



Qatar, U.S. push Israel to clarify PM's comments

Hamas leaders say chances slim for hostage deal following PM's statement

Jonathan Lis and Jack Khoury

The United States and the other mediators attach "crucial importance" to the summit meeting in Qatar on Wednesday after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu issued his "red lines" for completing a deal, foreign sources knowledgeable about the negotiations told Haaretz on Monday.

Negotiators are waiting to hear from Mossad chief David Barnea how flexible Israel will be in regard to each

of the issues still subject to dispute and whether Israel has practical suggestions to square the circle and advance the negotiations after Netanyahu's announcement.

One source said Netanyahu's message on Sunday has already complicated any progress of reaching a deal with Hamas.

The Hamas leadership overseas has told the heads of the Gaza-based factions that chances of reaching a hostage-cease-fire deal are now slim, after Netanyahu's statement.

The main points of contention remain Hamas' demand for a complete cessation of hostilities and the end of the war, which Palestinian prisoners will be released and whether Israel will have a veto power over certain prisoners, and finally Gaza reconstruction and preventing armed men entering northern Gaza.

Israeli sources said on Monday that a mutually agreed plan could still be reached but the price would be the collapse of the governing coalition. "The problem at the moment isn't the ability to reach an agreed upon plan. For Netanyahu, the problem is that he won't have a government if he pursues a deal. It's a political decision he will have to make," said one source.

Either way, Israel undertook a series of meetings to advance the deal. On Monday, Ronen Bar, the head of the Shin Bet security service, left for Cairo for talks; on Wednesday, the summit is due to take place in Qatar; and another working team may go to Doha before the end of the week to discuss advancing the plan.

An Israeli source said that the next three weeks will see a lot of meetings, mainly on the level of work



Fireworks go off over Paris' Republique Plaza, after forecasts for the second round of legislative elections began coming in Sunday evening.

Christophe Ena/AP

France rejects Le Pen's far right. But can Macron govern without the far left?

Sefy Hendler

PARIS – Many people in France will wake up on Monday morning with the feeling that the worst thing of all, the country's first right-wing nationalist govern-

ment in roughly 80 years, didn't happen.

That is thanks to what the French call the "republican dam" (barrage republicain). And on Sunday, even in the

face of the very powerful wave predicted by pollsters and pundits, it didn't collapse.

What the "dam" means is a joint effort by all the other political parties to block Marine Le Pen's far right at any cost. And in fact, based on exit polls, the National

Rally – the shiny new incarnation of the old National Front led by Jean-Marie Le Pen – didn't manage to win a majority in the National Assembly.

The younger Le Pen, according to the exit polls, was halted at 150 seats and maybe even less, far below

the absolute majority (289 seats) that some polls were still predicting a week ago.

The other side of this surprise was the victory by the New Popular Front, a coalition of leftist parties, which finished first in the voting

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PM aiding fundamentalists in bid for war, settlements

Anshel Pfeffer

Over the last nine months, you may have understood from reading this newspaper that Israel is undergoing the most tragic period in its history, with heavy casualties, 120 hostages still in Gaza and tens of thousands of civilians forced to leave

their homes on the borders around Gaza and the north. And you wouldn't be wrong. But not all Israelis feel the same way.

There are Israelis like National Missions Minister Orit Strock, who feel like "we're living in a miraculous

time." Strock was speaking to a group of settlers in Givat Hanan, an outpost in the South Hebron Hills, and was referring to the ease with which she and her fellow far-right ministers can now authorize and fund more settlement building in the area due to a combination of their control of key government roles and the focus on events elsewhere (the wars

in Gaza and the northern border). This has enabled not just new construction, but the displacement of local rural Palestinian communities.

Last week, Strock's Religious Zionism party boss, Bezalel Smotrich, spoke with concern on how he wouldn't be surprised if Hamas chief Yahya Sinwar responds positively to the hostage deal and tries to

save himself.

Smotrich opposes the growing consensus in the defense establishment in favor of a cease-fire agreement. Two weeks earlier, at a Jerusalem Day event in the capital, he called not only for continuing the war in Gaza "with all strength," but embarking on a wider war in Lebanon against Hezbollah. He did nothing to hide his

excitement at the prospect.

Meanwhile, he's using his powers both as finance minister and as minister in the Defense Ministry to try to fulfill his "decisive plan," published back in 2017, to topple the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank. He hopes to provoke a Palestinian uprising, which

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Netanyahu, left, with Ben-Gvir. Noam Moskowitz / Knesset Spokesperson

Hamas attacked 7 Gazans in Israel October 7. Their fates are unknown



Hamas terrorists next to the Gazans' car on Oct. 7.

