Israel to release 400 prisoners

URL:  http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/0505/050530-prisoners.html

Today’s contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The Article</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Warm-ups</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Before Reading / Listening</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>While Reading / Listening</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Reading</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening Gap Fill</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homework</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Answers</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

30 May, 2005
THE ARTICLE

Israel to release 400 prisoners

BNE: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his cabinet have approved the long-awaited release of 400 Palestinian prisoners. This latest batch is the second major freeing, following the 500 detainees who were set free in February. It is in accordance to an agreement with Palestinian Authority leader President Mahmoud Abbas as part of a ceasefire deal. Hesitant government ministers delayed the latest release until they were more certain of Mr. Abbas’s implementation of his assurances to crack down on Palestinian militants. The cabinet decided no prisoner directly involved in the death of Israelis would be released. Further, a clause that stipulated only prisoners who had served two-thirds of their sentence should be released may be relaxed this time round.

Mr. Sharon warned his government before the cabinet voted that it was essential for Israel to fulfill its obligations to the new Palestinian Authority. He said it was vital to strengthen Mr. Mahmoud’s position ahead of upcoming Palestinian elections on July 17. Israel is concerned that more militant groups such as Hamas, an organization branded as terrorists by the U.S. and the European Union, might win power and derail the Middle East peace process. Mr. Sharon urged his people to understand that this release and the August withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza will “not strengthen the forces of extremist terrorism”. He said it is necessary “to strengthen the principal moderate element in the Palestinian Authority and honor our commitments”.

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WARM-UPS

1. INFO SEARCH: Talk to different partners and find out all you know about Israeli-Palestinian relations. Get information on the people, the history and the current political situation. After you have finished gathering information, sit with your partner / group. Tell each other what you found out. Was this activity difficult? Did you learn new things about the world?

2. ISRAEL: Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with Israel. Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them.

3. CHAT: In pairs / groups, decide which of these topics or words are most interesting and which are most boring.

   Ariel Sharon / Mahmoud Abbas / Palestinian prisoners / the Middle East /
   ceasefires / militants / Palestine / Hamas / Gaza / Middle East peace process /
   extremist terrorism

Have a chat about the topics you liked. For more conversation, change topics and partners frequently.

4. 2-MINUTE DEBATES: With a partner, engage in these fun 2-minute debates. Students A firmly believe in the opinions on the left, Students B support the opinions on the right. Change partners often.

   a. Prisoners should never be released early. vs. If it helps the peace process, it’s OK.
   b. Israel is releasing terrorists. vs. Israel is releasing people who want their own country.
   c. Peace will never come to the Middle East. vs. Even the longest of conflicts always end in peace.
   d. Palestinians are terrorists. vs. Palestinians are fighting for their own country.
   e. The United Nations should solve the Middle East problem. vs. The situation in the Middle East is too difficult for the United Nations.
   f. Israel should withdraw from the Gaza Strip and West Bank. vs. It’s Israeli land.
   g. Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas should get the Nobel Peace Prize. vs. It’s way too early to award peace prizes.
   h. The Middle East is the most dangerous place in the world. vs. I disagree.
   i. Hamas is a liberation movement. vs. Hamas is a terrorist organization.

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BEFORE READING / LISTENING

1. TRUE / FALSE: Look at the article’s headline and guess whether these sentences are true (T) or false (F):

a. Israel will release 400 Palestinian prisoners. T / F
b. In February, Israel released 500 Palestinian prisoners. T / F
c. No prisoner involved in the death of Israelis will be released. T / F
d. All prisoners who have served 80% of their sentence will be released. T / F
e. Ariel Sharon wants to strengthen the position of Mahmoud Abbas. T / F
f. Israel will hold elections on July 17. T / F
g. Hamas is a group well liked by the U.S. and European Union. T / F
h. Israel will withdraw from the Gaza Strip in August. T / F

2. SYNONYM MATCH: Match the following synonyms from the article:

a. release truce
b. batch middle-of-the-road
c. detainees paramount
d. ceasefire emancipation
e. stipulated cardinal
f. essential prisoners
g. branded disengagement
h. withdrawal specified
i. principal labeled
j. moderate bunch

3. PHRASE MATCH: Match the following phrases from the article (sometimes more than one combination is possible):

a. the long-peace process
b. set down on Palestinian militants
c. in accordance to free
d. crack that stipulated ...
e. a clause upcoming Palestinian elections
f. fulfill its awaited release
g. ahead of element
h. branded as obligations
i. derail the Middle East an agreement
j. moderate terrorists

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WHILE READING / LISTENING

GAP FILL: Put the words in the column on the right into the correct spaces.

