



Israeli aid sent to the Druze community in Sweida, Southern Syria | Source: Abu Ali Express on telegram, <https://t.me/abualiexpress>

Overview

- A statement from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office indicated that Israel is attempting to leverage Hezbollah's weakened state to strengthen moderate factions within Lebanon. **The goal is to marginalize Hezbollah and its ally, Amal, while working toward normalization with Lebanon**
- **UK Minister of State for Security Dan Jarvis revealed that over the past three years, Britain has thwarted 20 Iranian assassination attempts targeting British citizens and residents.**
- During a meeting with the Irish Prime Minister on Wednesday, Trump responded to a journalist's question about Gaza, stating, **"Nobody is being expelled from Gaza."** This declaration was welcomed by Egypt and several Arab countries.
- In a recent interview with Yonit Levi of Channel 12, former Shin Bet chief Nadav Argaman expressed serious concerns about Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's conduct and the state of Israeli democracy. **Argaman indicated that he possesses sensitive information from his tenure that could implicate the prime minister.**
- Meanwhile, a historic visit took place on Friday when **over 100 Druze religious leaders from the Syrian-controlled Golan Heights—mainly from the village of Hader—traveled to Israel for the first time since 1974.** The delegation met with Israeli Druze leadership and visited the shrine of Nabi Shu'ayb.

ISRAEL AT WAR

WEEK 75

0

Total Israeli casualties This Week

0

Total Civilians killed this week

0

Total IDF Casualties this week

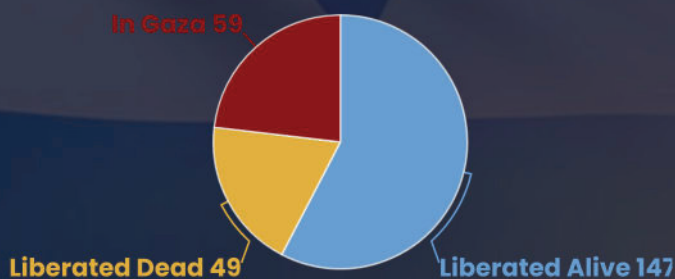
MAIN EVENTS

Escalation in Judea and Samaria – A shooting attack near Ariel, Hamas incitement during Ramadan, and counterterror operations with over 100 arrests and terrorist eliminations.

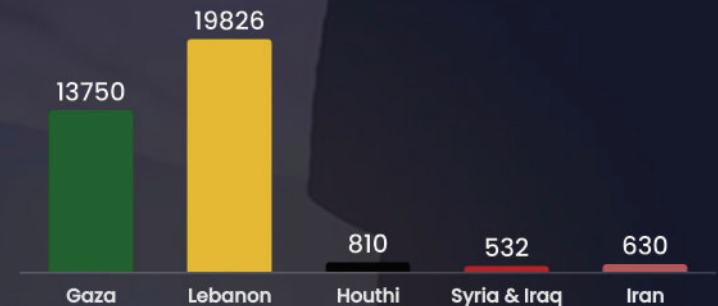
On March 15, 2025, the U.S. launched air and naval strikes on Iran-backed Houthi targets in Yemen, killing at least 31 and warning Iran to halt its support.

Hostage Release Talks and Ceasefire – Hamas agreed to release hostages in exchange for a 50-day ceasefire while demanding a comprehensive agreement without extending the first phase.

HOSTAGES IN GAZA 59/255



ATTACKS ON ISRAEL & ALLIES 35,548



Judea & Samaria + Israel Front

0 / 90
This Week Since Oct.7
0 Civilians and 0 security force fell.

9,200
Since Oct.7
Palestinian Terror Attacks since Oct.7
6,800 Palestinians Arrested

Gaza Front

0 / 1,641
This Week Since Oct.7
0 IDF soldiers fell in battle. 0 hostage were returned dead.

23,500
Since Oct.7
Hamas terrorists killed. Over 250 Senior officials killed since Oct.7

Lebanon Front

0 / 132
This Week Since Oct.7
0 civilian and 0 IDF soldiers fell.

+3,500
Since Oct.7
Hizbollah terrorists killed, 154 Hezbollah Leadership killed.

Greater Middle East Front

0 / 2
This Week Since Oct.7
0 Civilian killed this week.

