

**‘Memory is the only (place) from which you cannot be expelled’**

# **Israel News Faxx**

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*Welcome to the Israel News Faxx Weekly Edition*

*For Aug. 14, 2017– Aug. 18, 2017*

*incorporating news, features and opinion*

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## **Netanyahu Seeks Power to Go to War Without Broad Governmental Approval**

By *The Jerusalem Post*

A new initiative by Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu would allow him to decide on going to war with only the approval of the security cabinet, and not the full cabinet, Channel 2 reported Sunday. In some cases, according to the proposal, a prime minister would be able to declare war or get approval for a lengthy military operation even without the full security cabinet's approval.

**R**The cabinet already reportedly approved the amendment to Basic Law: Government, which would allow the full cabinet to vote right after a government is formed to allow the security cabinet to decide whether to go to war. The bill is expected to be brought to a vote in the Knesset when its recess ends, in October. The Prime Minister's Office did not confirm or deny the report.

Zionist Union MK Eyal Ben-Reuven said the law is dangerous and eliminates the broad discretion necessary to decide on declaring war. "War is a very dramatic event in the life of a nation," he stated. "Therefore, I will do all I can to try to prevent another law that can be severely harmful to Israel's future. I think this is another distraction from Netanyahu's shaky legal situation."

Former prime minister Ehud Barak, a prominent Netanyahu critic, wrote on twitter: "If the intention is to legislate the reality that (justly) is customary anyway that the security cabinet (and not the full cabinet) makes the decision - that is fine. Much ado about nothing."

## **Mossad Chief Warns that Iran is Taking Over the Middle East**

By *IsraelNationalNews.com*

Mossad Director Yossi Cohen briefed the cabinet Sunday, warning that the Iranian regime is expanding its control across the Middle East through proxy forces in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen. "In places where Iran's presence is limited, Iran is working to fill the void," he said, adding that Iran has not abandoned its aspirations to become a nuclear power, and that the nuclear agreement signed between the world powers and Iran only strengthens Iranian aggression in the region.

The Mossad head also told ministers that Iran's economy has gotten stronger ever since signing the nuclear accords in 2015, a trend that has been reinforced by recent international agreements. The agreement freed frozen Iranian funds and led to trade agreements with European countries eager to profit from the opportunity. Under Obama, the US also sent Iran hundreds of millions of dollars after Iran freed US hostages.

Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said during the discussion that Cohen's assessment proves that the agreement between the major world powers and Iran was fundamentally unsound, as he had warned, and noted that Israel is not obligated in any way to the international agreements signed by Iran. "Israel will continue to act determinedly and in a variety of ways to defend itself from these threats," said the Prime Minister.

Netanyahu had been a major opponent of the Iran deal, lobbying members of the US Congress to vote against the plan, and warning that the accords would pave the way for Iran to become a nuclear power.

President Donald Trump has been significantly more hostile towards Iran than his predecessor Barack Obama, and blasted Iran in July for not "living up to the spirit" of the nuclear deal it reached in 2015 with world powers. "I don't think Iran is in compliance. I don't think they're living up to the spirit of the agreement," Trump told reporters at his New Jersey golf club retreat. .

Israel will not allow Iran and its proxies to take over areas vacated by the Islamic State (ISIS) group, Netanyahu made clear on Sunday. "Today we received a review from the head of the Mossad about the security challenges we face. I will give summarize it on one sentence - ISIS out, Iran in. We are talking mainly about Syria," Netanyahu said in Ashdod, referring to Mossad Director Yossi Cohen's assessment that the Iranian regime is expanding its control across the Middle East through proxy forces in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, and Yemen.

"Our policy is clear," said the Prime Minister. "We strongly oppose the military buildup of Iran and its proxies, first and foremost Hizbullah in Syria, and we will do everything necessary to maintain Israel's security. That's how we act. We are guarding the state and its borders. We are strengthening the IDF, strengthening the security forces all the time, in order to ensure security, because we know first and foremost that in order to build the land, we have to protect the land."

## **Hizbullah Chief Once Again Threatens Israel's Nuclear Reactor**

By *DEBKAFfile*

Hassan Nasrallah, Hizbullah's leader, Sunday said in a speech marking the 11th anniversary of the last Lebanon war that next time, Israel would suffer a much harsher blow and a greater defeat. For the umpteenth time, he threatened to strike Israel's nuclear center at Dimona.

Nasrallah also blasted President Donald Trump, who castigated Hizbullah as terrorists, declaring that the real terrorists are America and Israel. "Even Trump accused Obama and Clinton of creating ISIS," he said. According to Nasrallah, Hizbullah is the only force in the Middle East that is fighting terror.

## **Ultra-Orthodox Baby Trafficker Exposed**

By *YnetNews.com*

Haim Aharon Yosefi—a well-known businessman and figure in the ultra-Orthodox world—trades in babies. He is a central figure in a network that allegedly takes young, pregnant Haredi women from Israel to the United States to give birth before giving the child away in an "adoption" arrangement for a fee.

In a series of meetings with undercover reporters from Ynet and Yedioth Ahronoth, Yosefi unwittingly provided a rare glimpse behind the curtain, openly divulging how he and his accomplices operate. He also revealed a string of other related activities including the distribution of pills to suppress sexual desire, forging identification documents and more.

Over the last few weeks, Ynet and Yedioth Ahronoth sent "Devorah Leah," a young Haredi woman with a cover story, to Yosefi. "I got pregnant by a married man, and I'm in trouble," Devorah told Yosefi.

During their meetings, Yosefi detailed the journey Devorah would have to endure until her baby is given to an adoptive family. He also offered her payment for the baby and even told her about previous "cases" he "handled."

"Let's say all the expenses concerning you are \$50,000, and I'm getting \$100,000. Maybe I'm making a profit off of you, but that also means I'm spending \$50,000 on you. This is all very problematic and very sensitive. Just so you know, the law says whoever tries to lobby a woman to give her child up for adoption in exchange for favors can get 15 years in prison. It is very criminal," Yosefi told Devorah.

"If I tell you now, Devorah Leah, take \$50,000 and I expect to get your fetus, that sounds fine. We are making what is called a fair deal. You get \$50,000 and I get the fetus. It doesn't matter if I sell it for a million dollars, or I don't sell it at all. You make out alright for your part. Just know the law is very dangerous. Now I am saying, in principle, in general, I am with you."

The conversations with Yosefi open a window into what he himself calls the "industry" of baby trafficking, involving "a ton, a sea," of similar cases, as he confessed to Devorah. Yosefi is a member of Degel HaTorah, the Lithuanian faction of the United Torah Judaism party. He has close ties to many prominent rabbis and is also welcome in many other Hassidic circles.

Approximately six months ago, Yosefi was arrested by police amid an investigation into document forging and providing fictitious exemptions to young ultra-Orthodox men attempting to avoid conscription into the IDF.

