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Die Themen dieser Ausgabe

1.	500.000 Viertimpfungen und steigende Zahl von Neuinfektionen	1
2.	Unruhen im Negev	3
3.	Skandal um ultraorthodoxen Kinderbuchautor	5
4.	Medienquerschnitt	6

1. 500.000 Viertimpfungen und steigende Zahl von Neuinfektionen

Ungeachtet der erneut rasant ansteigenden Neuinfektionen mit dem Coronavirus ermöglicht die israelische Regierung wieder Reisen in fast alle Länder. Die strengen Reisebeschränkungen seien nach Expertenansicht nicht länger nützlich, da auch in Israel die Virusvariante Omikron inzwischen stark verbreitet ist. Außerdem reduzierte Israel die Dauer der Quarantäne auf nur noch fünf Tage. In der Vorwoche war die Zeit bereits von zehn auf sieben Tage verkürzt worden. Allerdings ist weiterhin ein negativer Antigen-Test nötig, um die Quarantäne zu beenden. Prinzipiell gelten die Antigen-Schnelltests als weniger zuverlässig in Vergleich zu PCR-Tests. Wegen der großen Überlastung von PCR-Teststationen- und Labors lockerte die Regierung die Vorgaben für Corona-Tests. Nur noch Risikogruppen und Menschen ab 60 Jahren sollen nach dem Kontakt mit einem Corona-Infizierten einen PCR-Test machen. Der Unmut gegen Regierung und Gesundheitsamt wächst angesichts der sich so rasch ausbreitenden Erkrankungen. Unterdessen sind rund eine halbe Million Menschen in Israel zum zweiten Mal geboostert. Die zweite Auffrischungsimpfung für vollständig Geimpfte gilt im Moment für über 60-Jährige und besonders Gefährdete.

Insufficient preparation

After three months of relative calm, the fifth COVID wave is upon us in Israel, with tens of thousands of

verified cases since the beginning of the week. Many are feeling no symptoms or aren't being tested, so the true number is likely much higher. (...) Prime Minister Naftali Bennett boasted that Israel was among the first countries to identify the omicron outbreak. Bennett ordered the skies closed and prevented a rapid spread of the virus. (...) While politicians speak of living alongside the virus, some two years after the peak of the first wave, Israel is still unequipped to hold classes on Zoom. (...) to date only 20 percent of 5–11-year-olds have been vaccinated (...). The "Green Classroom" undertaking was confusing, never applied in many municipalities and expired this week with nothing to replace it. The quarantine instructions for students exposed to a confirmed COVID carrier were unclear to teachers, principals and parents, which led to the loss of precious classroom hours. (...) there was insufficient preparation of testing centers, and public guidelines changed almost daily. Now only populations at risk are eligible for PCR tests, and the rest will have to make do with home antigen tests. (...) One can only hope that in a few weeks, the omicron wave will be behind us, leaving as few casualties as possible. Until then, it is the duty of the Education Ministry to find a true model in times of COVID; the Health Ministry must learn from its mistakes, increase the number of vaccinated Israelis and seriously prepare for the next wave.

Editorial, HAA, 06.01.22

Israelis forced to fend for themselves in COVID war

All the warnings issued in recent weeks were perfectly clear. Yet the government, including Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and senior Health Ministry officials (...) decided to abandon their public and moral duty to do everything in their power to soften the blow of the coronavirus. (...) the Health Ministry released for publication new guidelines for quarantines and COVID testing according to which the vaccinated must now pay out of pocket for tests. The more serious problem, however, is that the new policy is built on a certain level of public trust and adherence that simply does not and cannot exist in any country anywhere. The new framework forces us to count on between tens of thousands and hundreds of thousands of Israelis to take an at-home COVID test each day, and that should they test positive for the virus, they will then take another PCR test at a government testing station, after which they will willingly quarantine for 10 days. All this in the absence of any documentation or oversight. (...) the government has neglected the health of all Israelis who are now left to fend for themselves, their families, and their loved ones. There can be no situation more tragic and terrible in this cruel and deceptive wave of a pandemic. (...) It was and remains the state's responsibility to do everything it can to moderate the spread of the virus and try to limit its harmful effect on the many Israelis who could become seriously ill and die. (...) Were the government to act in the public and health system's interests, it would have imposed restrictions on gatherings and required people to work and study from home a long time ago. Instead, Israel is adhering to a controversial policy, or rather non-policy, the significance of which is mass infections and indifference. This may not be official policy, but it is the policy in practice, and it points to governmental and moral bankruptcy. (...)

