

MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026 ■ 2 SIVAN, 5786

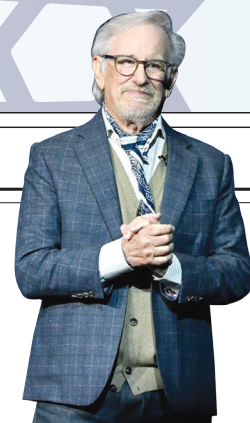


**Being ready**  
The importance of the IDF's eastern border exercise  
Page 3

**Heir apparent**  
Palestinian leader's son wins executive role in Fatah party  
Page 12



**No presence**  
Juror: Cannes blacklisting pro-Israel activists  
Page 16



ISRAELI SINGER Noam Bettan, who represented Israel at the 70th Eurovision Song Contest in Vienna, is seen after arriving at Ben-Gurion Airport, yesterday. (Chaim Goldberg/Flash90)

## Eurovision second place finisher Noam Bettan returns to hero's welcome

• By HANNAH BROWN

Singer Noam Bettan and the rest of Israel's Eurovision Song Contest delegation came home to a rapturous welcome on Sunday, returning from Vienna where they exceeded expectations and finished second behind winner Bulgaria in the highly charged event.

On Saturday night, Bettan strode confidently onto the stage at the 70th contest, after a year in which Israel faced an unprecedented campaign to ban it from the competition. He gave a brilliant performance of the song "Michelle," winning over an audience that sang along with him.

Poland's jury gave Israel 12 points, the top score, and Israel received 123 points from

the national juries, a strong showing compared to last year. "Michelle" received 220 points from the audience, putting it briefly in first place during the reading of the results, which elicited some boos from the audience.

It was a triumphant finish in the song contest for Israel in a year filled with boos and boycotts, when many European governments, broadcasters, and artists pushed hard to block Israel from the competition.

The winning song was "Bangaranga," a high-energy rave anthem by DARA from Bulgaria. "Eclipse" by Delta Goodrem of Australia finished third.

DARA, the stage name of Darina Nikolaeva Yotova, liked a clip of Bettan's rehearsal performance. It was a friendly and

kind gesture that stood out in a year when many avoided the Israeli delegation or made it feel unwelcome.

Bettan reveled in achieving a second flawless performance after the first one in the semi-final. During the time between his final performance and the announcement of the winner, he told KAN 11, "Wow, wow, wow. That was crazy. I felt more emotional than the previous times... I felt good, I felt I gave 100% in real time. It was crazy, it was fun, we're done now... I love you, Am Israel Chai!"

After Bettan's return to Israel on Sunday, President Isaac Herzog congratulated him on X/Twitter, posting: "Noam, you are a pride for Israel! I just spoke

See *EUROVISION*, Page 7

## UTJ unimpressed as Likud seeks to put haredi draft bill back on Knesset agenda

Netanyahu's coalition exerts 'massive pressure' on MKs to vote in favor of draft bill, Haskel tells 'Post'

• By KESHET NEEV

The coalition's controversial haredi (ultra-Orthodox) draft bill was scheduled on Sunday to return to the Knesset's agenda for advancement this coming Wednesday, ahead of its final readings, amid the crisis in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition with the haredi parties.

Rescheduling of the contentious draft legislation comes after the first vote on the bill to dissolve the Knesset was set for Wednesday, which initially had the backing of both the coalition and opposition parties and could trigger elections slightly earlier than October 27.

Netanyahu's coalition has exerted "massive pressure" on coalition lawmakers throughout the weekend and on Sunday to vote in favor of the contentious draft bill, Deputy Foreign Minister Sharron Haskel (New Hope-United Right), a leading critic in the coalition against the legislation, told *The Jerusalem Post* on Sunday.

The pressure was seen as a way for Netanyahu to appease the haredi parties, after he had reportedly told them last week that the legislation could not receive enough support in the coalition.

Despite the decision to readvance the draft bill, members of Knesset from Degel HaTorah – a faction within the haredi United Torah Judaism party – stated that they were still in favor of dissolving the Knesset.

