



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and the Middle East News Update

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News Excerpts

May 11, 2018

Ha'aretz

58 Palestinians Killed, 1,113 Wounded in Gaza Border Clashes

The Israeli army killed dozens of Palestinians at the Gaza border Monday as the Gazans' six weeks of demonstrations — and attempts to breach the border fence — heightened to protest the U.S. Embassy's historic move to Jerusalem. The Gaza Health Ministry said 58 Palestinians had been killed by Israeli gunfire Monday, making it the bloodiest day of the protests by far, as Israeli security officials had predicted. Around 35,000 people demonstrated at the border as Israeli and U.S. officials — including Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner — met in Jerusalem to celebrate the move of the embassy from Tel Aviv, fulfilling a promise by U.S. President Donald Trump. See also, ["The Latest: Gaza Health Ministry releases latest death toll" \(AP\)](#)

Jerusalem Post

Turkey Recalls Envoys from Israel, US over Recent Events

Turkey on Monday recalled its ambassadors from Israel and the United States to demonstrate its anger over the mounting Gaza death toll and the relocation of the American Embassy to Jerusalem, according to the Turkish newspaper the Daily Sabah. Already in December Turkey had warned that it would recall its ambassador should the US make good on its pledge to open relocate its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced the removal of the envoys at a speech he delivered in London. Israel's Foreign Ministry has yet to confirm the report. See also, ["Turkey's president blames US for returning world to 'dark days'" \(Guardian\)](#)

Ynet News

US Blames Hamas for Gaza Deaths, World Condemns Israel

The White House blamed Hamas leaders Monday evening for the deadly violence in Gaza earlier in the day—in which 52 Palestinians were killed and more than 1,200 wounded—and said Israel has a right to defend itself. "There is no justification for the recklessness and cynicism Hamas has shown in urging people to engage in violence that exposes them to terrible risk. As the Secretary of State has said, Israel has a right to defend itself," a White House official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said in a statement. The official further maintained a solution needed to be found to the "serious humanitarian challenges facing Palestinians" in Gaza. See also, ["Greenblatt: Delaying embassy move brought us no closer to peace" \(JPost\)](#)

Reuters

U.N.S.C Upset by Non-Implementation of Mideast Resolution

Two-thirds of the United Nations Security Council expressed "profound concern" on Monday that a 2016 resolution demanding an end to Israeli settlement building was not being implemented. A letter to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres from 10 members of the council coincided with the bloodiest single day for Palestinians since 2014. Israeli troops fatally shot dozens of Palestinian protesters on the Gaza border as the Trump administration opened the U.S. Embassy to Israel in Jerusalem. "The Security Council must stand behind its resolutions and ensure they have meaning; otherwise, we risk undermining the credibility of the international system," they wrote.

US Blocks UN Statement Calling for Probe into Gaza Violence

The Trump administration on Monday blocked a UN Security Council statement that was intended to call for an investigation of the events on the Israel-Gaza border. The statement, circulated by Kuwait, was supposed to include an expression of rage and sorrow on behalf of the Security Council over the deaths of more than 50 Palestinians, who were shot dead by the IDF during protests near the border fence. However, the U.S. blocked it from being adopted and published. The Kuwaiti statement also included a call for the creation of an "independent and transparent investigation" into Israel's actions on the border. It wasn't the first time that the U.S. has blocked an action at the Security Council related to Israel's actions in Gaza, but was notable in light of the high death toll yesterday in Gaza – the highest since the end of the 2014 war between Israel and Hamas. See also, ["Kuwait seeks UN Security Council meeting on Gaza violence" \(Ynet News\)](#)

Jerusalem Post

U.S. Jewish Groups Laud Trump's 'Courageous' Embassy Move

US Jewish groups on Monday expressed gratitude to President Donald Trump for keeping a campaign promise to move the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem following a ceremony in Israel's capital on Monday. The Anti-Defamation League said the embassy move acknowledges Jewish ties to the holy city and consecrates American-Israel relations. "The opening of the United States Embassy in Jerusalem is a historic milestone 2,000 years in the making," said ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt, who attended the opening ceremony. "Jerusalem has been the spiritual capital of the Jewish people for millennia and Israel's political capital since its earliest days," he said. "Today's opening of the US Embassy acknowledges these fundamental truths and constitutes a resounding answer to repeated attempts in recent years, notably in international fora, to deny the millennial Jewish bond to the city." See also, ["Singing Washington protesters denounce US embassy move" \(Ynet News\)](#)

I24 news

Arab League to Discuss 'illegal' US Embassy Move to Jerusalem

The Arab League will hold emergency talks Wednesday to discuss Washington's "illegal" decision to move the US embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, a senior official said. The meeting will focus on "ways of countering the illegal decision by the United States to move the embassy to Jerusalem", the organisation's deputy secretary general for Palestinian affairs, Saeed Abu Ali, said. He told reporters the permanent representatives of members of the Cairo-based Arab League would meet "at the request of the state of Palestine". Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in London on Monday that the US has lost its role as mediator in the Middle East. "With its latest step America has chosen to be a part of the problem, not a solution, and lost its mediator role in the Middle East peace process", he told the Chatham House international affairs think tank.