+1,972
Since Oct.7
Attacks on Israel. +810 from Yemen, 532 from Iran, +630 from other

Gaza

Hostage Deal

- Hamas has released a new video featuring hostage Matan Angrest, who was kidnapped from the Nahal Oz military post on October 7. In the video, Angrest is forced to make statements against the Israeli government, claiming that the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) will not be able to rescue the hostages through military action. This release is seen as a psychological warfare tactic by Hamas, aimed at increasing pressure on Israel ahead of renewed negotiations for a second phase of a hostage deal and a possible end to the war.
- The Israeli government has decided to stop supplying electricity to Gaza and is considering halting water transfers as a means of pressuring Hamas to accept the proposed hostage deal. The IDF, meanwhile, is preparing for a renewed military campaign and the possibility of maintaining a long-term presence in Gaza if fighting resumes.
- A Hamas spokesperson has publicly stated that the group is willing to accept the Egyptian proposal for a technocratic government to administer Gaza. Reports indicate that discussions with U.S. negotiator Adam Bohler have focused on ending the war, with Arab media sources suggesting that the goal is to reach a 10-year ceasefire that would include Judea and Samaria. Hamas has also signaled potential willingness to relinquish its long-range weapons.
- In the coming days, it will become clear whether Israel and Hamas will return to fighting or proceed with negotiations for a second-phase deal. We are also likely to learn, which posture of the Trump Administration is authentic - President Donald Trump's earlier threats to Hamas of "hell to pay," or the more recent direct negotiations with Hamas behind Israel's back orchestrated by Trump's Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, Adam Bohler..
- If Israel agrees to a second-phase deal under the current conditions, the war will end without achieving its stated objectives, including the removal of Hamas from power in Gaza. Israeli officials argue that they must resist any external pressure to accept terms that do not align with Israel's strategic interests.
- Hamas suffered a significant blow to its propaganda network **Hamas-affiliated media channels reported that, based on a joint European-American decision, the Al-Aqsa TV channel will be banned from all global satellite broadcasting services. Any satellite provider that airs Al-Aqsa TV will face financial penalties and legal action under charges of "sponsoring terrorism."**

Hamas' Position in Negotiations

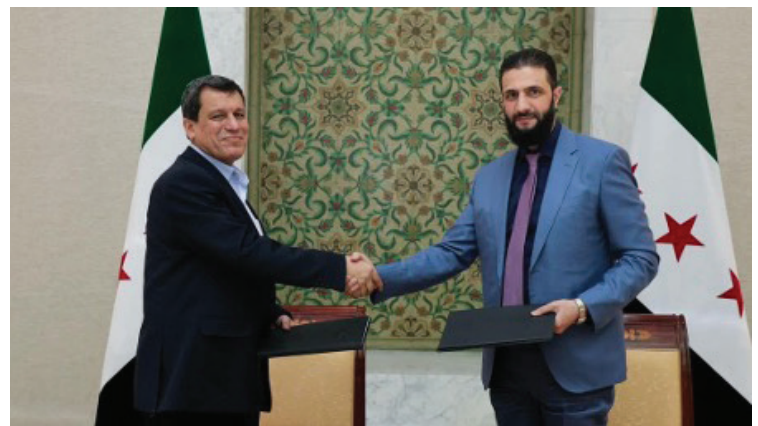
Hamas senior official Taher al-Nunu confirmed that multiple meetings were held in Doha focusing on the potential release of an American hostage. According to al-Nunu, Hamas engaged positively in discussions, aiming to serve "the interests of the Palestinian people."

Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem stated that the group had conveyed to mediators its opposition to extending the initial ceasefire phase. He emphasized that negotiations are currently underway to begin a second phase of the agreement, which should include three conditions: prisoner exchanges, a complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and a commitment from Israel not to resume hostilities. Hamas has proposed a new framework for prisoner swaps, calling on Israel to demonstrate "seriousness" in progressing to the next phase of the deal.

- **A Hamas delegation led by Shura Council head Mohammad Ismail Darwish met with Egyptian General Intelligence Director Hassan Rashad to discuss ceasefire terms and Gaza reconstruction.**

- **Reports indicate that Hamas has demanded a long-term ceasefire without committing to disarmament, arguing that this issue should be part of broader diplomatic efforts for Palestinian statehood.**

- **One proposal currently being considered involves the release of ten living Israeli hostages in exchange for a 60-day ceasefire, during which large quantities of humanitarian aid would be allowed into Gaza, along with the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails.**



Signing of the agreement between Abu Mohammad al-Jolani, Syrian President and Mazloum Abdi of the SDF | Source: General Command News Ahmed Al-Sharaa | Al-Julani on Telegram, https://t.me/syriaaa_2025

Hamas has formally agreed to a U.S. proposal to release captive soldier Edan Alexander, an American citizen, along with four deceased hostages who held dual citizenship. The terror organization confirmed its “absolute willingness to begin negotiations and reach an agreement on Phase Two.”

