



## ‘Day of disruption’ over hostages ends in massive rally in Tel Aviv

Security cabinet fails to discuss hostage release deal as tens of thousands protest

**Linda Dayan, Bar Peleg, Jonathan Lis, Adi Hashmonai and Eden Solomon**

Tens of thousands of Israelis gathered Tuesday evening on the plaza of the Tel Aviv Museum of Art – known since shortly after October 7, 2023, as Hostage Square – for a rally calling for the return of the Israelis still being held by Hamas in Gaza. Relatives of the hostages and former captives addressed the crowd.

Thousands marched to the square from a nearby train station. The event marked the high point of what organizers called a “day of disruption,” which included blocking major roads and holding demonstrations in dozens of locations across Israel. A similar shutdown took place last Sunday.

The event took place shortly after a meeting of Israel’s security cabinet, which a source familiar with the discussion said did not address the proposed framework for a hostage release deal. “It was a stupid and unnecessary discussion,” another source said of the meeting.

Before the cabinet meeting took place, released hostage Gadi Mozes discussed the protests for the hostages. “The importance of this day cannot be overstated,” he said. “The cabinet meeting is simply illusory. I am not willing to sacrifice anyone on the altar of the messianic ambi-



People demonstrating on Tuesday at Hostage Square in Tel Aviv for the release of the hostages and an end to the war.

Itai Ron

tion of destroying Hamas.” Mozes added that Hamas’ demands have not changed in the past two years and that Israel must agree to a deal. “They keep saying the same thing – end the fight-

ing and leave Gaza.”

Early Tuesday, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, representing many Israelis with loved ones held in Gaza, issued a statement directed at U.S. President

Donald Trump.

“President Trump, you’ve said that within the next two to three weeks there will be a conclusive end to the war. We pray this is true and that you’ve set a deadline to

end our suffering. You have committed to bringing all hostages home – now is the time to make that happen,” the group said.

At the main protest at Hostage Square, Nira Shar-

abi, whose husband Yossi was killed in Gaza captivity, urged Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to approve a full hostage deal.

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## Deadly strike on Gaza hospital could change course of war

Once upon a time, in another era, an incident like the one that occurred Monday in Khan Yunis, where an Israeli tank fired shells at a group of people on the roof of the city’s Nasser Hospital, would have brought an end to the fighting in the Gaza Strip.

According to the Palestinians, 20 people were killed by the tank fire, among them four journalists and five medical personnel. The firing of a second shell was captured in a live broadcast by a television crew. It clearly shows that among those hit was a rescue team.

Twenty deaths from two shells is highly unusual. It can’t be ruled out that more shells were fired than the Israel Defense Forces claimed in its initial response.

But after almost two years of war, which started with a terrible massacre committed by Hamas and weeks during which scores of Palestinian civilians were killed day after day by IDF fire without anyone troubling to explain the circumstances, Monday’s incident was met with almost complete indifference by the Israeli side.

Responding to Western condemnation and critical coverage in the international media, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu belatedly issued an expression of regret – but only in English. This came minutes after U.S. President Donald Trump appeared surprised to hear from reporters about the incident, many hours after it had occurred.

IDF Spokesman Brig. Gen. Effie Defrin also expressed regret in English. Apparently, he doesn’t think the Israeli public needs to

know directly about what was done in its name in Gaza. Quite the opposite: Israel’s Channel 12 rushed to report that eight of the dead were identified as terrorists and to name the hostages that had once been held at the hospital. Meanwhile, Channel 14 unusually rebuked Netanyahu for a “delusional announcement” (well, not the channel itself, but one of its writers).

No one would want to be in the place of the tank crew that fired the shells, or the commanders who decided to

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fire. The soldiers are operating in a devastated urban environment, which still poses a great risk. After all, Hamas’ entire method of operation is based on attacks from within the civilian population, with non-combatants serving as human shields for the militants.

Shooting at a hospital requires approval from someone with the rank of major general. According to initial IDF inquiries made on Monday, it seems no such approval was granted. The army’s response indicates that the shooting was directed at people holding cameras on the roof, who had been seen there several times in recent days. The assumption was that it was a Hamas observation post, which was tracking Israeli troops.

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Gazans outside Nasser Hospital after Monday’s strikes.

AFP

## IDF chief orders probe into fatal hospital strikes

**Yaniv Kubovich**

IDF Chief of Staff Eyal Zamir has ordered the military to investigate why troops in the Gaza Strip fired artillery shells to destroy a suspected Hamas surveillance camera mounted on the roof of Nasser Hospital in Khan Yunis rather than shooting it with a rifle or similar weapon.

The statement by the military said Zamir has ordered a thorough investigation into the process by which Monday’s attack was approved, its timing and, more generally, how decisions in the field are being made.

Attacks on a sensitive facility like a hospital require

the approval of an officer with the rank of major general. The initial probe into the attack, which killed at least 20 Palestinians and wounded dozens more, found that the forces were trying to destroy a camera Hamas had placed on the building but did not deter-

mine who approved it.

