



Trump, next to Netanyahu, on Iran: 'We'll knock the hell out of them'

Ben Samuels

U.S. President Donald Trump, speaking alongside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu ahead of a meeting at Mar-a-Lago on Monday, said he hopes the second phase of the cease-fire in Gaza will happen "quickly."

During a Q&A with the press pool preceding the two leaders' bilateral meeting, Trump said he would back military action if Iran continued building up its missile and nuclear capabilities.

"I hear Iran is trying to build up again, and if they are, we're going to have to knock them down," Trump said. "We'll knock them down. We'll knock the hell out of them. But hopefully that's not happening."

Trump added: "If they want to make a deal, that's much smarter. They could have made a deal the last time, before we went through a big attack on them, and they chose not to. They wish they had made that deal. So I think, again, they should make a deal. They want to make a deal. But sometimes that doesn't happen."

On Gaza, Trump said there "has to be a disarmament of Hamas," placing the onus on the group to do so before further steps in the cease-fire can be implemented.

On possible Turkish involvement in postwar Gaza, Trump said, "We're going to be talking about that. Turkey has been great," adding that he has "a great relationship" with



U.S. President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu having a luncheon at Mar-a-Lago in Palm Beach, Florida, on Monday.

Jim Watson/AFP

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

On Syria, Trump said he hopes Netanyahu is "going to get along" with the neighboring country, adding that Syrian President Ahmad al-Sharaa is "working very hard to do a good job."

"I know he's a tough cookie, and you're not going to get a choir boy to lead Syria," Trump said. "I hope they're going to get along."

Asked whether Netanyahu should be pardoned in his criminal trial, the U.S. president said Netanyahu

has done "a phenomenal job" as a wartime prime minister, adding that Israel "would not exist" without him.

The president added that he had spoken to Israeli President Isaac Herzog, who told him the pardon is "on its way." Herzog re-

sponded soon after denying any conversation had been held between the two.

The visit comes as U.S. officials prepare to unveil both a Trump-chaired Board of Peace, meant to complement an international stabilization force and a Palestinian techno-

cratic government. However, Israel's reluctance to move ahead with the Gaza deal's next phase has emerged as a significant obstacle to Trump's plans.

Despite this, and amid growing friction between

See TRUMP, Page 2

Court hears bids to curb scope of Oct. 7 probe of Comptroller

Chen Maanit and Noa Shpigiel

The High Court of Justice heard on Monday petitions to prevent State Comptroller Matanyahu Engelman's office from probing "core issues" related to the failures of October 7.

The petitioners claim that the comptroller's reporting would compromise the work of a future commission of inquiry investigating the failures and that it was violating the rights of those being probed. The Military Advocate General's office and the Movement for Quality Government filed the petition in June 2024.

The topics they say should be beyond the mandate of the Comptroller include the work of the security cabinet, intelligence activity, border defense with the Gaza Strip, the economic war on terror and events on the night before and on the day of the massacre.

The State Comptroller's office countered that the comptroller is doing his job according to the law and in line with the authority of defense officials.

The justices hearing the case are Daphne Barak-Erez, David Mintz and Alex Stein.

In parallel, a Knesset committee has been holding a hearing to advance a politicized committee of inquiry into the October 7 massacre.

Attorney Avigdor Klagsbald, representing the Military Advocate General's office, cited three flaws with the comptroller's work: "the comptroller's lack of authority to investigate the core issues, interfering with the investigation in the commission of inquiry and curtail-

ing the rights of those being investigated." He said the main fear was that testifying to the comptroller would compromise their future testimony to a commission of inquiry. "They [those testifying] will be exposed to information that contradicts their personal knowledge, like testimonies of others," he said. "A commission of inquiry is the proper means to investigate such a great disaster and not the state comptroller."

Klagsbald argued that the state comptroller is not authorized to deal with matters of policy or strategy that led to security failures,

The godfather's offer

Editorial, Page 5

or to criticize security cabinet decisions. He cited the comptroller's review of the policy to transfer funds to Hamas and said, "It's clear that such a matter is not for the state comptroller, according to the law." The petition reflects the position of former senior Israel Defense Force officials, among them former IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi, who believe the state comptroller targeted them to pass the buck of responsibility from the political leaders to them.

Representing the office of the attorney general, Yonatan Berman accused the state comptroller of turning criticism into an investigation. "The criticism expanded into a de facto investigation, including

See COURT, Page 2



Police cars in Tarabin al-Sana.

Eliahu Hershkovitz

Hundreds of police raid Negev Bedouin village

Eden Solomon

Hundreds of Israel Police officers raided a Bedouin village near the southern city of Be'er Sheva on Monday, firing flares, breaking windows in homes, and throwing stun grenades inside, residents said.

Police said the operation in the village of Tarabin al-Sana was part of "compre-

hensive activity to strengthen governance," and was carried out in response to "acts of revenge by criminals over the weekend."

The Israeli military said it had raised the level of alert on its bases in the south of Israel due to "operational considerations."

Police said 16 people were arrested, and 19 were barred from southern Isra-

el. Police also said officers found military weapons and combat equipment during the raid. According to police, residents disrupted police activity, who used protest dispersal means against them.

Police also searched "criminal compounds" and fenced off the entire village with concrete blocks to ensure the security of "nor-

mal" residents of the south.

Clashes in the village began on Friday, when police patrol cars entered the village in search of a stolen horse, quickly flooding the streets with clouds of pepper spray and tear gas.