U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff, along with mediators, proposed a framework involving the release of three to five live hostages, as well as several deceased hostages, in exchange for a 50-day ceasefire.

Adam Bohler’s Withdrawal as Hostage Affairs Envoy

Adam Bohler, who was nominated by President Trump to be the Special Presidential Envoy for Hostage Affairs, withdrew his name from consideration, following his controversial direct negotiations with Hamas, although he explained that the move was designed to avoid his having to divest from his investment company

The unprecedented direct talks with Hamas, aimed at securing the release of American-Israeli dual national Edan Alexander, marked a departure from longstanding U.S. policy against engaging with designated terrorist organizations. Bohler’s interactions with Hamas, conducted in Doha, Qatar, faced criticism from Israeli officials and some U.S. lawmakers. He has given a series of interviews in Israeli and American media and has toned down the rhetoric about Hamas suggesting that in negotiations one has to find the “humanity” in everyone and that Hamas people he met could be nice guys. He also created a distinction between American and Israeli interest with regard to the release of the hostages that have an American citizenship saying that the US is not an agent of Israel. This sounded like a dog whistle to the Anti-Israel American right that often use antisemitic tropes to describe the American government as controlled by Israel.



Joint Naval exercise of Russia, Iran and China| Source: Tasnim news agency on telegram, <https://t.me/Tasnimnews>

Operational

- The IDF conducted two airstrikes in Gaza—one in the Sajaiya neighborhood and another near the Nuseirat refugee camp—resulting in the deaths of five militants. Later that evening, an attempted smuggling operation from the Negev to Rafah via drone was intercepted. On Tuesday, Israeli forces struck a group of militants in central Gaza, followed by a targeted strike in the south against an operative engaged in surveillance and intelligence gathering on IDF movements. On Friday afternoon, an additional airstrike was carried out against suspects in central Gaza who were reportedly planting explosive devices.
- Currently, IDF operations in Gaza remain within the scope of routine security measures rather than a full-scale resumption of hostilities. Any decision to escalate military actions depends on directives from Israel’s political leadership and backing from the U.S. administration.
- Palestinian terror group sources told Saudi newspaper *Asharq Al-Awsat* that Israel has recently intensified its intelligence operations in Gaza in an “unusual” manner. The sources claimed that Israel has been deploying drones equipped with new surveillance technology, even over densely populated areas.
- According to these reports, Israel is using this intelligence-gathering effort to update its target bank in preparation for a potential resumption of hostilities if negotiations in Doha fail.

Trump’s Gaza Plan Comments

During a meeting with the Irish Prime Minister on Wednesday, Trump responded to a journalist’s question about Gaza, stating, “Nobody is being expelled from Gaza.” This declaration was welcomed by Egypt and several Arab countries, which interpreted it as a commitment against the forced displacement of the Palestinian population. Hamas and Fatah also praised Trump’s remarks.

The Egyptian Foreign Ministry expressed appreciation for Trump’s statement, saying that it “reflects an understanding of the importance of avoiding a worsening humanitarian crisis in Gaza” and that “the President’s initiative to end international conflicts and establish peace, including in the Middle East, could provide a practical framework for future diplomatic efforts.”

However, behind the scenes, there are conflicting signals as **U.S. and Israeli officials reportedly approached diplomats from African nations—including Somalia, Sudan, and the autonomous region of Somaliland—to discuss the possibility of relocating Palestinians from Gaza to their**

territories.

