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CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and the Middle East News Update

Tuesday, May 7

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News Excerpts

May 7, 2019

Times of Israel

Israel's Population Tops 9 Million, Including 45% of World Jewry

On the eve of its 71st Independence Day, Israel's population stands at 9,021,000, crossing 9 million for the first time, according to figures released on Monday by the Central Bureau of Statistics. The data show that 6,697,000 Israelis are Jewish (74.2 percent) and 1,890,000 are Arab (20.9%). In addition, there are 434,000 people who are non-Arab Christians or members of other ethnic groups. Seventy-five percent of the Jews in Israel were born in the country. According to the data, the country's population is expected to reach 15.2 million people by Israel's 100th Independence Day in 2048. In 1948 there were just 806,000 people in Israel and at the time, the global Jewish population was 11.5 million, and just 6% were in Israel. Today, 45% of the world's Jews live in Israel.

See also, ["ON INDEPENDENCE DAY EVE, 82% OF ISRAELIS HAPPY WITH COUNTRY'S ACHIEVEMENTS"](#) (J Post)

Ynet News

Israelis Living Near Gaza Border Angry About Ceasefire

There was anger and dismay on the Israeli side of the Gaza border on Monday after two days of rocket blasts and air-raid sirens that ended with a ceasefire. "In a month, in two weeks, in a month and a half, it will all happen again - we achieved nothing. I think Israel needs to strike them very, very hard so that they learn their lesson," said Haim Cohen, 69, a retired electrician from the coastal city of Ashdod 15 miles (25 km) north of the Gaza Strip. In Ein Hashlosha, a kibbutz about a mile and a half from Gaza, Meirav Kohan, 46, said she was shocked and disappointed at the truce. "This is a war of attrition and the government is not looking for a long-term solution to bring us peace. There's no policy. We're just pawns in a game," she said.

See also, ["THREE DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES WEIGHED IN ON THE GAZA VIOLENCE"](#) (JPost)

Times of Israel

Qatar Pledges to Send \$480 Million in Aid to West Bank & Gaza

Qatar pledged to send \$480 million in aid to Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank, Qatar's foreign ministry said overnight Monday. The Palestinian Authority would receive \$300 million for health and education and \$180 million would finance humanitarian initiatives, electricity and United Nations programs. It wasn't immediately clear how much of the \$480 million would go to Gaza.

Ma'ariv

IDF: Quiet in Gaza will be Fragile Without Political Initiative

While the most recent round of fighting did serve to strengthen Israel's power of deterrence against the terror organizations in the Gaza Strip, IDF officials believe that it is going to be difficult to keep the security situation in the south stable in the absence of a complementary political initiative. Among the array of positions that were presented in meetings were assessments that in the absence of significant progress on civilian issues, the situation in the Gaza Strip was liable to deteriorate once again within a matter of weeks.

The “Money for Quiet” Strategy has Run its Course

The results of the recent fighting between Israel and Hamas were mixed, since the root problem was not addressed and the wrong strategic objectives were chosen. Instead of citing the restoration of deterrence and dealing with Hamas’s increased military strength as mid-range objectives, and citing weakening Hamas and replacing it as a long-term objective, Israel has sanctified the strategy of “money in exchange for quiet,” which has entrenched Hamas and ensures that additional rounds of violence will soon follow, if not a full-scale war. (...) Israel needs to transition to a policy that involves restoring its power of deterrence, coupled with inflicting significant damage to Hamas’s military wing. Israel needs to do so without fear of enemy casualties, and it needs to target senior Hamas officials and adopt surprise tactics. The key is taking the initiative, instead of passively being dragged along, as we have been in the last few rounds of fighting. Anyone who is unwilling to bring about their adversary’s collapse has no chance of deterring that adversary. (by Amos Yadlin, director of the Institute for National Security Studies and a former director of the IDF Intelligence Branch)

See also, [“Gazans Come to Grips With Destruction – and Fear Next Round of Violence” \(Ha’aretz\)](#)

Ynet News

Gaza Fighting Made Islamic Jihad a Major Player

For an entire month Islamic Jihad tried to execute a major terror attack against Israeli targets or otherwise bring about an escalation in violence, in order to derail any long-term agreement between the Palestinians and the Jewish state. After a few attempts, they finally succeeded in dragging Hamas into this latest round of fighting in Gaza. Now that the smoke has cleared, it appears that this small organization has emerged as the most substantial player both in Gaza in particular and in the Arab sphere in general. Egyptian negotiators are now obliged to accept Islamic Jihad as an equal partner, represented not only by its leader Ziad Nahala, but also by its field commander Bahu Abu al-Ata, who now also has a seat at the table. Despite the heavy price that IJ payed in the course of the fighting, and in the resulting ceasefire agreement, from a long-term perspective, it has had an upgrade.

