

Aaron Katsman
Investment Specialist
02-624-0995
aaron@lighthousecapital.co.il

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Bring them home

Alex Dancyg, age 75, from Kibbutz Nir Oz, taken hostage on October 7

14 New heroes

Douglas Murray honors Israel and vice versa

15 Unlimited empathy

Grandson of hostage Chaim Peri advocates for peace

Fighting the emotional and ecological battle - on the Israel Trail

MAGAZINE

Nearly 200,000 Gazans flee Rafah as IDF invasion looms

Halevi plans to name new intel chief, then may quit

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

Around 150,000-200,000 Palestinian civilians have already left Rafah since April 7 and as the military gets ready for a long-discussed invasion, according to the IDF.

At one point, there were around 1.4 million Palestinian civilians in Rafah.

But after the IDF withdrew from Khan Yunis on April 7, a significant minority of civilians started to stream out of Rafah and back to Khan Yunis or to al-Muwasi on the southern Gaza coast.

The IDF hopes that more civilians will follow this lead as new tent cities are set up for civilians to evacuate Rafah to Khan Yunis, al-Muwasi, and central Gaza.

Further, the IDF's push to start the Rafah invasion has gotten more serious with some increasing frustration with the war cabinet for not yet having approved the operation.

From the perspective of the IDF and Defense Min-



HERZI HALEVI (IDF)



YOAV GALLANT (Violeta Santos Moura/Reuters)

ister Yoav Gallant, moving forward with the operation is the only way to break the impasse with Hamas over hostage negotiations as well as to eliminate the terror group's last relatively large contingent of four battalions (out of an original 24 battalions.)

At the same time, the Nahal Brigade and remaining aspects of IDF Division 162 which have taken the lead in northern Gaza for much

of the war, are finally exiting the Strip.

It is anticipated that they will return, possibly also to participate in operations in Rafah, but the IDF high command also believes these forces need a rest, so it was unclear exactly when they would return to combat.

In addition, IDF sources suggested that IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Herzi Halevi will appoint a new head of military intelligence to replace

outgoing chief Maj.-Gen. Aharon Haliva announced on Monday that he wished to step down to take responsibility for the failure to foresee and stop Hamas's October 7 invasion of the Israeli South.

Initially, there were questions about whether Halevi would make this appointment or whether the next IDF chief would, given that Halevi is expected to resign in the coming weeks or months for his role in failing to stop October 7.

One possibility is that Halevi will resign after the Rafah invasion.

Another is that he will resign after a large operation against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

Before withdrawing, the Nahal Brigade over Wednesday and Thursday eliminated several terrorists and destroyed terrorist infrastructure in the IDF corridor splitting off northern Gaza from the rest of the Gaza Strip, the

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MAY GOD BLESS THEM ALL

Tens of thousands of people attend the biannual mass priestly blessing at the Western Wall yesterday. Rabbi of the Western Wall and the Holy Places Shmuel Rabinowitz said, 'On this sacred occasion, we remember and pray for our brothers and sisters who are still captives in Gaza, and our brothers and sisters who have been evacuated from their homes due to the war.' (Marc Israel Sellem/The Jerusalem Post)

Egypt renews push for hostage exchange deal

18 countries appeal for release of captives

• By HANNAH SARISOHN in New York, TOVAH LAZAROFF and Jerusalem Post Staff

Egypt renewed efforts for a hostage deal Thursday as the United States and 17 other nations released a joint statement calling on Hamas to free the remaining 133 hostages.

"The fate of the hostages and the civilian population in Gaza, who are protected under international law, is of international concern," the 18 nations stated, adding that those held "include our own citizens."

"We call for the immediate release of all hostages held by Hamas in Gaza now for over 200 days," the nations stated.

Senior Hamas leader Sami Abu Zuhri told Reuters that Hamas would not be influenced by the statement and said the United States needs to force Israel to end its aggression.

"The ball now is in the American court," said Abu Zuhri.

It's the first time that these countries have banded together to form a united front since the hostages were seized during Hamas's

ISRAEL AT WAR



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JVP publishes anti-Zionist, pro-Gaza Haggadah, Page 3

Friday for talks.

Egyptian, Israeli, and US officials held in-person and remote meetings on Wednesday in an attempt to arrive at concessions that would revive a deal for a six-week pause to the war in exchange for the release of 40 of the captives.

Among the sticking points has been Hamas's insistence on a permanent ceasefire. IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi and head of the Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) Ronen Bar were in Egypt on Wednesday for such talks.

According to KAN, Hamas does not want to meet the demand for 40 live hostages including women, the elderly, the sick, wounded, and infirm. The debate is now around whether to do a lesser deal, possibly for only 20 live hostages.