On Saturday, masked assailants broke into two communities in southern Israel and vandalized vehicles. Dozens of police officers

raided Tarabin al-Sana in response and arrested six suspects. Police suspect the break-ins were carried out in retaliation for the police's activity on Friday.

On Sunday, police fired tear gas into a local mosque during evening prayers and fired rubber-coated bullets.

Fathi Tarabin, a resident of Tarabin al-Sana and local business owner, told Haaretz

that residents should not be punished for their reaction to what he called "incitement" against the village.

"You cannot punish a person for their reaction," he said, noting that "people threw stones and set up roadblocks after they were hit with tear gas – it all started with the police."

See BEDOUIN, Page 4

Shattered souls

Three soldiers, scarred from the war, are now battling the system

Tom Levinson

They are three people from different parts of Israeli society and different ages. They've never met each other; they haven't even heard of each other. But in many senses they know each other, even better than they realize.

It's as if their experiences since October 7 are intertwined – what they saw and what they are still living to this day, expressed in acute post-traumatic stress disorder. They told Haaretz about the events that have left them with scars that aren't healing, repeated flare-ups and a struggle for recognition against an unflagging adversary: the state that sent them into battle.

Tomer Badani, 48, from Hod Hasharon, a reservist in the unit for identifying bodies

The entrance to the Badani family's home in Tel Aviv suburb Hod Hasharon has an unusual feature: a traffic light. When it's green, the children know that their dad is okay and they can speak with him. When it's red, it's better to keep away and give him time to deal with his thoughts and pain.

"That was my psychia-

trist's idea, because my condition isn't typical," Tomer Badani says. "Usually people with PTSD have a few triggers; I have thousands. For me nearly everything is a trigger – cleaning products, trash bags, alcohol wipes, the smell of meat, fire, the noise of a helicopter, disposal gloves – even certain words can make me collapse, lose it."

Until that morning when Hamas terrorists burst through the border fence, Badani was an ordinary person, even a successful person – a manager of projects and infrastructure for a family construction firm, a lecturer at Ariel University in the West Bank, a social entrepreneur, a father of three.

"I wasn't suffering from anything," he says. Badani didn't have to report for reserve duty – he had received an exemption two years earlier, but he felt he couldn't just sit and do nothing. "I volunteered to be a driver in the munitions transport unit," he says. "But I got bored."

Two weeks later a proposal came: "There's an especially difficult assignment – are you sure you want it?" He didn't hesitate and reported to the unit for identifying

bodies. At first, he served as a driver, but he saw and did everything. After two or three months he was officially certified as an identifier of bodies.

"Every day I encountered the next day's names released for publication," he says. "We would clean the bodies, try to identify them, wrap them and send them to the Shura base," the Military Rabbinate's base in central Israel assigned for the identification of the dead. But the reality wasn't as sterile as this description sounds. "You don't see a person who has died with his eyes open, like you do in the movies. You see body parts, things that aren't ordinary," Badani says.

"At a high temperature the flesh and bones stick to the iron of the tanks, of the armored vehicles. I had to separate a body from iron and hold a soldier's liver in my hands. Some bodies arrived in bags, in pieces. There were bodies that arrived scorched, that couldn't be identified. Sometimes we'd drive to an intersection in the south where they were giving out food so we could see living soldiers."

See SOLDIERS, Page 7

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Mikveh filled with ash from Roman destruction found in Jerusalem

Ruth Schuster

Right by two of the main entrances to the Second Temple that the Romans looted and destroyed in 70 C.E. was a large mikveh that likely served locals and the many pilgrims to Jerusalem, the Israel Antiquities Authority revealed on a rainy Monday morning.

The rectangular ritual bath unearthed in excavations beneath the Western Wall Plaza had been carved out of the Jerusalem bedrock. It is usual for these baths to be hewn out of rock.

Four steps lead down into the pool, which was 1.85 meters or six feet deep (it wouldn't have been filled to the top), 3.05 meters in length and 1.35 meters in width, report the archaeologists with the IAA and the Western Wall Heritage Foundation. As was the custom, its walls were plastered.

How the bath would be filled isn't clear, excavation director Ari Levy says – presumably through a water channel, not merely trusting in seasonal rain or the ability to lug jars, but the excavation hasn't found it. Being in an arid environmental zone, ancient Jerusalem had elaborate systems, including a dam from about 2,800 years ago, to



The mikveh beneath the Western Wall Plaza in Jerusalem.

Ari Levy / Israel Antiquities Authority

store and channel water.

The bath structure dates to the Second Temple period, the archaeologists could confirm: It lay sealed beneath the Second Temple period destruction layer. Also, it was full of debris, ash and broken household items from the terrible destruction of the city and Temple in the year 70, following the Jewish rebellion that began in 66 C.E. "Buildings and streets were collapsing and burning down in the fighting," Levy recreates the

horrors of the time.

Among the shattered vessels bedded in ash in the bath were many made of stone, a hallmark of Jewish life in the Second Temple period. Stone kitchenware was believed to be impervious to contamination, whereas if a ceramic item was exposed to foulness, it had to be thrown out. The archaeologists also found also ceramic vessels as well as precious glass, as expected, says Levy. The archaeologists also found some coins.

The stoneware trend began in about 40 B.C.E. and vanished after the Bar Kochba revolt that ended in 135 C.E., with the Jewry largely scattered around the Diaspora, according to research by archaeologist Shimon Gibson. Jewish households before exile would reasonably possess both stone and pottery kitchenware, archaeologists have found over time; each had its advantages.

See MIKVEH, Page 2