Ran Reznik, IHY, 06.01.22

Israel's zigzagging pandemic policy is only causing more chaos

The quarantine mandate makes no sense, enforcement of rules on entry of travelers into the country has been lax (...) and the easing of other health restrictions as infections continue to climb is wreaking havoc inside schools. It seems that the government, which had so successfully dealt with the Delta variant and managed to hold off the Omicron strain for a while - is now failing to agree on a common plan on how to fight the pandemic. (...) The same

government that not so long ago mobilized the country's brightest medical minds and gave us a sense of security, showing it understands the situation and knows what it is doing, is now sending a very mixed message. A government that seemed so strong and united in the battle against the virus seems now to be doing damage control at best, working to shorten lines at COVID testing facilities and transfer as much responsibility as it can to the people. We all need a responsible adult, a parent, who can talk to us at eye level, put a hand on our shoulder and reassure us that everything is alright. Instead, we get a prime minister who warns us of an Omicron tidal wave, with no clear exit plan, while restriction rules are changing in the blink of an eye. (...)

Noam Barkan, YED, 07.01.22

Israel must help businesses survive COVID again

The government's main failure in managing the coronavirus crisis has been its failure to tell the truth – it has no ability to control the pandemic, and the only thing it is trying to control is the economic situation. (...) even though the number of seriously ill patients remains relatively low, incidence of the virus is high and the number of people in quarantine is even higher. The high number of patients and the expectation that it will only increase in the coming weeks have resulted in many absences from work and undermined economic activity at restaurants, hotels, shows, event halls and such. An exceptional situation has thereby been created. Most businesses are open and functioning, but many owners report a steep decline in revenue. The government thus faces a dilemma: Should it make a sweeping promise to compensate those who are hurting, or force businesses to get used to living with the coronavirus, make the necessary adjustments and wean themselves off government aid? A government announcement of sweeping compensation to businesses could create an incentive for them to reduce their operations or even shut down entirely until the current wave of the virus passes. That would have serious economic ramifications, and there's no need for it. Moreover, the aid would likely go even to businesses that don't really need it. Yet on the other hand, completely ignoring this distress may well lead to businesses collapsing. (...) The solution therefore lies in being able to determine who has truly been harmed by omicron's spread and then help them survive this difficult period.

Editorial, HAA, 11.01.22

How to navigate the COVID-19 'jungle'

(...) In the face of an increasingly disturbing wave of widespread sickness, people are falling prone (...) to ignore government recommendations. Defined by a sense of chaos and uncertainty in what they are being asked to do, people sense that the authorities aren't thinking strategically. In places where there is such a leadership vacuum, people respond by thinking that they need to look out first and foremost for their own interests if there are no clear answers as to what is best for all. (...) operating without any clear strategy and sending a message that the public needs to figure it out on their own is certainly misguided and is unlikely to stop the spread of the virus. However, an individual has no right to act unilaterally. A pandemic is by definition a crisis where individual actions impact on the welfare of the collective. (...) As confused as we justifiably might feel and as angry as we might be at the authorities for fueling confusion, we cannot be absolved of our personal and communal responsibilities. If we feel sick and worry that we might infect others, we must stay home. We cannot allow ourselves to be swayed by this environment of discontent and ignore the continued importance of vaccination. The rationale of social distancing remains as sound as ever and we should avoid crowded spaces as much as possible. (...) Finding our way out demands that we act responsibly and chart a course that will benefit everyone.