"If I tell you who I'm connected to, you'll be blown away," he told Devorah. "Officials in the Interior Ministry, the IDF, the police and different municipalities. I once had an arrangement with an official in the Interior Ministry where I would provide her with interest-free loans and she would help me in return."

Ynet and Yedioth Ahronoth learned of Yosefi's activities through testimony provided by "Esther," who recounted her experiences with him when her infant son was sold to a couple in the United States. As the investigation progressed, more stories emerged and many of the details were confirmed by Yosefi himself in conversations with Devorah, which were also rife with remarks that bordered on sexual harassment.

Yosefi constantly shifts between the gray and criminal areas. For example, he expressed disappointment when Devorah supposedly approached a doctor through her local clinic for a pregnancy checkup. "You weren't smart. From now on, never use your real name. I'm sending you to a private physician, and you can say your name is Ruth," he told her. "I've gone with other girls to the doctor as well. You pay and money has no smell. I come with you, put out NIS 500 or 900. I also make sure to give you an identity card with a fictitious number."

When Devorah told Yosefi the alleged father of her baby demanded proof she had an abortion, Yosefi suggested another criminal solution. "Now don't quote me, but you can play a very dangerous card and tell him 'I'm going to the police and telling them you raped me.' At that moment, he'll commit suicide. No one would believe a cute 21-year-old girl raped a 33-year-old man. They will believe you more than him."

Devorah's first meeting with Yosefi took place at a Jerusalem hotel, while her second and third meetings took place in the basement office of Lev L'Achima, a large ultra-Orthodox organization dedicated to religious education.

Yosefi labeled payments as "royalties." When asked about the precise nature of the royalties, he said, "Beyond the accommodations and flights, I provide you a gift of \$10,000 or \$20,000. It is criminal, but with God's help, I work very hard to make sure you get royalties too."

Yosefi then outlined the entire birthing process to Devorah, beginning with his accompanying her to the US and the birth itself. When the time comes, according to Yosefi, he will organize a "host family" in the US, with whom she will live until the birth. "They do it as a good deed," said Yosefi. "They can clothe your body in money."

When asked if he already had a family lined up, Yosefi responded, "Today I know, there are many Haredi families in the world that cannot have children for all kinds of reasons. I have a few, but I have to decide what I want."

Yosefi then proceeded to emphasize to Devorah that he has competitors in the market. "There are all kinds of organizations. But this is very sensitive. I'm talking to you about honesty and fairness. I send you abroad whenever you want. Sometimes I ensure that others do it and sometimes I do it myself. We ensure a host family for you throughout the entire pregnancy and you receive close supervision," he told her.

It costs quite a bit of money. Do I have to work while I'm there in order to finance it? "All expenses—clothing, makeup, medical insurance, the birth, doctors—you do not have to pay a shekel. If you go tomorrow, you have no expenses for the next six months."

Yosefi also offered additional bonuses, saying, "If you want, we can make efforts to give you some cosmetic treatment, a body design studio. I need to pamper you. This is all in the package. Trips, restaurants, fun. It will all be paid for."

Devorah then inquired about what to tell her parents when she needs to go to the United States and disappear for a period of time, to which Yosefi responded, "I can assist you with this too. I have a bag of excuses." When Devorah asked about the mental state of girls who have undergone the process and the possibility of seeing the baby after birth, Yosefi responded, "Psychologically, it isn't good for you, because you connect with him. It may be that in your case we will need to organize psychological help."

How can such an industry, involving so many people like Yosefi, exist for so long under the radar? In the absence of sex education, quite a few ultra-Orthodox girls and women become pregnant, and since the Haredi community is intolerant of such cases, women are forced to find a solution.

Many women willingly cooperate and others believe if they just give birth away from their families and friends, they would be able to raise the child themselves, or at the very least, remain in contact with the child.

The conspiracy of silence has lasted for years because of how ultra-Orthodox society is structured. No one speaks, because they do not want their children boycotted or condemned. However, as soon as one story comes out, others find the courage to speak out as well.

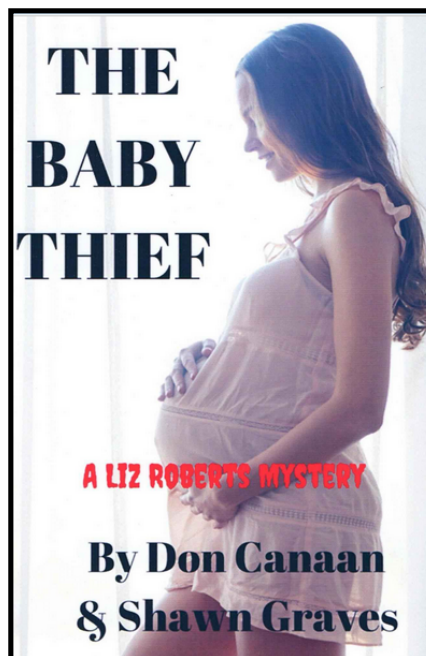
Why is the process conducted in the United States and not in Israel? For two main reasons. The first is to distance the wayward girl from the community in order to "protect" her, as it were. The second, and most significant, reason is that of legality. According to Yosefi, in the US, such a practice is possible and even legal. Most of the girls sign adoption documents and payment is ostensibly transferred to them legally.

In their last meeting, Yosefi thought it prudent to explain something else. He is now marketing Devorah to families who are looking to adopt a child. "I am going to elevate you, to market you respectfully. I will market you morally. I am trying to do my job faithfully."

## ***'The Baby Thief'***

***By Don Canaan and Shawn Graves***

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## *Analysis: Iran's Presence in Syria Presents a 'Red Line for Israel'*

By Israel Hayom

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and Iranian President Hassan Rouhani owe a great debt of gratitude to the West for its contribution to bolstering the Islamic republic's power, and while neither of them can be mistaken for righteous, their work has been and is being done by others.

**R**e 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and Western powers, led by the Obama administration, has revived the Iranian economy and allowed Tehran to pursue lucrative international contracts. Moreover, despite the agreement, Iran remains a nuclear-threshold state and in the not-so-distant future, when certain limitations outlined in the deal elapse, it will be able to build nuclear weapons unhindered.

Perhaps even more serious is the Western coalition's indirect "contribution" to the Iranians and their allies' territorial expansion in the Middle East. The explanation for this is simple: The West's obsessive focus on the war against the Islamic State group has paved the way for the flow of pro-Iranian Shiite militias into the Iraqi and Syrian spheres, which has emptied of Sunni insurgents. Khamenei could not have hoped for a better outcome.

But because of these developments, for the first time since the Arab Spring plunged the Middle East into turmoil in 2011, Israel is facing the actual threat of a "small Shiite crescent" on its northern border, meaning a strip of territory controlled by Hizbullah forces and pro-Iranian Shiite militias, which will stretch from Rosh Hanikra, near the Israel-Lebanon border in the west to where the Israel-Syria-Jordan borders converge in the southern Golan Heights.

