

MEIWeekly.



On Thursday, Israel’s far-right Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich announced plans to build more than 3,000 homes in a controversial settlement project in the occupied West Bank, which will “bury the idea of a Palestinian state”. He added that “there is nothing to recognise and no one to recognise” and that “this is Zionism at its best”. Photo: AFP

WHAT’S HOT: MEI PUBLICATIONS, PODCASTS, & MORE

READ: MEI Senior Research Fellow Jean-Loup Samaan analyses what could make or break the Lebanese government’s best chance in decades to disarm Hezbollah as it faces a race against time and a series of obstacles. Read the article [here](#).

WHAT’S NEWS: THE BIG HEADLINES THIS WEEK

Far-right Minister Vows to ‘Bury’ Palestinian Statehood

Israel’s Minister of Finance Bezalel Smotrich said that a plan to significantly expand a settlement near occupied East Jerusalem won approval and added that “anyone in the world today who tries to recognise a Palestinian state will receive an answer from us on the ground”.

Gaza Plan Stokes Tension Between IDF Chief and Government

The Israeli military’s top commander, Lt. Gen. Eyal Zamir, who reportedly casted doubts on government plans to capture Gaza City, faced increasing pressure on Wednesday. One minister criticised him over the promotion of top officers, while another suggested he could be fired.



General Zamir (pictured) was concerned about the exhaustion and fitness of reservists, risking the lives of Israeli hostages and about potentially tasking troops with governing millions of Palestinians, officials said. Photo: AFP

CR7’s Engagement Raises Eyebrows in Saudi Arabia

Even as fans celebrated the new engagement, this announcement highlighted how swiftly policies in the Kingdom have changed. The couple were not married and had been living with their children in Riyadh for two years—something that would have been punishable before.

CALENDAR: MEI EVENTS

MEI Annual Conference 2025

A re-ordered Middle East. Three panels. Insights you won’t get anywhere else. MEI is bringing you top experts to unpack how two years of war have reshaped the Middle East for its flagship Annual Conference next month. This event will be held both in-person and online via Zoom on Tuesday, 2 September 2025, from 9am to 3:30pm (SGT). Sign-ups are officially OPEN- to register, click [here](#).



The 12-day war between Israel and Iran, which had significant consequences for the Middle East and beyond, will be a major topic at this event. Photo: AFP

LOOK AHEAD: WHAT TO KEEP A WATCH ON

European Nations Ready to Reinstate Iranian Sanctions

France, Germany, and Britain have written to the UN, warning that they are ready to reinstate so-called “snapback” sanctions on Tehran if it does not return to negotiations over its nuclear programme, according to a letter shared by the French foreign ministry on Tuesday.

“We have made it clear that if Iran is not willing to reach a diplomatic solution before the end of August 2025, or does not seize the opportunity of an extension, E3 are prepared to trigger the snapback mechanism”, the ministers said in the letter.



They added that they had offered Iran a limited expansion to facilitate direct negotiations with the US but the offer had remained unanswered by the Islamic Republic so far. Photo:AFP

Turkey to Help Syria with Weapons Systems

In a first step towards a comprehensive military cooperation accord that they have been negotiating for months, Turkey and Syria inked a memorandum of understanding on 13 August after extensive meetings between their foreign and defence ministers, and intelligence chiefs. “The memorandum aims to coordinate, plan military training and cooperation, provide consultancy, information and experience sharing, ensure the procurement of military equipment, weapon systems, logistical materials and related services”, the Turkish Defence Ministry source told reporters.



Ankara added that it will also train the Syrian army in using weapons systems if needed. Photo: AFP

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