Yuval Cherlow, JPO, 12.01.22

Government zigzag does little to alleviate pandemic

The new testing COVID arrangements (...) are a mistaken and defective step that strengthens the principle of health for the rich only and abandons people to deal with the problem themselves. Instead of increasing accessibility for tests in a public framework, by strengthening the teams in the laboratories and opening additional testing centers, the government has placed the responsibility on the public. The government has ordered most of the population to carry out home antigen tests, which they have to pay for themselves, so a family with two or three children will be forced to spend hundreds of shekels each month, an economic burden that will be especially felt among underprivileged socioeconomic groups. Moreover, home antigen tests are thought to be less reliable than PCR tests. This means that people won't just be paying for the tests themselves, but in many cases, those infected with COVID-19 will receive inaccurate results, will

think they are negative, and will continue to infect others. (...) One of the main conclusions from the two years of the global fight against the pandemic is the need for strong public health systems and decisive and coherent government intervention. (...) The rate of vaccination among children is low, and the government hasn't succeeded in increasing it (...) Similarly, in the last two years, sufficient effort wasn't taken to install ventilation systems in classrooms and to reduce class sizes – two steps that would have reduced the infection rate among children. (...) The government is simply doing too little (...).

Dani Filc, IHY, 13.01.22

2. Unruhen im Negev

In der Negev-Wüste ist es bei Protesten von Beduinen gegen die Pflanzung von Bäumen zu gewaltsamen Zusammenstößen mit Sicherheitskräften gekommen. Die Beduinen lehnen die Anpflanzung von Bäumen ab, weil sie die Landnahme der Regierung in Gebieten fürchten, die sie als ihre eigenen betrachten. Die jüngsten Unruhen sind eine Prüfung für die heterogene Regierungskoalition von Ministerpräsident Naftali Bennett, der die arabische Raam-Partei angehört. Parteichef Mansour Abbas genießt große Popularität unter den Beduinen im Negev. Er kündigte Konsequenzen für die Zusammenarbeit an, sollten die Baumpflanzungen nicht gestoppt und keine formellen Verhandlungen mit den Beduinenführern aufgenommen werden. Seit Jahrzehnten steht eine klare Regelung über die Landansprüche aus. Fast die Hälfte der Beduinen lebt in nicht anerkannten Dörfern, oftmals ohne Strom- und Wasserversorgung.

Negev crisis: Seeing the forest for the trees

One would think that planting trees, especially in Israel, is an ecological enterprise that all should welcome. Except in Israel, as is often the case, how, where and when you do it can turn almost anything into an explosive political issue. (...) Israel has every right to exert its sovereignty within its territory, conduct forestation projects and plant trees wherever it wants on state land – including the Negev. On the other, the local Bedouin communities see the tree-planting on land they use for farming as part of an ongoing government campaign to expel them from their unrecognized homes. It's the government's job to negotiate a path between the two. (...) The current government, which features a wide range of parties from the Left to Right, has a lot on its plate, from the battle against corona to the one against

Iran. While sticking to its policy of consensus and the principle of working together to reach compromises within its own ranks – and with the opposition – it should not allow this affair to distract or derail it. At the same time, halting tree-planting and giving in to violence and threats from any side should not be an option. Sometimes, we can't see the forest for the trees – as this case clearly demonstrates.
Editorial, JPO, 13.01.22

A crisis is brewing in the Negev, and the Israeli government is on the verge of losing control