While this is not an existential threat, it cannot be taken lightly. Israel has repeatedly demanded that any agreement mediated by Russia and the U.S. to end the civil war in Syria include a specific stipulation keeping pro-Iranian forces away from Israel's border in the Golan Heights. So far, this demand has gone unheeded, underscoring the severity of the problem.

Mossad Director Yossi Cohen, who briefed the Diplomatic-Security Cabinet on the Iranian threat on Sunday, was right when he said that Israel alone cannot curb Iran's nuclear ambitions. If Israel were to launch a strike on Iranian nuclear facilities without coordinating with the U.S., it could spark chaos in the Middle East.

Israel and the international community are not the only ones now carefully monitoring what President Donald Trump may do -- the Iranians are also watching. If Trump proves hesitant or soft on North Korea, Iran will take it to mean that he is a paper tiger, looking at the U.S. administration as nothing to fear.

This is not true as far as the threat lurking on the northern border. The most effective way of dealing with the possible deployment of Iranian, Hizbullah and pro-Iranian militias not only in Lebanon but also in the Golan Heights, is to prevent their presence in the area altogether.

Given the military abilities these hostile elements possess, this is a red line for Israel. If Western powers fail to ensure their removal from the area near the border, Israel must make it clear that it will act -- independently if necessary. Such action would constitute a departure from the Israel's long-time policy of steering clear of any military involvement in the ongoing civil war in Syria.

## *Iranian Blogger to Take Jewish Agency Hebrew Courses*

By [IsraelNationalNews.com](http://IsraelNationalNews.com)

Iranian blogger Neda Amin, who arrived in Israel last Thursday after being threatened with deportation to Iran from Turkey, will on Tuesday begin intensive Hebrew classes as part of The Jewish Agency for Israel's flagship Ulpan Etzion program in Jerusalem.

Arutz Sheva publicized Amin's plight prominently in an article saying time is running out and calling for activism to save her after Uzay Bulut, a former resident of Turkey who writes op-eds on the situation there for Arutz Sheva, explained Amin's story. Amin was granted asylum in Israel after being threatened with deportation from Turkey back to Iran, where it was clear that she would be sentenced to death for having a blog on the Times of Israel website.

In a letter sent by Achiya Ginossar, Chairman of the Journalists' Union in Jerusalem, to Interior Minister Deri, Ginossar wrote: "Nada Amin will likely be arrested immediately upon her arrival in Iran and is in danger of being executed for her journalistic work and the fact that she wrote a number of columns of opinion on the Times of Israel website in the Persian language," he said.

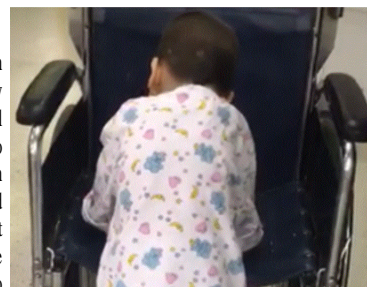
Chairman of the Executive of The Jewish Agency for Israel Natan Sharansky said: "Israel was created to serve as a homeland for a persecuted people. The Jewish Agency, which has welcomed millions of Jews home to Israel, is proud to play a part in easing Neda's integration into her country of refuge. I spoke to Neda earlier on, welcoming her to Israel and wishing her much success in her studies, and I expressed the hope that she will one day be able to return to a free Iran and contribute to the restoration of the historically close ties between our two nations."

Hundreds of young professional immigrants from around the world join Ulpan Etzion each year, studying Hebrew, exploring opportunities for employment and academic studies, and preparing for life in their new homeland. Participants typically spend five months in the program, which offers on-campus accommodation at The Jewish Agency's Beit Canada Immigrant Absorption Center in southern Jerusalem and in several other locations around Israel.

## *Gaza Boy Walks After Jerusalem Doc- tors Remove Tumor*

By [The Jerusalem Post](http://TheJerusalemPost)

A four-year-old boy from Gaza can walk after undergoing complex surgery at Hadassah-University Medical Center, in Jerusalem's Ein Kerem, to remove a tumor from his chest. Born with many birth defects in his spine and chest, Sliman was taken during his short life to several hospitals in Gaza where unsuccessful attempts were made to diagnose his condition. He had been operated on in the past to reduce congestion on the cervical spine due to the lack of development of the vertebrae, but his clinical condition did not improve due to the lack of proper treatment for the other problems he suffered.



After years of sitting in a wheelchair, unable to stand on his feet and in severe respiratory distress, Sliman was taken a few weeks ago by a Red Crescent ambulance to Hadassah for surgery.

Prof. Uzi Yizhar, head of the chest surgery unit, said that a significant congenital tumor had developed, causing pressure on the spinal cord and lung that led to recurrent pulmonary infections and chronic lung damage. "When he arrived at the hospital, there was evidence of acute pneumonia in the entire right lung."

After his admission to the hospital, the boy was hospitalized in a pediatric ward, where he was treated by specialists in pulmonary medicine. He underwent many diagnostic tests prior to the decision on chest surgery. "Over the past two years, Suleiman had stopped moving his legs," said Yizhar. "He had no feeling in his lower limbs and could not stand on them; his parents had to transport him in a wheelchair."

After his respiratory condition improved, "we decided to operate in order to perform an excision of the unusual and large tumor from the chest." In the successful operation, the entire tumor was removed.

The child's rapid recovery surprised even his doctors. "After the tumor was removed, Sliman was moved from pediatric intensive care to the pediatric surgery department, where his respiratory condition improved greatly," recalled Yizhar. "The next stage was inevitable, so I said to him: 'Come on, kid, we start walking.'"

The doctors believe that the removal of the tumor in his chest, ostensibly a location unrelated directly to walking, has reduced the pressure on the spinal cord, improved his breathing and nutritional status and helped him start walking.

"He took my request seriously and put his feet on the floor, making a great effort to move one leg and then another," continued Yizhar. "He really wanted to go, and he had great determination. He himself pushed his wheelchair around the ward." The boy has been transferred to Alyn Hospital Pediatric and Adolescent Rehabilitation Center where he will continue his healing and undergo rehabilitation.

## ***Draft of Israel's Declaration of Independence to be Auctioned***

By Israel Hayom

It is not every day that pieces of the history of modern-day Israel are put up for sale. But this month, a preliminary draft of Israel's Declaration of Independence and a pair of binoculars that belonged to slain Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin will go under the hammer at two separate auctions.

The Jerusalem District Court ruled on Sunday that a draft of the Declaration of Independence could be sold at auction, over the government's objection. Judge Tamar Bazak-Rappaport ruled that private individuals could own archival items of national importance, saying, "Historic records leave traces not only in documents owned by the state, but also documents owned privately."

