



ISRAELI forces remove a protester from a sit-in outside the Gaza Strip by extremists seeking to block aid into the Palestinian territory. MARCUS YAM Los Angeles Times

Israel’s religious right has big plans for Gaza

‘Occupying, deporting and settling’: War is energizing believers in a divine right to land.

BY KATE LINTHICUM

YITZHAR, West Bank — Carrying planks of plywood, a group of Israeli settlers pushed past soldiers guarding the barrier surrounding the Gaza Strip and quickly got to work. Within minutes, the young men had erected two small buildings — outposts, they said, of a future Jewish settlement in the war-torn Palestinian enclave.

Their movement had hungered for this moment for years, but now, after Oct. 7, they felt it was a matter of time before Jews would be living in Gaza again. “It is ours,” said David Remer, 18. “[God] said it is ours.”

Religious Zionists, who believe the Jewish people have divine authority to rule from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, make up only around 14% of Israel’s population. But in recent years they have greatly expanded their influence in the military, the government and society at large, and their often extremist ideology is helping shape Israel’s war against Hamas.

Although they are not politically homogeneous, most religious Zionists embrace far-right views. They loudly oppose a cease-fire deal to bring home Israeli hostages and have repeatedly blocked humanitarian assistance from entering Gaza by standing in front of aid trucks.

They see the Oct. 7 Hamas-led attack on Israel as proof of their longtime assertion that peace cannot be made with the Palestinians, and view Gaza as a territory that they have a religious obligation to conquer. Increasingly, they have called for the expulsion of the 2.3 million Palestinians living there. [See **Religious right**, A4]

Waymo may be an E-ticket ride

As the driverless taxis roll out across L.A. County, safety and social concerns grow. For now, the robocars will steer clear of freeways.

BY RACHEL URANGA

The driver in the Chevy Suburban seemed bent on testing the Waymo robotaxi on the streets of downtown L.A. this week.

Playing chicken against Silicon Valley’s wheeled robot, he sharply swung into the next lane toward the Waymo. The white, driverless Jaguar swerved to avoid the bigger car crossing the line.

The human driver then sped ahead of the robotaxi and braked abruptly in front of it. The machine slowed in time to avoid a collision, shifted into the next lane and the Chevy moved on, ending a brief yet anxiety-inducing interaction for a Los Angeles Times reporter and photographer riding in the Waymo vehicle.

Los Angeles, buckle up. Robotaxis will begin doing business in L.A. over the next couple of weeks as regulators, developers, drivers, passengers and policy- [See **Waymo**, A9]



A WAYMO robotaxi drives near Skid Row in Los Angeles. A demonstration ride revealed some shortfalls of the automated technology. ALLEN J. SCHABEN Los Angeles Times

What if your robotaxi gets into a fender bender?

As Waymo One expands across L.A. County, riders are sure to run into some sticky situations. Here’s what we know. **CALIFORNIA, B1**

Cool outlook for fire season, for now

A series of late-season winter storms has filled reservoirs, boosted snowpack and left forecasters anticipating a late start to California’s wildfire season.

And though the odds are also tilting toward a milder-than-normal fire season overall, that outlook could change by July, National Interagency Fire Center meteorologist Jonathan O’Brien said.

“It’s just a little too early to tell at this point what the peak season months are going to look like,” said O’Brien, who works for the center’s Predictive Services in Riverside.

For now, Predictive Services is forecasting below-normal large fire activity in Southern California in May and June and normal activity in Northern California.

The rainy season has already been wetter than normal for Southern California, and forecasts call for periods of rain and snow well into April, if not early May, O’Brien said. Vegetation at lower elevations is moist and green; in the high country, it’s buried in snow.

Experts forecast below-normal activity after the recent storms, but much could change by July

By Alex Wigglesworth



MICHAEL MURRAY operates a snowblower in Truckee, Calif., during a powerful storm on March 1. MARIO TAMA Getty Images

Statewide, the snowpack most recently measured 104% of normal for March 5. It was 95% of the April 1 average, when it’s typically the deepest.

The more moisture that’s in the snowpack, the longer it typically takes to melt. That ensures that vegetation dries out more slowly and also helps to moderate the onset of warmer weather, said Brett Lutz, a Bureau of Land Management meteorologist with Predictive Services Northern California Operations.

“Years when we’ve had above-average snowpack have been correlated, especially across Northern California, with a general tendency for below-average acreage burned,” Lutz said.

Still, as climate change pushes California fires to burn at higher elevations — places that were once too wet or cool to nurture flames — more snow is falling on burned areas, said Amir AghaKouchak, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at UC Irvine. Some of these places have [See **Wildfires**, A7]

LAPD seeks a revamp to fire bad cops

Disciplinary system, seen as flawed, has led to targeted officers staying on the payroll.

BY LIBOR JANY

It read like a typical job listing for an attorney.

Successful candidates could expect to cross-examine witnesses, research case law and write briefs — with a starting salary that topped out at roughly \$221,000.

But as the job description posted on the career website Indeed last year made clear, these wouldn’t be just any cases. The targets would be Los Angeles police officers whom department leaders wanted to fire, usually because they were suspected of lying or breaking the rules.

In the LAPD, firing a cop is not a straightforward proposition. Even in seemingly clear-cut cases of serious misconduct, the department’s often-criticized disciplinary system has led to outcomes in which those involved keep their jobs and continue collecting paychecks. Some are no longer allowed to patrol or interact with the public — relegated to administrative duties instead. LAPD officials estimate nearly 70 such officers are currently on the payroll.

For months, department and city officials endorsed the idea that hiring lawyers to better argue termination cases was a step toward fixing what many feel has become a broken system. But some leaders are already renewing calls for a more radical overhaul.

“It’s not about finding ways to level the playing field — the playing field is flawed,” Councilmember Hugo Soto-Martinez said during a public safety committee meeting last month. “It’s abundantly clear that this system is ... being taken advantage of.”

Under the city charter, the LAPD chief must send any officer facing termination to a three-member Board of Rights panel. The proceedings are kept secret under state law and play out like a mini-trial with evidence and witnesses. The accused officers are represented by an attorney sup- [See **LAPD**, A7]

USC, UCLA open with wins

Trojans defeat Washington and Bruins beat Oregon State in Pac-12 tournament. **SPORTS, B7**

House OKs bill to ban TikTok

Measure, which calls for China-based owner to divest, now goes to Senate. **BUSINESS, A8**

Royally bad public relations

How might the British monarchy rehab its image after the latest mess? **CALENDAR, E1**

Weather

Mostly sunny. L.A. Basin: 72/52. **B6**

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