Domestic Israel

Tensions between the Prime Minister and the Shin Bet

- In a recent interview with Yonit Levi of Channel 12, former Shin Bet chief Nadav Argaman expressed serious concerns about Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's conduct and the state of Israeli democracy. Argaman indicated that he possesses sensitive information from his tenure that could implicate the prime minister. He stated that while he currently withholds this information to maintain the integrity of the relationship between the Shin Bet chief and the prime minister, he will disclose it if Netanyahu acts unlawfully.
- Argaman also criticized Netanyahu's leadership, accusing him of deliberately causing societal divisions to maintain power. He called for the current government's resignation and the formation of a broad-based coalition to uphold democratic principles. Argaman expressed concern over the potential appointment of a politically motivated successor to current chief Ronen Bar. He emphasized that the government responsible for failures, particularly referencing events like those on October 7, should not appoint the next Shin Bet head.
- Argaman echoed the dovish talking points of the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, which had been used also as a political campaign against Netanyahu and his government. He emphasizing the urgency of ending the war and securing the release of all hostages. He proposed that, following these objectives, Gaza should be governed by a technocratic administration, suggesting the Palestinian Authority) PA (as a potential governing body as an alternative of Hamas and that Israel should not remain in Gaza other than a perimeter. He said that Israel should only control the Rafah Crossing but should give up control of the Philadelphi Corridor as there are no longer any tunnels under the Gaza-Egypt border and there would be no use to stay there even if there were tunnels as the IDF would not be able to deal with them.
- Argaman criticized Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policy of permitting Qatari financial aid to flow into Gaza, warning that this approach could have adverse consequences.

Reponses

- In response to Argaman's remarks, Netanyahu accused him and current Shin Bet chief Ronen Bar of engaging in a "campaign of blackmail" against him, likening their actions to "mafia-style" threats. Netanyahu asserted that such tactics would not

deter him from making necessary decisions to reform the Shin Bet following its failures on October 7.

- Former Shin Bet) Israel Security Agency (chiefs, including Yaakov Peri and former deputy director Israel Hasson, have voiced criticism of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. They also distanced themselves from comments made by former Shin Bet head Nadav Argaman, asserting that the agency would never misuse information against Netanyahu as a form of coercion.
- Netanyahu instructed his legal team to file an urgent complaint with Police Commissioner Dany Levy, alleging that Argaman's statements amounted to blackmail and threats against a sitting prime minister. The complaint emphasized that such actions pose a threat not only to the Prime Minister but also to the democratic system and the rule of law in Israel.
- In response to the complaint, Commissioner Levy directed the police to examine Argaman's statements. However, legal experts suggest that while Argaman's comments may appear threatening, they lack specificity and are considered vague within the context of political discourse. As such, the likelihood of legal action being taken against Argaman is considered low. Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara is expected to review the matter after, acknowledging the sensitivity surrounding freedom of expression in the political scene.
- The Shin Bet responded to Netanyahu's accusations, labeling them as severe and unfounded. They emphasized that current Shin Bet head Ronen Bar is fully dedicated to national security matters, including efforts to secure the release of hostages and the protection of democracy.



Weapons found in Judea and Samaria as part of a counter terrorism operation| Source: IDF Spokesperson

Analysis

The veiled threat and the fact that former Shin Bet heads had to walk back from it is indicative that they are shrewd political actors who realize when the Shin Bet has stepped over too much. However, Nadav Argaman was able to veil his threat in a way that could not implicate himself directly by not framing his statements as a threat but as a guardian of democracy, which allows him to have plausibly deniability and use the sensitive information only when he deems that Israeli democracy is in danger. This is a very concerning development as much of the political and media focus has shifted from the war that is winding down to the in fighting between different bureaucrats, politicians, jurists and security personnel with regard to the responsibility of the failure of October 7th and the reaching some agreed form of inquiry that would not be perceived as biased.

Without being able to reach some consensus over a probe to find out the failures of the attack, the necessary changes would not be made to avoid future failures in the future. The distrust that culminated with the social divisions in 2023 over Judicial Reform would come back to Israel, and could hamstring any efforts for reforming of public systems as politicians and bureaucrats are vying to improve their positions and political power to protect their interests.

Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari steps down as IDF spokesperson

- The IDF announced that Hagari would step down from his role and retire from military service. The official statement described this decision as mutually agreed upon between Hagari and the newly appointed IDF Chief of Staff, Lieutenant General Eyal Zamir. However, media reports suggest that this move effectively amounted to a dismissal, primarily due to strained relations with senior defense officials, notably Defense Minister Israel Katz, and disagreements with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office.
- Hagari used his position in the past to criticize the government. In December 2024, Hagari publicly criticized a legislative proposal that aimed to decriminalize the act of passing classified military information directly to the prime minister. He labeled the proposal as "extremely dangerous for the IDF". Further strain emerged when Defense Minister Katz criticized Hagari for allegedly failing to fully cooperate with a state inquiry into the IDF's preparedness and response to the October 7, 2023,
- Hagari's departure was framed by anti-Netanyahu circles and some outlets in the mainstream media as a removal of a safeguard in the army who was a check on the government. He was described as a decorated soldier and excellent officer which made

him a symbol in the eyes of the anti-Netanyahu protest movement.

