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## Israel and Middle East News Update

*Monday, September 13*

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# News Excerpts

September 13, 2021

Arutz Sheva

## **Bennett: Prison Break 'Succession of Failures & Mistakes'**

Prime Minister Naftali [Bennett](#) called the shocking escape of six Palestinian prisoners from the Gilboa Prison a "succession of failures and mistake". Bennett promised to correct the failures that were discovered. Bennett added that "The amount and energy and efforts invested to correct a sequence of mistakes and failures that simply should not have happened is enormous. It requires examination and lessons learned. "Together with the Minister of Internal Security, we decided to establish an investigation committee for the escape incident. There will be a comprehensive and serious examination." The prisoners Hollywood-style escape through a hole in their cell floor, delighted Palestinians and embarrassed Israel, sparking a massive manhunt. Four out of six prisoners have been captured on Friday and Saturday, while the other two remain at large. [Dig Deeper "Palestinians Said to Shoot at IDF Troops Searching for Fugitives in West Bank" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Times of Israel

## **Odeh: If 6 Could Escape, Palestinians Can End Occupation**

Lawmakers from the predominantly Arab Joint List party spoke in support of the six escaped Palestinian security prisoners, after four of them were captured. The six were all jailed for terror-related offenses. In party statements, the escapees were characterized as freedom fighters. "If six prisoners managed to break through the narrow and crowded prison, then millions of the Palestinian people can end the occupation," Joint List leader Ayman Odeh wrote in a Facebook post. He told Channel 12: "I have a dream [the prisoners] will all be released, and a Palestinian state will be established next to Israel. My dream is that there will be no jails or occupation." Joint List MK Ofer Cassif, the only Jewish member of the party, claimed the prisoners would be tortured in revenge for them escaping. [Dig Deeper "Arab Israeli Reporter Attacked over Mistranslation of His Post on Prison Break" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

I24 News

## **Rocket Launched from Gaza Intercepted**

For a third consecutive day, a rocket was fired from the Gaza Strip towards Israel, Sunday evening. The artillery fire was intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system, the Israeli military said. No direct casualties or damage from the rocket was reported. Cross border fire occurred Saturday and Friday night, as tensions rose between Israel and Gazan militants, following the escape of several Palestinian prisoners last week. Israel follows a policy of holding Hamas responsible for any fire from the Gaza Strip, irrespective of which organization conducted it. It conducted airstrikes targeting what the army said was militant infrastructure. The army's Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi warned militants not to continue increasing tensions. [Dig Deeper "Gaza Rocket Fire Targets Israel for Third Successive Day" \(Ynet News\)](#)

## Lapid Outlines Long-Term Vision for Calm in Gaza

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid presented his **vision** for a long-term settlement between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Lapid called the outline — dubbed "Economy for Security" — Lapid has presented this proposal to several international officials — among them Secretary of State Antony Blinken, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and EU and Gulf representatives. The plan consists of two phases. The first step would include an overhaul of Gaza's electricity, health and transportation systems in exchange for Hamas ceasing its military build-up. Israel would maintain full control of electricity and water supplies into Gaza, but the **Western-backed** Palestinian Authority (PA) would resume control over the border crossings. The second phase would include major infrastructure projects including the construction of a seaport, connecting the Strip to the West Bank and encouraging international investment in the local economy. The PA would regain full control of Gaza's civil and economic affairs.

## UN to Begin Dispensing Qatari Cash to Gazan Families

The United Nations said that it would begin distributing Qatari cash to some eligible Gazan families, as Prime Minister **Bennett** denied **reports** that his government was weighing a resumption of the previous leadership's policy of allowing cash payments to be sent in suitcases from Doha to Hamas civil servants. "Tomorrow, some vulnerable families in Gaza, out of the nearly 100,000 beneficiaries, will begin to receive their aid as part of the UN's Humanitarian Cash Assistance program, supported by the State of Qatar," the UN office tasked with handling Middle East peace efforts said. Qatari support is considered a crucial lifeline for impoverished Palestinians living in the Strip, which has been blockaded by Israel and Egypt for years. Israel views the blockade as a necessary measure to limit the ability of Gaza's Hamas terrorist rulers to arm themselves. Israel had been allowing millions in Qatari cash to flow through Israeli crossings into Gaza on a monthly basis since 2018, in order to maintain a fragile ceasefire with Hamas.

## Gantz: Iran Giving Drone Training, Know-How with Gaza

In what his office described as a new disclosure, Defense Minister Gantz said Iran was using Kashan airbase north of Isfahan to train "terror operatives from Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon in flying Iranian-made UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles)". Iran was also trying to "transfer know-how that would allow the manufacturing of UAVs in the Gaza Strip," on Israel's southern border, Gantz told a conference at Reichman University near Tel Aviv. His office provided what it said were **satellite images** showing UAVs on the runways at Kashan. A July 29 blast aboard the Mercer Street, a Liberian-flagged, Japanese-owned petroleum product tanker managed by Israeli-owned Zodiac Maritime, near the mouth of the Gulf, a key oil shipping route, killed two crew members. The US military said explosives experts from the Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier concluded the explosion was from a drone produced in Iran, which was accused by other world powers in the attack. Iran has denied involvement.