The Kedem Auction House in Jerusalem has set the opening bid for the draft at \$250,000. Meanwhile, fans of the history of modern-day Israel will have a chance to bid on Rabin's binoculars at a sale to be held this month at the Jerusalem of Gold Auction House in Jerusalem for an opening bid of \$5,000.

Rabin's binoculars, manufactured by the German firm Carl Zeiss, are being sold in their original brown leather case. The inside of the case is stamped with the words "Y. RABIN Brig Gen," an indication that the seventh chief of staff of the IDF had the binoculars at least from his time as a brigadier general. The name Y. Rabin also appears on the binoculars' strap.

"The binoculars were given to a family friend as a memento in the 1980s," explains Yehuda Galil, a researcher for the auction house. According to Galil, "In a picture from the 1950s, when [Rabin] was GOC Northern Command, he is seeing wearing the binoculars, which carry the memory of Rabin's glorious military legacy. ... He led the IDF to its greatest achievement, in the [1967] Six-Day War."

## ***Palestinian Authority Fears Israel will Build an 'Imaginary Temple'***

By IsraelNationalNews.com

Tayeb Abdel Rahim, a senior aide to Palestinian Authority chairman Mahmoud Abbas, warned of "the occupation's plans to Judaize Al-Quds and to build a synagogue in preparation for the construction of the imaginary Temple. We must be careful...because Netanyahu is wounded and will try to get revenge and complete his plan in Al-Quds. He has already opened the gates to the settlers so that they can desecrate and contaminate our holy places and expel our people," claimed Abdel Rahim in a speech he gave in Abbas' name.

This is certainly not the first time that PA officials have accused Israel of planning to demolish the Al-Aqsa Mosque and replace it with a Holy Temple. In 2013, the head of manuscripts at the Al-Aqsa Mosque made similar accusations, claiming that an analysis of Jerusalem's development plans finds there is an intention to Judaize the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and within this framework build the Temple on its ruins and to then reduce the number of Arab residents in the city.

Arabs continuously accuse Israel of "Judaizing" the Temple Mount, sometimes resorting to ridiculous propaganda such as accusing Israel of using chemicals to erode the foundations of the mosque to cause it to collapse.

## ***Wizz Air Plans to Start New Low-Cost Winter Flights to Eilat***

By IsraelNationalNews.com

Israel's tourism is set to get another boost, with Wizz Air adding four new low-cost routes from Eilat's Ovdia Airport to destinations across Europe. The new flights will fly to and from Prague, Bucharest, Poland's Katowice, and Latvia's Riga. These are among the most popular destinations in Eastern and Central Europe.

"The services, operated during the winter season, will establish an important link for trade and business between the countries, boost bi-directional tourism, while travelers can explore the rich history of these cities, enjoy the various cuisines, dazzling architecture and amazing landscapes," Wizz Air said in a statement.

Tourism Minister Yariv Levin (Likud) said, "I congratulate Wizz Air on their decision to deepen their activities in Israel and open new routes from Europe to Eilat. I am pleased that the collaboration between them and the Israel Tourism has intensified. This is a great vote of confidence in the Israeli tourism product and proof that the Eilat directive, which we initiated to encourage tourism to the resort, is yielding results.

"The tourism industry is undergoing a great revolution and the expansion of Wizz Air activities is further proof of the substantial improvement in Israel's attractiveness as a tourism destination. These new routes will lead to more growth in incoming tourism to Israel and they are part of the exceptional marketing efforts that we are leading. These endeavors have already led to a 26% increase in incoming tourism this year."

Wizz Air Communications Manager Sorina Ratz said, "Today we further continue our massive expansion in Israel bringing exciting news for all our Israeli customers, underlining once again Wizz Air's commitment to the country."

"We are delighted to announce four more routes to commence this autumn... With more than 70% seat capacity increase in 2017 across our 22 Israeli routes, we continue to stimulate tourism industry, as well as trade and business links between the countries. The whole Wizz team looks forward to welcoming our customers on board of one of the youngest fleets in Europe and to continuing to grow our Israeli network throughout Europe."



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## Israel Arrests Palestinian Cleric on Suspicion of Inciting Violence

By VOA News & Israel Hayom

Israeli police on Tuesday arrested a radical Islamic cleric on suspicion of inciting violence and involvement in an outlawed organization. Raed Salah, head of the northern branch of the Islamic Movement in Israel, was questioned for allegedly supporting and inciting violence and terrorism, police said. Israel outlawed his group in 2015. Salah was taken into custody following a raid on his home in the northern Arab city of Umm al-Fahm. Later, a court extended Salah's detention until Thursday.

Salah completed a nine-month prison sentence in January for "incitement to violence" and "incitement to racism." He has had repeated run-ins with Israeli authorities and was previously imprisoned for funneling money to Hamas, the Islamic terrorist Palestinian group that rules the Gaza Strip. Salah told reporters in the courtroom that his arrest was part of a political witch hunt against him.

Israeli media reported that Salah was arrested for remarks delivered in a speech last month at the funeral of three Arab-Israeli gunmen who killed two police officers at a contested Jerusalem holy site. In the speech, he praised the attackers and exhorted others to follow their example.

Israel's Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan told Israel Radio that Salah is "a danger to the public" for encouraging "radicalism and despicable acts of murder," while Arab-Israeli lawmakers called for his immediate release.

Lahav 443 investigators questioned Salah under caution for several hours about alleged incitement to violence and terrorism and support for, membership in, or activity with an illegal organization, presumably the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, outlawed in November 2015. An investigation revealed that Salah had urged some of his listeners to attempt terrorist attacks.

According to the police, Salah made many public speaking appearances after the Northern Branch was outlawed. Many of his statements relating to the organization's worldview were reported in the media. An overview of the material collected thus far indicates that the sentiments in some of his statements might have been acted upon, and the matter has been approved for investigation.

"The inciter Raed Salah led a movement that was outlawed because of its extremist ideology, which caused acts of murder and terrorism," Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan said Tuesday. "There was a reason why I was in a rush to have the movement declared illegal. Salah spoke in a manner that encouraged extremism and understanding of violence and loathsome murderous acts, and therefore comprises a danger to the public. I hope that this time, he will be tried and found guilty and spend a long time behind bars."

## Hamas Denies Digging Tunnels Under Civilians' Homes

By [IsraelNationalNews.com](http://IsraelNationalNews.com)

Hamas has denied Israeli allegations that it is burrowing terror tunnels underneath the homes of civilians in Gaza, saying they are "lies and rumors." The IDF and the Israel Security Agency (ISA or Shin Bet) last week exposed significant infrastructures belonging to Hamas in Gaza, including terrorist tunnels intended to be used as hideouts for terrorists and for the transfer of weapons.

Aerial photographs proved that Hamas takes advantage of Gazans and hides the entry shafts of the tunnels underneath houses and public buildings, such as schools and mosques. Hamas flatly denied the claims in a statement on Monday quoted by i24news.

