 terrorist attacks like the World Trade Center bombing mainly lived in New Jersey and parts of Brooklyn are a minority now with the massive influx of Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and other Muslims from the vicinity of India colonizing the city.

One of the most important things to understand about Zohran Mamdani is that he isn't just a Muslim, but he's an Indian Muslim. His rise reflects the growing numbers of Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and Indian Muslims who have taken over entire neighborhoods in the city.

There are an estimated 100,000 Bangladeshis occupying parts of New York City. From around 35,000 in 2010, the colonizing population rapidly increased, taking over parts of Queens, once home to middle class Greek, Italian and Jewish populations, but now Mamdani territory.

The Queens district that Mamdani used as a springboard to seize power in New York had formerly been

held by Aravella Simotas, a fairly typical representative of the next generation of old school Democrats, before being ousted by Mamdani using Muslim bloc votes.

On paper, both Simotas, a child of a Greek-American family who had lived in Africa, and Mamdani, the son of Indian Muslims also out of Africa, were both young 'progressive' Democrats who had all the right left-wing positions. Mamdani was backed by the Democratic Socialists of America while Simotas was backed by the Queens Democratic Party.

There was virtually no difference between their actual positions forcing Mamdani to adopt increasingly insane leftist positions that are now coming back to haunt him to stand out..

"I've worked with Aravella, and I'm not quite sure how you could be more left-leaning than she is," a councilwoman said.

Simotas had lived her whole life in Queens while Mamdani, who had been living in Manhattan, wasn't even from Queens but had moved there for the election. Why Queens? According to Mamdani, he moved to the area because he liked the Muslim population already there.

Mamdani had moved into Queens to run in a Muslim district against a fellow leftist Dem.

The 2020 Democrat primary came down to a narrow victory for Mamdani at 51.20% over 48.62% by a margin of around 400 votes. That began Mamdani's career in politics.

Mamdani's victory was part of a larger pattern.

Even while Mamdani used Muslim votes to seize control of District 36, 'Mary' Jobaida, a Bangladeshi Muslim immigrant, tried to take control of Assembly District 37 also in Queens. Jobaida, like Mamdani, ran on a hard left social justice platform, but still lost. She now wants to run for Mamdani's seat if he takes over City Hall.

In Assembly District 24, David Weprin, who is Jewish, has been the target of repeated Muslim candidates running on leftist platforms including Misbaah Mahmood, Mahfuzul Islam and Mahtab Khan: an anti-Israel Islamic activist running on the slogan "Tax the Rich".

Mamdani's rise reflects a larger Islamic campaign in President Trump and David Horowitz's former neighborhood.

In 2019, I warned that [Queens was becoming 'Queensistan'](#) after describing the rise of Islamic terrorism and colonization in the borough. "Grand Central Parkway, where Awais Chudhary, the latest Islamic terrorist operating out of Queens, planned to drop bombs on passing cars, passes a few blocks from President Trump's childhood home. There are 5 Islamic centers within a little over a mile of where Trump had grown up." Now Queenistan has given us Mamdani.

And that's not the end. Mamdani is a symptom of a larger crisis. Demographics is destiny and Muslim mass migration is proving a much greater threat to New York City than hijacked airplanes.

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

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



BS"D

#### STEP BY STEP

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Eye Exam/Eyeglasses: \$60 per child.

Your support is urgently requested.

You can send donations to:

East Texas Biblical Prophecy Forum which is a 501-3C ministry and receive a tax credit statement

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

US Donors may also send checks made payable to Simcha Smolensky, my son, who is also a volunteer.

Send to:

Rabbi Simcha Smolensky, 6739 N Mozart St Chicago IL 60645

**Your support will be appreciated.**

Yaffa Smolensky, Volunteer Program Manager