Ynet News

50,000 crowd Rabin Square to celebrate Eurovision win

Tens of thousands of Israelis crowded into Rabin Square in Tel Aviv Monday night to celebrate with Eurovision winner Netta Barzilai. "I am proud of you, you are my second family, I love you," Barzilai told the thousands who came to celebrate her winning the Eurovision Song Contest Saturday night.

Days of the Messiah

By Ben Caspit, Columnist at Ma'ariv

- Binyamin Netanyahu's series of successes has continued at full speed. After a rare week that included the Iranian nuclear archive, Trump's withdrawal from the nuclear agreement, the Iranian failure to attack Israel and the severe blow inflicted upon it by the IDF, yesterday it was the turn of the historic ceremony in which the US embassy in Jerusalem was dedicated in the presence of a dignified American delegation, pastors, rabbis, wealthy and powerful individuals and Ivanka Trump.
- It seems to me that along the way, Netanyahu can also take credit for Netta Barzilai and the conquest of the Eurovision. It's a pity that the early stages of the World Cup didn't start this week, perhaps we would have made the finals. At this rate and following this logic, by the end of the week the Messiah will also come. Or else he has come already and we did not notice.
- Only the State of Israel could supply a day of the kind that we experienced yesterday: the embassy was dedicated in Jerusalem, several dozen kilometers away 52 Palestinians were killed at the fence in a day of blood, fire and pillars of smoke, and a 45-minute drive from there tens of thousands of Israelis gathered in Rabin Square to hear the peculiar clucking that had won the Eurovision two days earlier. Two huge parties on one side, with 52 funerals and zero achievements on the other side is too good to be true—but it is completely true. We are apparently on the way to redemption.
- This is precisely the stage when we have to stop for a moment and think. The embassy relocation to Jerusalem should gladden every Israeli, including those who still support political negotiations, a peace agreement and a two-state solution. The questionable excuse of the friends from Meretz, who say that it "pokes a finger in the other side's eye" doesn't hold water. The other side has been poking fingers in its own eyes for years. It is the other side that rejected all the very generous peace offers that have been given to it until today.
- President Trump kept his promise, contrary to many assessments and commentaries (including those of this writer), and he should be praised for it. The State of Israel's legitimacy index has never been higher, at least not in the current era. We are succeeding wonderfully in all our endeavors, and life could be beautiful if not for this annoying nuisance of the Palestinians.
- The good news: The IDF succeeded, yesterday too, in blocking the Palestinian masses and preventing the fence from being breached in Gaza. All the efforts, and considerable efforts were made, to penetrate the Israeli iron wall, to break the fence or to create chaos and break through the Israeli troops—failed.
- The bad news: The Palestinians are still here. They are not going anywhere and they will get up this morning slightly more despairing than they got up yesterday morning. It is for good reason that IDF officials have been repeating over the past weeks that the goal is to perform the mission with a minimum of fatalities on the other side. What Hamas seeks to achieve is as many fatalities as possible (on our side, but also on theirs), in order to regain world attention, to fuel the fire and the anger, to try to create the necessary energy for a further explosion.

- Yesterday they got their pound of flesh. Apparently there was no other way to block them, and if anyone knows another way to ensure that the fence is not breached, they are invited to help this morning. But the bottom line continues to be harsh and ominous. The pressure cooker is still on the flame, which was small and is now large. At some point it will explode. Things will be terrible in Gaza, but we will have more than a few funerals on our side too.
- The political echelon has to do its utmost to prevent this. The military echelon has to give the political echelon the tools to do so. I'm not at all certain that this is happening. The sense of euphoria and uplifted spirits that has been shared by so many Israelis in the past few days could harm the sense of proportion, the sense of caution and the sense of humility. Every time we have been in such a state of euphoria, it ended in tears. Let's pray that it won't happen this time.

SUMMARY: Only the State of Israel could supply a day of the kind that we experienced yesterday: the embassy was dedicated in Jerusalem, several dozen kilometers away 52 Palestinians were killed at the fence in a day of blood, fire and pillars of smoke, and a 45-minute drive from there tens of thousands of Israelis gathered in Rabin Square to hear the peculiar clucking that had won the Eurovision two days earlier. Two huge parties on one side, with 52 funerals and zero achievements on the other side is too good to be true—but it is completely true. We are apparently on the way to redemption.