"Such lies and rumors are part of failed occupation policy and psychological war to influence the morale of the Palestinian people, and an attempt to legitimize crimes that may be committed against civilians in Gaza," said the statement from Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem.

The statement called on the media "not to deal with the lies and rumors of the occupation army," and said that human rights groups must "do their duty to expose the intentions of the Zionist occupation and its plans to deliberately target unarmed civilians."

Since Israel's counterterrorism Operation Protective Edge in 2014, Hamas has been busily reconstructing its terror tunnel network breaching into Israeli territory. A senior Israeli security official estimated several months ago that the terror group continues to dig 10 kilometers (six miles) in tunnels leading into Israel per month.

## Can Medical Marijuana Revive Kibbutz Movement?

By JTA

KIBBUTZ ELIFAZ—By all accounts, Eilon Bdil has no personal interest in marijuana. But as the business manager of Kibbutz Elifaz, he's a big believer in the herb. Bdil sees medical marijuana as a unique opportunity to revive his remote Negev community. "This cannabis gold rush has to pan out for us," he said. "There's simply no other choice. We need young people with good minds to come here, and medical cannabis is what can draw them."

Elifaz is one of dozens of kibbutzim — and hundreds of local companies — seeking to join Israel's new medical marijuana industry. After decades of stagnation, the collectives are betting that the move can revitalize their finances and even their way of life.

Israel's gold rush — or "green rush," as some are calling it — took off after the government in February threw its support behind legislation that would allow the export of medical marijuana. The Knesset is expected to pass the measure into law this summer — some industry insiders say as soon as this month. If that happens, Israeli companies would suddenly have access to a rapidly growing multibillion-dollar global industry.

Export is part of a larger government plan to make Israel a world leader in medical cannabis. Yuval Landschaft, the director of the Israeli Medical Cannabis Agency, said well over 700 companies have applied for official permission to grow, produce, distribute and dispense medical cannabis. By the end of the year, he said, the agency would give the OK to the first new medical marijuana farms and factories.

"We are really about to enter the medicalization of the Holy Land," Landschaft said. "The Torah once spread out from Israel. Now medical cannabis will spread out from Israel."

After playing a powerful role in founding and building Israel, the kibbutzim slid into social and economic crisis during the national financial crisis of the 1980s. Many young members decamped for the cities. By shifting away from their socialist roots — embracing differential salaries, members working off the kibbutz and non-members working on it — the kibbutzim, which number about 250, have largely stabilized.

Elifaz, located in the Arava Desert valley in southern Israel, is the only kibbutz that is already growing medical marijuana. It is one of just eight farms the government licensed to do so in 2010 as part of a limited system that will be replaced by the new one. (Recreational marijuana use is illegal in Israel, though it was recently largely decriminalized.)

So far, the medical marijuana business has not been particularly lucrative for Elifaz's more than 100 members and children. Most of its income still comes from date and pomelo farming and tourism. Just last year, the kibbutz began paying differential salaries to its members, a reform most of the once rigidly collective communities have made.

But Bdil, 42, who was born on Elifaz and returned to raise a family here, expects the years of experience to pay off when the exporting of medical marijuana starts. He said Elifaz also would benefit from its close ties with other kibbutzim. In the same way, the kibbutz produces date honey and date liquor as part of a kibbutz conglomerate, Bdil said, it would one-day manufacture cannabis products like extracts, creams and oils.

According to Nir Lobel, 37, Elifaz's secretary, the kibbutz voted to get into the medical cannabis business in part because it seemed like a natural way to update the traditional kibbutz ethos — and hopefully attract a new generation of members. "We're pioneers, and this is a new journey. We're farmers, and this is agriculture. We care about values, and this is a way to help people who are suffering," he said.

However, Hagai Hillman — one of Israel's eight licensed cannabis growers, who co-owns a marijuana-centered pharmaceutical company called BOL Pharma — says most of the kibbutzim and companies rushing into the industry are being overly optimistic.

"For those kibbutzim that don't have money, medical cannabis is not going to be the answer. To survive in this market, you need very deep pockets, and without vertical integration you're lost," he said, suggesting that profitable companies will control the medical marijuana supply chain from farm to pharmacy. A lot of farmers think it's like growing melons. But the future of this industry is medicalization."

Kibbutz Gezer, a largely American immigrant community located south of Tel Aviv, is exploring joining Elifaz in a medical cannabis business partnership with an Israeli pharmaceutical company. Laura Spector, a 62-year-old New Jersey native who immigrated to the kibbutz in 1977, is a leader of the project.

Spector said Gezer had only recently paid off the debt that it, like most kibbutzim, racked up during the Israeli financial crisis in the 1980s, and was ready to invest. She shares Bdil's interest in making a principled profit. "I believe in medical marijuana because I believe in the plant, which can help in so many ways," she said. "At the same time, I think there will be a huge financial advantage to Kibbutz Gezer."

According to Spector, Gezer's main asset is its land, which is in the center of the country and is licensed for mixed use. As such, it would be relatively easy to build processing facilities near the crops — a major advantage many kibbutzim have over other farms.

In contrast with Elifaz, Gezer is not motivated by a need for more members. The kibbutz is about 240 strong and expanding. It is building 16 houses for the founders' children and new members, with plans to add 22 more in the coming years.

Rather, Spector said, she wants Gezer to enter the medical marijuana industry to create communal employment opportunities. For young people, the business could mean a career close to home, and for pensioners, it could provide the purpose and extra income of part-time work, she said. "I was one of the people who pushed privatization on the kibbutz, but I think there's a certain social and economic spirit that we should keep in some ways," Spector said. "I mean, we came here for a reason."

Few kibbutzim embody the spirit of the movement better than Kibbutz Ruhama, which was established near the border of the Gaza Strip in 1943, several years before the State of Israel's founding. Today, the kibbutz's main business is the struggling KR Hamivreshet brush factory, and most of its some 200 members are of retirement age.

According to kibbutz secretary Ran Ferdman, a 40-year-old third generation member, Ruhama voted overwhelmingly to partner with researchers to enter the medical marijuana industry, mostly in hopes of filling up their pensions funds, which were emptied during the kibbutz debt crisis. "They believed the kibbutz would exist forever, and the younger generation would take care of the older one," he said. "But everyone has to take care of himself these days."

## ***Jewish Boy Attacked on Way to Soccer Field***

*By IsraelNationalNews.com*

A 13-year-old Jewish boy was attacked by a gang of Arab youths while riding to his local soccer field. The incident began when the youths grabbed the boy off his bicycle and began to ride it. The boy asked them for the bike back, and in response he was kicked an Arab boy who was with the gang. The gang proceeded to beat the boy and sprayed him with deodorant. A group of Jewish youths saw the beating and rescued the boy from his attackers.

