



Jerusalem 4:38  
Toronto 5:18

## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel*  
*From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of*  
*Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

### Commentary...

#### **Netanyahu is Correct: Gaza cannot be Rebuilt until Hamas is Disarmed** By Moshe Phillips

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's firm stand against allowing any reconstruction efforts in Gaza until the "disarming of Hamas and demilitarization of Gaza's weapons and tunnels" is completed is not about being cruel or punishment, but is about saving innocent lives. This position is far too often misrepresented by Israel's critics as harsh or punitive. In reality, it reflects a hard-earned lesson drawn from years of experience confronting a terrorist organization that has repeatedly exploited humanitarian gestures to advance its war against civilians.

Israeli officials have long been justifiably concerned about the danger of dual-use items such as cement. On the one hand, cement can be used for innocent purposes, such as home construction, when it is in the hands of a peace-seeking, trustworthy authority. But in the hands of untrustworthy elements, such as the Hamas regime that has ruled the Gaza Strip for two decades, cement has been used for other purposes, including the construction of terror tunnels. This is why no rebuilding can take place as long as Hamas remains.

This concern is not theoretical. Israel has fought multiple wars against Hamas long before 2023, and each round followed a similar pattern. After "Operation Cast Lead" in 2008-09, construction materials, including cement, were allowed back into Gaza under international supervision. Hamas subsequently diverted significant quantities of those materials into reinforcing underground military infrastructure rather than rebuilding civilian homes. The same thing was repeated following "Operation Pillar of Defense" in 2012, as Hamas continued expanding its terror-tunnel network and rocket-production capabilities.

The pattern was even more pronounced after "Operation Protective Edge" in 2014, when Israel uncovered dozens of cross-border attack tunnels, many reinforced with concrete and equipped with electricity, ventilation and communications systems. These tunnels were not defensive. Hamas designed these tunnels to infiltrate Israeli territory and facilitate kidnappings and mass murder of civilians. Yet even after that war, international pressure led to renewed flows of construction materials into Gaza—materials that once again found their way into Hamas's military rebuilding efforts.

Netanyahu's comments reflect this accumulated experience: "I'm hearing even now claims that Gaza's reconstruction will be allowed before demilitarization; this will not happen." This is not a negotiating posture or political rhetoric. It is a clear statement of policy shaped by repeated evidence that reconstruction without demilitarization only guarantees the next round of attacks from Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Concrete for the foundation of a building can also be used to make tunnels, as Hamas has demonstrated again and again. Israel is the only country in the world whose next-door neighbors have built dozens of tunnels into its territory to perpetrate massacres of civilians. No other nation would be expected to tolerate a situation in which its neighbor systematically digs beneath its borders in preparation for deadly attacks.

Israel fought previous wars against Hamas and PIJ before Oct. 7, 2023. But that invasion of and massacre in southern Israel only happened because the international community put cement into Hamas's hands, enabling it to build its sophisticated terror tunnel network. The scale, coordination and brutality of the Oct. 7 attack did not materialize overnight. It was the result of years of preparation made possible by materials sent and collected under the banner of

reconstruction.

Cement is not the only problem. Other tightly controlled or banned materials have also been exploited by Hamas. Electronics, wiring and commercial components intended for civilian use have

been diverted into rocket-guidance systems, detonators and communications equipment. Metal piping, steel and even unexploded ordnance have been repurposed into rockets and explosives. Hamas has demonstrated a consistent ability to transform civilian goods into weapons, turning humanitarian aid into a force multiplier for terror.

These facts alone should rule out rebuilding Gaza until Hamas is completely out of the picture. To ignore these facts is not an act of compassion; it is dangerous denial. Hamas must be dismantled. Rebuilding while Hamas remains armed and in control would not bring peace or stability. It would simply provide the terrorist organization with the raw materials it needs to prepare for the next massacre at the expense of both Israeli and Palestinian civilians.

There is nothing humanitarian about rebuilding Gaza while leaving Hamas armed and in control. Demilitarization is not a barrier to reconstruction; it is the safeguard that ensures reconstruction does not once again end in the mass murder of Israeli civilians.

(JNS Feb 2)

#### **Courage is being Scared to Death, but Saddling up Anyway**

By Yuval David

Zionists must step forward—not defensively, not apologetically, but proudly and thoughtfully. This is not a moment for silence or retreat. It is a time that demands clarity of language, depth of understanding, and the confidence to speak and act with conviction.