Judea and Samaria

- A young Israeli man, approximately 18 years old, was moderately injured in a shooting incident on a road near the Shoal agricultural farm, close to the Ariel industrial zone. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) stated that the details of the attack are still under investigation.
- In the town of Kabatiya, located in the Menashe Brigade sector of Samaria (West Bank), IDF forces discovered approximately **100 kilograms of materials used for manufacturing of explosives, along with pre-made explosive devices, combat positions, and equipment used by militants for shelter.**
- **Over the past week, Israeli security forces have arrested more than 100 wanted suspects and confiscated dozens of weapons across the Judea and Samaria as part of ongoing counterterrorism efforts.**
- Diplomatic
- Hussein al-Sheikh, Secretary-General of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee, participated in a meeting in Doha to discuss the Gaza reconstruction plan that was approved at the **Arab League summit in Cairo earlier this month.**
- **The meeting was attended by key regional figures, including Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Jordanian Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi, Saudi Foreign Minister Faisal bin Farhan, Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry, and UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed.**
- During the discussions, the Arab foreign ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the Gaza reconstruction plan and reached an agreement with the U.S. envoy to continue consultations and coordination, using the plan as a framework for rebuilding the enclave.



Hussein al-Sheikh, Secretary-General of PLO Executive Committee in a meeting in Doha to discuss the Gaza reconstruction plan | Source: Wafa news agency website, <https://www.wafa.ps/>

Lebanon

Diplomatic

- Israel has reportedly engaged in recent negotiations with the Lebanese government, mediated by the United States. As part of a goodwill gesture, Israel agreed to release five Lebanese detainees captured since the ceasefire.
- According to an official statement from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office, representatives from Israel, Lebanon, the U.S., and France met in Naqoura to discuss the release of Lebanese prisoners, the withdrawal of Israeli forces from five IDF outposts, and border adjustments along 14 points on the Blue Line.
- Hezbollah's Deputy Secretary-General Naim Qassem responded to these developments by asserting that Lebanon's efforts to establish a state monopoly on military power "will not be accepted by Hezbollah." However, he signaled that the group is open to negotiations, provided that they do not come at Lebanon's expense.
- **Lebanese President Michel Aoun met in Beirut with U.S. ceasefire coordinator Jasper Jeffers.** Aoun requested U.S. pressure on Israel to withdraw from five IDF outposts established after the ceasefire and the Israeli withdrawal on February 18. He also called for the release of Lebanese detainees captured during ground operations and negotiations over "Blue Line" territorial adjustments.
- **The Lebanese government, now under the leadership of a pro-Western Christian president and a Sunni prime minister, has shown interest in reducing Iranian influence and securing investments from Western and Gulf nations.** This shift has led to growing calls within Lebanon's parliament to disarm Hezbollah and restore the Lebanese army's monopoly on military power.
- A statement from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office indicated that Israel is attempting to leverage Hezbollah's weakened state to strengthen moderate factions within Lebanon. **The goal is to marginalize Hezbollah and its ally, Amal, while working toward normalization with Lebanon.** At a recent Lebanese cabinet meeting, government officials reportedly discussed a timeline for Hezbollah's disarmament. However, Lebanese officials publicly denied any moves toward normalization with Israel.

Operational

- On March 12, Israeli drones conducted a targeted assassination in the Nabatieh area, killing the head of Hezbollah's air defense unit within the "Badr" brigade. The operative was reportedly a key figure in Hezbollah's efforts to rebuild its air defense capabilities after suffering heavy losses in the war.

- In a separate incident near Nabatieh, Israeli aircraft targeted multiple Hezbollah operatives loading weapons into a vehicle.

- On March 14, the IDF launched airstrikes on Hezbollah facilities used for producing and storing strategic weapons in the Bekaa Valley.

Syria

Military Activity

The Alawite Revolt in Syria

The ongoing Alawite revolt in Syria has resulted in nearly 2,000 deaths, with more than 1,300 civilians reportedly massacred by Sunni fighters. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has provided a breakdown of casualties, listing 265 government security personnel (mostly Sunni), 256 pro-Assad rebels, and 1,319 civilians. However, alternative reports suggest the death toll is much higher, with some sources claiming that **7,000 Alawites and Christians have been killed.**

- Over the past five days, the relatively balanced death toll between pro-Assad forces and Sunni rebels suggests that the Sunni fighters have struggled to achieve a decisive military victory against the entrenched Alawite forces.

