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## Israel and Middle East News Update

*Tuesday, October 6*

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- Ex-Shin Bet Official: Arab States View Abbas as Irrelevant
- IDF Kills Terrorist in West Bank Who Targeted Troops
- Hamas Leader: 'Sudan Has Never Failed Us'
- Israel Under Diplomatic Fire Over Arms to Azerbaijan
- Azeris, Armenians Say Civilian Areas Are Under Fire
- Israel Records 5,651 Virus Cases in 24hrs, Death Toll: 1,771
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# News Excerpts

October 6, 2020

## Times of Israel

### **Rocket Fired from Gaza; IDF Retaliates with Strike**

Palestinian terrorists in the Gaza Strip fired a rocket at Israel, the army said, without reporting any casualties or damage. Sirens sounded in areas of southern Israel neighboring Gaza to warn of the incoming fire, for which there was no claim of responsibility. The army said the projectile likely fell in an open area. Hours later, the army said an IDF aircraft struck a Hamas military installation in the southern Gaza Strip in retaliation for the rocket fire. There were no immediate reports of casualties. The last cross-border rocket attack, after which Israel retaliated with air raids, came on September 15 and coincided with the signing in Washington of normalization deals between the Jewish state and the UAE and Bahrain. A truce mediated by Qatar has since held. [See also "Israel to Advance Plans for 4,400 New Settlement Homes, Mostly Outside Blocs" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

## Jerusalem Post

### **Ex-Shin Bet Official: Arab States View Abbas as Irrelevant**

The constellations of moderate Sunni Arab states which are on track to normalize relations with Israel view PA President Mahmoud Abbas as irrelevant, a former top Shin Bet official has said. He added that, "the Arab world now says that relations with Israel is more important than the Palestinian issue, which cannot be solved by Abu Mazen, for the foreseeable future." Accusing Abbas of irrational miscalculations, he said the PA has failed to grasp the changing times and its attempt to retry uniting with Hamas or some kind of new round of elections will fail. Part of the failure he said was inherent in the fact that neither the PA nor Israel will allow Hamas to take over the West Bank as they did in Gaza. Despite a playing field that currently favors Israel, he warned the Israel not to ignore or be dismissive of the Palestinian issue. [See also "Saudi Former Intelligence Chief Slams Palestinian Leadership's Criticism of UAE-Israel Deal" \(Reuters\)](#)

## I24News

### **IDF Kills Terrorist in West Bank Who Targeted Troops**

IDF troops opened fire on 3 Palestinians who hurled Molotov cocktails at the force, near the Jewish settlement of Einav in the West Bank. One was hit and killed, as the IDF launched a manhunt after the other two. No injuries were sustained to the Israeli soldiers. Tensions between Israel and the Palestinians escalated, when earlier a stabbing attack in Gush Etzion settlement was thwarted by a police officer and an IDF soldier. According to Israel Police, the attacker approached the security personnel at a junction near Hebron, ignored their orders to halt, which prompted the Israeli force to draw their firearms. The suspect was arrested and questioned. [See also "Israel's Policy Will Lead to Bloodshed" \(Arutz Sheva\)](#)

## **Hamas Leader: 'Sudan Has Never Failed Us'**

Hamas is hoping that Khartoum will stay true to its support for the Palestinians. The U.S. is presently negotiating Sudan's removal from its designation as a foreign terrorist organization. From the outset of its founding in 1987, Hamas' ideological links to the Muslim Brotherhood gave it access to the widespread organization's network across both the Arab and Muslim world. Its launching was to many Islamists in the region a dream come true, given the fact that the Palestinian resistance movement had been dominated by seculars who gave the struggle a nonreligious narrative and posed a barrage of accusations to the Palestinian Islamic movement in regard to its commitment to the cause. Among those who embraced the newly rising group was Sudan, which witnessed in 1989 a coup by pro-Muslim Brotherhood army officers. Over the years, Sudan was transformed into a regional base for Hamas. Sudan's alliance with the Palestinian group exposed it to foreign pressure and on some levels to military strikes, due to allegations that its territories were used to transport weapons to the Gaza Strip.

## **Israel Under Diplomatic Fire Over Arms to Azerbaijan**

A major supplier of arms to Azerbaijan, Israel has come under diplomatic fire from Armenia over the struggle between the Caucasus neighbors in disputed Nagorno-Karabakh. Armenia, a country long seen as close to Israel's nemesis Iran, only opened an embassy in Tel Aviv on September 17, but Yerevan recalled its ambassador barely citing weapons sales to Azerbaijan. While President Reuven Rivlin spoke with his Armenian counterpart and attempted to smooth the waters, Jerusalem's weapons exports to Baku will be difficult to give up. The diplomatic rift came shortly after press reports, based on data from flight tracing site Flightradar 24, cited the takeoff of an Azerbaijani cargo plane from southern Israel. The site said the aircraft, operated by Azerbaijani carrier Silk Way, took off from Ramon Airport, located near the Ovda military base, on the eve of the outbreak of hostilities. Beyond this single example, Azerbaijan has a long track record of buying Israeli arms -- to the extent that Iran in 2012 summoned the former's ambassador to voice its concerns.