Zionism has always required courage; however, this moment is an era of ever-increasing anti-Jewish hatred and bigotry. It calls not only to fight forward against it, but also requires literacy and resolve.

I am a Zionist not because it is fashionable or convenient, but because Zionism is rooted—deeply and continuously—in Jewish peoplehood, religion, history and lived experience. It is not a modern political invention imposed onto Judaism. Rather, it is the contemporary expression of an ancient and enduring Jewish understanding of who we are, where we come from and how we survive as a people.

At its core, Zionism is the belief that the Jewish people, like all peoples, have the right to self-determination, self-governance, safety, protection and continuity in our ancestral homeland. While political Zionism emerged in response to modern antisemitism, the idea of Zion predates modern politics by millennia. The Land of Israel has never been merely geographic. It is a civilizational anchor—integral to Jewish religion, culture, law, language, philosophy, memory and identity.

Jewish religious texts are unequivocal on these points. The Torah establishes a covenant not only between God and the Jewish people, but between the people and the land. Biblical narratives of exile and return are not metaphors; they are foundational frameworks for Jewish history and theology.

The Psalms mourn displacement ("If I forget thee, O Jerusalem ...") while the prophets speak of return, renewal and restoration. Jewish prayer, recited daily across continents for centuries, orients Jews toward Jerusalem. Prayers throughout the Shabbat services every week include pleas for rebuilding, restoration and maintaining our holy sites and land throughout the Amidah prayer. Birkat Hamazon, the prayers after every meal, includes thanks for the land of our ancestors that has subsequently been given to us. We close Passover seders and Yom Kippur—the most sacred moments in the Jewish calendar—with the words, "Next year in Jerusalem."

Throughout our prayers and religion, there are references and reminders that our peoplehood is defined by our interconnected religion, faith, belief, philosophy and land. This is not symbolism. It

is continuity.

History reinforces what faith affirms. After the Babylonian conquest, and later, the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple, Jews were dispersed but never detached. Rabbinic literature preserved legal, ethical and communal frameworks rooted in the land, even while Jews lived elsewhere. Medieval Jewish thinkers—from Saadia Gaon to Judah Halevi—wrote explicitly about the centrality of the Land of Israel to Jewish spiritual and national life. Halevi described Jewish existence outside the land as incomplete, a soul separated from its body.

Across centuries and continents, Jews consistently articulated this connection. Jewish communities in Spain, Yemen, Poland, North Africa and Persia wrote letters, poems, legal rulings and philosophical works affirming Zion as the center of Jewish peoplehood. Jewish weddings ended with remembrance of Jerusalem. Homes were oriented toward it. Calendars followed the agricultural cycles of religion and land. Even in exile, Jewish life remained anchored to the land.

The concept of Herut Zion—the “freedom of Zion”—emerged not as a rejection of exile communities, but as a refusal to accept exile as destiny. Long before modern nationalism, Jews understood themselves as a people bound by shared history, responsibility and future. Modern Zionism did not replace this inheritance; it translated ancient longing into political agency at a moment when Jews were again reminded—through pogroms, exclusion, and ultimately, the Holocaust—that safety without sovereignty is fragile.

Zionism has evolved because the Jewish people have always evolved. It has taken religious and secular forms, socialist and liberal expressions, conservative and traditionalist leanings, pragmatic and visionary paths. But its foundation has never changed: Jewish peoplehood rooted in land, history and continuity. Attempts to sever Zionism from Judaism or Jewish identity are not acts of critique; they are acts of historical erasure.

Today, Zionism is routinely distorted, portrayed as incompatible with democracy or human rights. This inversion depends on stripping Zionism of its religious, historical and indigenous context while holding Jews to standards imposed on no other people. Israel, like any democracy, is imperfect. But Zionism is not a demand for perfection; it is a demand for legitimacy.

As a journalist, news commentator, socio-political adviser and advocate, I witness how Zionism is debated, attacked and misunderstood in real time. Jews are pressured to explain, dilute or apologize for their identity. Allies often hesitate, unsure how to respond. That hesitation is understandable, but it is no longer sustainable.

This moment demands informed Zionism. It demands that Jews know our texts, history and story well enough to speak with confidence. It demands preparedness—not for conflict we seek, but for confrontation history teaches us will come. Pride without knowledge is brittle; knowledge without pride is defensive. We need both.

Zionism is not about exclusion but about belonging. It is not about triumphalism but about survival paired with responsibility. The Land of Israel is not only a physical place on Earth. It is the expression of Jewish peoplehood itself, encompassing religion, culture, ethnicity, nationality, philosophy, indigeness and memory.

