

BEIRUT (Dispatches) -- Qatar and Turkey have proposed a two-year plan allowing Hamas to gradually disarm, raising U.S. interest but facing strong Israeli opposition, Hebrew media reported on Monday. The initiative envisions weapons being handed to the Palestinian Authority or stored under international supervision, echoing Egypt's earlier plan and the IRA decommissioning model. The report said that U.S. officials have lately floated the idea of "decommissioning" weapons instead of a complete disarmament.

NY Times: Hamas Stronger After Two-Year War With Israel

GAZA CITY (Dispatches) -- Despite enduring a brutal two-year war with Israel, Hamas has emerged resilient and firmly in control of the Gaza Strip, according to reporting by The New York Times.

Analysts say the resistance group's rapid recovery underscores its organizational strength and enduring legitimacy among Palestinians.

The New York Times, in a report by Adam Rasgon, notes that even after suffering losses of key commanders and significant portions of its arsenal, Hamas quickly filled the void left by Israeli withdrawals under the October ceasefire.

Police forces loyal to the movement have returned to the streets, and security operations have stabilized local neighborhoods, ensuring continuity of governance and public order, the paper said.

Hamas leaders have also taken practical steps to sustain Gaza's economy, including imposing duties on certain imported goods, which officials say help fund essential services and maintain social stability. According to local merchants, the measures have been



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implemented in a controlled manner, reflecting the movement's ability to manage resources effectively while providing security for civilians.

Israeli and Arab intelligence sources cited in the New York Times confirm that Hamas has maintained significant infrastructure, including hidden depots and a substantial portion of its tunnel network.

"Hamas may have been struck

hard, but it is far from defeated," said Shalom Ben Hanan, a former senior Israeli intelligence official. He estimated that the group still commands approximately 20,000 trained fighters, highlighting its rapid replenishment of personnel and leadership after the conflict.

General Erez Wiener, formerly a senior official in the Israeli military, noted that Hamas has swiftly replaced fallen commanders, demonstrating remarkable or-

ganizational resilience. The group continues to oversee central governance in Gaza, including security services and municipal functions, ensuring that life continues with relative normalcy despite external pressures.

Hamas officials have emphasized their readiness to cooperate with technocratic bodies to administer Gaza responsibly while warning against any attempts to create a power vacuum.

Senior Hamas official Hossam Badran stated, "We are committed to preserving security and stability. Any disruption of governance would only threaten the well-being of our people."

Observers argue that the movement's ability to survive repeated military campaigns and maintain authority in Gaza defies external expectations and reflects the depth of local support.

The New York Times' reporting reinforces the view that Hamas is not only a resilient resistance movement but also a competent governing entity capable of safeguarding Gaza's residents amid ongoing regional challenges.

Syria a Year After Assad: Sectarian Terror, Lawlessness Under Jolani

DAMASCUS (Dispatches) -- A year after the fall of the Assad government, Syria remains trapped in chaos under the rule of Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), led by Abu Muhammad al-Jolani.

The extremist group, an affiliate of both Al-Qaeda and remnants of Daesh, has transformed the country into a theater of sectarian massacres, daily violence, and lawlessness, exposing the failure of the so-called "liberation" that once promised peace and justice.

HTS's rise to power has done little to alleviate insecurity. Across Idlib and other territories under its control, civilians live in fear of near-daily assassinations, summary executions, and arbitrary harassment. Alawite, Druze, and Chris-

tian communities remain under siege, with brutal reprisals targeting anyone perceived as opposed to the takfiri regime. Neighborhoods bear the scars of massacres, while displaced Syrians hesitate to return, fearing death at the hands of HTS militants.

The group's attempts at presenting a "legitimate" governance façade through feckless courts and temporary administrative councils cannot mask its violent ideology. Public trials of Assad loyalists or opponents are largely performative, staged for propaganda purposes, while genuine justice remains absent. Citizens report that HTS enforces its rule through terror, looting, and coercion rather than law, creating a climate where sur-

vival often depends on loyalty to the group or its local commanders.

