

MONDAY, APRIL 8, 2024 ■ 29 ADAR 2, 5784



## Bring them home

Gali Berman, 26,  
kidnapped from Kfar Aza

## Hollow threats

The illusion of  
Iran's strength  
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## Art roundup

Munch in Tel Aviv,  
Israeli art in Washington  
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RELATIVES AND supporters of the hostages held in Gaza by Hamas hold up placards at a demonstration in front of the Knesset in Jerusalem last night, demanding that the government conclude a deal that will bring the 133 captives home. (Menahem Kahana/AFP via Getty Images)

## 'We can't abandon the hostages'

Tens of thousands rally outside Knesset for captives, six months after Oct. 7

• By EVE YOUNG

Tens of thousands gathered outside the Knesset for a rally in support of the hostages on Sunday night, exactly six months after they were kidnapped by Hamas and taken to Gaza on October 7.

"Half a year that 133 hostages are being tortured day in and day out, every minute, in Hamas captivity," said the Hostages and Missing Families Forum.

The forum also addressed the IDF pullout of southern Gaza on Sunday, saying that "the

withdrawal of forces should be the first stage in a hostage deal. Now, we must not abandon the hostages in Gaza."

Released hostage Itay Regev spoke at the rally, talking about the emotional torture faced by the hostages, and about how Hamas would tell them that no

one cared about bringing them home.

"I just want to ask our leaders, is it true? Have you given up on them?" he asked. "Are the terrorists correct? I would like an answer, but before the [Knesset] recess if possible," he said, referencing the parliamentary break that began Sunday.

Released hostage Agam Goldstein-Altom also spoke, recalling her time in captivity. "I used to think a lot about who the people fighting for me were, who is dealing with my release, and you are those people, a huge part of them," she told the crowd.

She addressed the hostages still in Gaza telling them, "I hope you aren't counting the days, I hope you don't know how long it has been and that you don't know what a catastrophe it is, and that you don't know what [those in Israel] are talking about and busy with, while you are fighting for your lives."

"Today we mark six months,

## IDF wraps up active Gaza operation, pulls out from South

Gallant: Withdrawal will allow for Rafah op • 4 soldiers killed in ambush

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB  
and TOVAH LAZAROFF

The IDF on Sunday announced that it concluded the active invasion stage of the war, leaving open the possibility of a future new invasion of Rafah in deep southern Gaza.

The military withdrew all of Division 98 from Khan Yunis, maintaining one-plus brigades – the Nahal Brigade and portions of Brigade 401 – in northern and central Gaza.



CAPT. IDO BARUCH  
(IDF)



SGT. AMITAI EVEN SHOSHAN  
(IDF)

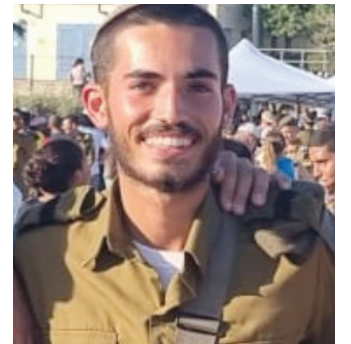
### ISRAEL AT WAR



Oct. 7 survivor fights for freedom of captive boyfriend, Page 4



SGT. REEF HARUSH  
(IDF)



SGT. ILAI ZAIR  
(IDF)

Although a top IDF official said this change had nothing to do with US pressure, the timing was unmistakable, coming right after the IDF's disas-

trous mistaken killing of seven humanitarian aid workers last week.

The decision also came less than two days after Isra-

el opened the Erez crossing and Ashdod port to transfer humanitarian aid, decisions

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## Netanyahu: Hamas, not Israel, is preventing a hostage deal

• By TOVAH LAZAROFF

Hamas remains the stumbling block to a deal, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday as Cairo hosted another round of hostage talks that included CIA Director William Burns as well as Israeli, Egyptian, and Qatari officials.

"It is not Israel that is preventing a deal. Hamas is preventing a deal," Netanyahu charged at the start of the weekly government meeting.

In advance of the talks, US President Joe Biden had said that Netanyahu needed to do more to support a deal for the remain-

ing 133 captives.