## **Azeris, Armenians Say Civilian Areas Are Under Fire**

Azerbaijan and Armenia accused each other of attacking civilian areas and said the death toll was rising from the deadliest fighting in the South Caucasus region for more than 25 years. NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg added his voice to calls for an immediate end to the clashes over Nagorno-Karabakh, a mountain enclave that belongs to Azerbaijan under international law but is populated and governed by ethnic Armenians. But prospects for a ceasefire appeared remote after fighting intensified with hundreds killed in clashes involving artillery, tanks and fighter planes since. Azerbaijan said Azeri cities outside Nagorno-Karabakh had been struck, taking the fighting closer to territory from which pipelines carry Azeri gas and oil to Europe. [See also "Israel May Halt Its Weapons Sale to Azerbaijan, Armenian Ambassador Says" \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

## **Israel Records 5,651 Virus Cases in 24hrs, Death Toll: 1,771**

Israel registered 5,647 coronavirus cases; new data released by the Health Ministry showed. The ministry recorded 1,024 new infections. In total, 52,059 screening tests were conducted Monday throughout the country, resulting in a 11.4% positive test ratio -- a continuation of a downward trend. No new deaths were registered since midnight as Israel's death toll remained at 1,757 on Tuesday morning. In total, the country has registered 274,423 infections since March. There are currently 63,832 active cases, among them 895 patients in serious condition -- including 224 on artificial lung ventilation -- and 316 individuals in moderate condition. While the Jewish state is undergoing a comprehensive national lockdown, morbidity rates have indicated a slight downward trend in recent days. That has not shifted Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's stance on the lockdown, saying yesterday during the Coronavirus Cabinet meeting that he will not ease restrictions so soon after implementing a stricter lockdown. [See also "Ministers Lean Towards Full Israel Lockdown Until October 18" \(Ynet News\)](#)

### Jerusalem Post

## **Sexual Abuse Doubles, Homelessness up 70% for Youth**

A new report shows that sexual abuse of Israeli youth doubled between June and August in comparison to last year. The report was compiled by Elem –Youth in Distress, an Israeli NGO that works with at-risk youth. The report also shows that homelessness among youth saw a 70% increase compared to last year. The report shows the massive impact of the coronavirus pandemic and ensuing lockdowns on a vulnerable population. In addition to the spike in sexual violence and homelessness, the report shows three times as much depression and anxiety among youth, twice as much domestic violence, twice as much substance abuse, twice as much loneliness, twice the prevalence of eating disorders and one-and-a-half times the amount of self-harm as the same period last year. The report also stated that 85% more youth were involved in crime or had run-ins with the police compared to previous years. One in every 11 young people met by the organization reported that the pandemic severely impacted their home. This impact took the form of hunger and increased poverty, unemployment, or depression or attempted suicide by one or both parents.

## **No Wonder We've Lost Confidence**

By Sima Kadmon

- If we were living in a normal country, Gila Gamliel would have left the cabinet in the blink of an eye. Every thinking person understands that someone who is part of the echelon that decides on the severe lockdown policies cannot be the one who violates them. It's so obvious that anything else is unacceptable. Gamliel shouldn't wait to be fired. She should have resigned on her own initiative immediately after she got caught having spent Yom Kippur far from her home in Tel Aviv. She should have immediately admitted that she went to synagogue for services—which is also against the directives and against the prime minister's personal request—and not have added insult to injury by misleading the professionals, who even had trouble finding her for the purposes of conducting an epidemiological investigation. Her excuse that she gave as part of her apology—namely, that she is the mother of two girls and therefore had to get help from her husband's parents who live in Tiberias—was nothing less than disgraceful. A mother of two girls? What will all the hundreds of thousands of mothers who have been trying to juggle work and kids for months say? They can't get help from grandma and grandpa because of the directives either. And I wonder why this excuse never came up when it concerned the minister's frequent overseas travel, as has been reported repeatedly.
- This story is infuriating in every possible aspect, and in a normal country this just wouldn't be tolerated. Neither the action, and definitely not what was and wasn't done afterwards. What we won't accept from a private citizen is definitely unacceptable from a cabinet member. But we don't live in a normal country, and Gamliel doesn't think that she should be punished for things that others did and got away with before her, from the president to the prime minister and to cabinet ministers and Members of Knesset. They violated the lockdown too, and they didn't follow the directives that the entire public is required to follow either. Every citizen [who violates the directives] is required to pay a fine, and it's unlikely that any of them bothered to. It was there, on the eve of the Passover Seder, that the seeds of calamity were sown. That's where the cracks in [the public's] confidence began to form. And that's also the reason why the prime minister was in no hurry to punish Gamliel, or even to reprimand her. What would he say, that he was punishing her for what he himself did? Would he give her a reprimand when just two weeks ago his two close advisors violated quarantine? The prime minister is in no position to do anything. Why should he get entangled with Gamliel, who would no doubt open her mouth and just made the situation worse? Better for him to let party members like Ketzi Shitrit do the work of defending the indefensible.
- After all, Gamliel is merely another link in a long chain of lockdown violators, the same senior officials who pay no heed to us and permit themselves to do what we, the private citizens, are prohibited from doing. MK Mickey Levy (Yesh Atid), who also turns out to have violated the lockdown and didn't exactly tell the whole truth, joined them yesterday. Only in his case, Lapid rushed to do what was necessary and dismissed him from the Coronavirus Committee. That's all that Lapid was missing, for a member of his party who