Reuters

## **IAEA-Iran Agreement Raises Hopes for Fresh Nuclear Talks**

The UN atomic watchdog reached an agreement with Iran to solve "the most urgent issue" between them, the overdue servicing of monitoring equipment to keep it running, raising hopes of fresh talks on a wider deal with the West. International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Rafael Grossi obtained the agreement in a last-minute trip to Tehran he called "constructive" before a meeting of his agency's 35-nation Board of Governors this week at which Western powers were threatening to seek a resolution criticizing Iran for stonewalling the IAEA. A resolution risked an escalation with Tehran that could kill the prospect of resuming wider, indirect talks between Iran and the US on reviving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, aimed at keeping Iran at arm's length from being able to develop a nuclear weapon if it chose to. It denies ever wanting to do so. Those talks stopped in June, and Iran's hardline president, Ebrahim Raisi, took office in August. Western powers have urged Iran to return to negotiations and said time is running out as its nuclear program is advancing well beyond the limits set by the deal, which Washington abandoned in 2018. [Dig Deeper "Iran to Allow New Memory Cards in UN's Nuclear Site Cameras" \(Associated Press\)](#)

Associated Press

## **US Pulls Missile Defenses in Saudi Arabia**

The US has removed its most advanced missile defense system and Patriot batteries from Saudi Arabia in recent weeks, even as the kingdom faced continued air attacks from Yemen's Houthi rebels, satellite photos show. The redeployment of the defenses from Prince Sultan Air Base outside of Riyadh came as America's Gulf Arab allies nervously watched the chaotic withdrawal of US troops from [Afghanistan](#), including their last-minute evacuations from Kabul's besieged international airport. While tens of thousands of American forces remain across the Arabian Peninsula as a counterweight to Iran, Gulf Arab nations worry about the US's future plans as its military perceives a growing threat in Asia that requires those missile defenses. Tensions remain high as negotiations appear stalled in Vienna over Iran's collapsed nuclear deal with world powers, raising the danger of future confrontations in the region. A redeployment of the missiles had been rumored for months, in part due to a desire to face what American officials see as the looming "great powers conflict" with China and Russia. However, the withdrawal came just as a Houthi drone attack on Saudi Arabia wounded eight people and damaged a commercial jetliner at the kingdom's airport in Abha. The kingdom has been locked in a stalemate war with the Houthis since March 2015. [Dig Deeper "Biden Won't Be Able to Pull US Forces from Middle East - ex-Mossad Chief" \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

## **Thanks to Civic Responsibility and a Police Ring**

By Yossi Yehoshua

- After the resounding fiasco of the escape from a guarded prison through a tunnel that had been dug with no interference and ended in a hole on the wrong side of the prison wall under an unmanned watch tower, the capture of four of the six terrorists at the end of the week restored perhaps a little of our lost dignity. The police, the GSS and the IDF, who worked fully coordinated and deployed properly on the ground, deserve to be praised. But we have to remember that the four terrorists were only caught thanks to the vigilance and sense of civic responsibility. The disparity between the bold operation of the Gilboa Prison escape and the escapees' amateurish hiding afterwards greatly surprised security officials. Even the most veteran and experienced detectives found this hard to explain.
- In the first hours after the escape, some feared that the six would flee the country. The working assumption was that veteran terrorists, aware of Israel's signist and hummin abilities, had no doubt prepared a way to avoid detection. But they hadn't. The group had no contacts waiting on the outside, acted separately and in open areas, moved around too much and made mistakes and failed to cover their tracks—from soft drink cans to cigarette packs. They were schlemiel terrorists. Another blow for which the escapees had not prepared for was the response of Israel's Arab citizens, among whom they mixed during their escape. Considering what happened in the [mixed cities](#) during Operation Guardian of the Walls, we realize how important this is and why it is vital to utilize it wisely to help heal the rift. Not only did the terrorists fail to get the cooperation that they had expected, but Israeli Arabs were the ones who identified them in Nazareth and reported this immediately to police. That is how the first two were caught, one of them the "brains" behind the escape.
- The incident is still not over; Police Commissioner Insp. Gen. Kobi Shabtai said he would only celebrate once the sixth prisoner was in his hands. But he too realizes that the escape was very amateurish. What happened on the ground? The forces created a ring around the escapes, which worked well. The many roadblocks and the police and army presence created pressure and forced the escaped terrorists to make mistake after mistake. Not only that, the important cooperation among the security organizations continued when the Marol unit, an IDF reserve unit formed after the kidnapping and murder of the three teens in 2014, went into action. A call from another alert citizen led to the capture of the second two, Zakaria Zubeidi and Mohammed Arida in truck parking lot near Mt. Tabor, with the latter sleeping inside a truck. Zubeidi, the symbol of the escape, is a terrorist who flirted for years with the Israeli public and media, on the seamline between murder and "moderation." He would go about with a rifle on him and carry out terror attacks without blinking but would also give interviews and portray himself as having "put down his weapon" and as having become a teacher and "political activist." What a gap between his bragging and the dismal end of his escape operation: the trackers found him walking exhausted, limping and unarmed.