Hamas, whose officials are also in Cairo, has demanded that Israel halt the war and withdraw the IDF from Gaza, while Israel has insisted that it must complete its military mission to destroy the terror group and oust it from the enclave.

Israel has been under increased pressure from the international community to end the war, irrespective of whether the hostages are freed.

"I have made it clear to the international community: There will be no ceasefire without

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## Is pullout due to US pressure, or strategy shift on hostages, Rafah?

ANALYSIS

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB

"Stunning" is the only word appropriate to describe the decision to withdraw from Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday.

Some political and defense officials tried

to offer explanations as to how it was hinted to, or was consistent with Israel's strategy to date – simply, it was not.

For months, Israel's consistent strategy was that the only way the IDF could convince Hamas to return more hostages would

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## US says 'increasingly frustrated' by Israel's handling of Gaza war

• By TOVAH LAZAROFF

There is growing American frustration over IDF actions in Gaza, even as it continues to support Israel's right to defend itself, US National Security Communications Adviser John Kirby said on Sunday as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu took steps to soothe tensions between Jerusalem and Washington.

There has been a "growing degree of frustration that we've had with the way these operations are being [executed] and the way that the Israelis are acting on the ground in terms of civilian casualties," Kirby told ABC's Meet the Press.

That "frustration" was at the core of the message US President Joe Biden delivered

to Netanyahu in their phone call this week, Kirby said, as he recalled the terse 30-minute conversation between the two leaders on Thursday.

Israel has "got to do more," it has "got to make changes," Kirby said. He acknowledged that Netanyahu pledged to take steps to improve the situation, which he welcomed, but that more needed to be done.

The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) said that 322 humanitarian aid trucks entered Gaza on Sunday, the largest amount in a single day since October 7.

The Security Cabinet last week also took steps to improve humanitarian conditions in Gaza, including an agreement to open the Erez Crossing to allow goods to be transported to the enclave through the Ashdod port.

The issue of Israel's failure to ensure adequate provision



A HOUSE burned by Hamas terrorists on October 7 is seen at Kibbutz Nirim yesterday. (Seth J. Frantzman)

## The Gaza border, six months on

REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK  
• By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

Lines of freshly planted trees. Israeli flags, each at a different height on a stick above where a tree will one day grow, fly in the wind. It's been six months since the Nova festival massacre took place here.

On each flag is printed the name of one of the victims who was killed here, or in the nearby forests and fields, during the massacre. Meanwhile, the

sound of artillery can be heard in the distance. By this late point in the day, the military had already announced that it was rotating forces out of Gaza.

A sense of change, noted by the passage of half a year, can be felt here. Time continues to pass, and each day ends, but there is no closure for the families, who are left in limbo while Hamas continues to hold 133 hostages.

On Sunday morning, families of the Nova victims gathered at the site. They talked of the

feeling of abandonment they experienced, especially from the government; they talked of pain, of getting treatment for that pain. They spoke about how this massacre could have been prevented, and how difficult it is to return to life.

Right then was when the news broke that a mourner's wreath was sent to the family of 19-year-old hostage Liri Albag, blaming the government for the lack of a deal. The Shin Bet

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## 7,000 in NY join call for hostage deal

• By HANNAH SARISOHN  
Jerusalem Post Correspondent

NEW YORK – More than 7,000 people gathered Sunday afternoon near the United Nations in New York calling for the return of the remaining 133 hostages, in the largest rally outside of Israel to date.

Hostages' family members and rescued hostage Louis Har were joined by members of Congress and local community leaders as well representatives of 150 organizations including synagogues, churches, and schools.

Former prime minister Naf-tali Bennett was also in attendance and was seen embracing Ruby Chen, father of deceased hostage Itay Chen.

The rally began with an exhibit by activists with the Hostage and Missing Families Forum chained in cages with the goal of shocking passers-by and reminding them what life in captivity looks like.

Har, who was rescued from Hamas captivity after 129 days, told the crowd he can't start healing until all of the hostages are returned home.

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THOUSANDS MARCH in New York near the United Nations yesterday, calling for the release of the hostages six months after October 7. (Hostage and Missing Families Forum)



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