

Hamas shelling kills 3 at Gaza border crossing

Source: Negotiations for a deal to release hostages are on the brink of collapse

Yaniv Kubovich, Jonathan Lis, Jack Khoury, Eden Solomon and Yael Freidson

The army reported that three soldiers were killed and nine were wounded during a barrage of mortar fire near the Gaza border.

The soldiers were named as Staff Sgt. Tal Shavit, 21, of the Nahal Brigade, and Staff Sgt. Ido Testa, 19, and Staff Sgt. Ruben Marc Mordechai Assouline, 19 of the Givati Brigade.

The army says the barrage was carried out in an area located 300 meters from an area used as shelter for displaced Gazans.

Some shells hit military and civilians infrastructure, including a house in Kibbutz Kerem Shalom.

The IDF struck the launchers used in the attack. Following the barrage, the Kerem Shalom crossing used for transferring aid into Gaza was closed.

The attack targeted an army staging area near the Kerem Shalom border crossing. Israel therefore closed the crossing, which is a major conduit for humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip.

Hamas claimed responsibility for the attack.

The Israel Defense Forces said it counted 14 launches aimed at the stag-

ing area, where soldiers were guarding equipment. The site has mobile shelters, and the army is investigating whether a warning of the attack reached the soldiers in the area and, if so, whether the soldiers followed standard procedures. The IDF had forecast that preparations for an operation in Rafah would lead to shooting from the area.

Defense Minister Yoav Gallant met with soldiers in central Gaza on Sunday

PM sabotaging cease-fire

Yossi Verter, Page 3

and said Israel "sees worrying signs that in practice, Hamas doesn't intend to go for any deal," referring to the ongoing negotiations over a hostage deal. "This means an operation in Rafah and throughout the Gaza Strip in the very near future."

In a eulogy for Elyakim Libman, who was murdered in Hamas' attack on October 7 but was only buried on Sunday, after his body was finally found, National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir said he hoped Libman "would tear open the gates of heaven and pray to the Holy

One, Blessed be He, that we should learn from this family's deeds, and that He give us the strength to invade Rafah and perform a root canal, the strength to make war on Hezbollah and, yes, strength in Iran as well when they attack us. Not to keep silent and not to give responses that aren't serious. Only through strength, with God's help, will we win."

Libman's mother Avishag said in her eulogy, "Thank you for the privilege of raising you, for the privilege of learning from your wisdom, your generosity and the way you honored your parents. I'll love you forever and wait for you to return to me."

Noting that the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, near which the funeral took place, is where Liebman had his brit mila and his bar-mitzvah, she added, "We wanted you to get married here, but instead, we'll bury you near the Tomb of the Patriarchs. We'll tell the master of the universe 'Enough. Enough hostages, enough families in agony, enough wounded, enough widows. We're ready for redemption, for the resurrection of the dead.'"

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The scene of the attack at Kerem Shalom on Sunday.

Magen David Adom spokesperson

Netanyahu puts up a rejectionist front

The intensity of U.S. pressure will determine whether he accedes to Joe Biden's demands

Amos Harel

The United States, Egypt and Qatar applied a steamroller of pressure on both Israel and Hamas on Sunday night in an effort to prevent the negotiations over a hostage deal from blowing up. As part of this effort, CIA Director William Burns flew from Cairo to Doha after the Hamas delegation submitted objections to the mediators' proposal

and returned to Qatar.

Meanwhile, Israel is intensifying its threats to invade Rafah, in part due to Sunday's severe incident, in which 3 soldiers were killed and 11 others were wounded in a Hamas mortar attack near the Kerem Shalom border crossing.

Hamas gave the mediators a list of objections, but the heart of the dispute has

revolved for months around a single question. Hamas demands that any deal include the end to the war and a full retreat of Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip, backed by guarantees from the mediators. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu refuses to agree to this, because it would mean admitting his failure to achieve the war's stated aims and could therefore open a political hornet's nest.

Veteran Netanyahu watchers – and by this point, that

includes most Israeli adults – have long known that he is the sum of his fears and the pressure exerted on him. Today, it's hard to distinguish between the two. But Mariano Edelman's years-long portrayal of Netanyahu on the satirical television show "Eretz Nehederet" conveys the man's essence – wild eyes, constant fear, serial excuses.

It's no secret that Netanyahu is now in a vise. On one hand, even though Hamas' leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, continues plac-

ing obstacles before a deal, the Biden administration is pushing Netanyahu to be even more flexible and seek an agreement. And the Americans' next moves will have a decisive influence over developments.

They have offered to wrap the Israeli concessions in a plethora of sweeteners, first and foremost a normalization agreement with Saudi Arabia. But if Netanyahu refuses, and especially if he

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Netanyahu and Sinwar's visions of victory are prolonging the war

Anshel Pfeffer

The breathless reports in Arab media on Saturday that Hamas had agreed to the Egyptian cease-fire and hostage release proposal were premature. While talks are still ongoing in Cairo, as of Sunday evening it is looking increasingly unlikely

that Hamas' chief in Gaza and the man who calls the shots on any deal, Yahya Sinwar, is prepared to agree to any compromise that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu can accept.

Both men are determined to emerge with a perception

of victory in their grasp – but there doesn't appear to be any framework in which the two can have that.