Meanwhile, Israel continues near-daily strikes on HTS-controlled areas, exploiting the chaos to further occupation objectives, while the Western powers, including the United States and European countries, maintain a hypocritical embrace of the group.

Despite HTS's terrorist and takfiri past, these nations have offered diplomatic overtures, normalization talks, and aid, undercutting moral claims of fighting extremism. The contrast is stark: a regime responsible for sectarian killings and public terror is courted internationally, while ordinary Syrians bear the brunt of violence and occupation.

Observers note that HTS's governance has worsened the humanitarian crisis. Markets remain unstable, public services falter, and fear dictates daily life. Calls for transitional justice are ignored, leaving survivors of massacres, arbitrary arrests, and torture without recourse.

A year after Assad's removal, Syria has not been liberated; it has fallen into an oppressive hand. HTS's reign, compounded by Israeli aggression and the West's duplicity, has turned the promise of so-called freedom into a nightmare of sectarian terror, occupation, and international cynicism—leaving the Syrian people trapped under the shadow of extremism and hypocrisy.

Pakistan's New Army Chief Warns Taliban Amid Rising Tensions

ISLAMABAD (AP) — Pakistan's newly appointed armed forces chief called on Afghanistan's Taliban government on Monday to choose between maintaining ties with Islamabad or supporting the Pakistani Taliban, the militant group blamed for a surge in deadly attacks in recent years.

Gen. Asim Munir made his remarks at his headquarters in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, where he received a guard of honor from all three branches of the military, marking the launch of Pakistan's new joint military command.

His appointment was confirmed last week in what officials said would improve coordination among the army, navy and air force, amid shifting regional security dynamics.

Munir told officers that a "clear message" had been delivered to the Taliban government in Kabul: it must decide between Pakistan and "Fitna al-Khawarij," a term authorities use for the outlawed Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-

Taliban Pakistan, or TTP.

The TTP, though separate, is closely aligned with the Afghan Taliban and has been emboldened since the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in 2021.

Relations between the two neighbors have deteriorated since October, when several days of border clashes killed dozens of soldiers, civilians and suspected militants and wounded hundreds more. The violence followed Oct. 9 explosions in Kabul that Taliban authorities blamed on Pakistan. A Qatar-mediated ceasefire has largely held since October, though they failed to reach an agreement in November, despite holding three rounds of talks in Istanbul.

Munir has risen to prominence since earlier this year, when Pakistan said it repelled India in a four-day conflict. The two nuclear-armed rivals exchanged tit-for-tat strikes in May after India targeted militants inside Pakistan, accusing them of involvement in the massacre of 26

tourists in India-controlled Kashmir.

The confrontation eased only after U.S. President Donald Trump announced that India and Pakistan had agreed to a "full and immediate ceasefire."

Munir said the operations during the conflict have become a "textbook example" of future warfare. He also presented awards to Pakistan navy and air force personnel for their roles in the fighting.

Munir said that "India must remain under no illusion that Pakistan's next response will be even swifter and more severe." He said that Pakistan is a peace-loving country, "but no one will be allowed to test its resolve regarding sovereignty, territorial integrity, peace or stability."

Pakistan and India have a long history of bitter relations and have fought three of their wars over the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir since gaining independence from British rule in 1947.

Yemen on Verge of Fragmentation UAE-Saudi Proxy War in Yemen Escalates as Key Oil Sites Seized

SANA'A (Dispatches) -- UAE-backed Southern Transitional Council (STC) forces seized Yemen's Al-Aqlah oil facility in Shabwa on Sunday, marking a dramatic escalation in what critics describe as a destructive proxy contest between Abu Dhabi and Riyadh for territorial dominance.

Aden Independent TV quoted a military source confirming that STC units had taken full control of the strategic site, part of a broader sweep across Shabwa that has seen multiple key positions fall with little resistance.

The rapid STC advance coincides with a sudden Saudi pullback. Sana'a-based Al-Masirah TV reported that Saudi forces began evacuating personnel from Aden, with a cargo plane airlifting dozens of soldiers from coalition headquarters.