See also, [“A Strange Symbiosis: Why Israel and Gaza Keep Fighting Brief Battles” \(New York Times\)](#)

Ynet News

Israel Prepares to Remember its Fallen Soldiers, Terror Victims

Israel on Tuesday evening will mark the start of Memorial Day for its fallen troops and terror victims, which begins with a one-minute air raid siren sounding across the country. In the next 24 hours, Israel will unite in honoring the memory of 23,741 Israel Defense Forces soldiers who were killed since 1880 - the year in which Jews first moved to pre-state Palestine - and some 3,150 civilians killed in terror attacks since the establishment of the state. Four of those have been killed this week alone in the latest deadly round of cross-border fighting between Israel and Hamas.

Independence for Both Peoples

Haaretz Editorial

- Israel will begin its 71st Independence Day celebrations Wednesday evening; the enjoyment will be diluted by the knowledge of the price, in blood and despair, exacted by the last round of violence in Gaza. Four Israeli civilians and 25 Palestinians were killed in another bloody campaign. The events of the past few days, like the rest of the wars and operations, demonstrate the diplomatic dead end that has been reached.
- Even though a cease-fire was reached, it is likely that the violence will resume soon, that new rocket barrages will again force large numbers of Israelis into bomb shelters and wreak additional death and misery. The first to admit this depressing fact is Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who, in contrast to his enthusiasm for pre-empting television broadcasts for his war against the judicial system, refrains from addressing the public in times of crisis, as rocket sirens wail. On Monday, he said in a statement: “The campaign is not over. ... We are prepared to continue.”
- What is this continuation? What is Netanyahu’s plan for the day after, after he completes his scheme to sever the West Bank from the Gaza Strip, weaken the Palestinian Authority and preserve Hamas rule? What is the solution the prime minister is offering to residents of the south, who have suffered from an intolerable routine for years, especially in the past year? How does he mean to deal with the consequences of the equation he has created, according to which Israel understands only force and violence and strengthens those who attack its citizens while weakening and humiliating those who shrink from violence and terrorism and have chosen the diplomatic path?
- Ironically, in the Netanyahu’s era it is not Hamas that is deterred but rather the Israeli left, which can and must call out and cry out against Netanyahu’s security swindle. In the face of the silence of the flagship of the opposition, Kahol Lavan party, we must reiterate what most Israelis insist on repressing: It’s impossible to “manage” the conflict, to conceal the Palestinian people and to ignore its troubles and legitimate demands — in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip — for independence and liberty. The occupation, which destroys every good part of Israeli society, hangs like a sword over Israel. It will continue to be a moral and strategic threat, irrespective of election results or who is sitting in the White House.
- The fates of the Jewish and Palestinian peoples are intertwined, whether they want it or not. The happiness and welfare of the one depends on the other, and no statesman or general can erase that. Israel will never be genuinely independent until the Palestinians achieve genuine independence. These days are a painful reminder of these facts.

The above article is Haaretz’s lead editorial, as published in the Hebrew and English newspapers in Israel.

Gaza Proves ‘Land for Peace’ Really Means ‘Land for War’

By Yair Netanyahu

- **JERUSALEM** — Imagine the southern half of the United States being bombarded by missiles for days at a time. Conceptualize the populations of Miami, Los Angeles and Dallas running into bomb shelters as rocket sirens blare. This is the reality here in Israel as I write these words.
- For the last three days, more than 600 terror missiles have been indiscriminately fired upon some of Israel’s largest cities. Almost half of Israel’s population is currently inside the line of rocket fire while our capital, Jerusalem, and the economical hub of Tel Aviv could be the next targets. Once the rocket alert system is activated, the people of Israel have only a few seconds to find refuge as Gaza missiles target their cities.
- The rockets are being launched by Hamas, the Palestinian Islamist terror organization that controls the Gaza Strip, and by the Iran-backed Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group. Four Israeli civilians were murdered on Sunday (reportedly including an Israeli Arab Bedouin) by the Palestinian missiles. A pregnant Palestinian woman and her 14-month old baby were reportedly killed by a Hamas rocket launched toward Israeli civilians that accidentally fell inside the Gaza Strip.
- For decades, Israelis have faced rounds of terror like this, occurring at times once in a few years, and more recently, every few months. The Palestinian Islamists in Gaza are routinely committing a double war crime — deliberately aiming their missiles at Israeli civilian targets while hiding behind their own civilians. Many of the Gaza missiles fired toward Israel are launched from mosques, hospital and schools (often UN schools), cynically utilizing the coastal enclave’s population as human shields.
- Stunningly, the left in Israel, Europe and America often attempts to excuse the terror from Gaza by claiming that the “root cause” of the mayhem is the poverty and despair of the local population. They ignore that the Palestinian population has received billions in economic and humanitarian aid, surpassing even the amount that Japan received to recover after World War II. Look at Japan and look at Gaza.
- The reason the people of Gaza live in poverty is because their terrorist government utilizes the foreign aid that they receive to build their missile infrastructure and construct terror tunnels with the aim of waging war on the Jewish state.
- Another claim often propagated by the left is that the terror from Gaza is prompted by the so-called “economic blockade” of the Gaza Strip. This is another myth. There is no such blockade of Gaza. Every day, hundreds of Israeli trucks filled with tons of goods cross the border into Gaza. Israel supplies about two-thirds of Gaza’s electricity as well as its fuel despite those provisions being utilized to power Hamas’s missile factories and terror facilities.
- Gaza shares a major border with Egypt, a fellow Arab Muslim state, and Israel has no control over that border. The Israel Defense Forces does enforce a naval blockade of Gaza to ensure that weapons are not imported by sea. This started in 2007, when Hamas took control over