By any meaningful or objective sense of the word, neither side can be said to have "won" the war between Israel and Hamas. On October 7, Israel suffered the most grievous blow in its history when Hamas' surprise attack killed nearly 1,200

people and depopulated entire communities around Gaza's borders. In the subsequent seven months, Hamas has lost around 10 times that number of fighters, another 20,000 civilians are estimated to have been killed, and the main cities and townships in Gaza have been largely destroyed.

But the only way the two leaders who have brought

so much destruction on their own and each other's peoples hope to survive after the war is by trying to convince enough of their people that they have actually won. Many, of course, can never be convinced. The awful facts can never be overturned. But autocratic populists like Netanyahu and murdering fundamentalists like Sinwar don't

care about facts, and only ever need to convince just a chunk of the population – the "real" people – of their victory. Everyone else will be branded as defeatists and traitors for not believing in victory.

For Sinwar's purposes, a "victory" is easier to achieve. All he needs to do is stay alive and allow Netanyahu to keep making all the

mistakes. He still has about half of his fighters still alive, and since Netanyahu refuses to accept any alternative force taking over in Gaza, they are already back in control of major parts of the Strip. He didn't contemplate Israel's devastating retaliation, but he's not going to relinquish power over Gaza even if it's entirely in ruins.

What Sinwar wants, says

one senior Hamas watcher in the Israeli intelligence community, is to be able "to make a victory lap outside his bunker." That's all. To spend enough time in the sunlight, without fear that Israel will target him with a missile, so he can be shown on Al Jazeera walking in Gaza with a cheering crowd.

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They fled the Nazis as children. Now they can't go home due to war



Galina Sidenko. Holocaust Remembrance Day began Sunday. (See story, Page 4.) *Olivier Fitoussi*

Liza Rozovsky

Galina Sidenko, 89, enters the room with heavy, cautious steps. She sits down beside a table covered by a white tablecloth and turns into the little girl Avigail of the Segal family.

"At home I was called Galia, but I'm registered as Avigail," she says, proudly presenting her yellowing Lithuanian birth certificate. "We were named after

my grandfather, Avrum. I was called Avigail and my cousin was named Avivit. "For a year we even went to a Hebrew kindergarten until the Soviet Union occupied Lithuania and closed it. When I was a child I knew Hebrew, but I've completely forgotten it." Our conversation takes place in a room at Jerusalem's Prima Park Hotel; it's in the synagogue area in the basement, a nice quiet space. Ga-

lia has been living at the hotel for nearly seven months, ever since she was evacuated on October 18 from Shlomi, a town on Israel's northern border. She's at the hotel with 56 other Russian-speakers, most of them elderly. Like Galia, 20 of them are Holocaust survivors who, as children, fled with their families deep into the Soviet Union, escaping annihilation at the hands of the Nazis. Now, 80 years later, they were

evacuated again, waiting for the war against Hamas and Hezbollah to end so they can return to their homes.

Galia was born in the Lithuanian city of Siauliai to an affluent family that owned a children's clothing store. In June 1940, the Red Army invaded the Baltic states as part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, took the store and evicted the family from their spacious apartment. Galia believes that if the Soviets had more efficiently instilled their rule before the Germans arrived a year later, her family would have been sent to Siberia, where many richer Lithuanians and Jews were sent.

Instead, Galia's father started working for the postal service, and the manager of a post office saved the family when Germany attacked the Soviet Union in the early summer of 1941. "On June 22, I woke up at 4 A.M. to the sound of sirens and bombs. I was very scared. It has stayed with me to this day. We already had some displaced people from Tilsit," Galia says, using the German name of the city now called Sovetsk in Russia's Kaliningrad enclave that lies between Poland and Lithuania.

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Tomer Appelbaum

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Hiding inside a gold mine

Jewish Romanian family spent two years hiding from the Nazis

Linda Dayan

As a child growing up in northern Romania, Liku Rifca Carmi (née Marcovici) wanted for nothing. The inquisitive, fiery 5-year-old lived with her parents and six siblings in a large house maintained by two housekeepers, and a tiny white dog who never left her side. Her father Shlomo made a comfortable living as a merchant and, despite lacking a formal education, supplied his family with the finest things.

So when they were told in April 1943, just before the Passover holiday, that all of the Jewish families in Sighet must report to the town's train station in 10 days' time to be taken to a marvelous place that had anything they could possibly want, Shlomo was suspicious. He reached out to Petru, a Christian friend he had known since childhood. "He was a coal miner, and he knew the forest and the mines and the animals' hiding spots," Carmi explains today. "And my father turned to him for help in hiding us, until this thing would end."

Carmi is now nearly 88 and living in Jerusalem. There are certain parts of

her past that she remembers so clearly, and other parts where family members have filled in the gaps. "When it comes to history, there are other people who are writing and have written it better

would rather keep his identity private) knew of an abandoned gold mine in the forest. It had potable water running through it, "and as someone who works underground, he knew the value of that."



Lea and Shlomo Marcovici, in Israel.

Courtesy of the Carmi family

than me," she says. "My intention is to tell my story and to bring awareness to it, to my family, to what happened to us during World War II." She talks to Haaretz from the waiting area of a Tel Aviv hospital – a short inpatient stay could not deter her from speaking.

Petru (not his real name, but Carmi, who did not get confirmation from his family before telling this story,

Before the Jews were to depart to their unknown destination, Shlomo gathered the family and told them they would not be going – and that they could not tell a soul. "It sounded to me, as a little girl, like an adventure. Going with mom and dad to hide in a gold mine in the forest – it sounded like a

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