

The week ending October 24, 2014

ISRAEL & THE PALESTINIANS

Palestinian driver in East Jerusalem kills baby, wounds 8 in train station attack

A Palestinian resident of East Jerusalem drove his car into a crowded light-rail station Wednesday, killing a 3-month-old baby and wounding eight people, two of them seriously, according to Israeli police. [The Washington Post](#) reports that the driver was identified as Abd al-Rahman al-Shaludi, a resident of the Silwan neighborhood who, according to police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld, has been previously jailed in Israel for involvement in terrorist activities. "Police arrived on the scene, and the driver was shot as he attempted to flee the vehicle," Rosenfeld said. Police said that Shaludi was critically injured and that his exact motives were unclear. "I do not see an end to this unrest," said Shaul Bartal, a retired Israeli major. "This is a popular protest, and it is growing. The police have arrested more than 800 people, charged more than half of them, but it does not help. There are still more people ready to demonstrate."

Gaza rebuilding slowed by trickle of aid, rivalry

Several dozen tons of cement bags stored in a warehouse are one of the few tangible achievements so far of a \$2.7 billion plan to rebuild war-wrecked Gaza Strip. The program was launched with high expectations at an international conference in Cairo on Oct. 12, but has run into obstacles, including wrangling between the rival Palestinian factions Hamas and Fatah for control in Gaza and what officials say has been a trickle of promised aid. But a U.N. official said the holdup is mostly technical and that he expects more deliveries once the Palestinian government has vetted more Gaza importers of construction material and potential buyers. According to [The Associated Press](#), another hurdle is the fraught relationship between Hamas and Abbas, and differences over divvying up responsibilities. For example, Hamas wants to keep some of its border officials at the main Israel-Gaza cargo crossing, Kerem Shalom, but the unity government wants to send its own team there, arguing that this would expedite imports. "Nothing is solved about the government and the crossings," said Ghazi Hamad, a Hamas official. "It is known that money needs months to arrive, but we are encouraging donors and ask them to give us even part of the assistance so as to begin the projects," said Mohammed Mustafa, the top government official in charge of reconstruction. "Reconstruction is facing some problems, that is why it is not taking off," said government spokesman Ehab Bseiso. "These things are not going to be changed overnight."

EGYPT

IDF: Fire on Egypt border was ‘violent drug-smuggling attempt’

A shootout on the border with Egypt that left two Israelis soldiers wounded Wednesday was a confrontation with drug smugglers, the IDF said Wednesday evening, correcting earlier reports that it had been an attack by Islamist militants. A preliminary investigation into the cross-border incident, conducted in coordination with the Egyptian army, showed that the suspects opened fire at Israeli troops who had identified the suspicious figures approaching the border. The army said in a statement it was a “violent drug-smuggling attempt,” foiled by the army unit commander. One report from Egypt, citing unnamed security officials, blamed Sinai terror group Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis, while a second report also, citing unnamed Egyptian sources, said the fire had come from Egyptian troops who mistook the Israeli soldiers for smugglers. The Israeli soldiers returned fire, and at least three of the smugglers were killed, the IDF said. Kalashnikov rifles and bags of drugs were found at the scene after the shooting, according to [The Times of Israel](#). The incident occurred near Mount Harif in the central Negev Desert, about 112 kilometers from Eilat. The Mount Harif region is one of the most remote in Israel, and the deep canyons there have long served as smuggling routes for drugs and people into Israel.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Israel on the Front Line of Ebola Crisis

Israel is often on the front lines to help those in need around the world. As the Ebola crisis spreads throughout West Africa, Israel has sent more than a million shekels’ worth of medical equipment and invaluable Israeli expertise. Israel’s Agency for International Development Cooperation of the Foreign Ministry (MASHAV) sent a team of public health experts to Cameroon to train local health workers on preventing the spread of the virus. The agency donated protective suits to African Union troops stationed in Ethiopia. Most recently, MASHAV is deploying mobile field hospitals to Liberia and Sierra Leone, where the virus has affected the most people. “We have experience in mobile clinics and mobile emergency centers, and that’s where we want to lend our assistance,” said Gil Haskel, deputy director general of MASHAV. With support from MASHAV, Israeli humanitarian organization IsraAID is also working with other international agencies in Sierra Leone. IsraAID teams are training local community workers on preventing the spread of the infectious disease and on methods to help Ebola survivors and their families overcome post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in the wake of the crisis. “We Jews often stress our commitment to tikkun olam — the work of improving the world...IsraAID enables Jews to fulfill that global vision through Israel and its highly-skilled and dedicated volunteers. From post-tsunami Japan and now in Ebola-plagued Sierra Leone, IsraAID is making tikkun olam a reality,” describes IsraAID Goodwill Ambassador, Sally Oren. Throughout the world, MASHAV and IsraAID export Israeli expertise to communities facing development challenges, natural disaster recovery, refugee crises and much more. Israel’s commitment to ending the Ebola crisis is just the latest example of the Jewish state serving as a light unto the nations.