

# The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

## Roads Reopen, Trains Restart as Shaky Truce Takes Hold on Gaza Border

Judah Ari Gross, Times of Israel, February 25<sup>th</sup> 2020

### Recap:

Roads reopened and train service resumed in southern Israel as a ceasefire brokered by Egypt and the United Nations [1] appeared to hold between the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist group and Israel, following two days of intense fighting around the Gaza Strip.

### The Context:

- ✧ Earlier this week, terrorists fired over 90 rockets at southern Israel. Most projectiles shot toward populated areas were intercepted by the Iron Dome anti-missile system although one hit a playground in Sderot. 55,000 students stayed home on Tuesday and Israel closed its border crossings with Gaza while the IDF retaliated with several rounds of airstrikes against Islamic Jihad in Gaza.
- ✧ The violence erupted after Israeli troops killed an Islamic Jihad member planting explosives near its border fence with Gaza [2]. Israel's attempt to retrieve the corpse to negotiate for the release of two Israeli men, and the remains of two fallen Israeli soldiers held by Hamas, sparked outrage in Gaza.
- ✧ Officials and organizations across the political spectrum condemned the latest round of escalation saying, "we strongly support Israel's right to defend itself and its people against acts of terror [3]."
- ✧ Israel generally holds Hamas accountable for violence emanating from the Gaza Strip. Israel and Hamas have fought three wars Hamas seized control of Gaza in 2007.

### Conversation Points:

- ✧ What might push Israel and Gaza past the brink to all-out conflict?
- ✧ Why did Israel stop short of retaliating against Hamas during the latest round of escalations?
- ✧ Which of Israel's candidates is best-suited to protecting Israel's security?

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## Netanyahu Announces New Settlements Days Before Israeli Election

Oliver Holmes, The Guardian, February 25<sup>th</sup> 2020

**Recap:**

Netanyahu said he would restart a long-dormant project to build 3,500 homes for Jewish settlers in one of the most sensitive areas of the West Bank less than a week before Israel's third general election in under a year.

**The Context:**

- ✧ Since 1994, Israel has frozen plans to build settlements in an area right outside of Ma'ale Adumim due to objections from the United States and European allies who considered the project a threat to any future peace deal with Palestinians [4]. Netanyahu had pledged to advance building in the area, known as E1, after UNESCO recognized Palestine as a member state, but never made good on that pledge [5].
- ✧ Netanyahu has made similar pledges before previous elections. In April, he said he would annex all current settlements, and in September, he promised to claim sovereignty over a third of the West Bank. On Sunday, the Prime Minister's Office ordered 12 illegal outposts in the West Bank be connected to Israel's official power grid [6].
- ✧ Palestinians argue that the plan to develop E1 will virtually cut the West Bank into two sections and completely encircle Palestinian neighborhoods. Netanyahu claims he is the only candidate willing to expand Israel's presence beyond the Green Line [7].

**Conversation Points:**

- ✧ Would Netanyahu make such promises if he didn't need the support of the settler base?
  - ✧ Should Israel refrain from expansion until a permanent government is appointed?
  - ✧ What is the significance of adding illegal settlements to the state's power grid?
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## Virus Could Cost Israeli Economy Nis 14 Billion

Luke Tress, Globes, February 25<sup>th</sup> 2020

**Recap:**

The coronavirus could cause up to a 1% drop in Israel's economic output.

**The Context:**

- ✧ More than 80,000 people have been infected globally from the viral outbreak that began late last year in China. More than 2,600 people died in mainland China and the virus has also infiltrated dozens of other nations, including in the Middle East, where dozens of cases have now been reported in Iran.
  - ✧ Israeli health officials have severely restricted travel to and from China, South Korea, Japan, Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, Thailand and other countries to stem the spread into the country [8] including turning back as many as 130 South Korean passengers upon their arrival in Tel Aviv on Saturday [9].
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- ✧ Israel's national airlines, El Al, already lost \$50 million due to the crisis and tourism in particular will likely see a decline.

**Conversation Points:**

- ✧ What will make countries more susceptible to the impact of Coronavirus than others?
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**Notes:**

1. [Israel-Gaza ceasefire takes hold after two-day flare-up](#), Reuters, February 25<sup>th</sup> 2020
2. Ibid.
3. [Washington reacts to recent wave of rocket attacks in Israel](#), OMRI NAHMIAS, Jerusalem Post, FEBRUARY 25<sup>th</sup> 2020
4. [Netanyahu revives settlement plan opponents say cuts off East Jerusalem](#), Yahoo, February 25<sup>th</sup>, 2020
5. [Netanyahu says authorizing 3,500 settler homes in West Bank's E1](#), TOVAH LAZAROFF, Jerusalem Post, FEBRUARY 25<sup>th</sup> 2020
6. [Netanyahu says he's ordered 3,500-home project in contentious E1](#), JACOB MAGID, Times of Israel, February 25<sup>th</sup> 2020
7. Ibid.
8. [In last days of campaign, Netanyahu stops shaking hands over coronavirus fears](#), Times of Israel, February 25<sup>th</sup> 2020
9. [Coronavirus outbreak: Israel blocks arrivals from Seoul](#), Al Jazeera, February 23<sup>rd</sup> 2020

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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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