Between Jerusalem and Gaza, The Bitter and the Sweet

By Nahum Barnea, Columnist at Yedioth Ahronoth

- The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus was the biggest circus the world has ever known. It was so big that the performances in it were held in three separate rings: elephants danced in one ring; lions roared in the second ring; and trapeze artists leapt through the air in the third ring. There was something about yesterday's events that reminded me of that circus: the inauguration ceremony of the new American embassy in Jerusalem was an isolated event; the rush on the Gaza border was an isolated event; and the victory party in Rabin Square was an isolated event. Three moods; three flavors that in reverse order go: sweet, bitter and foreign.
- The formal American recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel should have been made 69 years ago, when Israel formally declared Jerusalem as its capital. Despite coming at a significant delay, it should be celebrated: it corrects a distortion. But the guests who made their way to the building at the southern edge of Jerusalem didn't suffice with that. They compared the relocation of the embassy to the Balfour Declaration, no less, and to President Truman's decision to recognize the State of Israel. Fawning is fairly standard in events of this kind, but you need to know when to stop.
- Sitting around were the Jewish Republican officials and their wives, and they melted in pleasure. They are foreign to the overwhelming majority of Jews in the United States and they are foreign to us as well. They will always be in the Diaspora, even and perhaps especially when they visit here. The atmosphere reminds me of a Reform synagogue in the Hamptons, said to me one Israeli friend of mine who was there in an official capacity. What's the deal with all this dancing before the foreign ruler, asked a different Israeli.
- And she was right. The State of Israel isn't a distant dream, as it was in Balfour's day, and it isn't an infant fighting for its life, as it was during Truman's day. Israel is strong and well-established. It's an ally and not a welfare case. It can stop groveling.
- American protocol worked to restore the correct proportions to the event. Netanyahu wanted to attend the unveiling ceremony, and to have Ivanka Trump and Steve Mnuchin pull the cover off from one side, while he and Sara would pull it off from the other. That isn't going to happen, said the American official responsible for the ceremony: only official American representatives will pull the string. Sara Netanyahu wanted to sit beside Ivanka, who would draw the attention of the cameras. No way, dictated American protocol. Netanyahu was justly showered with honor at the ceremony, but he wanted a bit more, just like in the torch-lighting ceremony.
- The 55 people who were killed in Gaza, including eight children, are an unbearable price for a day of battle on the fence. Even if every incident of gunfire can be justified, the bitter taste of failure accompanies this day. One of the commanders on the ground explained in a briefing on the eve of the event that the rules of engagement are more restrictive than any accepted requirement. When a Gazan draws near the fence, they only shoot at him after his feet become visible. The feet, and not just the legs. The orders to the snipers are to aim for the feet.
- The question of whether the IDF operated as expected of it yesterday remains an open question, but that is only a secondary question. The troubling question is why the political echelon has

refused to discuss any alternative that might change the reality in Gaza, and prefers to let the Gazans collapse on our doorstep.

- There isn't any connection between the incidents in Gaza and the embassy's relocation, though both are liable to result in a wave of violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank. There isn't any connection between Gaza and the Eurovision, though it seems unlikely that Netta Barzilai would have won the same number of points had the competition been held after yesterday's events.
- I was in Rabin Square last night, and the taste was sweet. I haven't seen that many people together since the wave of protests in 2011. I haven't seen that many young Israelis celebrating together—wholeheartedly, without anger, without gloating at someone else's expense, without the drive of competition in... many years. The square was filled with girls and women, full-figured and slender, boys and men, and families. The girls gazed on over their parents' shoulders at Netta Barzilai with the same fan-filled adoration that Ofra Haza and Yardena Arazi elicited a generation ago.
- Normalcy, that was the working assumption, that was the message. I asked myself where these youngsters go on Election Day, why their message isn't reflected in the politicians' decisions. Barzilai who, beyond her talent, displays in every statement she makes maturity, intelligence and self-possession, had a happy thought that she wanted to share with them from the stage: "Thought creates reality," she said. In other words: if you will, it is no dream. The audience preferred to sing.

SUMMARY: The question of whether the IDF operated as expected of it yesterday remains an open question, but that is only a secondary question. The troubling question is why the political echelon has refused to discuss any alternative that might change the reality in Gaza, and prefers to let the Gazans collapse on our doorstep. There isn't any connection between the incidents in Gaza and the embassy's relocation, though both are liable to result in a wave of violence in Jerusalem and the West Bank. There isn't any connection between Gaza and the Eurovision, though it seems unlikely that Netta Barzilai would have won the same number of points had the competition been held after yesterday's events.