The riots that broke out in the Negev reflect a dangerous combination of a growing political crisis and an internal security threat. As usual, venomous propaganda from the right (...) has added fuel to this fire. (...) if the government doesn't come to its senses quickly, it may find itself facing the most serious security threat the country has had since the violence in the mixed Jewish-Arab cities during Operation Guardian of the Walls in May. The atmosphere among the Bedouin in the Negev has been heating up gradually over the past few weeks, especially due to fear of renewed house demolitions. (...) Due to the severity of the incidents and their security implications, the Shin Bet security service became involved in both investigations— a rare occurrence. The security establishment believes that these clashes have clear political motivation (...). The riots coincide with the political storm. Clashes over tree-planting are not new in the Negev, but for the first time this is happening while an Arab party is a key member of the coalition. Forty-six percent of the votes for the United Arab List in the last election came from Negev Bedouin, and the last thing party chairman MK Mansour Abbas wants to do is leave those voters feeling abandoned. (...) The prime minister will find it hard to function in the midst of a public rift with the UAL chairman. Thus, efforts are now underway to stop the planting and reach a long-term solution. Unless and until this happens, a government crisis is looming.

Amos Harel, HAA, 13.01.22

The more Ra'am gets, the more it wants

The Arab parties' demand that the JNF-KKL stop planting trees in the Negev is a direct result of the electricity bill, which allows some illegally-built structures to hook up to the national electricity grid, being passed. Because the more they get, the more they want. The coalition should have prepared ahead of time for a law that encourages past transgressions to encourage continued barbaric behavior. (...)

Ra'am leader Mansour Abbas has declared more than once that in exchange for budgetary funds, he would be willing to put aside the national issue, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the issue of a Palestinian state. Last week, he realized he didn't have to, that he could have both. (...) The political system has pointed to the electricity bill as a watershed moment, not only for Ra'am and the Negev Bedouin, but the Israeli public as a whole. Many, including some who support the government, didn't believe that something like this could happen. They believe it even less now after the government stopped planting trees this week at the demand of Ra'am and the Joint Arab List. Under fire, no less, while the Bedouin there were rioting, blocking roads and throwing concrete blocks on train tracks – an incident that miraculously ended without anyone being hurt. (...)

Mati Tuchfeld, IHY, 14.01.22

Negev Bedouin protests an issue long ignored by Israel

Making the desert bloom and planting trees on Tu Bishvat (...) has long been the Israeli equivalent of America's mother and apple pie. Everyone loves it, everyone wants it. What could be bad? It is for this reason that many Israelis were caught completely off guard by the brouhaha over Tu Bishvat tree planting this year in the Negev. A brouhaha that not only turned violent but also shook the coalition. (...) The question in play is not whether Israel should make the Negev green with trees. The question is where those trees should be planted. It's a big place, that Negev, made up of 12.2 million dunams. You want to make it bloom, make it bloom. But do you have to do it on the 5,000 dunams of land claimed by a Bedouin clan near the unrecognized Bedouin village of Sawa? And that is the issue here: whose land is it? Seventy-two years after the establishment of the state, and 48 years after a local Bedouin filed a claim to this particular plot of land, the issue has not been adequately adjudicated. And that is what is needed: the state, once and for all, has to determine whose land it is – who has ownership over nearly a million dunams of Negev land claimed by Bedouin. (...) the gray area has been allowed to last for too long (...). Issues long ignored don't just solve themselves. As the country again saw this week in the Negev, they tend to pop up and smack you in the face – often when you least expect it.

Herb Keinon, JPO, 15.01.22

3. Skandal um ultraorthodoxen Kinderbuchautor

Der Fall des international bekannten und überaus beliebten ultraorthodoxen Kinderbuchautors Chaim Walder aus Bnei Brak erschüttert den frommen Sektor in Israel. Walder steht im Verdacht, über einen Zeitraum von 25 Jahren Dutzende junger Mädchen und Frauen sexuell missbraucht zu haben. Zahlreiche Opfer sagten gegen ihn aus. Walder hat sich unterdessen das Leben genommen. In der Kritik stehen auch bekannte Persönlichkeiten und Rabbiner, die sich nach der Tragödie mit der Familie Walders solidarisch zeigten und keine kritischen Worte gegen den verdächtigen Kinderbuchautor fanden, darunter der frühere aschkenasische Chefrabbiner Israel Meir Lau, der zeitweilig auch Vorsitzender der Holocaustgedenkstätte Yad Vashem war. In den vergangenen Jahren drangen wiederholt Fälle schweren Missbrauchs von Seiten religiöser Lehrer und Rabbiner im ultraorthodoxen Sektor an die Öffentlichkeit.

