

# Trump is the only one who can keep PM from leading Israel into disaster in Gaza

Amos Harel

Israel is about to embark on a major expansion of ground warfare in Gaza City. Despite overwhelming opposition from the defense establishment, led by IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is determined to move forward with the operation and occupy more of the Gaza Strip very soon.

Netanyahu and his right-wing messianic coalition may well be dragging the country into another disaster involving a diplomatic and security entanglement that will be hard to exit this time around. The one man who can stop this is U.S. President Donald Trump. At the moment, however, he has shown only limited interest in what's happening, and has not taken any steps that could extricate Israel from the mess it has gotten into. And there isn't much time left for him to come to the rescue.

This marks the third straight time the prime minister has insisted on acting against the professional recommendations of the defense establishment – Zamir, Mossad head David Barnea and, to a lesser extent, the acting Shin Bet security service head S. (Netanyahu renewed his efforts last week to appoint David Zini as permanent head of the service).

The defense leadership supported the deliberations that took place at the end of August about resuming negotiations on a hostage



Prime Minister Netanyahu and U.S. Secretary of State Rubio at the Western Wall in Jerusalem on Thursday. (See story, Page 3.)

Nathan Howard/AP

deal instead of widening the war effort. A majority also opposed the timing of the extraordinary attack on Qatar last week, in which Israel failed to assassinate Hamas' foreign leadership as it was meeting to discuss the hostage talks. Mean-

while, back in March, Netanyahu blew up the hostage deal that had been reached two months earlier, just before Trump's inauguration, and resumed the war rather than negotiating terms for the agreement's next stage. Over the weekend, coal-

ition faction heads met to discuss plans to continue the Gaza operations. This is a narrower forum than the security cabinet, the authorized body for making the most significant decisions, and several ministers who do not lead factions par-

ticipate in it due to their positions. The most recent discussion, like earlier ones, highlighted the close alliance between the prime minister and his extreme right partners – National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Finance

Minister Bezalel Smotrich. Defense Minister Israel Katz echoes Netanyahu's messages, but his opinion is not believed to carry any weight.

Arye Dery, the Shas party leader, didn't come to the meeting this time. The only

minister in the forum who has consistently warned in recent weeks about the consequences of an expanded war is Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar. He has pointed out Israel's growing international isolation and the dangers of exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza in light of Israel's attempt to push some 1 million Palestinian residents from Gaza City and its surroundings southward, to refugee camps in the center of the Strip and to the Muwasi area. The army estimates that only a quarter of the residents have fled to date. Conditions in the humanitarian zones in the south are becoming even more difficult given the population density and the lack of minimal humanitarian solutions.

Along with Sa'ar, Zamir is the most prominent voice against expanding the war. The chief of staff seems concerned that once troops enter deep into built-up areas, it will be very difficult to end the operation quickly. The army will be dragged into clashes with guerrilla squads deployed by Hamas that are hiding underground in tunnels and among the rubble.

The plan is to deploy tens of thousands of soldiers in Gaza, most of them from regular units. Zamir proposes returning to negotiations, which would enable in the first stage the release of at least 10 live hostages and about half of the bodies of those dead. It would also leave open two months for

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## Some 10,700 disabled vets of Gaza war suffering from trauma

Ran Shimoni

Around 20,000 veterans injured in the Gaza war are being treated by the Defense Ministry's Rehabilitation Division, with 55 percent – roughly 10,700 – struggling with mental health issues, the ministry announced Sunday.

Twenty percent of those with mental health issues were also physically wounded, while 45 percent of the veterans registered with the division are dealing only with physical injuries. The ministry said that 64 percent of the patients are reservists and 92 percent are male.

The division estimates that by 2028, it will treat 100,000 injured veterans, including 50,000 with mental health injuries. A year ago, the department had estimated it would reach the 100,000 mark in 2030; the prolonged nature of the war has advanced the forecast.

A total of about 81,700 people are treated by the Rehabilitation Division, including 31,000 with mental health conditions and post-traumatic stress disorder.

