

Trump comes to PM's rescue to help end trial

President raps Israeli justice system in apparent response to Netanyahu's request

Amos Harel

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is trying to enlist the president of the United States to blackmail Israel's justice system with threats to end the criminal trial against the premier without a conviction and any admission of guilt.

That's what can be concluded from Donald Trump's recent remarks. Both he and Netanyahu see themselves as partners in the successful attack on Iran and its nuclear installations. Now, Trump is trying to leverage the achievement in Iran to end the war in Gaza, bring home the hostages and normalize relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia (and perhaps most important of all, to win the Nobel Peace Prize). And for all this, Netanyahu has only one small request – help me escape trial.

Trump has answered with increasingly aggressive declarations. "It is terrible what they are doing in Israel to Bibi Netanyahu," he wrote on Truth Social on Sunday morning. "He is a war hero, and a prime minister who did a fabulous job working with the United States to bring great success in getting rid of the dangerous nuclear threat in Iran. Importantly, he is

right now in the process of negotiating a deal with Hamas, which will include getting the hostages back. How is it possible that the prime minister of Israel can be forced to sit in a courtroom all day long, over nothing? He downplayed the charges against Netanyahu, and called the trial a "witch hunt." Trump even threatened to stop U.S. military aid to Israel if this "INSANITY" continues.

Soldier killed in the Gaza Strip

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The thought that the Israeli prime minister planted such a dangerous idea in the president's head is simply chilling.

If anyone doubts that these messages weren't entirely coordinated with Netanyahu, an official tweet of thanks from the prime minister to Trump came a few hours later. It's clear that Trump is not passing along a demand from Hamas to resolve the prime minister's legal troubles as part of the deal. In other words, it is again clear that Netanyahu's insistence on his political survival (as part of his bargaining efforts at his trial) has delayed the end of

the war in Gaza.

On Sunday, in a visit to the Shin Bet security service's southern district headquarters, Netanyahu claimed that "a lot of opportunities have now opened up following the [Iran war] victory." Unusually, he said the goal of the war in Gaza is "first of all rescuing the hostages." For a long time, he said that the defeat of Hamas was the top goal.

Even if in practice there's no logical connection between negotiations over a hostage deal and the Netanyahu trial, it is hard to see the attorney general, Gali Baharav-Miara, caving in to the pressure and reaching an agreement without demanding some concessions from Netanyahu, which the latter has insisted.

As Netanyahu sees it, he is the 51st and most important hostage of them all. The real hostages – 20 living Israeli civilians and soldiers still being held by Hamas in Gaza and the bodies of 30 who have been killed – will need to wait till a more urgent problem is solved, namely an end to his trial. This effort started soon after the start of Netanyahu's cross-examination, which has been a source of stress and embarrassment for him.

On Sunday, Netanyahu

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Demonstrators in front of the Kirya military headquarters in Tel Aviv on Sunday calling for the release of the hostages in Gaza.

Hai Ron

PM says hostages' return is top priority of Gaza war: 'Opportunities have opened up'

Jonathan Lis

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Sunday that the release of the remaining hostages in Gaza is the top goal of the war and that it was one of "many opportunities" that have opened up in the wake of the war with Iran.

The prime minister made the remarks during a visit to a Shin Bet security service

facility. "Many opportunities have opened up: first and foremost to rescue the hostages, but also for broader regional prospects. Of course, we will also need to resolve the issue of Gaza, to defeat Hamas, but I believe we will accomplish both tasks," he said.

The inner cabinet met Sunday evening at the headquarters of the Southern Command of the Israel Defense

Forces for a consultation with senior defense officials.

Netanyahu did not explicitly mention which "regional opportunities" had opened up, but earlier Sunday Donald Trump said in an interview with Fox News that additional countries have expressed interest in joining the Abraham Accords. "We have some really great countries in there right now, and I think we're going to start

loading them up, because Iran was the primary problem," the U.S. president said. He added that at one time he even thought Iran might join the accords, "and frankly, they would have been better off than where they are right now," he said.

Despite Netanyahu's remarks, a senior Hamas leader, Mahmoud Mardawi, said Sunday that Netanyahu was setting impossible con-

ditions for a cease-fire and hostage deal, with the aim of thwarting it. Posting on his Telegram channel, Mardawi wrote that Netanyahu refuses to commit to components of the agreement that he had previously approved. He added that the prime minister is insisting on the release of only 10 hostages, instead of the release of all of them

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Court cancels PM's trial this week after closed hearing with intel chiefs

Yael Freidson and Ben Samuels

The Jerusalem District Court on Sunday granted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's request to cancel his scheduled testimony in his corruption trial for the coming week, but ruled it was too early to determine whether testimony should also be canceled for

the following week.