**was also a member of the Coronavirus Committee to violate the directives. So it's no wonder that we've lost confidence. All of us. An entire public, Haredim and secular, right- and left- wingers, Arabs and Jews, who feel abandoned and deceived and are looking for any way to circumvent the directives that even the leadership hasn't upheld. No wonder that there's no way to convince us that these directives are warranted and that they haven't been imposed on us to fulfill various needs that are immaterial. And no wonder that as the coronavirus cabinet keeps debating restrictions—the demonstrations have continued, mass funerals have been held, and there is no leadership or source of authority to rely on and listen to.**

## **The Israeli Autumn**

By Yossi Shain

- Political science students who learn about “democracies in distress” discuss protests, change of government, regime collapse and revolutions. These are the processes of change that are often accompanied with fervor and danger, at the end of which there can be both good and bad outcomes. The reasons for protest have to do with the sense of frustration, with government failings, governmental corruption and failed performance. Sometimes anti-democratic forces bring about change, including extreme nationalist, Marxist or religious forces that bring about democracy’s destruction. For example, the rise of fascism in Europe about 100 years ago. If the protests deteriorate into street battles and civil war, this is liable to strike a mortal blow to democracy and to the rise of dictatorial regimes. Sometimes, a civil war can also lead to renewal, but at a high price. In contrast, “good” protests form the foundation that safeguards democracy and its balances. They are not violent, and they are meant to bring about reform and openness without cracking the governmental structure and its spirit—rather only to uproot its ills and to strengthen its institutions and liberty.
- Regimes usually do not fully understand the depth of the protest, its character and its dimensions. Often corrupt democracies will try to uproot the protests and to paint them as illegitimate, as dangerous anarchism or as revolutions, while trying to enlist the masses against it. Governments, in many cases, also have difficulty anticipating the continuity and spread of the protest because the character and boundaries of the protest can change at any minute. Governments also have difficulty calculating the proper balance between suppression and tolerance—sometimes the price of tolerance is high and suppressing a protest is impossible, and sometimes suppression brings about even greater ruin. A wise democratic leadership must contain the protest and respond with the right dosage of suppression and tolerance—and if the protest is not violent, as the protest in Israel today is not violent, it must not, under any circumstances let the police use violence to suppress it, since such violence will ignite a fire.
- In parliamentary systems, protests can bring about rapid changes in the ruling party. This is how Margaret Thatcher was replaced by John Major in the UK in the early 1990s. In Israel too, the goal of the current protest is to bring about the resignation of the prime minister and the establishment of an alternative government, one that is not dependent on the Haredim, who are fundamentally anti-democratic. A failed leadership, lacking authority, suspected of dishonesty and even of criminal actions, ultimately loses its legitimacy—which is liable to bring about the democracy’s collapse if the leader assumes dictatorial emergency powers. In contrast, a wise leadership—even if it has become corrupt or suspected of corruption—will lower its head, take a timeout and bring about a quiet and orderly governmental change. The popular Tony Blair, who became entangled in Iraq and became hated, vacated his position for Gordon Brown. The same thing happened in the protest after the Yom Kippur War, when Golda Meir and Moshe Dayan stepped down and the system was again balanced, which led to the upheaval of 1977.

- **Israel is in the throes of a protest whose evolution is hard to project—but it is generating deep change in society. Public order has been maintained in the protest—a testimony to the democratic maturity of the protestors. But when faced with the huge failure of the government and the person who leads it in everything to do with their performance and morality, the current protest wave will intensify, despite the tight lockdown. The attempt to choke the large protests on Balfour Street on the grounds that they constitute a health risk is not only based on a lie but is also leading to hundreds of “small” protests. A thousand small protests will change the Israeli equation.**