The ministry said that each month, an average of 1,000 veterans from the current war are being admitted to the division, with another 600 seeking recognition for injuries from previous wars.

The division warned that a staff shortage could make it difficult to treat the injured. Every rehabilitation social worker has a case load of 750 patients, it stated, adding that bureaucracy makes

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An event on Mt. Ebal in 2023.

Hadas Parush

## Education Ministry to fully fund W. Bank school trips

Noa Limone

The Education Ministry has informed principals that school trips based on the theme of Jewish identity that take place in the West Bank will be fully funded by the ministry, even if the costs exceed the budget allocated for their school, says a letter received by principals in the Haifa district.

"You should note that this funding applies only to programs that include a focus on the Binyamin area or on Judea and Samaria. We will not deal with requests for assistance in trips to other areas," the letter states.

The document explains the budgetary guidelines for

a ministry program called "Tours on the Bible Trails," which constitutes part of a Jewish identity reform program initiated by Education Minister Yoav Kisch. This program is part of a database of external programs and resources (the Gefen system) that have been ap-

proved and budgeted by the ministry. Principals are allowed to select programs from this database and arrange related activities for students.

The "Tours on the Bible Trails" program also includes excursions to other areas in the country, but

those will only be partly funded by the ministry.

According to the ministry, only the West Bank trips will be fully funded by the ministry to cover increased security-related expenses due to the region's risks dangers. This is to allow such excursions an equal

opportunity of being chosen by school staff for their students.

The Education Ministry responded to Haaretz that the "Tours on the Bible Trails" program is meant to bring students closer to Bible stories and to their heritage. Excursions are held in different regions across the

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### 'Look, it's the Oscar winner'

## IDF raids Masafer Yatta home of 'No Other Land' co-director

Nirit Anderman

Soldiers on Saturday raided the West Bank home of Palestinian filmmaker Basel Adra, co-director of the Oscar-winning documentary "No Other Land."

According to a post on X by journalist and co-director Yuval Abraham, the raid occurred after settlers attacked Palestinians in the village of al-Tuwani in Masafer Yatta, in the southern Hebron Hills in the West Bank.

"I'm very worried they will detain Basel, because detention centers in Israel have, in recent years, become places of torture – it's truly horrifying," Abraham told Haaretz.

"The IDF, and the settlers too, want to take revenge on Basel for exposing the story of Masafer Yatta to the world through the film. But it's not just him; they want to punish all activists and suppress Palestinian resistance to the occupation," he added.

Abraham said that on Saturday afternoon, settlers entered the lands of al-Tuwani and attacked several Palestinians, including Adra's brother. Basel Adra managed to document the incident before taking his

brother to the hospital.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces arrived on the scene, raided the family home, and conducted a search. "Some of the settlers who came were masked; one was carrying a club, and they were very aggressive. This is a recurring pattern – settlers attack a [Palestinian] village, and then the army comes and acts against the residents who were attacked," he added.

Abraham said that the settlers targeted Basel specifically, saying, "Look, it's the Oscar winner," but stressed that such attacks have become routine across much of the West Bank.

"They want to hurt Basel and the activists in Masafer Yatta because there is resistance that threatens them and exposes the ugly reality of occupation and displacement there. But this is happening throughout the West Bank. Basel's community gets more attention because they managed to tell their story, but it's happening to so many Palestinians in so many places," Abraham said.

In response to the incident, the IDF said: "On Saturday, we received a report

of several terrorists throwing stones at Israeli civilians near al-Tuwani in the Judea Division. Two Israeli civilians were injured and evacuated for medical treatment. Security forces immediately went to the scene and are currently searching the area and questioning suspects."

This is the third time in recent months that activists involved in the film have been harmed in clashes with settlers or Israeli forces.

In March, shortly after "No Other Land" won an Oscar award for Best Documentary Film, co-director Hamdan Ballal was attacked in clashes with settlers in the Palestinian village of Susya. Reports at the time said that after he was wounded, soldiers delayed the ambulance evacuating him and arrested him. Hundreds of international filmmakers signed a petition condemning the incident, and the American Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences also issued a condemnation.