For Jews, embracing Zionism today means reclaiming agency and confidence—standing as inheritors of a people who survived exile and returned home. For allies, it means recognizing that standing with Zionism is not opposing justice, but affirming Jewish dignity and self-determination.

Zionism embraces unity, not uniformity. Amid all our differences, it calls for a shared understanding: that self-governance in our homeland, safety and representation for our people, culture, faith, history and path forward in the world are all interconnected.

Now is the time to speak clearly, stand firmly and carry Zionism forward with pride and hope—not as an apology, but as an affirmation of who we are and where we come from, and the future we are determined to build. (JNS Feb 4)

## When Jewish Leadership Chooses Comfort Over Courage

By Robert M. Soffer

Antisemitism in America is not rising; it is exploding. The numbers are no longer warnings; they are alarms.

In 2024, nearly 70% of all religious hate crimes targeted Jews, though Jews make up just 2.4% of the population. The threat is unmistakable. The real scandal is the unwillingness of many of the very leaders entrusted to protect us to act with urgency or conviction.

A handful of Jewish leaders meet the moment with courage. However, far too many retreat into platitudes, issue statements only when shamed into it or wait for someone else to speak first. The collective response does not match the danger, not even remotely. And when leaders shrink, the community shrinks with them.

Far too many Jewish leaders, especially those in progressive coalitions, chase applause instead of responsibility. They preach tikkun olam and tzedek (“social justice”), B’tzelem Elohim (“in the image of God”), yet their loudest activism is reserved for secular issues that guarantee praise: climate, immigration, racial equity, LGBTQIA+ advocacy.

These are all worthy causes, but also convenient shields from the work that actually matters. They fit neatly into elite moral consensus, while antisemitism gets whatever scraps of attention remain. Some Jewish leaders now rally the community around what they call “immigration justice,” yet it is baffling that this same fervor is rarely directed toward confronting the far more immediate threat of Jew-hatred.

Worse still, many of these secular causes are treated as morally uncomplicated, even when the consequences fall directly on the Jewish community. Take immigration: Numerous Jewish leaders embrace expansive policies as a matter of principle, invoking our history as strangers in a strange land. Their influence has caused far too many in the Jewish community to similarly embrace such policies. But they willfully ignore a harsh reality: Many immigrants have come to America from countries where anti-Western values are embraced and where virulent antisemitism is ingrained throughout society. Compassion does not require blindness.

Welcoming the stranger cannot mean welcoming the danger that comes along with it by importing the very hatreds that drove Jews out of both Europe and the Middle East, and that murdered millions of Jews over the centuries. The peril is not hypothetical; we are seeing the erosion of the Jewish community’s well-being. Despite this glaring reality, too many of our leaders still prefer the comfort of moral simplicity to the discomfort of asking who is entering our communities and what views they are bringing with them.

Meanwhile, antisemitism grows bolder and disturbingly normalized. Whether or not it has touched your own family, it is reshaping the environment in which all Jews live. The danger is no longer distant or abstract; it is becoming a defining feature of Jewish life in America.

A community under assault cannot afford leaders who look away. Not now. Not ever. That is not leadership. It is abandonment, and it is indefensible.

Fighting antisemitism and advocating for Israel requires courage—the kind that risks social capital, ruptures alliances and invites backlash. It means calling out hatred even when it comes from “allies.” It means confronting narratives that cast Jews as “oppressors” or “privileged,” narratives now used to justify excluding Jews from the protections afforded to every other minority. It means recognizing that attacks on Israel are often attacks on Jewish identity itself. When mobs chant “Death to Israel,” they’re not debating policy. They’re targeting Jews for extermination.

Some leaders pretend to do this work, but their efforts are timid compared to the energy they pour into secular causes. If your first instinct is to check how your allies will react before defending Jews, then you have already failed the people you claim to represent. You are a leader in name only.

The consequences are immediate and personal. Jewish students face harassment on campus. Jewish children encounter hostility in public schools. Synagogues require armed guards. Ordinary Jews now alter their daily routines in ways unthinkable just a few years

ago. A mezuzah should be a declaration of pride; today, it is treated like a liability. A kippah should be a symbol of faith; on too many campuses, it has become a target. These are not abstractions; they are the lived consequences of leadership that refuses to confront the sources of antisemitism with clarity and conviction.

Our ancestors did not survive pogroms, expulsions and centuries of hatred so that we would shrink in the face of social discomfort. Jewish survival has never been guaranteed. It has always depended on Jews who refused to bow.

