

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

UN Calls For 'Maximum Restraint' After Alleged Israeli Strike in Lebanon

The Guardian, August 26th 2019

Recap:

The United Nations (UN) called for maximum restraint after a reported drone strike on a Hezbollah stronghold near Beirut was blamed on Israel. Israel did not comment on the attack.

The Context:

- The drone strike destroyed an expensive and rare industrial mixing machine used to create solid fuel for weapons. It is believed to have set back Hezbollah's plans to develop long-range precision missiles by at least a year [1]. In addition to the Lebanese attacks, Israel also stands accused of a drone strike in Iraq that killed a leader of an Iranian-backed militia [2].
- Iran has long maintained a foothold in Lebanon via Hezbollah, which fought a month-long war with Israel in 2006 that killed 1,200 Lebanese and 160 Israelis. Israel is concerned about Iran's growing influence in the region and its vulnerability as Iran spreads its proxies across Iraq, Lebanon and Syria.
- Michel Aoun, Lebanon's President and Hezbollah's political ally, said the attacks were "a declaration of war" and that Lebanon seeks "peace not war [3]." Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah should "calm down" after Nasrallah said he would respond to the alleged attack [4].
- Hezbollah seeks to locally manufacture long-range precise missiles and upgrade its current stock of simple rockets but has not yet succeeded and possesses only a small number of precision-guided missiles. Hezbollah, considered a terrorist organization by Israel and the United States, is a major political actor in Lebanon and a key government backer in war-torn Syria [5].

Conversation Points:

- Is Lebanon a nation that seeks "peace not war" if Hezbollah is allowed to operate at the highest level of government?
- What could trigger Israel and Iran's proxy battles into a full-fledged war?
- Does this week's drone attack in the heart of Beirut mark a shift to a more aggressive defense policy for Israel?

Israel Aiding Brazil in Fight Against Devastating Fire in the Amazon

Marcus M. Gilban, Haaretz, August 27th 2019

Recap:

Israel will send firefighting aircraft and flame-retardant materials to help fight the Amazon fires. Under international pressure, Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro authorized the use of 44,000 troops to battle the fires, the most serious since the country began tracking them using official data.

The Context:

- Brazil has recorded more than 41,000 fires in the Amazon region so far this year – more than half from this month alone. Most are set by farmers clearing existing farmland, but the fires are attributed to deforestation as well [6].
- Ties between Israel and Brazil have warmed since Bolsonaro was elected last year. Bolsonaro's election by nearly 60% of voters put an end to 15 years of Brazilian government's openly hostile to Israel. Conservative and Christian, Bolsonaro became the first head of state to tour the Western Wall accompanied by an Israeli Prime Minister.
- In January, Israel sent a rescue team and equipment to Brazil in search of hundreds feared dead following the collapse of a dam. Netanyahu's pledge joins a chorus of international concern about the Amazon fires and leaders of the Group of Seven are preparing aid to help Brazil as well [7].

Conversation Points:

- Will Israel's public alignment with right wing governments backfire when the pendulum ultimately swings left?

New App Offers 24/7 Hebrew Lessons for Immigrants

Itamar Eichner, Ynetnews, August 8th 2019

Recap:

Two recent Israeli immigrants developed an app to help new arrivals tackle the challenge of learning Hebrew.

The Context:

- The classic ulpan program, a rite of passage for many immigrants to Israel, has remained stagnant since its inception. The free course is, in most cases, a five-month language immersion program that meets five days a week, making it virtually impossible to work simultaneously [8].
 - Aprende Hebreo, a smart-learning company that developed the app, was founded by two young immigrants from Latin America who struggled to learn the language in government run courses. "We developed this solution because we wanted anyone who immigrates to Israel to have a basic knowledge of Hebrew as well as the ability to study anytime and anywhere," said Francisco Marinaro, the company's co-founder.
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- Aprende Hebreo uses interactive video clips with speech, grammar and vocabulary exercises. The company's subscription-based business model costs just a few dollars a month and includes online support. The app currently teaches Hebrew to Spanish speakers but will soon support English, French and Russian. Lessons are available 24 hours a day.

Conversation Points:

- Will removing the ulpan experience from the classroom hinder networking opportunities for new immigrants?
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Notes:

1. [Report: Beirut strike will delay Hezbollah missile program by at least a year](#), JUDAH ARI GROSS, August 27th 2019
2. [Lebanon Accuses Israel of 2nd Attack in 2 Days](#), Ben Hubbard, New York Times, August 26th 2019
3. Ibid.
4. [HEZBOLLAH PLANNING 'CALCULATED STRIKE' AGAINST ISRAEL, BUT NOT WAR](#), REUTERS AUGUST 27th 2019
5. [Report: Beirut strike will delay Hezbollah missile program by at least a year](#), JUDAH ARI GROSS, August 27th 2019
6. [Netanyahu offers Brazil help in fighting devastating Amazon fires](#), Times of Israel, August 27th 2019
7. Ibid.
8. [Not Your Typical OOlpan: Program Helps New Immigrants Learn 'Real' Hebrew](#), Haaretz, December 24th 2015

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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