- They saw that he had spotted them and alerted the SWAT team, and the two were caught without a single bullet being fired. Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi said that the escape was liable to have regional effects. For now, the incident is being contained, but there were disturbances in Judea and Samaria (West Bank), some of them very violent including live fire at IDF troops. Hamas is unable, at the moment, to set fire to the territories as it wants. The two rockets that were fired by Islamic Jihad from Gaza, on Friday and on Saturday nights, were intercepted successfully. It is in Israel's supreme interest to keep the PA's security organizations strong, so that it can foil future terrorist operations. The fact that all four were taken alive and were not killed in a clash with Israeli forces also helps to keep the situation quiet, and of course, helps with intelligence. The manhunt is now focusing on the last two escapes. One, according to some assessments, crossed into the territories and might be in the Jenin area. The other is most likely in Israeli territory.
- An arrest operation in Jenin is much more complicated. The likelihood that it will not end in an exchange of gunfire is low. The escapee is probably hiding and is preparing for this with armed people. In summary, the important capture of the four must not divert the spotlight from the Prison Service's enormous failure, the GSS's intelligence failure and the other flaws that came to light. The political echelon wanted to buy quiet with the security prisoners and paid a high price for that. We must also remember that there is another front, with Hamas in Gaza, and that the crisis over the Qatar money is worsening. The money was supposed to reach Hamas's officials and became stuck because of the PA's refusal to transfer it. This could cause the situation to escalate, even though the army's assessment is that Hamas, like Israel, wants to reach a truce arrangement.

## **The Three Class Solution**

By Yuval Noah Harari

- **Yom Kippur is a good time for a self-reflection, not just on the personal level but on the group level as well. For many years the conversation about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been dominated by the two-state solution. During Netanyahu's tenure, Israel abandoned that solution, and now that his tenure has ended—we ought to do some self-reflection and ask ourselves honestly: where do we go from here? If not two states for two peoples, then what exactly is Israel's alternative vision? When we imagine the future, what is it exactly that we see there? Let's assume that the most optimistic Israeli scenario pans out, and that Israel is able to achieve its vision fully. What does that look like? When addressing that question, just like when addressing the question of our nuclear policy, most Israelis prefer to keep things ambiguous.**
- **But if one listens attentively and looks closely, the alternative vision is as clear as our Mediterranean sun. Succinctly put, the forces that govern Israel have pivoted from a two-state solution to a three-class solution. They envision a single state between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River in which three classes of people will live: Jews, who will enjoy full rights; first-class Arabs—Arab citizens of Israel who enjoy some rights; and second-class Arabs—Palestinians, who will barely have any rights at all. That is already the reality in the present day and, if we were to judge by the ballots cast at the polling stations, it would seem that the Jews would prefer that things remain that way as well. Forever.**
- **The Genie in the Bottle: The three-class solution isn't new; Israel has been implementing it for decades, using the salami method of one slice at a time. Except that Israel has denied its intentions up until now. The different treatment given to Jews, Arab citizens and non-citizen Arabs was justified by arguing that this was a temporary situation that stemmed from the Israel's security needs. Even today, when Israeli representatives speak in public—for example, at the UN General Assembly—they will never dare to speak openly about the three-class solution as a permanent solution. That simply doesn't smell good. Instead, Israeli representatives will speak at length about Israel's security challenges; either that or they'll explain that despite the fact that the entire area between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea belongs to Israel, it will never have to grant voting rights to the residents of Nablus or Bethlehem because they belong to a marvelous creature that goes by the name of the "Palestinian Authority."**
- **It is an entirely unique creature that in some ways is reminiscent of Aladdin's genie. Most of the time, that creature is locked up inside a tiny lamp and doesn't get in the way of us doing as we please. Israel, after all, controls most of the land and the water, as well as the entire airspace and digital spectrum in the West Bank. Israel also incessantly meddles in the Palestinians' day-to-day lives and decides, for example, how long a drive from Nablus to Bethlehem takes, and whether a family from Hebron will be able to attend a cousin's wedding in Jordan. Leaf through the news section of the newspaper and look at the upper left-hand corner on the back page.**