The Israel Defense Forces statement said that six of the people killed in the attack have been identified as terrorists, and one participated in the attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, which began the war.

Nevertheless, the state-

ment added, those six were identified only after the attack; the target was the camera, not the terrorists. The IDF has killed militants inside hospitals in Gaza before, but such a strike would need to follow special procedures that weren’t followed in this case.

Gaza’s Hamas-run Health Ministry, which does not distinguish between civilians and combatants, reported Monday that at least 20 people were killed in the attack, including five journalists and press photographers and four medical staffers.

It said the initial attack targeted the hospital’s

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## Australia expels Iran envoy, says gov’t behind antisemitic attacks

**Judy Maltz, Reuters and Haaretz**

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said Tuesday that the Iranian government has directed at least two antisemitic attacks on Australian soil and that his government has responded by expelling the Iranian ambassador.

Albanese said that Australia has suspended operations at its embassy in Tehran, adding that all Australian diplomats are now safe in a third country.

Albanese also said that his government would pass legislation to list Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps as a terrorist organization.

The Mail Online quoted Albanese as saying that Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO) “has gathered enough credible intelligence to reach a deeply disturbing conclusion: the Iranian government directed at least two of these attacks. Iran has sought to disguise its involvement, but ASIO assesses it was behind the attacks on the Lewis Continental Kitchen in Sydney on October 20 last year, and the Adass Israel Synagogue in Melbourne,” he added.

ABC News in Australia reported that Mike Burgess, ASIO director-general,

spoke alongside Albanese and Foreign Minister Penny Wong, saying that both attacks were ordered by Iran and that his organization believes the country was behind further attacks.

“They put lives at risk, they terrified the community, and they tore at our social fabric. Iran and its proxies lit the matches and fanned the flames,” Burgess said.

Wong described Iran’s conduct as “extraordinary and dangerous acts of aggression orchestrated by a foreign nation on Australian soil,” adding Ambassador Ahmad Sadeghi, along with three other officials, had been declared persona non grata and given seven days to depart.

The Zionist Federation of Australia lauded the country’s decision to expel the Iranian Ambassador, “who for too long has been permitted to promote Tehran’s propaganda and contribute to antisemitic vilification in Australia.”

The federation’s CEO, Alon Cassuto, condemned the “normalisation of terrorism and extremism in Australia.”

“Just weeks ago, well-known Australians, including Craig Foster, Mary Kostakidis, and Julian Assange, as well as current and

former Members of Parliament, including Ed Husic MP, Senator Mehreen Faruqi, and Bob Carr, were pictured proudly standing in front of a photo of the current Supreme Leader of Iran, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.”

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry’s President, Daniel Aghion, said Iran’s attacks were an attack on Australia’s sovereignty, adding that “antisemitism is a threat not only to the Jews, it is a threat to civilisation.” “Israel’s enemies are Australia’s enemies. This is apparent. The same regime that helped plan the October 7 atrocities, directed Hezbollah to open a second front against Israel, attacked Israel directly with ballistic missiles and threatened it with nuclear annihilation, is responsible for plotting and executing criminal attacks against Australians.”

Diplomatic relations between Israel and Australia have become increasingly strained over the past month, with both nations taking actions against one another. The row began after Australia announced its intention to recognize a Palestinian state at the United Nations and revoked a visa for a far-right Israeli lawmaker, leading to a public feud between the two prime ministers.

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‘Fear and exclusion’:

## Report documents antisemitism burgeoning on European campuses

**Judy Maltz**

Jewish students in Europe are “increasingly withdrawing from campus life, hiding their identity, and suffering from fear and exclusion,” a comprehensive report published on Tuesday warns.

The report documents and analyses antisemitism in academic institutions across eight EU member states – Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden – as well as the United Kingdom. It was published jointly by B’nai Brith International, the European Union of Jewish Students, and democ – a German non-profit devoted to the study of and struggle against anti-democratic movements.

In assessing incidents, the report uses as its reference point the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. This definition has been criticized for conflating legitimate criticism of Israel with Jew hate.

“The impact on Jewish students as a result of the hostile environments captured across the national en-



People waving Israeli flags as they take part in a “Solidarity with Israel” protest across the road from a “Solidarity with Palestine” protest in Berlin in August.

Ralf Hirschberger/AFP

tries is significant,” according to the 100-page report titled “A Climate of Fear and Exclusion: Antisemitism at European Universities.”

“Jewish students report feelings of fear, isolation and disenfranchisement within academic spaces that should otherwise serve as environments of mutual respect and open discussion.”

The report documents several instances of beatings, as well as the targeting of Jewish students with violent threats via messaging apps or via inscriptions on their personal belongings, in certain cases warranting police intervention and even hospitalization.

“The mainstreaming of antisemitic or virulently

anti-Zionist and anti-Israel positions has lowered the threshold toward violence against Jews,” it warns.

Universities often reacted with hesitance to the protests on their campuses, the report found, “sometimes with tacit approval or by invoking freedom of expression.”

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