The statement said the factions' lawmakers would "not be drawn into political games," and had been instructed by their spiritual leader, Rabbi Dov Lando, to support dissolving the Knesset.

Tensions between the haredi parties and Netanyahu's coalition escalated last Tuesday, when it was reported that Netanyahu informed representatives of United Torah Judaism

that the coalition did not have the majority needed to pass the haredi conscription bill.

That led Degel HaTorah's spiritual leader to write in a letter to the faction's Knesset members that "We no longer have trust in Netanyahu."

"Steps must be taken to dissolve the Knesset as soon as possible. All kinds of talk about a 'bloc' no longer exist," the letter added.

Haskel told the *Post* about the pressure that coalition lawmakers were under to pass the legislation.

"Over the weekend, phone calls were made to almost all coalition members in order to check their positions and pressure them to vote on the conscription law," Haskel said.

Haskel also noted that one

See *HAREDI*, Page 7

## Manpower shortage becomes a serious worry for IDF

• By SARAH BEN-NUN

The military's manpower crisis is set to deepen unless legislation extending mandatory service advances separately from the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) draft bill, as the IDF faces a widening gap between wartime operational needs and the number of soldiers it will have available to meet them.

Defense officials raised a red flag on Sunday that by the end of the year, units could face a severe manpower shortage, with an emphasis on a lack of thousands of regular-service combat soldiers.

The issue has become more urgent as the haredi conscription bill returned to the Knesset agenda on Sunday, ahead of its final readings and amid a coalition crisis over a possible vote to dissolve the Knesset.

While the haredi draft bill has become one of the central political fights threatening Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition, defense officials have also pushed for a sepa-

rate extension of mandatory service, arguing that the current model no longer matches the demands placed on the military since October 7.

The IDF is operating across multiple arenas while also dealing with heavy casualties, high reserve use, and growing erosion among both regular and reserve forces. Many reservists who once served far more limited periods have been called up repeatedly since the war began, with annual reserve burdens now reaching roughly 80 to 100 days for some combat soldiers.

Regular soldiers, meanwhile, are spending more time in operational employment and less time training, leaving units with some combat soldiers remaining almost continuously on the line rather than rotating between operational duty, training, and recovery.

One of the main concerns centers on the first cohorts enlisted under the shorter service framework. Soldiers who enlisted in July 2024

See *MANPOWER*, Page 7

## 'Drone strike on Barakah power plant is a warning to UAE'

• By AMICHAI STEIN and Reuters

The drone attack on the civilian Barakah Nuclear Power Plant, which supplies electricity to the United Arab Emirates, was intended to "send a message" to the Emiratis, two sources familiar with the details of the strike told *The Jerusalem Post* on Sunday.

According to one of the sources, the drone deliberately targeted one of the facility's energy suppliers in order to convey the message: "We can also strike the nuclear reactor itself and trigger a nuclear incident."

The UAE, at this point, is not directly blaming Iran for the attack and is investigating whether Tehran or the Houthis in Yemen are behind the incident. "In any case, it's Iran who ordered the attack," the two sources told the *Post*.

Anwar Gargash, senior adviser to UAE President Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, wrote on X/Twitter that the attack on the nuclear facility – "whether carried out directly by those responsible or through one of their proxies – represents a dangerous escalation and a dark development that violates all international laws and norms."

Gargash said that the attack demonstrated disregard for the lives of civilians in the UAE and across the wider region. "This prohibited escalation once again highlights the nature of the challenges facing the region in confronting the forces of evil, chaos, and destruction. No one will bend the will of the United Arab Emirates."

This follows authorities in the UAE responding to a fire caused by a drone strike on an electrical generator outside the

inner perimeter of the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant in the Al Dhafra Region, as confirmed by the Abu Dhabi Media Office earlier on Sunday.

No injuries were reported, radiological safety levels were unaffected, and the Federal Authority for Nuclear Regulation confirmed the plant's essential systems are operating normally.

