

'Likud politicians acting to thwart gov't appointment of northern 'czar'

• By ELIAV BREUER

Former Likud MK Osnat Mark is acting to thwart the recent appointment of Diaspora Affairs Ministry Director General Avi Cohen Scali to lead a directorate within the Prime Minister's Office responsible for the rehabilitation of the North, according to a report by KAN News on Wednesday evening.

KAN News alleged that Mark, widely known as a confidante of Sarah Netanyahu, the prime minister's wife, wants the position for herself. KAN added on Thursday morning that Likud MK Ketzi Shitrit was also acting to thwart the appointment, reportedly because she wanted it for her son, Moshe Shitrit, a former deputy mayor of Beit Shemesh.

KAN added that one of the arguments against Cohen Scali, also a resident of Beit Shemesh, is that he supported incumbent mayor Aliza Bloch rather than a candidate preferred by the Likud. Bloch lost the recent election.

Channel 12 and other Hebrew media outlets later reported the same news.

The report was not confirmed. Shitrit denied the accusations, and her son told KAN he would not accept the position even if offered.

The prime minister's office did not respond to repeated queries on the issue.

The report came weeks after a



A FIREFIGHTER takes cover in Kiryat Shmona yesterday as sirens warn of incoming rockets launched from southern Lebanon. (Jalaa Marey/AFP via Getty Images)

Channel 13 investigation found that Transportation Minister Miri Regev had given preferential treatment to mayors who supported her in the Likud primary election. The Israel Police opened an investigation into Regev. KAN's report also came after National Unity leaders MK Benny Gantz and MK Gadi Eisenkot accused Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

of prioritizing political considerations over national security.

Cohen Scali's appointment was made public on Tuesday, and the report that Likud politicians were acting to thwart it drew broad condemnation.

The denunciations came from within the government, including Development of the Negev and Galilee and National Resilience Minister Yitzhak Wasser-

lauf and Aliyah and Integration Minister Ofir Sofer; from the opposition, including Gantz and Yair Golan, the newly elected leader of the Labor party; and a forum of mayors from cities and towns in the North.

In a letter to Netanyahu, the forum of northern mayors wrote, "Our residents have been removed from their homes for over eight months, do not sleep

at night, and are losing their minds out of concern."

"Business owners, tourist attractions, and farmers have already collapsed, and the government is playing games! The role of the director to implement the plan for [rehabilitation of] the North is significant. We demand that Mr. Cohen Scali remain in his position," the mayors wrote.



IDF TROOPS operating in Rafah yesterday. (IDF)

LEBANON ROCKET FIRE CONTINUES

IDF kills Hamas, Hezbollah commanders

• By YONAH JEREMY BOB and Jerusalem Post Staff

The IDF killed one senior Hezbollah and one senior Hamas commander on Thursday in different air strikes in the North and the South.

The Hezbollah commander was Faisal Ibrahim, who ran operational activities in the Jouaiya district of southern Lebanon.

He was killed in an IDF airstrike on a vehicle in the town of Deir Kifa in southern Lebanon.

Ibrahim was responsible for planning and executing terror attacks against Israel and in recent months promoted Hezbollah's consolidation in southern Lebanon while trying to improve the organization's ground combat activities, according to the IDF.

Concurrently, IAF fighter jets attacked Hezbollah's air defense system in the Rihan area of Lebanon, systems which have regularly posed a threat to IDF aircraft operating in Lebanese skies.

Hezbollah kept up its rocket attacks on northern Israel with reports of around 20 rockets and some 10 rocket sirens.

At press time, the IDF had not confirmed the operations.

Ahmed Hassan Salame Alsauarka was the Hamas commander killed in a joint operation by the IDF and Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency,) with the Air Force taking the lead.

According to the IDF, Alsauarka was a squad commander in the Nukhba Forces who participated in the massacres in southern Israel on October 7. Moreover, Alsauarka was a Hamas sniper who led sniper activity in the Beit Hanun region of northern Gaza, taking part in multiple attacks on IDF soldiers.

Following an extensive search and tracking him over time to find the right moment to strike, the IDF eliminated him in Beit Hanun, while avoiding harming Palestinian civilians.

Meanwhile, IDF troops continued to operate in the central Gaza Strip, with IDF aerial and artillery forces destroying a Hamas mortar position. In addition, two terrorists who posed a threat to IDF troops in the area were targeted using an Iron Sting precision missile.

In Rafah, troops continued precise, intelligence-based operational activity in the Rafah area. Over the past 24 hours, the troops eliminated several terrorists in close-quarter encounters and destroyed more Hamas rocket launchers.

The IDF announced that two soldiers were seriously wounded in fighting in the southern Gaza Strip and that they were evacuated for medical treatment.

Despite all of these reports, there was no sign of any additional large battles in Rafah, leaving open the possibility that most of Hamas's forces there escaped before the IDF invasion.

To date, only around 550 of a 4,000 to 8,000-strong Hamas force have been reported as killed by the IDF.

Hostage families ask court for probe whether PM's criminal trials affected war decisions

• By ELIAV BREUER

agreement accordingly.

A group of family members of hostages and parents of soldiers and reservists petitioned the High Court of Justice on Thursday to demand that the Attorney General's Office check whether Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's war-time decisions were affected by his ongoing criminal trial.