Police were called to the scene immediately and found the attackers playing soccer in the field the boy had attempted to reach. A police officer referred the case to his local police station, but refused to detain the attackers. When the father of the victim reacted angrily to the refusal to detain his son's attackers, the police instructed him to file a complaint.

The boy's family has suffered from Arab violence in the past. The family's son-in-law, Aharon Banita Bennett, was murdered in a terrorist stabbing attack in Jerusalem's Old City two years ago. The boy's older sister, Adelle, was stabbed 17 times during the attack and survived.

The family turned to the Honenu legal organization following the failure of the police to act on the attack on their son. Attorney Menashe Yaddo sent an urgent letter to the commander of the Jerusalem District Police, detailing the stages of the incident and the police officer's outrageous behavior. He also demanded that the rioters be stopped immediately using cameras installed in the area.

## ***Sign in Swiss Hotel Orders Jews to Shower Before Using the Pool***

*By Israel Hayom*

Israeli tourists staying at the Paradies holiday apartments in the Swiss resort town of Arosa have reported a disturbing sign posted on the premises instructing Jewish guests -- and only Jews -- to shower before using the swimming pool.



Many haredi tourists visit European resorts at this time of year, when yeshiva students are on summer vacation. One couple who arrived at the Swiss vacation spot saw the sign and said there were no other signs referring to any other religious sector. A guest wrote above the sign that he was not Jewish, but

the sign was "racist," and added: "This sign is disgusting."

Some Jewish guests reported another sign specifically addressing "Jewish Guests" posted in the kitchen area of the holiday apartments, asking them to take food out of the refrigerators only at designated times. The guest who reported the signs to Israel Hayom said, "We were horrified by the sign. The sense is that Jews, and especially not Jews of a religious appearance, have no reason to be in Europe. We feel the hate."

A Jewish couple said the sign made them extremely uncomfortable. "It ruined the feeling of a vacation. We felt very unwanted. The place might be called 'Paradise,' but for Jews it isn't at all. It really reeks of anti-Semitism," a guest said.

In a phone conversation with Israel Hayom, a representative of the Aparthaus Paradies apologized for the offensive signs and promised to remove them. "There was no intention to offend anyone. We are very far from anything having to do with anti-Semitism. Most of our guests are religious Jews, and we respect them and are happy to host them," the representative said.

"The sign over the refrigerator was addressed to Jews, because they use the employees' refrigerator to store kosher food. The pool sign requested that hygiene rules be observed because of things that happened in the past. We apologize if anyone was offended."

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## *Hamas: We've Built Many Towns Underground. It Claims Israel is Scared*

*By DEBKAFfile & IsraelNationalNews.com*

The new Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar, said Wednesday that his movement doesn't war with Israel, but if it does happen, "Hamas will pulverize Israel." He claimed that many towns have been built under ground - not just tunnels, as Israel says. He warned against "foolish steps" against the Gaza Strip, because "Hamas is ready and a lot stronger than it was last time." The Hamas leader said, "Israel is not starting a new war against Gaza because it is scared of the unknown."

Sinwar, whose voice has not been heard many times since his appointment as Ismail Haniyeh's replacement last February, warned Israel against "taking stupid steps against Gaza", adding, "The Palestinian resistance has the ability to respond to that." He also made it clear that Hamas was prepared for a confrontation and claimed that the organization's strength was greater than it was during Operation Protective Edge in 2014. "Israel is not launching a new war against Gaza, which stresses its fear of the unknown that awaits it in Gaza," he claimed. Sinwar was released together with 1,026 other terrorists as part of the 2011 Shalit deal.

Since the counterterrorism Operation Protective Edge, Hamas has been busily reconstructing its terror tunnel network breaching into Israeli territory. A senior Israeli security official estimated several months ago that the terror group continues to dig 10 kilometers (6 miles) in tunnels leading into Israel per month.

Last week, the IDF and the Israel Security Agency (ISA or Shin Bet) exposed significant infrastructures belonging to Hamas in Gaza, including terrorist tunnels intended to be used as hideouts for terrorists and for the transfer of weapons. Aerial photographs proved that Hamas takes advantage of Gazans and hides the entry shafts of the tunnels underneath houses and public buildings, such as schools and mosques. Earlier this week, Hamas flatly denied that it was hiding tunnel entrances underneath homes and public buildings, describing Israel's claims as "lies and rumors"

## *Iran Reportedly is Building Long-Range Scud Missile Factory in Syria*

*By Israel Hayom & IsraelNationalNews.com*

Iran is building a facility in northwest Syria to manufacture long-range Scud missiles, Channel 2 reported on Tuesday, showing Israeli satellite images of the site under construction.

On Sunday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu echoed Mossad chief Yossi Cohen's assessments that Iran is strengthening its foothold in Syria, its longtime ally, as Islamic State fighters are being displaced from the country. Netanyahu said Israel was closely monitoring the developments and would act against any threat. "Our policy is clear: We vehemently oppose the military buildup by Iran and its proxies, primarily Hezbollah, in Syria and we will do whatever it takes to protect Israel's security," he said.

After analyzing the images of the site in northwest Syria near the Mediterranean coastal town of Banyas, experts said some of the construction indicated explosives would be stored there. Construction of the site reportedly began a year ago and is likely to continue through the end of 2017.

Analysts compared images of buildings said to be a rocket factory near Tehran to structures at the Syrian site, and said there was a strong resemblance between them, indicating the involvement of Iranian engineers. The facility has one entrance, an administrative section, a production area and a storage wing, while some of the buildings appear to be for manufacturing ammunition. Large dirt mounds to protect the facility are also visible in the images.

Netanyahu has been harshly critical of the 2015 deal signed by six world powers, including the United States under then-President Barack Obama, with Iran to curb its nuclear program in return for an end to multilateral sanctions. Israeli officials have consistently argued that the agreement fails to prevent Iranian weapons that pose a threat to Israel's very existence. Iran has insisted its nuclear program is for peaceful purposes only.

Last month, the U.S. imposed new economic sanctions on Iran over its ballistic missile program and said Tehran's "malign activities" in the Middle East had undercut any "positive contributions" from the 2015 accord. President Donald Trump has frequently criticized the agreement as being too soft on Iran, which remains subject to a U.N. arms embargo and other restrictions.

Meanwhile, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani warned Tuesday that Iran could abandon its nuclear agreement with world powers "within hours" if the U.S. imposes any new sanctions. "If America wants to go back to the experience [of imposing sanctions], Iran would certainly return in a short time -- not a week or a month but within hours -- to conditions more advanced than before the start of negotiations [in 2015]," Rouhani told a session of the Iranian parliament broadcast live on state television. Iran is a strong supporter of Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and has been providing him with both financial aid and military advisors against a range of opposing forces.