- You'll see a map with the weather forecast. The entire area between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, including even the Gaza Strip, is represented in a single color. You won't be able to find the Palestinian Authority there even if you use a magnifying glass. But when we need to disavow responsibility—for instance, our responsibility to vaccinate the Palestinian population against the coronavirus—one need only give the lamp a quick rub and Shazaam! Out comes that marvelous creature in all its glory and absolves us of any responsibility. "Vaccinate the residents of Nablus and Bethlehem? What have they got to do with us? Nablus and Bethlehem aren't ours—they're part of the Palestinian Authority." But maybe on Yom Kippur, when every one of us is either alone with him or herself or with trusted friends, we can be a bit more honest. Won't we be able to admit that we are heading in the direction of the three-class solution?
- In other words, in the direction of a single state that has two million citizens who are discriminated against in education, housing and policing, and millions of other residents who do not even have the right to vote in elections. A single state that has three classes of people. A single state in which one class of people will always enjoy preferential treatment in terms of personal security, mobility and employment. There are some people who find that that reminds them of various other historical examples. That is irrelevant. No two cases in history are the same, and the moment one engages in historical comparisons people immediately begin to argue whether they are the same, different and to what extent the one is similar to something that happened in the past, only to forget to talk about the substantive issue—what is happening here and now. That is what needs to be discussed.
- Traitor: The first rule of the three-class solution is that one mustn't ever talk about the three-class solution. At least not in public. One mustn't talk about it in public because it clearly is not a just solution. It stems from a worldview that subordinates the principle of justice to another principle—the principle of tribal loyalty. People who believe in the principle of tribal loyalty believe that the very demand for justice for people who are not members of the tribe is tantamount to treason. Whereas it is a faux pas to speak about the three-class solution here, the word "traitor" gets bandied about quite frequently. Originally, a "traitor" was someone who divulged military secrets to an enemy state. For example, Marcus Klingberg, who provided the Soviets with information about Israel's biological weapons program. Today, alternatively, many Israelis believe that anyone who thinks that justice is sometimes more important than loyalty to the Jewish tribe is branded a "traitor."
- People who in the name of justice are opposed to the three-class solution have been upgraded from being mere "bleeding hearts" into "traitors," even if they hold a general's rank in the IDF. Think, for example, about the attitude towards the High Court of Justice, which is also often accused of treason. The problem that many Israelis have with the High Court of Justice doesn't stem from either a specific ruling or the identity of one justice or another on the bench. The problem stems from the identity of the High Court of Justice itself, which is the High Court of Justice, and not the High Court of Loyalty.

- In practice, the High Court of Justice has not blocked even a single one of the principal policy decisions that are leading us towards the three-class solution, but the people who want that solution to be the solution are afraid that one day, maybe, the court will nevertheless try to stand up to prevent it in the name of that same justice. That is why they would prefer to do away with the High Court of Justice in advance. They don't want to see any institution exist in Israel that is committed to justice over loyalty.
- Chimpanzees: It is easy to understand the people who rank loyalty over justice. They have millions of years of evolution behind them. All of the social living creatures—from ants to chimpanzees—sanctify loyalty to their group. Chimpanzees also understand what justice is, but for them it is always secondary to loyalty. In a conflict between two members of their pack, chimps will sometimes side with justice. But in a conflict between a member of their pack and an outsider chimp, the chimpanzees will always support their own pack member, even if justice clearly resides with the other chimp. That is also the way human beings behave in many situations, such as in clashes between crime gangs or in rivalries between soccer teams.
- The calculus here is very clear. In a great many situations, if I prioritize justice over loyalty to my tribe, that will be damaging to my interests and may even place my life at risk. But that is precisely why prioritizing justice is called “morality” and not an “interest.” Morality exists for precisely those situations in which one's interest pulls you in one direction, while justice pulls you in another direction. There is no disputing that it is far harder to act morally than to act in self-interest. That is probably the reason why the Jewish religion established special day in the year on which we are instructed to ask ourselves, “are we acting morally enough?” We have no need for a designated day of the year to ask ourselves, “are we acting in sufficient self-interest?” We ask that question all the time in any event.
- So, on this Yom Kippur, before we recite “we've wronged, we've betrayed, we've dispossessed” [part of the liturgical texts recited during Yom Kippur services], we should first ask ourselves which moral principles we use to define wronging, betrayal and dispossession. Do we think that Jews are inherently superior beings who are entitled to special privileges? Do we think that justice is sometimes more important than tribal loyalty, or that loyalty to the tribe always takes precedence over justice? And is there any way of resolving the conflict between the ethical demand for justice and the tribal demand for loyalty without forcing us to choose between the two, and without having the desire to act justly be construed here as an act of treason?