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## December 24, 2009

### Middle East News: World Press Roundup

The LA Times says that Israel is building a barrier along its border with Egypt. Several sources look back at the Gaza war one year on, as Hamas says it's ready for another conflict. Reports suggest that Hamas may be flexible on the deportation of released prisoners, and Ha'aretz says that it is likely to accept Israel's latest offer. Israeli cabinet minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer says that jailed Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti should be released, but not in the context of a deal with Hamas. A leadership battle threatens to split Israel's Kadima party. A UN official accuses the international community of the "tragic" failure in Gaza. A YNet commentary says that settlers are on a collision course with mainstream Israeli society. More young Israelis pledge to disobey orders to evacuate settlements. West Bank shepherds say their livelihood is threatened by drought and occupation. The Guardian reports on Christmas in Bethlehem under the shadow of the separation barrier, as Palestinian Christians from Gaza pray for peace. Neve Gordon says Israel is determined to break nonviolent Palestinian resistance in the occupied West Bank.

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<sup>[5]</sup>

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### ISRAEL: Good neighbors make fences

**Article Author(s):** Batsheva Sobelman

**Media Outlet:** The Los Angeles Times

**Article Type:** Blog

**Date:** December 23, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2009/12/israel-good-neighbors-make...> [6]

While Egypt's steel barricade draws both ire and fire from Gaza, it isn't the only neighbor fencing in its property. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu intends to build a fence along the country's border with Egypt.

The border sprawls about 143 miles through sand-land and mountainous terrain, and with the exception of the official crossing at Taba, it is wide open. It is largely a peaceful area, but in recent years it has become increasingly exploited by a wide range of factors that are evolving into a real threat.

## **Postwar Gaza: Scars frozen, Mideast at an impasse**

**Article Author(s):** Karin Laub

**Media Outlet:** Associated Press

**Date:** December 23, 2009

**Source Link(s):**

[http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gmXHE59FHWjDID6yB0iK31hd\\_RAAD9...](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gmXHE59FHWjDID6yB0iK31hd_RAAD9...) [7]

Gaza's scars have been frozen in place since Israel waged war a year ago to subdue Hamas and stop rockets from hitting its towns. Entire neighborhoods still lie in rubble, and traumatized residents can't rebuild their lives.

A man who lost two daughters and his home can't visit his surviving 4-year-old girl in a Belgian hospital because Gaza's borders remain sealed. A 15-year-old struggles to walk on her artificial limbs, while dozens of other war amputees still await prostheses.

## **Reports: Hamas flexible on prisoner expulsion**

**Media Outlet:** Ma'an News Agency

**Date:** December 24, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=249260> [8]

Hamas is leaning toward accepting Israel's demand to deport more than 100 prisoners in an exchange deal that would secure the release of a captured soldier, news reports said on Thursday.

The Lebanese daily Al-Mustaqbal reported on Wednesday that Hamas would allow 123 prisoners to be deported in an exchange that would also see the release of some 1,000 Palestinians from Israeli prisons.

## Prisoners' families say deportation better than nothing

**Media Outlet:** Ma'an News Agency

**Date:** December 23, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=249125> <sup>[9]</sup>

Rumors of a prisoner release are notoriously hard on families of the detained. As the back-and-forth between Israel and Gaza factions continues at a heated pace, Ma'an spoke with the wives and children of some of Palestine's most prominent detainees.

Abla Sa'adat is the wife of one of the nine prisoners identified by Israeli media earlier in the week as one of the nine high-profile prisoners whose release the swap deal depends on.

## Israeli minister: Barghouthi must be freed with or without Shalit

**Media Outlet:** Ma'an News Agency

**Date:** December 24, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=249174> <sup>[10]</sup>

Israel should release imprisoned Fatah leader Marwan Barghouthi, with or without a prisoner exchange deal, Israel's Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said on Wednesday.

"I call to release Marwan Barghouthi not in the deal with Hamas. These are two entirely different issues," he told a news conference in East Jerusalem's American Colony hotel.