The petitioners, represented by Adv. Dafna Holtz Lechner wrote that they had sent a letter on May 8 in which they inquired about whether the prime minister's conflict of interest agreement, which he signed in 2020, applied to his decision-making regarding the war. The petitioners said that they had not received an answer and demanded that the High Court direct the attorney to answer immediately.

The May 8 letter to the attorney-general was based on a High Court ruling days before. The ruling turned down a petition similar to the current one but noted that if the Attorney-General, Gali Baharav-Miara, believed that there was a conflict of interest between the prime minister running the war and his criminal trial, she would need to update the

The petitioners argued, for example, that Netanyahu had requested several delays in his criminal trial due to his being busy running the war. This showed that the prime minister had an incentive to prolong the war as a means to delay his trial.

Further, the petitioners said in a statement that they had also argued that they were the citizens most affected by decisions regarding the war and that decisions by the prime minister could impact them immensely regarding either the length and scope of reserve duty, the danger to soldiers, the well being of the hostages or all the above.

Holtz Lechner said in the statement, "We have heard politicians and security officials saying every day that in issues that are fateful for the State of Israel and its citizens, Netanyahu has acted based on personal considerations and not on the national interest. If this is indeed the case, the attorney-general must act with utmost urgency to respond to the request by those who paid and continue to pay the price of the failure [on October 7] and the ongoing war."

PIKUACH NEFESH

קונגרס הרבנים למען השלום
The Rabbinical Congress for Peace

פיקוח נפש

ב"ה

Do we have the courage to admit that we were wrong?

By Rabbi Avrohom S. Lewin

Exec. Director of The Rabbinical Congress for Peace

In the true spirit of Israeli tradition, as the fire rages around us, as our enemies attack on every front, as our finest soldiers fall or are wounded in battle, and antisemitism runs rampant through the world, we continue to loudly and fervently engage in divisiveness, protests, and baseless hatred - to our great shame and disgrace. And above all, we continue to ask the same question, on every street corner and in every newsroom, "Who is to blame?" All the while, we hold our axes high, enthusiastically waiting to sever the heads of the guilty parties, as the crowd cheers on.

We, the Israeli members of the Rabbinical Congress for Peace, warned about the potential for disaster long before October 7th, in newspaper ads and through every possible platform. We warned about "the terrible situation that has developed in the past year, the painful division and incitement among Jews, happening in a brutal and disproportionate manner beyond anything had appeared before, reflecting the words of the Mishnah (*Avot* 3:2): "A man would devour his fellow alive."

"Like the woman in the judgment of Solomon, who enthusiastically cried, 'Cut him in two,' so our Jewish brothers rush out enthusiastically to destroy, tear down and annihilate those who think slightly differently than them - all the while ignoring the warnings of security experts that such blatant polarization and anarchy severely harm Israel's security and strengthen and encourage our enemies, G-d forbid.

"In the meantime, our enemies rub their hands together in glee. Everything that they have been unable to do for decades, we do to ourselves, while they wait quietly for the right moment to carry out their murderous intentions - G-d forbid that it should ever happen.

"A cry bursts forth from the depths of our hearts. It pierces the heavens: 'Master of the World! If we do not come to our senses and extinguish this burning enmity that consumes us, there will be nothing left to save!'"

We must take stock of what has happened to us and how it happened. But asking "Who is to blame" will neither help nor change our current situation.

The proper question to ask right now is: "What is to blame?!"

What did we do wrong, that led to the greatest disaster for the Jewish people since the Holocaust?!

What is the "underlying concept" that brought us to such terrible ruin!

How did we turn from being a nation that defeated massive armies on all fronts in six days, to one that collapses before a terrorist organization in six hours?

Why is the entire world against us even after our enemies brutally abuse us, at the same time as we provide them with food, water, and electricity?

How did we reach a situation where our enemies do with us as they please, holding hostage large areas in the north and south, while our hands are helplessly tied?

These questions need to be asked honestly and candidly, in every newsroom and in every public and governmental committee. If they are not being asked, it is because we lack the courage to admit the answer, loud and clear, to ourselves and to the whole world.

The Torah of Israel declared, warned, and pleaded with us: The halacha in the Shulchan Aruch (*Orach Chaim* 329) (Jewish Code of Law) unequivocally determines - Oslo is a disaster. The Disengagement is a disaster. Agreeing to two states is a disaster! In the words of the Shulchan Aruch- "doing so makes it easy for our enemies to conquer the land."

The conduct of the Israeli government and the security establishment over the past decades is the reason for the terrible situation we are in today. Frighteningly, the negotiations, withdrawals, and concessions to our enemies, which continue even today, may lead to far more severe danger, may it never happen!

The first step - the very least we should do to correct the situation and engage in true soul-searching - is to declare now, clearly:

The conduct of Israel since Oslo has been a tragic and terrible mistake. From now on, there will be no more negotiations, no concessions, or further withdrawals. We will never agree to the "two state solution." T he Israeli security forces alone will control all Israeli territories with a strong hand, to ensure the safety of the people of Israel in their land!

The time has come to heed what the Torah of Israel - the Torah of Life - has to tell us. The time has come to unite around the eternal truth of the Jewish people. Only when we finally attain true unity - one nation, in one land - will we receive the blessing of "Bless us, our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Your countenance."