

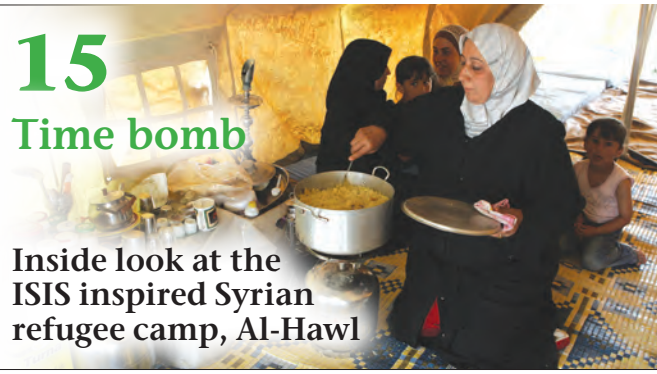


## Bring them home

Agam Berger, age 19, kidnapped from the Nahal Oz base

## 15 Time bomb

Inside look at the ISIS inspired Syrian refugee camp, Al-Hawl



## 17 Warm ties

The Serbo-Israeli relationship blossoms both in trade and diplomacy



Israel's October orphans

### MAGAZINE



## Victim of Gan Yavne attack dies of wounds

• Jerusalem Post Staff

Lidor Levy, 34, one of the three victims of a terrorist stabbing attack in Gan Yavne on Sunday night, died from his wounds on Thursday, Israeli media outlets reported.

He leaves behind an 18-month-old daughter and a wife, who is pregnant with the couple's second child.



LIDOR LEVY (Courtesy of the family via Walla)

"Lidor was an exemplary father, partner, brother, and son, a man full of love, nobility, and devotion," his family said in a statement, Walla reported. "His life purpose was to help people modestly and humbly. Lidor left a huge void in our hearts; we will continue to live according to the values he instilled in us for his memory."

Levy was seriously wounded as a combatant in the Engineering Corps during an operation in the Gaza Strip in 2009, his family said. Even though he was exempted from reserve duty, he tried to enlist during the ongoing Israel-Hamas war, they said.

A 19-year-old terrorist from the Hebron area stabbed three people near a shopping center in Gan Yavne on Sunday night. He was killed by a police officer and a municipal guard.

### QATARI OFFICIALS TO 'POST':

# We approached Israel after October 7 with hostage deal, response took a week

## Qatari officials speak up for the first time on their role in hostage mediation

EXCLUSIVE • By ZVIKA KLEIN

DOHA, Qatar – In the complex tapestry of Middle Eastern diplomacy, Qatar emerges as a paradox.

On the one hand, it positions itself as a mediator and peacemaker, instrumental in negotiating high-profile hostage releases and actively participating in regional discussions, a role that has placed it in the international spotlight in the aftermath of the Hamas-led October 7 attack.

This role, as articulated by senior Qatari officials during my visit, reveals a nation striving for a larger purpose on the world stage. Their efforts, they assert, are in alignment with the broader objectives of global powers like the US and Israel, aimed at fostering stability in a tumultuous region.

Yet, there's a palpable undercurrent of skepticism about Qatar's true intentions. Its financial support to Gaza, often labeled as aid to Hamas, as well their policy of allowing that group's top leaders

to reside in their country, are focal points of contention.

Qatari officials contend that these actions are not unilateral, but responses to requests from Israeli and US governments, aimed at stabilizing the region and averting humanitarian crises. They argue that their unique position enables them to mediate complex issues effectively, including the Israel-Hamas dynamics. Despite these explanations, the arrangement continues to spark debates and suspicions in Israel and beyond.

As an Israeli journalist delving into the depths of Qatar's foreign policy and regional actions, I find myself navigating a narrative that's both enlightening and elusive. Last week, I conducted more than 15 hours of interviews and off-the-record briefings with the most senior Qatari government officials, who asked to remain anonymous. They were eager to share their complex history and relationship with Israel.

Read full story, Page 13.



RELATIVES AND supporters of hostages held in Gaza block a road during a demonstration in Tel Aviv yesterday. (Jack Guez/AFP via Getty Images)

## Behind the scenes in Doha

• By ZVIKA KLEIN

DOHA, Qatar – Quite a few Israelis didn't understand why I was interested in visiting Doha, the Qatari capital, to hold in-depth interviews and conversations with the heads of this small but powerful Muslim country. Public opinion research shows that Israelis have two main conceptions about Qatar:

1. The Qataris host Hamas leaders in Doha, and they send suitcases of cash to Gaza.
2. The oil rich Gulf state is known for soccer after winning the first-ever World Cup in the Arab world.

They have also earned a reputation as mediators in some of the most challenging conflicts around the globe and for their ability to bring home hostages: Americans held in Venezuela, Iran and North Korea, and to repatriate Ukrainian children kidnapped by Russian forces. But despite their deeds and enormous resources, the world has yet to properly understand their story.

