



ISRAEL MATTERS!

1809 Whitney Avenue, Hamden, CT 06517-1401

July-August 2024



Fighting For The North

The March 2021 edition of *Israel Matters* was titled “Israeli Freshwater Fun.” In that issue, we extolled the virtues of the freshwater vistas found in Israel’s north such as the Baniyas Nature Reserve shown below. We



also described the beautiful spots off of Highway 90 running from Kiryat Shemona to the Golan Heights such as kayaking on the Hetzboni River at Hagoshrim, or eating fresh fish from the Dan River at – where else? – Dag al ha Dan.

We regret to report that these activities are not possible at the present time. Following the Hamas atrocities of October 7, 2023 and the ensuing war in Gaza, the Iranian-backed Hezbollah unleashed a steady barrage of rockets on Israel’s north. We reported in the December 2023 *Israel Matters* that Hezbollah rockets have forced Israel to evacuate civilians from the “finger of the Galilee” emptying towns from Metulla to Kiryat Shemona as shown in the diagram to the right.



Matters are now much worse. The rocket fire from Hezbollah has intensified to the point where the forests of northern Israel are constantly ablaze. Increasingly, Hezbollah has employed explosive-laden drones that have proven better able to evade Israel’s layered defense systems.



Fires rage in northern Israel from Hezbollah attacks

While most rockets and drones targeting populated areas have been brought down, many direct hits have been recorded, in some cases resulting in the deaths of Israeli citizens. Consequently the evacuated area of northern Israel has been pushed further south, with a de facto new northern border more or less following Israeli Highway 89 from Nahariya on the Mediterranean coast to Tzfat (Safed) before continuing along Highway 91 into the Golan Heights as shown in the map on the next page. More than 80,000 Israelis have been displaced from the north and are unable to return to their homes in the present circumstances.

With so many towns and communities evacuated in northern Israel, Hezbollah has taken to the sadistic destruction of civilian infrastructure and property with the goal of hollowing out the territory and thus preventing the return of Israelis to the north. A favored Hezbollah method is to fire mortars and/or anti-tank shells directly into unoccupied evacuated northern Israeli homes to render them uninhabitable. As an



example, consider Kibbutz Manara, which straddles the recognized border between Lebanon and Israel (the “Blue Line” established by the United Nations on June 7, 2000). As of December 2023, 86 of the 155 homes on this kibbutz had been damaged by Hezbollah attacks. When in Israel in May, I was informed that the total percentage of homes destroyed at Manara has now reached 80%. Israel’s northernmost village of Metulla,



A house damaged by Hezbollah in Kibbutz Manara on November 27, 2023 (AFP)

situated at the very tip of Israel’s “finger of the Galilee,” had a population of 1,740 before Hezbollah began its aerial barrage. Favored as a resort town by Israelis, the streets are lined with homes that look like Swiss chalets. Metulla is also home to Mercas Canada – the

Canada Centre, built with donations from the Canadian Jewish community. The Canada Centre contains Olympic sized hockey and figure skating rinks, a swimming pool, Jacuzzi and spa, basketball court and more. Right now, Metulla is a ghost town, with around 150 homes ruined, and of course the Canada Centre is closed. Rockets have ruined buildings, homes and roads in Kiryat Shmona, the largest town in the “finger of the Galilee.” Israel’s entire north is under and on fire!

Here are some questions for you dear readers. How often do you hear about the attacks on Israel’s north in the media? Can you recall reading in the *New York Times* about Hezbollah’s attacks on civilian targets, or seeing news stories on any of the major networks reporting what is happening in Israel’s north? Isn’t it odd that turning 80,000+ Israelis into refugees in their own country is not deemed newsworthy? Nor the loss of their homes, businesses, the harm to the Israeli economy, and the desolation of northern Israel? In truth, there is no real border dispute between Lebanon and Israel, only terrorism prosecuted by Hezbollah as part of the Iranian pincer strategy of squeezing Israel by terrorist groups from all sides; where is the outrage?

While a war with Hezbollah and its Iranian patron is nothing for Israelis and their supporters to look forward to, the current situation is simply not sustainable. Northern *Israel Matters* too!