Sexual abuse won't end if we don't stand with victims

December saw a whirlwind of alleged sexual assault, abuse and fallout. (...) there was Chaim Walder, the Israeli haredi (...) author of children's books who was recently accused by dozens of young women of sexual abuse. (...) A total of 22 people has (...) come forward to testify before a beit din (...) about the sexual-assault allegations. (...) What we are seeing in Israel is a wave of sexual assault with in every corner of society, no matter the religion or the level of observance. It allegedly happens within the haredi sector (...), within the national-religious sector (...) and within the secular sector (...). Something bad is happening in Israel, and it needs to be confronted. On the one hand, we need better sex education in our schools. Children need to be taught what is right and what is wrong, and educators need to put in place stronger safeguards to prevent attacks. But that is not enough. We also need public officials to stand with victims (...). Education is key, but it is not enough. Victims need to feel support. Lau has shown them the opposite.
Editorial, JPO, 03.01.22

For every voice condemning Chaim Walder, others made excuses

(...) This is the shocking and deplorable story of a man who was at the top of the publicity tree in the strictly Orthodox world, who came crashing down to earth when his repellent behaviour came to light.

This is the story of a renowned Charedi children's author, Chaim Walder, who exploited his success – his books were in thousands of strictly-Orthodox homes across Israel and the diaspora – by sexually abusing young women and children. (...) over a period of 25 years – 25 years! – Walder had indulged himself by sexually abusing women, young boys and girls, Walder (...) committed suicide, shooting himself at the graveside of one of his sons who had died from cancer. And here is where the other men's voices come into play. For everyone (...), who accepted the damning testimony of the brave women and children who came forward to say what Walder had done to them, there were just as many ready to make excuses for him. First there were the men who arranged to have Walder buried in a cemetery alongside a whole host of perfectly innocent people, rather than an area reserved for suicides. Then, despite all evidence to the contrary, a whole slew of rabbinical names came forward to denounce Walder's detractors for their "public shaming" of him, adding that their actions were "worse than murder". (...) perhaps worst of all, the Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Israel, David Lau, attended the family's shiva, giving the clear intimation to those who seek to parse such actions, that in his eyes, Walder was not guilty. (...) A 24-year-old woman, one of Walder's victims, committed suicide in the days after his death. Shifra Yocheved Horovitz, sick with despair, believed she would never get justice after seeing Walder mourned so publicly. (...)

Jenni Frazer, TOI, 06.01.22

Ultra-Orthodox can't stay in denial over sex abuse in their community

The shocking, recent revelations of alleged sexual violence and cruel abuse perpetrated by the Haredi educator and popular author Haim Walder not only highlight the prevalence of such horrible events in the ultra-Orthodox community, but also offer a real opportunity for change. Walder took his own life after the allegations had started to emerge and 22 of his victims came forward to tell their stories. The ultra-Orthodox leadership succeeded in solidifying its power over their flock, through a policy of segregation from secular Israeli society, in all walks of life. (...) Segregation allows rabbis to control the minds of their followers, but it is under attack from the internet which is now found to be used by two-thirds of the Haredi public. Walder's sexual conduct challenges the power of rabbinical leaders. He was the poster boy of an ultra-Orthodox educator, admired by all, and seen as the example of a pure spiritual

communicator for the community. (...) Now, Walder is revealed as a sexual predator and the fracture in his society is great. (...) Community leaders who desert the victims violate religious law and the moral standard of Judaism detailed in the Torah. They cannot claim their hands are clean of this sin. Haredim understand the magnitude of their leaders' failings. It is likely that with Walder's reported suicide, the rabbis who sought to whitewash his memory, may have brought calamity on their own hegemony.

