

Complex issues remain for ceasefire



Released Israeli hostage Evyatar David, front center, arrives Monday at Beilinson Hospital in Petah Tikva in central Israel. Menahem Kahana/AFP via Getty Images

Hostages, prisoners freed, but governance, Hamas’ future still unclear

By Melanie Lidman, Samy Magdy and Wafaa Shurafa
ASSOCIATED PRESS

JERUSALEM — Israel and Hamas moved ahead on a key first step of the tenuous Gaza ceasefire agreement on Monday by freeing hostages and prisoners, raising hopes that the U.S.-brokered deal might lead to a permanent end to the two-year war that ravaged the Palestinian territory. But thornier issues such as whether Hamas will disarm and who will govern Gaza — and the question of Palestinian statehood — remain unresolved, highlighting the fragility of an agreement that for now only pauses the deadliest conflict in the history of Israel and the Palestinians. For Israelis, the release of the 20 remaining living hostages brought elation and a sense of closure to a war many felt they

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A released Palestinian prisoner embraces a boy upon arrival Monday at Ramallah Cultural Centre in the West Bank city of Ramallah. Zain Jaafar/AFP via Getty Images

“Now it is time to translate these victories against terrorists on the battlefield into the ultimate prize of peace and prosperity for the entire Middle East.”

President Donald Trump

Program targets teachers unions in Texas

Conservative program hopes to lure educators

By Taylor Goldenstein
AUSTIN BUREAU

After years of working to dismantle diversity programs, ban books and rewrite classroom curriculum, conservatives are converging on a new battlefield in their push to overhaul public education: teachers unions. This spring, a right-leaning think tank called the Freedom Foundation launched the Teacher Freedom Alliance as a free, national membership program meant to incentivize public educators to jump ship from traditional teachers unions. The group, which is headquartered in Grapevine, encourages teachers to instead take advantage of its \$2 million liability insurance, professional development training and curriculum resources, including recommended learning from PragerU, a conservative group that produces free video content “upholding Judeo-Christian values.” The group is structured as a non-profit, so it doesn’t have to disclose its donors. “The message we want to send to teachers is that you don’t need the teachers unions,” said Aaron Withe, the group’s president as well as CEO of the Freedom Foundation. “They care about politics. What we care about is bettering our public education system (and) giving the teachers the resources that they need to help develop free, moral and upright citizens.” The group says it already has 13,000 members in Texas. Last month, Withe brought on former Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction Ryan Walters to helm the effort. Walters drew bipartisan criticism during his Oklahoma tenure for his advocacy for teaching the Bible in public school classrooms. Speakers at the group’s most recent summit, in July, included the founder of the conservative parental rights nonprofit Moms for Liberty and the former vice chair of President Donald Trump’s 1776 Commission. Event-goers wore red, white and blue and tossed bean bags into cornhole boards with the face of Randi Weingarten, president of the American Federation of Teachers, emblazoned into the wood, her angry open mouth serving as the target. The group said it was unable to

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Changing title to ‘secretary of war’ would require Congress

By Sig Christenson
STAFF WRITER

Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth has made a show of adopting a new title — “secretary of war” — and calling the agency he leads the “Department of War,” its pre-1949 name. At the Pentagon, workers have been replacing signs and nameplates to reflect the new monikers. Department stationery now bears the heading “Department of War,” and the agency’s web address has become www.wargov. On the social media platform X, Hegseth’s handle is @SecWar. “We are not the woke department anymore. We are not the Defense Department anymore,” Hegseth says in a video he posted to X on Friday. “We are the War

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Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth says the title secretary of war signifies the armed forces have moved beyond “woke” policies. Alex Brandon/Associated Press

INSIDE

Some Texas National Guard soldiers deployed to Chicago have been sent home for failing to meet fitness standards. A2

Unused funds went to ex-legislator’s charity

By Taylor Goldenstein
STAFF WRITER

Former state Rep. Chris Paddie had a \$450,000 dilemma. It was early 2022, and he had recently announced he would be stepping down from the Texas House. Like many outgoing members, the East Texas Republican still had unspent campaign cash he would need to offload in the coming years — in his case, nearly a half million dollars. Under Texas law, he could either return that money to donors, give it to political causes, donate it to a charity or surrender it to the state treasury. Paddie opted for charity, but not just any. The same day he resigned, he filed paperwork to launch his own nonprofit, and three weeks later he

transferred \$450,000 to the newly formed Paddie Family Foundation, according to state records. Paddie now chairs the organization, his wife is vice-chair and his adult son is secretary, according to tax filings. While transferring money to a person’s own charity is not explicitly outlawed, some ethics experts say it highlights a glaring loophole in state rules meant to prevent former officeholders from personally benefiting off of unused funds. Paddie is one of a handful of lawmakers, including a former House speaker, who’ve seeded such organizations with campaign cash in the last five years, according to a Hearst analysis. His donation is by far the largest. Andy Cates, a lawyer who specializes in Texas ethics law and has

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