Meeting this moment is not optional. It is the minimum required of anyone who claims to lead.

It means issuing unambiguous public statements; cutting ties with groups that tolerate antisemitism; and redirecting resources toward security, advocacy and education. It means building long-term infrastructure—coalitions with other minority communities, training a new generation of Jewish advocates and ensuring that every major Jewish institution has a real plan for confronting antisemitism. And it means making Jewish well-being a top priority.

This is not parochialism. It is the first duty of any community that intends to survive.

We are a people who have outlasted every empire that sought to erase us. History is watching what we do now. This is not a moment for bowed heads. It is a moment for standing, speaking and fighting—together, for our children, community and the Jewish future. And here is the irony: Jews in America have more resources and influence than our ancestors could have imagined, yet too many Jewish leaders behave as though we are still powerless. Strength without courage is just another form of surrender. (JNS Feb 3)

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#### **Foreign Forces in Gaza will Fail** By David M. Weinberg

Here we go again. The so-called “international community,” led by Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff of the Trump administration, alongside the European Union and a panoply of questionable Arab “allies,” is rushing in to “stabilize” the Middle East.

A convoluted and fantastical array of “technical” and “security” structures is supposedly going to bring good governance, deradicalization and demilitarization to Gaza.

Poppycock, especially the part about disarming Hamas.

Nobody but the Israeli army is truly going to clear the Gaza Strip of weapons aimed at Israel, from guns to rockets to terror attack tunnels. Nobody but the Israel Defense Forces is going to confront and crush Hamas’s remaining 30,000 or so fighters.

Nobody but the Israeli military can prevent Hamas from rearming or reimposing its reign of terror on Palestinians in Gaza. And nobody but Israel can thwart the flow of money to Hamas, whether from Turkey, Qatar or Iran.

In fact, the fanciful Kushner vision of a “Riviera” in Gaza—an Eden-like oasis of high-tech progress and luxury living—may already be serving as a conduit for a surge of cash to the same corrupt and venal Palestinians who have occupied and destroyed Gaza over the past generation.

Through U.S. President Donald Trump’s 20-point peace plan for Gaza, Israel has been presented with gobbledygook: a dazzling and dizzying assortment of new and recycled guarantors of stability with serious-sounding acronyms—EUBAM, GAC, NCAG, ISF, PSF, CMCC, DDDR and more.

The European Border Assistance Mission (EUBAM), along with its counterpart, the E.U. Mission for the Support of Palestinian Police and Rule of Law, is meant to guard the Rafah crossing between Egypt and Gaza and prevent bad actors and dangerous goods from entering.

It is convenient but reckless to forget that EUBAM officers, together with Palestinian Authority policemen, fled Rafah with their pants around their ankles when Hamas violently seized Gaza in 2007.

There is no reason to believe these European monitors will show any more spine today in the face of Hamas threats than they did then.

The Gaza Administrative Committee, also known as the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza, is theorized as a “non-partisan, technocratic body” to manage civilian affairs, made up of “non-affiliated” Palestinian bureaucrats—people who supposedly do

not owe their lives and livelihoods to Hamas. Yet these would be many of the same Palestinians who worked in the Hamas-run administration before Oct. 7, 2023.

There is no reason to believe that such fearless, genuinely non-affiliated Palestinians exist in Gaza.

The proposed International Stabilization Force would consist of troops from countries around the world—though there are currently no serious volunteers beyond the Turks—to train and oversee a Palestinian Security Force drawn from Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas’s various militias in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) and allegedly deradicalized Gazan fighters.

There is no reason to believe that such an international force, if it ever materializes, or such Palestinian units will strip Hamas fighters of their weapons or remove Hamas leaders from their de facto control of Gaza.

No officer in these forces will dare intercept aid or money flowing to Hamas, or expose new terror tunnels being dug beneath Shifa Hospital or along the Philadelphia Corridor.

The Civil-Military Coordination Center, already operating in Kiryat Gat with hundreds of U.S. Army officers and foreign representatives, is expected to oversee all of the above, along with humanitarian aid, Gaza reconstruction and the implementation of Disarmament, Demobilization, Deradicalization and Reintegration.

It all sounds lovely. It amounts to an imagined paradise. But it is claptrap.

It is ridiculous to expect Hamas to melt away in the face of this alphabet soup of international do-gooders. Hamas will instead bamboozle, threaten, bribe or eliminate any European monitor, American official or Egyptian overseer who gets in its way.