Yedidia Stern, YED, 07.01.22

Chaim Walder exploited our children – and our faith as Orthodox Jews

When the news broke, several weeks ago, that the internationally famous Haredi author Chaim Walder was accused of sexual assault on minors, it was hard for many of us in the Orthodox world to accept. Beyond his immediate Haredi circle, many children across the Orthodox religious spectrum have been exposed to his literature. We could not believe this seemingly empathetic man had a such a dark side to him. (...) There are too many examples of educators and public figures who have similarly exploited and defiled our faith in them. Something, however, felt different in this case. For one, there is no closure. Instead of facing his demons, as he so often advised his fan base and as he illustrated in his stories, Walder took the easy way out. His suicide deprived the victims of confronting him in court and ultimately satisfying themselves that justice had finally been done. (...) There is something more to this story. (...) Walder was meant to understand us, and he was supposed to be gifted in understanding children. Instead, he abused the trust vulnerable children placed in him and ultimately ensured that the world they had originally feared was murkier and scarier than it was before they met him. His threats that followed his molesting robbed these victims of their ability to speak out. Not only were they physically and psychologically assaulted, there was no one with the equivalent degree of community sanction they could turn to unload the secret of their abuse, their feelings and their scars. (...) How do we let our children roam free when such monsters inhabit our world? (...) What can we do to redeem this horrific story and find some meaning? Firstly, we should shift focus, from the villain to the heroes of this sorry saga. Courage is a rare commodity, and sometimes it takes determination and empathy for it to be revealed. The fact that some of the victims are now sharing their deep pain is not only liberating for

them: It is also a testament to their human spirit. It emboldens us and reminds us that while humans can be frail, they can also be tough. While some sin, others courageously remove evil from the land (...).

David Fachler, HAA, 10.01.22

4. Medienquerschnitt

Prozess gegen Netanyahu

Thank God there is a trial for Benjamin Netanyahu

(...) Israel's legal system is critically ill. (...) Fixing Israel's broken legal system might even be more significant than mitigating the horrors of the Oslo Accords and the Palestinian terrorism it enabled. A durable democracy in the Middle East is almost as important as denuclearizing Iran. Both are indispensable for the Jewish state's future. The phishing began in early 2016 and continued throughout 2017, when suspects in unrelated investigations were interrogated by the police about rumors concerning Netanyahu in an effort to find evidence against him. (...) As the prosecution acknowledges, there is no direct evidence against Netanyahu. After the key witnesses have now taken the stand it seems that circumstantial evidence is also nonexistent. (...) Anyone who treasures the Jewish state and its democracy should be attentive to the trial and thankful that Netanyahu passed on the plea bargain reportedly offered by the attorney-general. A bargain would exempt Netanyahu from prosecution but distance him from public service. (...) Had he taken the deal we would probably have never known about potentially criminal leaks. We would have never known of the illegal measures applied in the course of interrogating possible state witnesses. (...) As the trial proceeds more malpractice will surely be revealed and in the process more and more open-minded people will comprehend the significance of the trial and what led to it. (...) The trial will not be able to reveal what would have happened had there been no witch hunt. What would Netanyahu and his government been able to achieve had the attorney-general refrained from going on this wild six-year goose chase? (...) Would the Abraham Accords have been expanded to include Saudi Arabia and other Muslim states? Those questions and many more will be left to hypothetical historians or for the next time Netanyahu is elected prime minister.

