



ISRAEL MATTERS!

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Mossad Chief: Iran ‘Closer Than Ever Before’ to Israel’s borders

Belgium Suspends PA Construction Projects After Palestinian School Renamed for Terrorist

The Belgian government is suspending all efforts to construct or furnish Palestinian schools, after one built with Brussels’ aid was renamed in honor of a mass-murdering terrorist. Located in the southern West Bank, the school’s controversial name pays homage to Dalal Mughrabi, who led a massacre of 38 people, including 13 children, near Tel Aviv in 1978.

A plaque at the school, which was first identified by the Israeli monitoring group Palestinian Media Watch, notes that it was established with Belgian support. Didier Vanderhasselt, a spokesperson for the Belgian Foreign Ministry, confirmed that the school’s construction was supported by the Belgian government. “When the school building was handed over to the local community in 2013 it was called ‘Beit Awwa Basic Girls School,’ subsequently the name was changed to ‘Dalal Mughrabi Elementary School,’” Vanderhasselt explained. “The Belgian government was unaware of this name change.” He added that Belgium “unequivocally condemns the glorification of terrorist attacks,” and “will not allow itself to be associated with the names of terrorists in any way.”

In a recent Facebook post, the school wrote, “The name of Dalal is engraved in our hearts and will remain engraved in our minds.” It also shared a poem written to express the “sadness” of “the faculty and students” over “the confiscation and robbery of the right and the will of the Palestinian people to name its institutions.” [algemeiner.com]

The head of the Mossad intelligence service warned recently that Iran, through its proxies, is operating closer “than ever before” to Israel’s borders with Lebanon and Syria, though he also said Israel was operating deep in enemy territory.

Spy chief Yossi Cohen said that in addition to arming the terrorist groups Hezbollah and Hamas, the Islamic Republic was working to develop its own nuclear capabilities with the goal of weaponizing them.

Cohen made his remarks at a ceremony in which six teams from the espionage service received a special commendation from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Due to the sensitivity of the operations, the details of the teams’ activities were kept secret. However, the spymaster said that the ones chosen were representative of the type of missions the service is capable of carrying out. According to Cohen, the intelligence service “carries out hundreds, thousands of activities every year — some of them complicated and deep within the heart of enemy countries.”

The comments were something of a rarity, as Cohen does not often speak in public forums. He said his intelligence service is “focused only on the top national, security and political priorities.” First on that list is Iran, according to Cohen. Tehran “continues with its vision of [obtaining] a significant nuclear capability, which is meant to lead it to a military nuclear capability,” he said.

Under the 2015 Iran deal, the Islamic Republic is permitted to continue with civilian nuclear research, which uses radioactive material that has been enriched to a much lower degree than that used for military purposes. In his speech, Cohen did not allege that Iran was violating the 2015 deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. However, the spy chief said Tehran was fostering unrest in the region. “Iran continues to work with increasing military aggression in the Middle East, closer to our borders than ever before,” Cohen said, as Netanyahu looked on with apparent approval. “Iran continues to support terrorist groups, Hezbollah and recently Hamas. Iran continues to work to transfer advanced — and accurate — weaponry to terror groups within our region,” he said.

Cohen’s comments appeared to confirm recent military assessments that Tehran was outfitting Hezbollah with precise missiles that are meant to be used in a future war with Israel.

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Jerusalem has also long been concerned that Iran-backed Shiite militias were entrenching themselves along the Syrian border with the Golan Heights. Israel's attempts to convince Russia and the United States to make their removal a requirement in a ceasefire in Syria have reportedly not yet succeeded.

In addition to Iran, the Mossad chief also pointed to the Islamic State terrorist group as an ongoing threat to not only Israel, but the entire world. "Islamic State is continuing to challenge us," Cohen said. He noted that the terrorist group, which is also known by its Arabic nickname, Daesh, was trying to "harm us and, no less importantly, our friends in the world."

To handle those threats, Cohen said, the intelligence service was improving itself. "The Mossad is getting stronger, with new capabilities in order to advance the future appearance of the world, with new technologies, with intelligence systems, with new forces, with human resources — all of this in order to be prepared for the challenges before us," he said.

"The winners of the prime minister's prize display the best within us and show to what lengths the Mossad, its people and its fighters can reach," Cohen said.
[timesofisrael.com]

Israeli Paralympic Rower Wins Silver Medal at World Games



Israeli Moran Samuel recently won a silver medal at the World Rowing Championships in Sarasota, Florida. Samuel completed the women's Paralympic 2,000 meter race in just over 11 minutes and 20 seconds, setting a new Israeli record.

Samuel only took up rowing in 2010. She had been a member of Israel's national basketball team until 2006, when, at 24, she suffered a rare spinal stroke and became paralyzed in her lower body.

The talented athlete had to adapt to a new life, but she didn't give up her love of sports. In fact, she kept playing basketball with the national wheelchair team and, eventually took up the solo sport as well.

[timesofisrael.com]

Qatar Offering to Trade Body of Israeli Soldier for American-Jewish Support

A recently published report in Forbes magazine has claimed that Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani will seek to hold meetings with Jewish leaders in the United States. The report said that the Emir aims to gain the leaders' support, amid Qatar's ongoing rift with four Arab states, by handing over the body of an Israeli officer killed by Hamas in 2014.

According to the writer, Richard Minter, some leaders of American-Jewish non-profits said that Qatar is using Lt. Hadar Goldin's body as a "bargaining chip" to communicate with Jewish-American groups, three years after his death. Hamas admitted to killing the Israeli army lieutenant after he infiltrated a tunnel in the Gaza Strip in 2014. The movement usually retains the bodies of Israeli military to exchange for its own captives.

Minter added that some American-Jewish leaders received a tacit message saying that their meeting with the Qatari Emir may result in recovering 23-year-old Goldin's body. It may also reveal the fate of a missing Israeli soldier, they added. Speaking to Minter, Rabbi Shmuley Boteach said he funded an advertising campaign against Qatar. Boteach is deemed one of America's "most influential rabbis," according to Newsweek magazine.

Boteach said that some American-Jewish groups are trying to communicate with Doha, despite the latter being involved in killing Israeli soldiers through supporting Hamas. The rabbi added, "It is a shameful episode for our community when those who fund the murder of Jews in Israel are being embraced by Jews in the United States."

Boteach explained that he ordered "full-page New York Times ads to make it clear to all who agreed to whitewash the terror-stained hands of the Emir would be condoning murder." The report also quoted Boteach as saying the attempts to organize meetings between the Emir and some American-Jewish groups shows Qatar's desperation.

Minter said that the diplomatic and economic strain on Qatar has worked. This is linked to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Egypt cutting ties with the country. The quartet also withdrew its ambassadors, closed ports, airports, and worked to isolate the Qatari leadership until it committed itself to stop supporting and financing terrorism.

[english.alarabiya.net]

Help Wanted

Your editor has been the Chair of the TBS Israel Affairs Committee for about a decade. During that time Israel has seen many significant changes to its national identity, including those in security, technology, and the sociology of the country.

Few things last forever and it appears the time is right for a change in the committee's leadership. If you are passionate about Israel and are willing to take the initiative to continue to bring to the TBS membership an increased awareness of events in, or affecting Israel, then this is the challenge for you. If this sounds like you, please let Rabbi Scolnic know of your interest.