And Hamas will have Qatari and Turkish officials—its increasingly assertive Muslim Brotherhood backers—embedded in Trump’s proposed “Board of Peace” and Gaza Executive Board to run cover for the terror group and refill its coffers as needed.

Egypt offers a clear example of why Israel must never rely on Arab actors or the international community for its core security.

Egypt has a peace treaty with Israel and presents itself as a Western partner in stabilizing Gaza. Yet it is among the fiercest purveyors of anti-Israel and antisemitic messaging in the Arab world—and a longtime adversary of the Palestinians themselves.

Egypt did nothing to stop Hamas from overthrowing the Palestinian Authority and seizing Gaza. It allowed the Sinai Peninsula under its control to become a hub for international terrorism and large-scale weapons and drug smuggling into Gaza and Israel.

By turning a blind eye to—and benefiting from—this massive smuggling industry, Egypt helped transform Hamas-ruled Gaza into a major Islamist terror base, paving the way for the Oct. 7 massacre.

Over the past two years, the IDF has uncovered more than 100 smuggling tunnels beneath the Gaza-Egypt border. There is no credible scenario in which Egyptian police, military and political officials were unaware of or did not approve this activity.

It is also worth remembering that Egypt cares even less about Palestinians than it does about Israel. It has kept Gaza sealed for decades, denied medical treatment to wounded Palestinians during the past two years of war, and refused to offer refuge in Sinai to those fleeing the fighting.

The idea of once again placing the Rafah border crossing and the Philadelphia Corridor under Egyptian supervision, alongside flimsy EUBAM monitors and only token Israeli involvement, is not only preposterous. It is dangerous.

Only full-scale, permanent IDF control of Gaza’s southern border can guarantee Israel’s security.

Ultimately, only the destruction of Hamas’s military and governing capabilities can offer Gaza any chance of recovery and Israel any chance of long-term security. And only the IDF can achieve that.

All the fancy mechanisms now being floated will do little more than get in the way—or worse, entrench Hamas even further.

(JNS Feb 1)

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## Trump Shouldn't Fall into the Iran Negotiations Trap

By Jonathan S. Tobin

President Donald Trump was re-elected to the presidency to drain the swamp in Washington, push back the tide of illegal immigration and roll back the dead hand of toxic woke leftism in American government and society. He wasn't returned to the White House to enact regime change in Iran or anywhere else. Those two basic truths are the foundation of any argument on behalf of the United States not getting actively involved in the effort to topple the Islamists theocrats in Tehran.

Still, there's another angle from which to consider that question.

Whatever else was on his agenda or that of his voters, it is equally true that the second Trump administration was not summoned into existence to re-enact the failed foreign policy of former President Barack Obama. And that's the main thing for the president and his team to remember as they engage in negotiations this week with Iran.

The Islamist regime is sending senior officials to Turkey, where they plan to meet with the president's special envoy to the Middle East, Steve Witkoff, as well as his son-in-law and informal adviser, Jared Kushner. The United States says that a whole range of issues, including Iran's nuclear program, missiles and terrorism, is on the table. The Iranians say they want only to discuss the nuclear issue.

But that is a formula for Iran to do what it has always done with Western, and especially American, envoys who are desperate for a deal with the mullahs: prevaricate and string the diplomats along until they give up or give in to Tehran's demands.

That's what happened to Obama's Secretary of State John Kerry, who arrived at talks with Iran in 2013 with a strong hand backed by global sanctions that had shaken a regime that was tottering due to domestic unrest. Over the course of the next two years, Kerry abandoned Obama's demands and campaign promises to end Iran's nuclear program and to end its role as the world's leading state sponsor of terror. The result was the 2015 Iran nuclear deal that actually guaranteed that the country would eventually get a nuclear weapon, rather than preventing it from building or acquiring one.

It rescued the Islamist theocrats from the predicament that they had created at home and flooded it with billions in cash used to suppress dissent at home and spread terror around the Middle East.

That's exactly what Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei is hoping will happen again in talks with Trump's team. It comes at a time when his government has been shaken by massive protests in the past few weeks, which have been suppressed by the murder of as many as 30,000 protesters. Khamenei knows he needs a lifeline. He knows that a repeat of last summer's joint Israeli-American air campaign aimed at weakening the regime's ability to project terror abroad might be the spark that finally blows up the Islamist government. A deal right now with Washington will ensure that it survives and lives to fight the "great Satan"—ironically, the United States, the same entity that may give it a lifeline—and Israel, the "little Satan."