According to the outlet, Saudi authorities also moved to close Yemen's airspace, blocking civilian flights—steps analysts say reflect Riyadh's fury over recent STC maneuvers in Hadhramaut and Mahra, regions Saudi Arabia considers red line zones.

Reuters cited STC sources saying members of the Saudi-backed regime have also fled Aden. Riyadh has reportedly withdrawn troops from the presidential palace, symbolizing a retreat from a city long shared uneasily between the Saudi-supported regime and the UAE-backed separatists.

The STC's capture of Seiyun—Hadhramaut's second-largest city—under the banner of "Promising Fu-

ture" has further inflamed tensions. The takeover followed clashes with forces of the Saudi-supported Presidential Leadership Council (PLC). STC units have also pushed into Mahra, edging closer to Oman's border. Hadhramaut Protection Forces, a Saudi-aligned militia, called for "resistance" against what it labeled an STC attempt to invade the province.

Al-Masirah accused the STC of orchestrating raids, looting, and intimidation campaigns in recently seized areas, asserting that dozens of homes were stormed and residents coerced as the group entrenched itself as the "de facto authority." The Soufan Center noted that the speed of STC gains—with minimal fighting—has fueled speculation that some territories were quietly ceded.

Critics argue the latest developments expose the deeply corrosive ambitions of both Saudi Arabia and the UAE, who they say have spent years carving Yemen into spheres of influence to dominate its ports, oil fields, and coastal trade routes. Some analysts and Yemeni political factions further accuse Abu Dhabi of aligning its Yemen strategy with Israeli regional interests.

With the ceasefire collapsing on December 3 and the STC consolidating control over much of the territory it envisions for a breakaway southern state, Yemen's fragmentation appears to be accelerating—driven, observers say, not by local aspirations but by the competing geopolitical appetites of its powerful neighbors.

Netanyahu Rejects Pardon in Exchange for Political Retirement

TEL AVIV (Dispatches) -- Israeli prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu bluntly rejected the prospect of resigning from political life in exchange for a pardon, doubling down on a political survival strategy that critics say has plunged the occupying regime deeper into a constitutional and moral crisis.

Pressed by a reporter during a joint press conference with German Chancellor Friedrich Merz, Netanyahu responded simply: "No." His curt refusal reinforced what detractors describe as his relentless determination to cling to office despite facing multiple corruption cases and a deeply fractured public.

Netanyahu attempted to deflect attention, joking that reporters were "very concerned with my future," while insisting that voters—not prosecutors—would ultimately decide his fate. He went on to praise Israel's cooperation with Germany, comments that analysts say were designed to project normalcy and leadership while his own legitimacy remains under intense scrutiny.

Netanyahu stands accused in three major corruption cases, charged with fraud, bribery, and breach of trust—crimes that could carry a decade-long prison sentence. His trial, paused during Israel's devastating genocidal war on Gaza, resumed in December 2023. Opponents accuse him of exploiting wartime chaos to delay accountability and shield himself

from legal consequences.

Late last month, the embattled prime minister formally requested a presidential pardon from Isaac Herzog, submitting over 100 pages of legal documents. According to Axios, Netanyahu even appealed to U.S. President Donald Trump for help securing clemency. Trump subsequently sent a letter urging Herzog to pardon Netanyahu—an intervention that critics blasted as inappropriate foreign meddling in Israel's so-called judicial process.

Herzog, pressed on the matter, stressed that Israel's "legal" system—not external political pressure—would determine the outcome, vowing to consider the request "on the merits."

Opposition leader Yair Lapid insisted that no pardon should be granted unless Netanyahu admits guilt and permanently leaves politics. Polling for the Times of Israel suggests the public agrees: most Israeli settlers oppose a pardon without an admission of wrongdoing.

Yet Netanyahu's inner circle remains defiant. His aides told Hebrew media he "will not admit guilt," while his attorney Amit Hadad argued a pardon would allow Netanyahu to "devote all his time and energy" to leading the occupying regime.

For Netanyahu's critics, this is precisely the problem: they argue the prime minister is fighting for his own political survival at any cost.