Telling that story, however, isn't my business. As an Israeli journalist, I wanted to know precisely how they intend to help us get back all of the remaining 134 hostages, and I wanted to understand why they are hosting Hamas and funding the terrorist group in Gaza, as many of my colleagues and friends have been asking.

See full story, Page 24.

## 'Qatar should have put Hamas in headlock'

'Egypt, UAE, Saudis can replace Doha'

EXCLUSIVE • By YONAH JEREMY BOB

Qatar should have "kicked Hamas out of Qatar, closed their bank accounts, and said there would be no more funds for Gaza in the future," absent a deal to release the hostages, senior diplomatic sources told *The Jerusalem Post* in an exclusive interview.

Only this kind of approach might have yielded a deal a few weeks ago and kept the Qataris as the official moderators, as opposed to now, when Egypt may have displaced them, the sources explained.

A senior diplomatic official said that Qatar needed to take a much harder line with Hamas than it took "as a moral matter because Hamas are religious fanatics of the Muslim Brotherhood."

Because Qatar failed to exercise any of the powerful pressure points that it seriously had over Hamas, the "negotiations reached a dead end. So in recent weeks, the center of gravity shifted to Egypt. This is the

See QATAR, Page 10

## Is Qatar 'the arsonist or the firefighter?'

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

In the wake of *Jerusalem Post* Editor-in-Chief Zvika Klein's exclusive visit and meetings with a series of top officials in Qatar, there have been a number of counter-perspectives shared with the *Post* compared to what the Qataris told Klein.

These perspectives can be divided into three categories: 1) those who see the Qataris as sometimes problematic but real potential allies; 2) those who see the Qataris as highly problematic, but as still critical interlocutors due to pragmatic realities; and 3) those who see the Qataris as a profound problem which must be cut off.

Former Mossad director Yossi Cohen roughly represents the first school of thought. He would candidly admit to having excellent personal relations with the Qataris, having gone "glamping" [glamorous desert camping] with their top officials, and told the *Post* this week that they have been and could be useful for regaining Israeli hostages from Hamas.

It would seem that Cohen also thinks that the current negotiations with Qatar could have had better outcomes if they had been handled more cleverly.

See full story, Page 14.

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Beersheba	6:42 p.m.	7:40 p.m.
Eilat	6:31 p.m.	7:38 p.m.

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## Biden: Gaza policy to change unless IDF protects Gaza civilians

• By TOVAH LAZAROFF and HANNAH SARISOHN

The United States will change its policy toward Gaza unless Israel takes immediate steps to better protect Palestinian civilians there, US President Joe Biden warned Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during a terse half-hour call on Thursday night.

"With regard to our policy in the Gaza Strip... if we don't see the changes that we need to see, there'll be changes in policy," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told reporters in Belgium as he discussed the conversation.

US National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby said that this change

needed to happen within "hours and days," adding that he expected to see announcements from Israel.

"The President made very

clear his concerns, and the prime minister acknowledged those concerns," Kirby

See BIDEN, Page 10

## US: Iran is a viable threat to Israel's safety

• By TOVAH LAZAROFF and HANNAH SARISOHN in New York

Tehran is posting a public and viable threat to Israel, the United States said on Thursday, as Israel braced for the possibility of a retaliatory attack, after its suspected killing of Iranian generals in Damascus this week. Israel said it would respond forcefully, signaling it had stiffened its military preparedness.

See IRAN, Page 10

## IDF halts leave for all combat units as Northern threat looms

Hagari: We are prepared for all scenarios

• Jerusalem Post Staff

The IDF on Thursday said it has halted leave for all combat units after an Israeli airstrike that killed an Iranian general in Damascus earlier this week drew threats of retaliation.

"In accordance with the situational assessment, it has been decided that leave will be temporarily paused for all IDF combat units," the IDF said in a statement. "The IDF is at war, and the deployment of forces is under continuous assessment according to requirements."

On Wednesday, the IDF said it would call up reservists to bolster the IAF's air defenses.

The decisions come amid heightened tensions in Israel and increasing threats by Iran in the wake of an alleged Israeli strike in Syria, which killed senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps commander Mohammad Reza Zahedi.

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi on Thursday said Israel would pay a "heavy price" for the attack.

IDF Spokesperson R-Adm. Daniel Hagari on Thursday said: "IDF soldiers are well deployed in both defensive and tactical arrays on all borders and are prepared for a variety of scenarios. We must

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### ISRAEL AT WAR



IDF probe focus will expand back to 2014, may include Gantz, Netanyahu, Page 2

Iran embassy strike shows Israel's growing reach as Mideast boils, Page 3