- The mass executions and humiliations inflicted on Alawite captives—such as forcing them to crawl on all fours while barking like dogs before execution—demonstrate not only deep sectarian hatred and a desire for revenge after years of oppression but also highlight the Sunni rebels' lack of counterinsurgency expertise. Their reliance on sheer brutality suggests they are struggling to subdue the Alawite resistance effectively.

- On March 9, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) leader Abu Mohammad al-Jolani condemned the violence against civilians and announced the formation of an investigative committee, which would include two Alawite representatives, to examine the events. He pledged that anyone found responsible for the massacres would be punished. However, given the scale of the atrocities, it is difficult to believe that Jolani was not involved in some capacity. Even if various Sunni militias acted independently out of sectarian hatred, the massacres send a clear message to other minority groups in Syria—particularly the Kurds and Druze—that they should avoid rebelling against Jolani's rule.

- Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan has endorsed Jolani's actions, describing them as "stabilization efforts."

Israel's Attack in Syria

The Israeli Air Force recently carried out its largest aerial assault on Syria since Operation "Arrow of the Bashan" in December 2024. According to Syrian reports, Israel conducted approximately 60 airstrikes, primarily targeting southern Syria, with additional strikes in Damascus and Homs provinces.

- The IDF released a statement indicating that the strikes targeted radar installations, command centers, and former Syrian army military sites, neutralizing potential future threats.

- The timing of these attacks leaves little doubt regarding their purpose: to deter Syria's new regime from advancing southward or targeting Druze communities. For the Druze in the Hauran region, the massacres of Alawites serve as a stark warning—without external protection, they risk suffering a similar fate if they resist Jolani's rule.

- Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz made a public statement warning that Jolani "will be able to see IDF forces from Damascus while standing on Mount Hermon." This thinly veiled threat was reinforced by a press conference Katz held on the Hermon summit, where two new IDF outposts have been established.

- Israel's long-term strategic goal in Syria has been to promote a federalized state with autonomous Druze, Kurdish, and Alawite regions under a weak central government incapable of rebuilding. However, with the recent Jolani-Abdi agreement and the mass killings of Alawites, this vision now seems unlikely to materialize. Despite this setback, Israel remains determined to prevent any significant Turkish expansion in Syria, particularly in the south, where the possibility of establishing a Druze autonomous zone remains viable.

- On March 14, Israeli forces carried out an airstrike targeting a Palestinian Islamic Jihad headquarters in Damascus.

Israel's Strategic Goal in Southern Syria

Israel's overarching objective in Syria has been to promote a federalized state with autonomous Druze, Kurdish, and Alawite regions, ensuring a weak central government incapable of rebuilding itself. However, with the recent **agreement between Abu Mohammad al-Jolani and Mazloum Abdi**, alongside the mass killing of Alawites, this federalist vision appears increasingly unlikely to materialize. Despite this setback, Israel remains focused on weakening Syria's new government and preventing Turkish entrenchment in the country, particularly in southern Syria. The possibility of establishing a Druze autonomous zone in the Hauran region remains viable.

Syria's interim government has reached an agreement to integrate the Druze-majority southern province of Sweida into the state's institutions, according to multiple reports. Under the agreement, Druze security forces in the area will fall under the jurisdiction of the Syrian Interior Ministry, and a new police force will be recruited from the local Druze population. The deal grants Druze residents the right to serve in state civil institutions, while Syria's security forces will regain access to the entire province, including control over police stations and other security centers.

Despite these developments, internal divisions persist. One of Syria's senior Druze leaders, Sheikh Akl Dr. Sami Abi al-Muna, has publicly opposed the agreement, citing concerns over the extremism of Syria's new regime under President Ahmed al-Sharaa.

Historic Visit

Meanwhile, a historic visit took place on Friday when **over 100 Druze religious leaders from the Syrian-controlled Golan Heights—mainly from the village of Hader—traveled to Israel for the first time since 1974**. The delegation met with Israeli Druze leadership, visited the shrine of Nabi Shu'ayb (believed to be the tomb of the Druze religion's founder), and toured the town of Peki'in. Thousands of Israeli Druze gathered to welcome them.

The visit was initiated by Sheikh Mowafak Tarif, the spiritual leader of Israel's Druze community, following the collapse of the Assad regime. Tarif played a central role in unifying Druze leadership in Syria under Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri, who is based in Jabal al-Druze. Israeli security and political officials viewed the visit as strategically important and approved its coordination.