Clause 27 of the Copyright Law

Bar Peleg

A gray van stands under the overpass, an unmoving figure in the driver's seat. The passenger door is half-open, but no one is getting in or out.

All around, the terror is at its height, the video shows. Here there was an execution, there a body was thrown out of a black car on the road. The video, around 90 seconds long, is from the

morning of October 7.

But the gray van isn't the focus, and the people inside it seem to have remained in the background ever since. Their fate has been unknown for months.

There are more questions than answers about what happened to them. We know the car's owner is Sammi El-gargawi, 52, a professional van driver from the Bedouin village of Wadi al-Na'am in the Western Negev. That

morning, he was transporting seven Gazans, all from Beit Lahia.

The Gazans had permits to enter Israel, where they worked in fields in the south, and were en route to work when the sirens sounded and the rocket launches and the shooting began. When it was last seen moving, the van was heading east toward Rahat. But it never made it through the Sha'ar Haneguv Junction, one of the bloodi-

est intersections on that day.

An army investigation concluded that five of the seven were murdered, as was the Israeli driver, according to an army source. The other two apparently returned to the Gaza Strip with the terrorists, he added.

Thirty-three people, including 10 members of the security forces, didn't leave that intersection alive, according to research by Yuval Harpaz and Sagi Or, who mapped the massacre. The battle lasted around three hours, and at the end, the bodies of nine terrorists were found. Last month, another body was found that hasn't yet been identified, but the army thinks it is probably a 10th terrorist.

But the seven laborers weren't included in the original count, or in a later one. It's as if they were never there.

Without the video and other information uncovered later, one might reasonably believe that they weren't. After all, they didn't wind up in the Shin Bet security service's interrogation rooms after the massacre, and according to security sources, they weren't involved in clashes with police or soldiers. Yet

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Opposition bloc poised for majority if elections held now

Revealed by satellite photos
Iran expanding missile production, sources say



Planet Labs PBC / Reuters

haaretz.com

Finnish system also used by U.S. Marines, Ukraine

Shin Bet bought anti-drone system from abroad for PM's security

Oded Yaron

The Shin Bet purchased a Finnish-made anti-drone defense system to protect Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to a report in the Helsingin Sanomat newspaper. It claims that the Israeli Defense Ministry, on behalf of the Prime Minister's Office, ordered the Airfence system produced by Finnish company Sensofusion. The information was accessed in response to a freedom-of-information request from the Finnish Defense Ministry.

The Airfence system uses radio frequency sensors to identify the location of a drone and its operator, and can electronically intercept it – either bringing it down or taking control of the drone itself. The system is equipped with a continually updating database of the main commercially-made drones, and provides 10 square kilometers of coverage. It can also be combined with other radar and optic sensor systems to identify drones that may have eluded the system's passive sensors.

The system was approved for use by a leading techno-

logical agency of the U.S. Defense Department and has been sold to the Marine Corps. It was also part of an American Federal Aviation Administration project to protect airports from drones, and is being actively used in Ukraine against the invading Russian forces.

According to the Finnish paper, the export license to Israel was only issued in January of this year, but the system has been in use in Israel for several years. In was featured in a Channel 12 report on the police preparations for the 2019 Eurovision Song Contest held in Israel, though was unnamed in the segment. The Airfence interface was, however, visible on the screens in the police control room featured in the segment. Sensofusion CEO Tuomas Rasila declined to confirm the sales to Israel. In a conversation with Haaretz that he began with a Hebrew greeting of "Erev Tov" (Rasila is studying Hebrew with a tutor in Helsinki), Rasila said, "In the beginning, we built drones. We believed that in the future it would be very easy to develop AI-based anti-tank drones at a cost of less than \$2,000 apiece." With the cur-

rent intensive use of drones in Ukraine, their prediction seems to have been spot on, but at the time, no one believed it was possible, so the company decided to move to the defensive side.

Many Israeli companies are developing similar systems, such as Elbit's Red Sky air defense system, which was recently reported to have been installed on the roof of the Swedish parliament. So why did Israel decide to purchase a Finnish system? "It's blue-and-white (the colors of the Finnish flag)," Rasila chuckled in Hebrew with a smile.

The Prime Minister's Office, the Shin Bet and the Israel Police declined to answer questions from Haaretz on whether the purchases were made via a tender and whether Israeli solutions were also considered. A 2021 State Comptroller report on the country's preparedness for drone threats provides the answer.

"In 2017, the Shin Bet wrote an operational request for a response to the drone threat... and conducted a systems test in which nine companies (seven Israeli

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