Ben-Eliezer has called for Barghouthi's release in the past.

## Hamas likely to accept Israel offer on Shalit within days

**Article Author(s):** Yuval Azoulay

Avi Issacharoff

Jack Khoury

**Media Outlet:** Haaretz

**Date:** December 24, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1137297.html> <sup>[11]</sup>

Hamas announced on Wednesday that the German mediator involved in the talks to release kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit had delivered Israel's offer.

Hamas' deputy political leader, Moussa Abu Marzouk, said that top officials in the group were

studying Israel's offer and would respond to the German mediators within days.

Media outlets in the Gaza Strip said that a Hamas delegation would head from Gaza to Cairo on Thursday, and then to Damascus, where they would meet with members of Hamas' political wing there to discuss their response to what Israel has put on the table.

## **Netanyahu asks Livni, Kadima to join unity government**

**Article Author(s):** Jonathan Lis  
Mazal Mualem  
Barak Ravid

**Media Outlet:** Haaretz

**Date:** December 24, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1137429.html> <sup>[12]</sup>

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu asked opposition leader Tzipi Livni, the chairwoman of Kadima, on Thursday to join a unity government. Livni did not immediately reject the offer, and added that if the offer is real "I always said that it is up for discussion."

Livni clarified that any decision regarding Kadima's moves will be taken by the party after thorough discussion and not by her alone.

Netanyahu told Livni that Kadima's addition to the government was crucial in light of the local and global challenges facing Israel today.

## **Year after Gaza war, Hamas says ready to fight Israel again**

**Media Outlet:** Reuters

**Date:** December 24, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1137451.html> <sup>[13]</sup>

One year after Israel's offensive on the Gaza Strip, the spokesman for Hamas' armed wing said this week that the Islamist group would not shirk away from a new battle with Israel.

"We do not wish for war. We wish for calm and peace for our people," Abu Ubaida, Izz el-Deen al-Qassam Brigades spokesman told Reuters.

"But if any battle is imposed on us, we are ready with all our manpower and equipment to confront any Zionist war, any crime and any attack regardless of scale," he added.

## UN expert slams 'tragic' international failure in Gaza

**Media Outlet:** Agence France Presse (AFP)

**Date:** December 23, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3824428,00.html> <sup>[14]</sup>

A UN human rights expert on Wednesday condemned a "tragic failure" by major powers to end Israel's blockade of the Gaza Strip or probe alleged war crimes committed during a military offensive one year ago.

In Geneva, the UN Special Rapporteur for the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Richard Falk, urged Israel's European and North American allies to press for the immediate end of the blockade "backed up by a credible threat of economic sanctions."

## 2 types of Zionism

**Article Author(s):** Gadi Taub

**Media Outlet:** Ynetnews

**Article Type:** Opinion

**Date:** December 24, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3823962,00.html> <sup>[15]</sup>

Based on recent reports, it appears that the IDF is preparing to enforce the construction freeze in Judea and Samaria as if it was dealing with a strike against Iran's nuclear sites.

## Israel teenagers pledge 'no settlement evacuation'

**Media Outlet:** BBC News

**Date:** December 24, 2009

**Source Link(s):** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8429571.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8429571.stm) <sup>[16]</sup>

About 200 Israeli teenagers have pledged to disobey any orders to evacuate Jewish settlements during their military service.

The letter sent to Defence Minister Ehud Barak was signed by young people about to be drafted into the Israeli Defence Force.

Jewish law as written in the Torah forbids the dismantling of Jewish-built homes, the letter said.

The government has ordered a 10-month lull in building in the West Bank.

"We consider utilizing the army for political ends and for warfare against Jews an existential

danger and a destruction of the military," the letter said.

## **West Bank shepherds fear for their flocks**

**Article Author(s):** Bethany Bell

**Media Outlet:** BBC News

**Date:** December 24, 2009

**Source Link(s):** [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle\\_east/8426067.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/8426067.stm) [17]

According to the Christian tradition, shepherds were the first to visit the infant Christ.