The decision followed an initial rejection by the court on Friday and came after a closed-door hearing attended by IDF Intelligence Chief Maj. Gen. Shlomi Binder and Mossad director David Barnea.

Their appearance in court was made at the request of Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz,

with IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir authorizing Binder's participation.

On Thursday, Netanyahu's attorney Amit Hadad submitted a new request to cancel the prime minister's cross-examination, arguing that Netanyahu must "devote all his time and energy to ur-

gent national, security, and diplomatic matters." These include managing the ongoing war in Gaza and the hostage negotiations – responsibilities that have intensified, he said, following the recent confrontation with Iran and other regional and international developments.

Despite this, the court initially rejected the request on Friday. Judge Rivka Friedman-Feldman stated that "the request to postpone the hearings, in its current form, does not present a factual basis or detailed reasoning that could justify canceling evidentiary sessions."

Meanwhile, U.S. President Donald Trump on Saturday dramatically expanded his attacks on the State of Israel over Netanyahu's ongoing criminal corruption trial, implicitly warning that the \$3.8 billion in annual U.S. military assistance to Israel may be compromised unless

the charges are dismissed.

While Trump's Truth Social post last week marked an unprecedented intervention from a U.S. president into a foreign democratic ally's judicial proceedings, his broaching of U.S. military aid – long considered an "unbreakable" tenet of the bilateral relationship – brings his criticism into truly uncharted waters.

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Quiet, there's a pogrom in progress Editorial Page 5

To end Gaza war, Trump must pressure PM, not coddle him



Trump and Netanyahu at the White House in April.

Leah Millis/Reuters

Amir Tibon

U.S. President Donald Trump seems determined to bring the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza to an end. But for some unexplained reason, instead of applying pressure on the one person in the world who wants this war to continue – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – the president is doing the opposite: Coddling Netanyahu and endorsing the prime minister's demand to

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IDF: 'Lessons learned' after Gaza aid seekers came under fire

Nir Hasson and Haaretz

The Israeli military says "lessons learned" from investigations into incidents at Gaza aid sites have been passed down to troops following a Haaretz exposé featuring soldier testimonies saying they were ordered to fire at unarmed civilians.

The IDF has denied allegations that it ordered troops to fire on aid seekers amid widespread reactions

both in Israel and abroad as well as growing calls for an independent investigation into the deaths.

The IDF Spokesperson's Unit stated on Friday, "Contrary to the claims in the report, there is no order within the IDF to deliberately shoot at civilians in general, and those who have come to the aid distribution sites specifically," after the exposé was published earlier in the day. "Following events in

which there were reports of harm to [Gazans] who arrived at distribution sites, in-depth investigations were carried out and guidelines were given to forces in the field following the lessons learned," it added.

In a statement released following publication of the exposé, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Israel Katz

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Ministry denies Russian's aliyah plans despite eligibility on 2 counts

Judy Maltz

A Russian couple seeking to immigrate to Israel have had their plans put on hold after the Interior Ministry denied Nikita Levin's request, despite qualifying for Israeli citizenship on two counts: He is both the grandson of a Jew and the spouse of a Jew.

The 25-year-old engineer and his wife, Alisa, flew to Israel from Moscow in September to participate in Masa, a program that brings thousands of young Jews to Israel every year for study, volunteer and internship programs.

To qualify for Masa, applicants are required to prove their Jewish lineage. As the son of a non-Jewish mother, Nikita is not considered Jewish according to religious law (halakha), but does have a Jewish grandfather.

Their plan was to apply for immigrant status after the program was over. All Masa participants are entitled to a six-month work visa after their programs end, allowing them to explore the possibility of staying in Israel permanently.

Alisa was granted a work visa, but Nikita was not. Instead, he only received a six-month tourist visa. Her



Nikita and Alisa Levin. Nikita can't become a citizen despite having a Jewish grandfather.

request for aliyah was approved, while his was rejected.

Last week, Nikita was informed by the Interior Ministry that his appeal had also been rejected.

In more than two decades of representing prospective immigrants facing challenges with Israeli bureaucracy, Nikita's lawyer says this is the first time she has ever encountered a case of an applicant who was eligible for

aliyah, via both a Jewish grandparent and spouse, and having his request denied.

"The Interior Ministry has done everything it can to foil this couple's aliyah," said Nicole Maor, director of the Legal Aid Center for Olim at Israel Religious Action Center, the advocacy arm of the Reform movement in Israel.

"He has basically been told that even though his grandfather was Jewish and

his wife is Jewish, he is not allowed to live in Israel."

The Law of Return, which was passed unanimously by the Israeli government in 1950, originally stipulated that every Jew has the right to immigrate to Israel, though it left open the definition of a Jew. Under an amendment adopted in 1970, a Jew was defined as either someone born to a

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