That would be bad enough. But the spectacle of repeating the pattern of Obama's appeasement of Iran by repudiating his promises to the Iranian people that "help is on the way" would be a disaster for Trump's foreign policy and embolden foes around the globe.

**Iranian Community in Israel Supports Protesters** Members of the Iranian Jewish community in Holon, in central Israel, hold a demonstration in support of people and protesters in Iran, Jan. 24, 2026. Photo by Erik Marmor/Flash90.

It would also seem to be a repeat of another Obama fiasco. Obama backed off on his 2012 threat to Syrian President Bashar Assad, saying if the despot were to use chemical weapons against his own people, then it would cross a "red line" and ensure a U.S. military response. Nothing came of that; it was another milepost on the road to American decline. By punting on the threat and offshoring the job of dealing with the problem to Russia, Obama threw away American credibility, handing Tehran and its allies a huge and undeserved victory for its plans for regional hegemony.

For the same thing to happen to Trump would be an even greater disaster since his foreign-policy successes have been based on the fact that foreign adversaries and allies have been reluctant to test his mettle

in a confrontation. If, under pressure from critics on the far right and far left who oppose a strong stance against Iran, Trump wilts, then no one will or should take his threats seriously again.

It's entirely true that Trump and the American people would prefer to avoid using military force against Iran, as well as have zero interest in fighting a land war there or engaging in "nation-building." Washington won't repeat President George W. Bush's mistaken policies that landed America and its troops in an Iraqi quagmire. But neither can Trump afford to demonstrate weakness just at the moment when he needs to project strength if he is to deal with this and other ongoing difficulties, like ending the war in Ukraine.

The dilemma here is partly the trap that talking with an insincere negotiating partner always provides. Trump, Witkoff and Kushner all believe themselves to be master negotiators because of their past work in real estate, coupled with the administration's successes during the president's first term, such as brokering the Abraham Accords between Israel and four Muslim-majority countries.

Yet they have already signaled that, like Kerry, they are far too eager for a deal with a regime that is at its best and most lethal when it is pretending to be reaching an agreement with the United States.

The problem, however, transcends the hubris that Witkoff and Kushner will pack in the bags they take to Istanbul. It is also about how to define the Trump approach to foreign policy.

"America First" means viewing the world through a realist prism rather than one determined by fantasies about a rapprochement with people whose main goal is to destroy the West. It also means overturning the conventional wisdom of the D.C. establishment about the value of appeasing the Islamist terror regime and ensuring that it is not allowed to use its oil wealth, nuclear program or its terrorist forces to destabilize the Mideast. And it means helping those who are aiding American foreign-policy goals without necessarily doing all the fighting for them.

Far from an isolationist creed, Trump's vision is one that is essentially about projecting and embodying American strength abroad. That's in direct contrast with the sort of weakness that led to the outbreak of wars in the Middle East and Ukraine in the four years Biden was warming Trump's seat in the Oval Office.

That's why Trump joined Israel's attack on Iran's nuclear program last June and inflicted the sort of damage that makes it unlikely that they will be able to use it to achieve their dream of regional hegemony.

And it's also why Trump ought not to fall into the trap of negotiations with Iran just at the moment when a decisive push against them, both via sanctions and strategic strikes, might enable the Iranian people to overthrow the regime that has murdered and oppressed them for the last 47 years.

It's not just that everyone knows that no deal with Iran could be verified by independent monitors of either its media or that the regime could be trusted to keep. They've cheated on the nuclear pact they made with Obama and virtually every other deal the regime has signed since the Islamist movement toppled the Shah of Iran in 1979.

So, if Trump backs down on anything less than a change in the fundamental character of the Iranian regime and its transformation into a reasonable neighbor rather than the home base for terrorism, the damage he'll be doing to himself will be as great as it is to the Iranian people's hopes for a governmental alternative.

Few presidents have more at stake in maintaining their reputations than those who can't be trifled with or bested in a negotiation. Surrendering to Iran will inevitably lead to surrendering to Hamas in Gaza. It would also end any hope of concluding Russia's war with Ukraine on terms the West can live with or deterring global power grabs by an empowered China. It would also impair his ability to act for the rest of his term in office, which is still three full years.

We can't know what the ultimate outcome of a U.S. or a joint U.S.-Israel attack on Iran looks like or what all the consequences of such a policy would be. But we do know that failing to follow through on his threats would make Trump a lame duck on foreign policy and pin on him the responsibility for future massacres of Iranians by their Islamist tyrants. That's a price the president simply cannot afford. (JNS Feb 2)