These days, about 12,000 families still rely on herding in the West Bank.

The United Nations is warning that their livelihood is under threat, because of drought and Israeli restrictions on their movements.

A flock of sheep and some scrawny goats huddle in a rough stone enclosure on a barren hillside south of Hebron.

They belong to Mohammed Abu Ali and his wife Fatima, and their family.

They live in a cave next to the sheep pen.

Fatima says the animals are all they have.

## **Scars of conflict still raw in Gaza**

**Article Author(s):** Tobias Buck

**Media Outlet:** The Financial Times

**Date:** December 24, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d3a841f0-f02b-11de-833d-00144feab49a.html> [18]

Until the day the soldiers came, Majed Abdullah al-Atamneh counted himself a fortunate man. He owned six houses on the eastern fringes of Abed Rabbo village in the northern Gaza Strip, three taxis and several acres of land planted with olive and lemon trees. All his sons and their families lived in the family compound, 56 men, women and children in total.

## **Bethlehem's modern nativity scene ? crib, wise men and separation wall**

**Article Author(s):** Rory McCarthy

**Media Outlet:** The Guardian

**Date:** December 23, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/23/bethlehem-nativity-scene-separation-...> [19]

The shelves of Bethlehem's tourist shops this winter are filled with the gifts you might expect. There are countless carved olive-wood crucifixes, angels and last suppers. But there are also unexpected nativity scenes complete with Joseph, Mary, crib, wise men and large Israeli concrete wall with military watchtower.

## Breaking Palestine's peaceful protest

**Article Author(s):** Neve Gordon

**Media Outlet:** The Guardian

**Article Type:** Opinion

**Date:** December 23, 2009

**Source Link(s):** <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/dec/23/israel-palestinian-peace-mov...> [20]

"Why," I have often been asked, "haven't the Palestinians established a peace movement like the Israeli Peace Now?"

The question itself is problematic, being based on many erroneous assumptions, such as the notion that there is symmetry between the two sides and that Peace Now has been a politically effective movement. Most important, though, is the false supposition that Palestinians have indeed failed to create a pro-peace popular movement.

## Peace high on Gazans? Christmas wish list

**Article Author(s):** Omar Karmi

**Media Outlet:** The National

**Date:** December 24, 2009

**Source Link(s):**

<http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20091224/FOREIGN/712239862/...> [21]

Father Jorge Hernandez was busy and distracted. Yesterday was the third day he had spent composing his Christmas sermon, and he hadn't finished it yet.

?Good intentions are the foundation for hope,? the Latin Catholic priest said his message would be. ?Hope is something we have to pray for in Gaza, where we celebrate Christmas with mixed feelings, remembering the war last year.?

Father Jorge, an Argentinian, was appointed in May to lead Gaza's small Catholic congregation of a few hundred and was not here during the war. But he can still see, he said,

the ?psychological impact?.

## Israeli Consensus Cracks over Shalit

**Article Author(s):** Rachelle Kliger

**Media Outlet:** The Media Line

**Date:** December 23, 2009

**Source Link(s):** [http://www.themedialine.org/news/news\\_detail.asp?NewsID=27482](http://www.themedialine.org/news/news_detail.asp?NewsID=27482) [22]

Every day for the past three and a half years, campaigners have sat at a makeshift tent outside the official prime minister's residence in Jerusalem in protest, cajoling passersby to sign a petition urging the release of captured soldier Gilad Shalit.

At first, the campaigners were loud and aggressive. People who passed the tent without signing would get called back, stickers and fliers thrown into their faces. Not signing, the campaigners explained, was simply not an option.

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[8] <http://www.maannnews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=249260>

[9] <http://www.maannnews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=249125>

[10] <http://www.maannnews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=249174>

[11] <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1137297.html>

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[15] <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3823962,00.html>

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[18] <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/d3a841f0-f02b-11de-833d-00144feab49a.html>

- [19] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/dec/23/bethlehem-nativity-scene-separation-wall>
- [20] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2009/dec/23/israel-palestinian-peace-movement>
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