



# Rabbinic Recap

The week of June 22, 2018

## PALESTINIANS

### **IDF Deploys Additional Iron Dome Batteries Near Gaza Amid Heightened Tensions**

The army deployed additional Iron Dome missile defense systems in southern Israel on Wednesday, after terror groups in the Gaza Strip launched dozens of rockets and mortar shells earlier in the day, the [Times of Israel](#) reported. Residents of the area were encouraged to go about their daily lives as usual, but to also prepare themselves for the possibility of another round of violence. [...] Schools opened as usual on Wednesday, following the rocket and mortar attacks earlier that morning, though teachers led special sessions to speak with students about what had happened. Parents were also given the option to not send their child to school, though few did. Over 90 percent of students attended classes on Wednesday, according to an Eshkol spokesperson.

### **Hamas Paid Family to Claim Gaza Baby Was Killed by Israeli Tear Gas, Says Cousin**

A 20-year-old Palestinian indicted Thursday on terror-related charges told Israeli investigators during his interrogation that Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar paid his relatives to falsely tell the media that his baby cousin died of tear gas inhalation, the [Times of Israel](#) also noted. The story of baby Layla Ghandour's death, purportedly from inhaling tear gas fired by Israel at the Gaza border, made headlines around the world last month and intensified global criticism of Israel's handling of Hamas-spurred violence at the fence. On May 28, IDF forces arrested Mahmoud Omar along with another member of Fatah's armed wing, the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades, after they attempted to infiltrate into Israel and torch an unmanned IDF post, the Southern District Attorney's indictment against him said.

### **Burning Kites from Gaza Damage Israeli Farms, Wildlife**

After years of rocket attacks and militant infiltrations from Gaza, residents of southern Israel are now coping with a new kind of threat: incendiary kites and balloons that have damaged farmlands and nature reserves, as reported by the [Associated Press](#). The crude devices launched by Palestinians inside the blockaded territory have not been lethal. But they have sparked fires that have damaged agriculture, killed wildlife and whipped up considerable indignation. "It's caused significant economic damage but more than that it is emotional," said Itzik Ebbo, 78, a member of Kibbutz Nir Am, a collective farming community. "These are crops we poured our hearts into. These are fields we hiked with our children and grandchildren." Sullen locals have become a fixture on Israeli TV, guiding reporters around smoldering fields and lamenting the loss of life among snakes, turtles and the like.

## IRAN

### **Report: Iranian-Backed Syrian Militias Change Uniforms, Head Toward Golan**

Hezbollah and Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias are concentrating in an area dubbed the "triangle of death" near the Golan Heights, as the Syrian regime prepares its major post-Ramadan offensive, as reported by the [Jerusalem Post](#). The offensive is designed to defeat the rebels in southern Syria and has raised concerns in Jerusalem, Washington, Moscow and Amman as a potential crisis looms. This comes as Israel continues warning the Syrian regime to remove Iranian forces from the country. On Sunday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he reiterated Israel's demand that Iran withdraw from all of Syria, in conversations with Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo over the weekend. With the defeat of Syrian rebels in Damascus, the regime has begun to concentrate forces along its long front line that stretches from the environs of the southern Damascus countryside down to Daraa near the Jordanian border. This front-line ranges from 10 kilometers to just one kilometer from the Golan Heights.

## UNITED NATIONS

### **AIPAC Statement on U.S Withdrawal from the UNHRC**

[AIPAC](#) appreciates the Trump administration's decision to withdraw from the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC), and for the leadership of U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley on this issue. Unfortunately, the council has profoundly betrayed its mission through its long and obsessive record of unfairly targeting the Middle East's only genuine democracy, the state of Israel. The UNHRC's unrelenting, unbalanced and unfounded attacks on Israel have destroyed its credibility. The council has passed more country-specific resolutions against Israel than the rest of the world's nations combined. The United States has repeatedly called for reform of the UNHRC; unfortunately, the council has rebuffed any serious reform—severely impeding its ability to effectively act as an objective guardian of human rights. We also appreciate the important efforts pursued by members of Congress on a bipartisan basis over many years to combat the council's bias against our democratic ally.

## ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

### **Israeli-Led IBM System Debates with Humans, But Who Wins?**

IBM's new artificial intelligence (AI) system engaged in the first ever live, public debate with two Israeli student debating champions on Monday, demonstrating the computer's ability to deliver persuasive arguments against humans on complex topics, according to [Israel21c](#). Named Project Debater, the AI was unveiled at IBM's Watson West site in San Francisco, where it began by preparing arguments for whether governments should subsidize space exploration and whether the use of telemedicine should be increased. Preparation for Project Debater began six years ago at the IBM's Haifa research lab, but IBM Research principal investigator and creator of Project Debater Noam Slonim said the AI system only gained the ability to participate in debates with people two years ago. During the first debate, the computer was pitted against 2016 Israeli national debate champion Noa Ovadia. Both sides delivered a four-minute opening statement, a four-minute rebuttal, and a two-minute summary in their arguments for each topic.