Gaza. By the way, Gaza in modern times never had any port that could handle cargo ships; goods were always trucked in from Egypt or Israel.

- **If Israel wouldn't apply this naval blockade, Iran would ship virtually unlimited weapons directly to Gaza, thereby endangering Israel's existence.**
- **How did Israel get into such a crazy situation where half of its population is threatened by missiles?**
- **Israel is a tiny country about the size of New Jersey surrounded by an ocean of 22 Arab states and more than 50 Muslim countries.**
- **From the time of its establishment in 1948, Israel faced the constant threat of annihilation. For its first 19 years, Israel was only a strip of coast about 11 miles in width. In 1967, Israel's neighboring Arab countries launched yet another war to destroy it. Israel defended itself and took control over the Gaza Strip, Golan Heights and Judea and Samaria (also commonly referred to as the West Bank).**
- **It's important to emphasize that Judea and Samaria are a mountain ridge overlooking Tel Aviv about 11 miles to the west and it's the ancient heartland of the Jewish people since the time of the Bible. Both the Gaza Strip and Judea and Samaria were intended to be part of the Jewish state in the legally-binding San Remo Resolution of 1920, agreed upon by all the winning powers in the aftermath of WWI.**
- **When the modern State of Israel was created in 1948, all neighboring Arab countries invaded it and Jordan took control of Judea and Samaria while Egypt took Gaza. Since the liberation of these two territories in 1967, Jews returned and settled on the sites of ancient Hebrew towns in the area.**
- **Until 14 years ago, there were about ten thousand Israelis living in prosperous and beautiful towns inside the Gaza Strip. For decades the left in Israel, Europe and America demanded that Israel apply the formula of "Land for Peace" and give away its crucial strategic and historical lands to the local Arabs who took on the name of "Palestinians."**
- **In 2005, the Israeli government decided to do just that. It announced a plan to expel every single Jew living in the Gaza Strip and pull out the Israeli army. The Israeli left – with the media as their sounding board – infamously promised that Gaza would become "the Singapore of the Middle East" and that on the land of the former Israeli communities will be established peace camps. After all, if we withdraw to the very last inch of Palestinian demands and give them their own state in the whole of the Gaza Strip, why would they continue waging terror against us?**
- **The right in Israel warned that the evacuated Gaza Strip will become a launching pad for missiles into Israel and that Gaza will be taken over by Hamas. The left mocked this assumption and reassured the Israeli public that once Israel will be out of the Gaza Strip there will be peace.**
- **In August 2005, Israel expelled the Jews of Gaza and even removed every single body from the Jewish cemetery there. The Palestinian Authority received the whole of the Gaza Strip without a single Jewish civilian or soldier inside.**

- **Less than two years later, Hamas took control of the Strip and ever since Israel finds itself facing waves of terror and missiles from the territory that was supposed to become peaceful. The Gaza Strip is tiny, flat and about 50 miles away from Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Judea and Samaria is much bigger and runs alongside central Israel, directly adjacent to the heart of Jerusalem and a stone's throw from Tel Aviv.**
- **There are more than half a million Jews living in Judea and Samaria, unlike the ten thousand evicted from the Gaza Strip. Much of the international community and the left in Israel, Europe and America demand that Israel do in Judea and Samaria what it did in Gaza in 2005.**
- **Such a move will lead to the destruction of Israel. The "Land for Peace" formula leads in reality to "Land for War".**

Yair Netanyahu is a conservative political activist and son of the Israeli prime minister.