Ophir Falk, JPO, 06.01.22

Palästinensischer Häftling beendet Hungerstreik

Enough with administrative detentions

After 141 days during which the life of administrative detainee Hisham Abu Hawash was in danger, an agreement was reached (...) for him to be released (...). It's a pity that only after Abu Hawash spent four and a half months on hunger strike to protest his detention without trial, and in the wake of unrest in the Palestinian Authority and threats by Islamic Jihad and Hamas, was this rightful result achieved. (...) Abu Hawash, 40 and a father of five, was arrested in his home in Dura, south of Hebron, in late October 2020. Military prosecutors had no unclassified evidence on which to draft an indictment to present to a military court. But in the Shin Bet security service state, "confidential material" is enough for a military commander to sign an order for six months of administrative detention, and an additional one six months later, repeat ad infinitum. After decades of occupation, it seems that almost no one in Israel has the energy or interest to speak out on behalf of one more Palestinian who's been wronged. (...) For many people in Israel, "Palestinian" and "terrorist" are synonyms, and Israelis apparently prefer to believe that the state would not be doing these injustices unless if there was something there. But if (...) the state had evidence against Abu Hawash, it should have charged him. If not, it had to release him immediately. Israel's insistence on keeping a man in custody without trial could have cost us military escalation in the Gaza Strip and popular unrest in the Palestinian Authority. (...) It's time for Israel to learn to forgo this undemocratic, corrupt practice of unlimited administrative detention, without evidence or charges that can be refuted.

Editorial, HAA, 04.01.22

Israelische Agentinnen im Auftrag Teherans

There is more to Iranian threat than meets the eye

At first glance, it seems that by recruiting four Israeli women to spy on its behalf, Iran did not gain much. After all, the information that the alleged suspects shared (...) can be found online relatively easily. However, by making light of the affair, and calling it "the grandmothers' underground organization" (...) one misses the point. Firstly, because Iran succeeded in recruiting Israelis for spying purposes, although this is a complex task, especially when it

comes to two hostile nations. Secondly, because simple tasks are just the beginning for newly-recruited agents. These are designed to build them up and test their abilities and willingness to take risks. (...) Thirdly, every intelligence organization builds "intelligence files" on a variety of topics. (...) And lastly, one must never underestimate Iran. Although they lag behind Israel in operational capabilities, they are a major and serious nation working diligently to catch up with the Jewish state on all fronts. Making light of this seemingly negligible affair might result in a much more serious one in the future. (...) the current affair must also be looked at as part of an overall war between Israel and Iran. (...) May no more Israelis ignore such clear suspicions and attempt to help Iran in the future.

Yoav Limor, IHY, 13.01.22

Weniger Vertrauen in Israels Verteidigungsarmee

The IDF is losing the public's trust and this will be Kohavi's legacy

(...) IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kohavi convened military reporters for a briefing (...) what Kohavi found himself answering were questions from the reporters on the quality of food in the IDF, recent reports of health hazards in numerous military kitchens, and pictures circulating on social media of pigeons eating out of the same pots as soldiers. (...) There was the fierce criticism he came under a few months ago, after fighting to increase pensions for career officers. (...) There is no underestimating the severity of the Israel Democracy Institute report (...) showing a sharp drop in public trust in the IDF. It was 78% of Israelis who said they had "a lot" of trust in the IDF, the highest rating among all state institutions – but a 12% drop in two years, and the lowest score in 14 years! There is no doubt that the relative quiet along Israel's borders (...) gives people the opportunity to focus on other issues like quality of food, healthcare, budget allocations, ethics, and more. (...) Israel is still a country with a compulsory draft. While 50% of youth might not enlist, those who do serve come from all parts of society – the secular and the religious who hail from cities as well as from kibbutzim and settlements in Judea and Samaria. When society loses its trust in the military, it doesn't end with a mere verbal vote of no-confidence. It can lead to an even greater reluctance to serve in the IDF, a severe drop in enlistment numbers. That is the danger. (...) The pensions affair hurt Kohavi. It bolstered an already negative image of the military

as an old-boy's club, a place that first takes care of its own. It was a bad look when the IDF chief was tussling for a billion shekels, at a time when a million Israelis were on unpaid leave due to the corona pandemic. It said something about the military's disconnect from society. (...) There are daily threats along Israel's borders, and operations that require his constant attention. (...) if he doesn't do something quickly, his term in office will be remembered as the one when the Israeli people lost trust in their military. (...)

Yaakov Katz, JPO, 14.01.22

HAA = Haaretz

YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

GLO = Globes

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