A senior US administration official told reporters in Washington that Hamas had rejected that initial deal and that efforts were now underway for another agreement.

Hamas leaders on the outside say all sorts of things, but the decision-makers are

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IDF SOURCES:

US artificial island operational by May

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

Although construction of the US's artificial island for providing humanitarian aid to Gaza has not yet formally started, it is expected to be completed and operating by early May, say IDF sources.

The artificial island, or Joint Logistics Over the Shore (JLOTS) pier, has been in the works since it was announced by US President Joe Biden in his State of the Union address on March 7.

At the time, the announcement caught many Israeli officials by surprise and it was the start of a series of moves of Washington injecting itself more forcefully into the humanitarian situation in Gaza.

But shortly after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanya-

hu noted he had offered the possibility back in October 2023 (though at the time he was trying to use it to stave off having to open land aid crossings), and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said on March 10 that the new US maritime Gaza humanitarian aid program would speed up toppling Hamas.

The challenge of getting the JLOTS going connects to why it may also get up and running relatively quickly.

A series of large US naval vessels have been making their way slowly across the Atlantic, but when they arrive, in the upcoming days, they have essentially all of the equipment and materials needed to establish the temporary island off Gaza.

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Pentagon: Mortar fire hits area of pier site

• By HANNAH SARISOHN Jerusalem Post Correspondent

NEW YORK - The Pentagon is aware of reports that a small number of mortars landed in the vicinity of the marshalling yard area for humanitarian assistance that will eventually be the delivery site off the coast of Gaza.

The Pentagon is tracking some type of mortar attack causing minimal damage in the vicinity of the marshalling yard area for US delivery of humanitarian aid off the coast of Gaza, Spokesperson Maj.-Gen. Pat Ryder said on Thursday afternoon.

Ryder said it's important to highlight this occurred before any US forces started moving any supplies and no US assets were damaged. It's unclear if any Israeli assets sustained damage.

Ryder added that the USNS Benavidez has begun to construct the initial stages of the temporary pier and causeway at sea.

Cyprus is where aid will be stockpiled and loaded on the ships and Gaza is the shore where eventually this temporary causeway will connect, Ryder said.

The marshalling yard eventually will be in the vicinity of where the causeway will connect to, Ryder said but the two essential pieces in the middle are the temporary pier which is out at sea and the causeway which will eventually join land and be anchored.

According to Ryder, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has yet to speak with his Israeli counterparts on reports of mass

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Protests escalate as frustration grows over protracted hostage talks

• By EVE YOUNG

Protests and actions for the hostages have been ramping up in recent weeks, growing in number and intensity as hostage negotiations faltered and the IDF pulled out of southern Gaza, leading many to ask what is being done to bring the hostages home.

"The war has been waged at a low intensity for a long time while all the military achievements are undone without reaching the goals of the war - a hostage deal and ensuring the future of the state of Israel," said protest organization The Day After.

"In two weeks we will celebrate Remembrance Day and Independence Day, and the thought of the ministers in the government of neglect,

who are preventing a hostage deal, walking into cemeteries full of our friends, who fell defending the country, with their heads held high is unimaginable."

"We have stopped playing nice," they said. "Whoever abandons the hostages and our future will be met with significant and fierce nonviolent resistance," the organization added.

"This government is not doing everything it can to win the war," said Nadav Salzberger, one of the leaders of protest organization The Change Generation.

"There is no Rafah operation, it has been dragging on for months. There is no serious discussion of the day after in Gaza, and Hamas is enjoying this neglect as

it allows them to return to places in Gaza the IDF had cleared. This government, through inaction, is going to allow the return of Hamas to power in Gaza," he said.

Numerous protests, rallies, and installations took place in the lead up to, and during Passover, including the night of the Seder, with more planned.

Four were arrested in Jerusalem Wednesday night at protests that broke out after Hamas released a video of Goldberg-Polin in captivity, led by Goldberg-Polin's friends. Protests also broke out in Tel Aviv, where protesters blocked Begin Road.

The protests in Jerusalem were exceptionally intense,

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A WOMAN WITH her mouth sealed reacts during a protest marking 200 days since the start of the Gaza war, in Tel Aviv on Tuesday. (Hannah McKay/Reuters)

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SHABBAT BEGINS ENDS

Jerusalem	6:35 p.m.	7:55 p.m.
Tel Aviv	6:56 p.m.	7:57 p.m.
Haifa	6:48 p.m.	7:58 p.m.
Beersheba	6:56 p.m.	7:56 p.m.
Eilat	6:43 p.m.	7:52 p.m.

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