

# The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

## Iran Will Suffer ‘Crushing Blow’ If It Attacks Israel, Netanyahu Warns

Raphael Ahren, Times of Israel, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2020

### Recap:

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned Iran against attacking Israel in response to the American killing of Iranian senior military commander Qassem Soleimani. “We’re standing against those who seek to kill us. Whoever tries to attack us will suffer a most crushing blow.”

### The Context:

- ★ Israel has long considered Iran its greatest enemy due to its nuclear intentions and support for terrorist proxies, like Hezbollah. In recent years, Israel has struck a number of Iranian and Hezbollah targets in Syria to prevent the transfer of precision-guided missiles [1].
- ★ American forces killed Soleimani in a drone strike on January 3<sup>rd</sup> at Baghdad International Airport. American officials blame Soleimani for countless American deaths and claim he had planned an imminent attack on American interests in the region. In retaliation, Iran fired 22 ballistic missiles at two American bases in Iraq [2], warning that it would turn Israeli cities “to dust” if the US retaliates.
- ★ President Donald Trump urged Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China to work alongside the US and constrain Iran’s nuclear ambitions. “They must now break away from the remnants of the Iran deal and we must all work together toward making a deal with Iran that makes the world a safer and more peaceful place [3].”
- ★ Israel, a fierce critic of the Iranian nuclear agreement signed in 2015, accuses Iran of trying to develop nuclear weapons and has repeatedly threatened military action to prevent that from happening. Israel is widely believed to possess its own arsenal of nuclear weapons, but neither confirms nor denies it [4].

### Conversation Points:

- ★ Why did Iran drag Israel into the issue?
- ★ What ramifications could Soleimani’s assassination have on Israel?
- ★ Was the limited damage of Iran’s counter strike calibrated to save face yet avoid triggering full-scale American retaliation?

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## Sandbags and Storms: Israel Braces for New Bout of Wintry Weather

Ynetnews, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2020

**Recap:**

Just days after a storm claimed the lives of four people, Israel is bracing for another bout of turbulent weather.

**The Context:**

- ✧ Following a five-year drought, rainfall in 2019 topped multi-year averages in most of the country. Although Israel's underground aquifers and the Sea of Galilee benefitted greatly, excessive rain this week caused low-lying roads, some of them major highways, to become impassable when more than 20% of the city's average annual precipitation fell within three hours [5].
- ✧ Two people died in Northern Israel after their cars were swept away by flooding and a couple drowned in Tel Aviv when their building's elevator filled with floodwater. Over 5,000 calls were made to Israel's emergency hotline, twice the usual volume, since Thursday morning [6].
- ✧ Tel Aviv locals blamed the city for ignoring numerous warnings about the area's infrastructure and failing to clear sewage drains. Tel Aviv Mayor Ron Huldai declined to take responsibility for the flooding, saying "no drains in the world" could have contained the "once-in-50-years" downpour [7]. In 2013, the Ayalon highway which cuts through Tel Aviv completely flooded due to a "once-in-100-year storm." It happened again in 2014 and 2018.

**Conversation Points:**

- ✧ How should Israel balance its disaster-preparedness policy between probability and reason?
  - ✧ Why has Israel experienced more flooding in recent years?
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## Record Number of People Visited Auschwitz in 2019

Ben Ariel, Israel National News, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2020

**Recap:**

A record 2.3 million visitors toured former Nazi death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau in 2019. The figure marks an increase of 170,000 from 2018, the previous record year.

**The Context:**

- ✧ One million Jews and 100,000 non-Jewish Poles, Roma and Soviet prisoners were killed by the Nazis at Auschwitz-Birkenau from 1940 to 1945. During War II, Nazi Germany invaded Poland and signed a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union to carve up the country [8]. Auschwitz is located in Poland.
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- ✧ Almost 400,000 Poles, 200,000 Britons, 120,000 Americans and 73,000 Germans toured the complex in 2019. Visits by Bill Gates and Leonardo DiCaprio raised awareness and helped the site reach one million Twitter followers.
- ✧ Last month, German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited Auschwitz for the first time as Chancellor, where she expressed Germany's "deep shame" and committed 60 million euros from the German government to help conserve the site.
- ✧ Poland's president refused to attend a commemoration in Israel later this month to mark the 75th anniversary of Auschwitz's liberation since, unlike Germany and Russia, he was not asked to speak at the event [9]. In 2018, the Polish government made it a crime to accuse the Polish nation of complicity in the Holocaust, setting off a diplomatic crisis after Israeli officials likened it to Holocaust denial.

### Conversation Points:

- ✧ Why is Germany allowed to speak at the commemoration and not Poland?
- ✧ Why is Holocaust remembrance important in today's environment?

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### Notes:

1. For Israel, Iran strike could be back on the table, Josef Federman, Washington Post, January 6<sup>th</sup> 2020
2. Iran's Supreme Leader Issues More Threats at U.S., Aresu Egbali and Sune Engel Rasmussen, Wall Street Journal, January, 8<sup>th</sup> 2020
3. Trump Backs Away from Further Military Conflict with Iran, Peter Baker, New York Times, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2020
4. For Israel, Iran strike could be back on the table, Josef Federman, Washington Post, January 6<sup>th</sup> 2020
5. A Super-rare Storm Just Smashed into Israel. Expect More, Ruth Schuster, Haaretz, January 7<sup>th</sup> 2020
6. One dead as heavy rains flood northern Israel, Jerusalem Post, January 8<sup>th</sup> 2020
7. Man, 71, killed in Binyamina flooding amid heavy rains; another man missing, Times of Israel, January 5<sup>th</sup> 2020
8. Polish president boycotts Holocaust remembrance in Israel, MONIKA SCISLOWSKA, ABC News, January 7<sup>th</sup> 2020
9. Ibid.

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**The Sabra Report** is a newsletter intended to stimulate conversation about Israel by recapping major events & providing context. Our conversation points are meant to encourage discussion amongst friends and family.

**The Sabra Report** is written by Irving Safdieh.

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