Lebanese Druze leader Walid Jumblatt reportedly attempted to block the visit but was unsuccessful. Reports indicate that Israel has also begun providing initial humanitarian aid to the Druze community in Sweida.

The visit drew unprecedented criticism against the Druze community within Syria. According to sources close to Sheikh Hikmat al-Hijri, "certain media outlets with clear loyalties to al-Sharaa's regime attempted—and are still attempting—to undermine the connection between the Druze in Israel and Syria, but they have failed." In an interview with *Al-Arabiya*, al-Hijri stated: "There is no reconciliation or agreement with the Damascus government. We are at a decisive crossroads—either we survive as a community or we do not. We will act in the best interests of the Druze people and move in the direction that serves them."

Diplomacy

Al-Jolani's Power Consolidation in Syria

- On March 10, Abu Mohammad al-Jolani and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) commander Mazloum Abdi signed a seven-point memorandum of understanding aimed at achieving a complete ceasefire and halting Turkish-backed attacks on Kurdish forces in northern Syria.
- The agreement includes merging all civilian institutions into the new state, integrating SDF fighters into the newly formed Syrian military, controlling border crossings, and assuming control over the country's airfields. It remains unclear whether the agreement also covers oil and gas facilities, as well as detention centers housing approximately 10,000 ISIS fighters currently held by the SDF.
- Previously, Abdi had refused to dissolve the SDF. However, facing the threat of a coordinated attack from Turkey in the north, the Turkish-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) in the northwest, and Jolani's forces from the west and south, he was forced to reconsider. His decision was likely influenced by the Kurdistan Workers' Party's (PKK) recent ceasefire with Turkey and calls from PKK leadership urging Syrian Kurds to lay down their arms.
- According to SDF spokespeople, the U.S. government has attempted to mediate between the conflicting parties. However, fear of mass killings—similar to those carried out against the Alawites—may have also played a role in the Kurds' decision to negotiate.
- SDF fighters are now expected to join the newly formed Syrian military and will focus on suppressing pro-Assad forces along the Euphrates River.
- **Canada announced plans to ease economic sanctions on Syria and appoint an ambassador to the country.** The Canadian government stated that it aims to support the transitional leadership in Damascus to prevent Syria from spiraling into further instability.
- According to Reuters, Qatar has begun supplying gas to Syria through Jordan, with U.S. approval.
- **The Israeli Foreign Ministry delivered 10,000 humanitarian aid packages to Syrian Druze communities affected by ongoing battles.** The initiative, ordered by Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, was coordinated with Druze religious leader Sheikh Mowafak Tarif, the Druze religious council, and the IDF. The aid includes basic food supplies such as oil, salt, flour, sugar, and rice.

Iran

Tensions with the U.S. Over Nuclear Deal Negotiations

On March 8, Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei rejected a U.S. proposal for negotiations, despite receiving a letter from President Donald Trump on March 5 calling for a new nuclear agreement. Days later, Khamenei threatened military retaliation if the U.S. took any military action against Iran. Iranian President Pezvakian also dismissed any possibility of negotiations with Washington.

Trump confirmed the letter in a television interview, saying, "I've written them a letter saying, 'I hope you're going to negotiate because if we have to go in militarily, it's going to be a terrible thing.'" In response, Khamenei denounced Trump's offer as a deception, arguing that the U.S. has a history of not honoring agreements and that negotiations with Washington would be pointless.

Khamenei also addressed Trump's nuclear threats directly, stating, "The U.S. threatens military action, but that would be unwise because Iran will retaliate. They say they won't allow Iran to acquire nuclear weapons. If we wanted a nuclear weapon, the U.S. wouldn't be able to stop us. But we don't want one—we have explained our reasons for this before." However, this statement contradicts reports from the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), which indicate that Iran continues to advance its nuclear program.



Syrian government delegation meeting with leader of the Druze community in Sweida, southern Syria after signing a joint memorandum | Source: General Command News Ahmed Al-Sharaa | Al-Julani on Telegram, https://t.me/syriaaa_2025

Naval Exercise

Between March 11–14, Iran, Russia, and China conducted a joint naval exercise in the northern Indian Ocean, named "Maritime Belt 2025."