The UAE's Foreign Ministry later said in a statement that the incident was a "terrorist attack" that "constitutes a 'dangerous escalation, an unacceptable act of aggression, and a direct threat to the country's security.'"

The UAE's Defense Ministry said that investigations were underway to determine the source of the drone attack. It added that three drones were

See *UAE*, Page 7

## The Lebanon ceasefire fiction

ANALYSIS

• By HERB KEINON

It's only natural to want to applaud the extension of a ceasefire.

After all, who doesn't want a ceasefire: a halt, if only temporary, to rockets falling, drones buzzing, and bombs exploding?

The problem is that the US State Department's Friday announcement – following another round of negotiations between Israel and Lebanon in Washington – extending the ceasefire between the two countries is something of a fiction.

Why? Because it is not the government of Lebanon that decided to wage war against Israel, first on October 8, 2023, and then again on March 2, 2026. It is Hezbollah, the terrorist organization that owns a commanding stake in the country, and whom the rest of the shareholders either cannot



SMOKE RISES from the site of an Israeli airstrike that targeted the southern Lebanese village of Erzay, yesterday. (Kawnat Hajji/AFP via Getty Images)

– or do not want, out of sympathy – to control.

And it is Hezbollah that is firing drones at Israeli soldiers in southern Lebanon, there to prevent the terrorist organization from once again setting up a base of operations directly on Israel's border, with the

expressed intent of, at some point, launching an October 7-style invasion of the Upper Galilee.

Israel and Lebanon are formally in a state of war, and have been since 1948, so talks between the governments, through their ambassadors in

Washington, are not insignificant. But a ceasefire with Lebanon doesn't mean much, since their armies aren't fighting one another.

The problem, of course, is the mini-state inside Lebanon run by Hezbollah.

According to various media reports in Lebanon, one of the principles now under discussion as part of the ceasefire is placing decisions of "war and peace" solely in the hands of the Lebanese state – an implicit acknowledgment that those decisions are currently not in the hands of the Lebanese state at all, but in Hezbollah's.

And the very fact that the Lebanese presidency reportedly needed Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri to relay its ceasefire with Israel to Hezbollah for its approval underscores the central reality of this conflict: Hezbollah is not subordinate to the Lebanese state; the Lebanese

See *LEBANON*, Page 7

## US prosecutors seek death penalty for shooter in Capital Jewish Museum attack

• By MATHILDA HELLER

US federal prosecutors are seeking the death penalty for the man who shot and killed

two Israeli Embassy staffers outside Washington's Capital Jewish Museum in May 2025, the DC US attorney's office announced on Friday.

According to the notice of intent filed by the attorney's office, Elias Rodriguez, the suspect, intentionally killed victims Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky, and/or intentional-

ly engaged in violence knowing it carried a risk of death. These, the filing says, meet the statutory threshold for what a jury or court must prove beyond a reasonable doubt for a defendant to be eligible for the federal death penalty.

The notice of intent also lists various aggravating factors that aid in justifying the death

penalty as the appropriate punishment. These include grave risk of death to additional persons, substantial planning and premeditation to cause death or commit an act of terrorism, and vulnerability of the victim (Milgrim is said to have been vulnerable due to infirmity).

The federal prosecutors also detail non-statutory aggra-

vating factors, such as a bias motive. The prosecutors declare that Rodriguez's actions were motivated by political, ideological, national, and religious bias, contempt, and hatred.

"He targeted individuals whom he perceived to have attended an event for young Jewish professionals, organized by the American Jewish Com-

mittee and hosted at the Capital Jewish Museum, to amplify the effect of his crimes," the filing says.

In technical terms, the prosecutors seek the death penalty for the following offenses on account of the offenses charged in Counts One, Four, and Five of the Superseding Indictment. In February 2026, Rodriguez

was indicted on 13 counts.

The prosecutors are saying that Count One (Murder of a Foreign Official) and Counts Four and Five (Discharge of a Firearm During a Crime of Violence and Causing Death Through the Use of a Firearm) are the charges for which the

See *SHOOTER*, Page 7



9770793913023 21  
18/05/2026 פוסט חיל