In July, Palestinian activist Awdah Hathaleen, who was interviewed in the film, was shot dead in the

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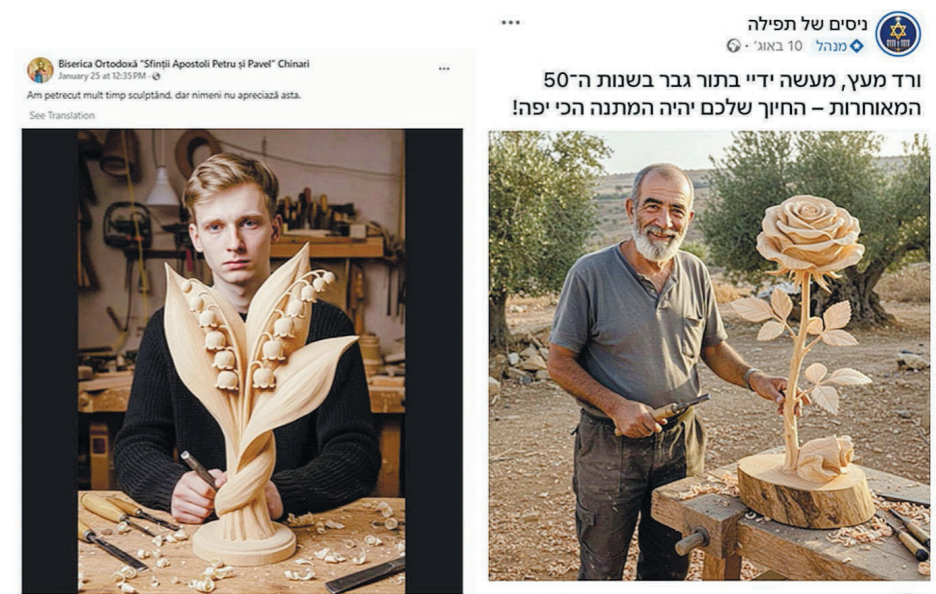
## Pro-Russian AI disinformation campaign preps for Israeli election

Omer Benjakob

"Welcome to *Mothers Cook Together!* The tastiest, warmest Facebook group there is 🍷," read the description of the seemingly innocent Facebook group. "Here mothers (and also grandmothers, sisters, aunts...) share recipes, kitchen tips, photos of their successes (or their failures 😊)..." As of Saturday, the group had 13,000 members – not bad, considering it was created just a few months ago.

It's likely that its members – most of them real Israeli women – were likely looking for a different, popular group by the exact same name that was founded in 2014 and has more than 850,000 members. But by Sunday morning, after Haaretz reached out to Meta, Facebook had removed the group.

The fake group is one of a larger network of bogus profiles and pages set up as part of a foreign influence operation that has been active on Israeli social media for several months and threatens to sow chaos and disrupt the election scheduled for November 2026. At this stage, the operation is still in its initial stages – focused on drawing in Israeli



Floral wood carvings are a common motif in both the Romanian and Hebrew-language groups.

followers, partly through content generated by artificial intelligence – laying the infrastructure needed to disrupt elections in the future.

The campaign seems almost identical to another social media campaign that wreaked havoc last year in Romania and disrupted that country's election – until the court annulled the results in case that underscored how so-called FIMI, or Foreign

Information Manipulation and Interference campaigns on social media can have devastating real-world effects.

As part of the current campaign, being exposed here for the first time, a small group of fake users opened a number of Facebook pages and groups over recent months – digital bait meant to lure in Israeli users, especially those with traditional or conservative views.

Pages such as "A Blessing a Day" and "Psalms – A Daily Chapter" quickly accumulated thousands of members, while groups impersonating existing, popular groups like Mothers Cook Together ensnared tens of thousands.

The pages and groups do not just entice followers to follow their content; they also form a pipeline which pushes Israelis to join WhatsApp

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