Near the start of the Syrian civil war, it was reported that then-Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad had personally sanctioned the dispatch of officers from the Iranian Revolutionary Guards to Syria to fight alongside Assad's troops. A senior Iranian commander said several months ago that Iran will provide military advisors to Syria for as long as necessary and stressed that "the advisory help isn't only in the field of planning but also on techniques and tactics."

## *Kurds are Hoping That Israel Can Nudge USA to Support Independence*

*By The Jerusalem Post and Reuters*

Many senior Iraqi Kurd officials have visited Israel over the last several weeks urging Jerusalem to both support its independence and send a message to Washington to do the same, Zionist Union MK Ksenia Svetlova said. A referendum on independence in the Kurdistan region in Iraq is scheduled for September 25. The Jerusalem Post reported Sunday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told a delegation of US Republican congressmen last Thursday that he is in favor of an independent Kurdish state in parts of Iraq.

Netanyahu, according to a source who took part in the discussion, expressed his "positive attitude" toward a Kurdish state in the Kurdish areas of Iraq, saying that the Kurds are a "brave, pro-Western people who share our values." Netanyahu's comments to the congressmen came the same day that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson asked Kurdistan Regional Government President Masoud Barzani to postpone the independence referendum.



The US position is that a referendum now will distract from more pressing matters, such as defeating Islamic State, and could ignite a fresh conflict with Baghdad and turn into another regional flashpoint. Turkey, Iran and Syria, which together with Iraq have sizable Kurdish populations, all oppose an independent Kurdistan.

Svetlova, who chairs a Knesset caucus for strengthening relations between Israel and the Kurdish people, said that visiting Kurdish officials were looking for Jerusalem's help in getting Washington to back the independence drive. "They say that Israel has a strong lobby, and the ear of [President Donald] Trump, and that they would be very happy if we could help," she said.

But the US position is that now – with a victory over Islamic State in Mosul and an Iraqi prime minister who is having some success – is "not the time to rock the boat" with Kurdish independence, she said. The last time Netanyahu came out in favor of Kurdish independence was three years ago.

Ofra Bengio, whose areas of expertise at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University include Israel-Kurdish ties, said that the timing of Netanyahu's comments to the congressmen was clearly connected to the referendum. The Kurds, she said, are looking for "as many voices of support" for their referendum as possible, and Netanyahu's expressing support for the move to a delegation of congressmen is exactly what the Iraqi Kurds want.

Michael Oren, deputy minister in the Prime Minister's Office, said that in addition to the referendum issue, Netanyahu's remarks to the delegation were also the result of the awareness in Jerusalem of "the rapidity with which Iran is consolidating its position in the region and Iraq, and that a Kurdish state would be one way to block it."

The Iraqi Kurds, he said, "are obviously not pro-Iranian." Furthermore, he said, "With all the talks over the decades of a Palestinian right to self-determination, and the Palestinian refusal to accept offers of self-determination – or even negotiate for one – it is about time that people consider another people who are no less deserving, or at least as deserving, as the Palestinians." Oren said the Iraqi Kurds are "pro-Western, stable, strong and open to Israel."

Svetlova said she was "100% sure that Kurdish independence is good for us because we need to look for partners in the Middle East." There are no better partners or people who respect Israel's achievements more than the Iraqi Kurds, she said.

Svetlova acknowledged that coming out squarely in favor of Kurdish independence was complicated – considering the passions doing so would arouse in Turkey, Iran and among competing Kurdish groups less positively disposed toward Israel in Turkey and Syria – but that Israel needed to take a stand. "I think that morally, as a country that needed any help we could get in 1948, we need to support them," she said.

## Both Presidents Bush Say America Must Reject Anti-Semitism

By YnetNews.com

Former US presidents George H.W. Bush and George W. Bush said in a joint statement on Wednesday that "America must always reject racial bigotry, anti-Semitism and hatred in all forms." Their comments come a day after current President Donald Trump gave weight to the complaints of white nationalists by once again declaring at a press conference that counter protesters shared the blame for the violence that erupted last weekend in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Referring to Thomas Jefferson, the Bushes—both Republican—said that as they pray for Charlottesville, they're reminded of "that city's most prominent citizen in the Declaration of Independence: We are all created equal and endowed by our Creator with unalienable rights."

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin issued a public letter to Executive Vice Chairperson of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations Malcolm I. Hoenlein on Wednesday, considering the weekend's violent and deadly clashes led by US neo-Nazis and white supremacists. "At this difficult time, I want to express my support and solidarity, and that of all the Israeli people with you and your communities, and ask that you kindly convey this message on my behalf to the Jewish communities across the US," wrote Rivlin.

"The very idea that in our time we would see a Nazi flag—perhaps the most vicious symbol of anti-Semitism—paraded in the streets of the world's greatest democracy, and Israel's most cherished and greatest ally is almost beyond belief. We have seen manifestations of anti-Semitism again and again arise across the world; in Europe and the Middle East. In the face of such evil, we stand now as we did then. With faith. With faith in humanity, with faith in democracy, and with faith in justice. I know that the great nation of the United States of America and its leaders will know how to face this difficult challenge, and prove to the world the robustness and strength of democracy and freedom." Rivlin concluded his letter by writing, "As we say Chazak, Chazak, ve'Nitchazek. Be strong, be strong, and we will be strong."

The blowback was swift, including from fellow Republicans. Sen. Marco Rubio of Florida said Trump should not allow white supremacists "to share only part of the blame." House Speaker Paul Ryan declared in a tweet that "white supremacy is repulsive" and there should be "no moral ambiguity," though he did not specifically address the president.

Trump's remarks were welcomed by former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, who tweeted, "Thank you President Trump for your honesty & courage to tell the truth." Trump spoke Tuesday in New York and showed sympathy for the fringe groups' efforts to preserve Confederate monuments. His words amounted to a rejection of the Republicans, business leaders and White House advisers who'd pushed the president to more forcefully and specifically condemn the KKK members, neo-Nazis and white supremacists who took to the streets of Charlottesville.

## Ambassador Friedman's Daughter Makes Aliyah

By IsraelNationalNews.com

US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman's daughter made Aliyah to Israel on Tuesday, along with 232 other immigrants from North America brought on a special flight chartered by Nefesh B'Nefesh. Friedman met his daughter, Talia Friedman, on the tarmac to welcome her to her new home. <https://youtu.be/ReKP20skWKE>

"We're so proud of our daughter Talia," Friedman told Arutz Sheva. "She's always wanted to live in Israel and she's realizing her dream and the whole family is just very proud of her. We're here to just greet her and to give her a hug and to wish her hatzlacha rabba [success] here in Israel. We're very excited. We're so proud of her, we love her so much, we just want her to be happy and this is something she always wanted to do. She loves Israel, we all love Israel, our whole family loves Israel, and this is her dream."