• **Iran, Russia, and China began joint military drills in Iranian territorial waters, involving warships from each country.**

• **The participating fleet included:**

• **Russia: Two destroyers and one logistics vessel**

• **China: One destroyer and one logistics vessel**

• **Iran: Three destroyers, five Iranian military ships, and three Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) vessels**

• **Observers from Azerbaijan, South Africa, Oman, Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Qatar, Iraq, the UAE, and Sri Lanka attended the drill.**

Despite increasing tensions with the U.S., Iran is keen on projecting unity within the Iran-Russia-China axis. However, this alliance appears to be weakening, especially following a reported understanding between Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin that distanced Moscow from Tehran. Though the naval exercise was scheduled before this diplomatic shift, Iran views it as an opportunity to reinforce its strategic alliances.

Diplomatic

- UK warned that it is prepared to invoke the SnapBack mechanism and take all necessary measures to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.
- The Iranian parliament announced a \$1 billion budget allocation for the country's nuclear program.
- Iran and Belarus signed a strategic security cooperation agreement in Minsk.

Yemen

- **On March 12, Houthi military spokesman Yahya Saree announced the renewal of a naval blockade targeting Israeli-affiliated ships.** The blockade applies to the Red Sea, the Arabian Sea, the Gulf of Aden, and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.
- **Saree warned that any Israeli vessel attempting to violate the blockade would be attacked.** He stated that the ban would remain in place until crossings into Gaza are reopened and humanitarian aid is allowed in.
- On March 15, 2025, the United States initiated significant military strikes against the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen. This action was a direct response to the Houthis' persistent attacks on international shipping in the Red Sea, which

have severely disrupted global trade routes and posed substantial threats to maritime security.

The operation was spearheaded by the USS Harry S. Truman carrier strike group, accompanied by three Navy destroyers and one cruiser. The coordinated strikes targeted key Houthi assets in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, focusing on: Missile and drone systems, Air defense installations, and Radar facilities. These targets were identified as instrumental in the Houthis' capacity to disrupt shipping lanes in the Red Sea.

President Donald Trump, in announcing the strikes, emphasized the necessity of protecting American and allied maritime interests. He issued a stern warning to the Houthi forces, demanding an immediate cessation of their attacks. Furthermore, President Trump cautioned Iran to halt its support for the Houthis. This is a signal to Iran that it better negotiate with Trump, otherwise, America could flex its military muscle as it is doing against the Houthis.

International

- The United Nations has released a new report accusing Israel of committing "genocide" in its military campaign in Gaza, as well as using sexual violence against Palestinians as a method of warfare. The report alleges that Israel systematically targeted the reproductive ability of Palestinians in Gaza, which it classified as a form of genocide. It is one of the most libelous reports ever produced by the UN which use the same language that anti-Israel activists and legal scholars have used and managed to get the UN stamp on it to bring more credibility to these reports.
- **UK Minister of State for Security Dan Jarvis revealed that over the past three years, Britain has thwarted 20 Iranian assassination attempts targeting British citizens and residents.** The UK is now considering new anti-terrorism legislation, which may include sanctions against Iran and its intelligence services. Jarvis emphasized that Iran has become increasingly brazen in its efforts to intimidate dissidents, with a particular focus on Jewish, Israeli, and Persian-speaking journalists in the UK who criticize the Iranian regime.
- **The U.S. Department of Education sent warnings to 60 academic institutions across the country, stating that they could face funding cuts due to their failure to address antisemitism and discrimination.** The warnings follow the Trump administration's decision to revoke \$400 million in federal grants from Columbia University. Institutions that received warnings include Harvard, Yale, Princeton, and Cornell.
- **On March 13, the U.S. Treasury Department imposed sanctions on Iran's oil minister, 18 companies, and 13 vessels linked to the Iranian**

government.

- According to a report from the Qatari newspaper *Al-Arabi Al-Jadeed*, citing Egyptian sources, the U.S. has notified Cairo of its decision to reduce military aid to Egypt starting next year. The report also claimed that the Pentagon has increased pressure on Egypt to cooperate with the U.S. plan for Gaza, a proposal that Cairo has so far resisted.
- Two senior Iraqi officials revealed that the U.S. government has urged Iraqi Prime Minister Mohammed Shia' al-Sudani to resolve the case of Elizabeth Tsurkov, an Israeli-Russian researcher kidnapped by Hezbollah Brigades in Iraq in March 2023. The U.S. has warned that there will be political and economic consequences if Iraq fails to act.

Global Jihad

- Swiss police arrested a 19-year-old suspect last month on suspicion of planning an attack on a synagogue in Halle, Germany. According to the German newspaper *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, the suspect, who was detained on February 14, intended to carry out an attack similar to the 2019 Yom Kippur synagogue attack in Halle, during which two people were murdered.

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