

The week ending August 22, 2014

ISRAEL & THE PALESTINIANS

Senior Hamas Official Says Group Abducted Israeli Teens

A top Hamas official said members of his militant group kidnapped three Israeli teenagers whose deaths in June provoked a spiral of violence that led to the war in Gaza, the first acknowledgement of the movement's involvement. [Reuters](#) reports that Hamas has up to now refused to confirm or deny Israeli accusations that it masterminded the abduction and killing of the three young men, one of them a joint U.S.-Israeli citizen, in Hebron. Speaking at a conference in Istanbul, Saleh al-Arouri, a Hamas official from the West Bank who lives in exile in Turkey, appeared to confirm Israeli allegations that the Islamist group was behind the teenagers' abduction. "The popular will was exercised throughout our occupied land, and culminated in the heroic operation by the Qassam Brigades in imprisoning the three settlers in Hebron," he said, referring to Hamas's armed wing. Israel said a third suspect arrested by its security forces admitted under interrogation to organizing the kidnapping with funds from Hamas in Gaza.

Gaza Strife Escalates After Talks Collapse

The wife and infant son of Hamas military commander Mohammed Deif were killed in an Israeli airstrike, the Islamist group said on Wednesday, after the collapse of a weeklong cease-fire sparked a sharp escalation in Gaza attacks and a freeze in truce talks in Cairo. For most of Wednesday, there was no word about the fate of Mr. Deif, who had been the target of several failed assassination attempts over the past decade. According to [The Wall Street Journal](#), a spokesman for the military wing of Hamas in a televised address said Israel failed to kill the military leader. He also said the Palestinians were pulling out of the already-suspended truce talks. "This has proved that you are failures and you are a big lie," said Abu Obeideh, spokesman for Hamas's military wing, known as the Al Qassam Brigade, in a speech on Hamas's al-Aqsa TV on Wednesday. Mr. Obeidah declared cease-fire talks in Cairo dead. Israel suspended participation on Tuesday, accusing Hamas of breaching a truce with rocket fire, but stopped short of abandoning talks permanently. "The Palestinian delegation has to withdraw immediately from Cairo, and not return back," the spokesman said. "Hamas thinks it will wear us down," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a nationally televised address on Wednesday. "Against attrition, Hamas will get a pounding—of its infrastructure, its terrorists, its commanders." "The Israeli goal is to deter Hamas for a very long time. The number of military targets that they can hit effectively, which will strengthen deterrence, is very small," said Gerald Steinberg, a political-science professor at Bar Ilan University. "That makes symbolic targets of someone like Mohammed Deif very important. It shows that Israel is capable of reaching even the most carefully guarded Hamas leader." The cease-fire collapse prompted Mr. Netanyahu to convene a cabinet meeting on Wednesday. Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman renewed criticism of the talks and argued that "there's no alternative...to the defeat of Hamas." Israeli cabinet members

have warned that a new escalation could prompt a decision to topple Hamas's rule in the Gaza Strip, a move Mr. Netanyahu has resisted so far. Such a move would dramatically increase casualties on both sides and ratchet up the international criticism of Israel.

For the latest information on the situation in Israel please click [here](#).

IRAQ

Obama, 'Appalled' by Beheading, Will Continue Airstrikes

President Obama declared on Wednesday that the entire world was “appalled” by the videotaped beheading of an American journalist by Islamic militants, speaking as American warplanes conducted 14 airstrikes in Iraq and the State Department asked the Pentagon to send as many as 300 more American troops to Iraq for security. “The United States of America will continue to do what we must do to protect our people,” the president said from Martha’s Vineyard, where he was vacationing. “We will be vigilant, and we will be relentless.” [The New York Times](#) writes that Mr. Obama’s harsh remarks, the failed rescue mission and Wednesday’s military action reflected new pressure on the administration not to step back from the assault on the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, as well as recognition of the grim reality that other American hostages held by ISIS face a similar threat. The events were also a shift in the complexion of the American confrontation with the terrorist group—until now an abstraction to most Americans—after its release of a gruesome video depicting the beheading of Mr. Foley, which ISIS militants said was in retaliation for the American airstrikes in Iraq. ISIS threatened to kill another American journalist held hostage, Steven J. Sotloff, if the airstrikes continued. Secretary of State John Kerry stepped up the administration’s tough tone. “Make no mistake: We will continue to confront ISIL wherever it tries to spread its despicable hatred,” he said in a statement, using an alternative acronym for ISIS. “The world must know that the United States of America will never back down in the face of such evil. ISIL and the wickedness it represents must be destroyed, and those responsible for this heinous, vicious atrocity will be held accountable.”

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Israel Turns into WiFi Hotspot

Accessing WiFi in Israel just got easier: Communications Minister Gilad Erdan recently announced that he is cancelling router restrictions on public use of WiFi, meaning anyone anywhere can now set up free Internet hotspots indoors and outdoors across Israel. Israelis are already known among the world’s top internet users reports [Israel21C](#). Erdan says in a press release that he signed the order to open public accessibility so that Israelis—and tourists—can “remain up to date and connected” at all times. In light of new technologies that have appeared over the past few years, the ministry has decided to remove limitations on use of Wifi, which until now had been limited to indoor venues. It will now be possible to offer Internet services anywhere in Israel,” the press release reads. The new rules stipulate that while anyone from municipalities to private companies and cafes can set up routers, no one is allowed to charge a connecting fee. Moreover, routers can be set up in public outdoor spaces now and not solely indoors. This move will benefit cities like Tel Aviv and Ariel—which already provide free WiFi—but had to do so from the inside of buildings thus making accessibility shoddy. So, get ready, because you’ll soon be able to surf in parks, at beaches, on campus and while you’re walking down the street.