Talia, a nurse, was the only one of Friedman's five children who joined him on May 15th when he flew to Israel and was formally received as the US Ambassador to Israel. When asked what his daughter's plans were, Friedman said she would likely continue to work as a nurse, but was unsure of where she would live.

"She's going to live wherever she wants, that's up to her. She'll make her decision, she's a big girl, she'll decide for herself. She's a nurse. She was trained as a nurse, she worked in a hospital in New York and she'll probably do the same thing here. Hopefully she'll bring refua [healing] to people here in Israel."

Friedman praised the Nefesh B'Nefesh mass-Aliyah charter flight, saying American immigrants to Israel helped to strengthen the connection between the two countries. "What's amazing is that you have so many Americans coming to Israel and they're going to remain American but they're going to become Israeli so you have this whole group of Israeli-Americans and I think they add a lot to both countries. And it's very encouraging to see the connection strengthened between Israel and America."

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## *Suicide Bomber Kills Hamas Guard in Gaza*

By *YnetNews.com*

A suicide bomber killed a Hamas guard in the southern Gaza Strip near the border with Egypt early Thursday, officials said. Sources described it as a rare Islamist attack against Hamas, the terrorist Islamist group that rules Gaza. "Early this morning, security forces stopped two people approaching the southern border," an interior ministry spokesman in the Gaza Strip said in a statement. "One of them blew himself up and was killed. The other was wounded."

After, a medical source confirmed that a member of Hamas' security services had been killed in the attack. The source named the victim as 28-year-old Nidal al-Jaafari. Witnesses said hundreds of security forces were deployed along the border after the explosion.

Hamas has stepped up patrols in the border area with the declared aim of preventing the movement of extremists between Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula, where the Islamic State (ISIS) group has been battling Egyptian troops for years. Gaza security sources said they believed the suicide bomber was a radical Islamist. Other reports suggested he may have been an ISIS sympathizer. This attack marks the first time a suicide bomber has targeted Hamas forces in Gaza, the security sources said.

Hamas, classified a terrorist organization by several countries, has been regularly criticized by more radical groups in the strip. The two terrorists are members of the Salafist faction in the Gaza Strip, which is affiliated with ISIS. Gaza's Salafis are proponents of global jihad, holy war, endorsed by ISIS and al-Qaida. Hamas, which seized control of the Gaza Strip in 2007 from forces loyal to Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, has shown little tolerance for Salafi movements, detaining many of their members and raiding homes in searches for weapons.

According to the Gazan Interior Ministry, Hamas forces stopped for a security check two people who were nearing the border crossing from inside the strip when one of them set off an explosion, likely from a suicide belt. Five other Hamas security personnel suffered various degrees of injuries in the explosion. The second terrorist was also wounded. The wounded were taken to the Abu Yousef al-Najjar hospital in the strip.

The Hamas Interior Ministry described the assailant and his colleague as "ideologically deviant," a term Hamas uses to describe members of the Islamic State group and other extremists. Hamas's military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, vowed in a statement to "fight the alien deviant ideology without concession."

## *Netanyahu's Son's Facebook Page is Getting Him in Trouble*

By *JTA*

Yair Netanyahu reportedly advises his father, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, on how to use social media. But his own Facebook activity has repeatedly sparked controversy in Israel — and made headlines worldwide.

Most recently, in the wee hours of Wednesday, Yair Netanyahu, 26, weighed in on the violence at a white supremacist rally over the weekend in Charlottesville, Va. He suggested in English that American left-wing groups — the anti-fascist Antifa movement and the Black Lives Matter movement against systemic racism — are more dangerous than neo-Nazis.

"To put things in perspective. I'm a Jew, I'm an Israeli, the neo nazi scums [sic] in Virginia hate me and my country. But they belong to the past. Their breed is dying out," he wrote. "However, the thugs of Antifa and BLM who hate my country (and America too in my view) just as much are getting stronger and stronger and becoming super dominant in American universities and public life."

On Tuesday, after coming under criticism for staying silent on Charlottesville, the prime minister had tweeted a vague denunciation: "Outraged by expressions of anti-Semitism, neo-Nazism and racism. Everyone should oppose this hatred."

Earlier this month, Yair Netanyahu — who goes by Yair Hun on Facebook, using the pre-Hebraicized last name of his mother's father, Shmuel Ben-Artzi — trashed left-wing Israeli nonprofits and several former prime minister's sons.

He was responding to a critical article by Molad, a left-leading Israeli think tank, titled "Five Facts You Didn't Know About Crown Prince Yair Netanyahu." The article questioned the cost of Netanyahu's lifestyle to taxpayers, and noted a Facebook post making the rounds in which Yair's neighbor accused him of flipping her off when she complained that he had not picked up his dog's droppings.

He called the article "lies and slander" and called for investigations into Molad's funding sources or the alleged illicit behavior of ex-prime ministers' sons. Most controversially, he said Ariel Olmert, Ehud Olmert's son, had "an interesting relationship with a Palestinian, that may have had national security implications," apparently referring to rumors that Ariel had an affair with an East Jerusalem man.

Netanyahu ended the post by saying, "I have a message for all the members of the Israel Destruction Fund and their metastases," playing on the Hebrew name of the New Israel Fund. He then typed emojis of a hand giving the middle finger and a smiling poop.

Ariel Olmert responded with a Facebook post criticizing Yair as an adult living at the prime minister's residence, using a state-funded driver and security guards and spending time with millionaires. "Unlike you," Olmert said, "I actually work for my living. I also make an effort to pick up my dog's poop." Both he and Molad threatened to sue Netanyahu. Molad made good on the threat. The Hebrew media had a field day, with two papers running cartoons with caricatures of Netanyahu and poop emojis.

While Netanyahu's public timeline only goes back a few weeks, his Facebook activity has been getting him in trouble for years. In 2011, during his mandatory military service in the Israel Defense Forces Spokesperson's Unit, Netanyahu complained on the social media platform that soldiers need to do weekend duty "because of those damned Palestinians." After a report that criticized his mother, he wrote: "I hate the damned media." After that post, his Facebook page was temporarily deleted.

But by 2015, according to Hebrew reports, Netanyahu was helping to steer his father's media strategy in the national elections. With the help of a last-minute social media campaign — including the controversial Facebook warning that the Arabs were voting "in droves" — Binyamin Netanyahu defied the polls and held on to his seat. Since then, Yair Netanyahu's influence with his father has reportedly grown. The media have lately made much of the sway he and his mother, Sara Netanyahu, allegedly hold over the prime minister.

For his part, the prime minister has often complained about the media's unforgiving coverage of his wife and two sons, recently railing against "fake news" and "leftists." At a rally last week in Tel Aviv, he called the corruption investigations that threaten to oust him from power "an obsessive witch-hunt against me and my family." But in a leaked statement Wednesday from sources close to Binyamin Netanyahu, the prime minister distanced himself from his son's statement, saying, "Yair is an adult and his views are his alone."