Israel to release 400 prisoners

BNE: Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his _______ have approved the _______ release of 400 Palestinian prisoners. This latest batch is the second major freeing, following the 500 _______ who were _______ free in February. It is in accordance to an agreement with Palestinian Authority leader President Mahmoud Abbas as part of a ceasefire deal. Hesitant government ministers delayed the latest release until they were more certain of Mr. Abbas’s _______ of his assurances to _______ down on Palestinian militants. The cabinet decided no prisoner directly involved in the death of Israelis would be released. Further, a clause that _______ only prisoners who had served two-thirds of their sentence should be released may be _______ this time round.

Mr. Sharon warned his government before the cabinet voted that it was essential for Israel to _______ its obligations to the new Palestinian Authority. He said it was _______ to strengthen Mr. Mahmoud’s position ahead of _______ Palestinian elections on July 17. Israel is concerned that more militant groups such as Hamas, an organization _______ as terrorists by the U.S. and the European Union, might win power and _______ the Middle East peace process. Mr. Sharon urged his people to understand that this release and the August withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza will “not strengthen the forces of _______ terrorism”. He said it is necessary “to strengthen the principal moderate _______ in the Palestinian Authority and honor our _______”.

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AFTER READING / LISTENING

1. WORD SEARCH: Look in your dictionaries / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words ‘set’ and ‘free’.
   • Share your findings with your partners.
   • Make questions using the words you found.
   • Ask your partner / group your questions.

2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS: Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.
   • Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
   • Ask your partner / group your questions.

3. GAP FILL: In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words in the gap fill. Which were new, interesting, unusual, difficult...?

4. VOCABULARY: Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

5. STUDENT MIDDLE EAST SURVEY: In pairs / groups write down questions about the Middle East.
   • Ask other classmates your questions and note down their answers.
   • Go back to your original partner / group and compare your findings.
   • Make a mini-presentation to another group / the class on your findings.

6. TEST EACH OTHER: Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall exactly how these were used in the text:
   • approved
   • second
   • ceasefire
   • crack down
   • directly
   • relaxed
   • warned
   • vital
   • branded
   • derail
   • forces
   • honor

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DISCUSSION

STUDENT A’s QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

a. What did you think the article would be about when you read the headline?
b. Did the headline make you want to read the article?
c. Are you interested in what goes on in the Middle East?
d. What do you know about Ariel Sharon?
e. Do you think Mr. Sharon is a good man?
f. Do you think it’s OK to release the prisoners?
g. Do you think releasing the prisoners will move the peace process forward?
h. Should the U.S. and the European brand Hamas as terrorists?
i. Will peace win the day in the Middle East?
j. Would you like to visit Israel?

STUDENT B’s QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

a. Did you like reading the article?
b. What did you think of this news?
c. What do you know about the Palestinians?
d. Do you think the Palestinians should have their own country?
e. What are the biggest problems between Israel and the Palestinians?
f. Is the prisoner release a victory for the terrorists?
g. Is the withdrawal from Gaza a victory for the terrorists?
h. Should Ariel Sharon and Mahmoud Abbas be awarded Nobel Peace Prizes for their efforts?
i. Will the world be different when Israel and Palestine are at peace?
j. Did you like this discussion?

AFTER DISCUSSION: Join another partner / group and tell them what you talked about.

a. What question would you like to ask about this topic?
b. What was the most interesting thing you heard?
c. Was there a question you didn’t like?
d. Was there something you totally disagreed with?
e. What did you like talking about?
f. Do you want to know how anyone else answered the questions?
g. Which was the most difficult question?
### SPEAKING

**PEACEMAKERS:** You are the head of a new organization called “International Peacemakers Inc.” that resolves conflicts of any kind. It is your job to create a masterplan (in pairs or groups) to bring peace to a current world, national, regional, and even a school or family dispute. Prepare your notes and suggestions in this table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The dispute is between _____________________ and ____________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Describe the two sides</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the history of “Side A”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explain the history of “Side B”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does “Side A” want?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What does “Side B” want?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What are your proposals to make the two parties totally happy?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After you have finished, tell the whole situation and your proposals to a different partner / group. They will provide you with feedback. You comment on that feedback.

LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

Israel to release 400 prisoners

**BNE:** Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and his cabinet have approved the ____ _______ _________ of 400 Palestinian prisoners. This latest batch is the second major freeing, following the 500 detainees who were set free in February. It is __________ __ __ ________ with Palestinian Authority leader President Mahmoud Abbas as part of a ceasefire deal. Hesitant government ministers delayed the latest release until they were more certain of Mr. Abbas’s implementation of __ ________ __ ___ ______ down on Palestinian militants. The cabinet decided no prisoner directly involved in the death of Israelis would be released. Further, a ______ __ ____________ only prisoners who had served two-thirds of their sentence should be released may be relaxed this time round.

Mr. Sharon warned his government before the cabinet voted that it was essential for Israel __ _______ __ _________ to the new Palestinian Authority. He said it was vital to strengthen Mr. Mahmoud’s position _____ __ __________ Palestinian elections on July 17. Israel is concerned that more militant groups such as Hamas, an organization ________ __ ________ __ the U.S. and the European Union, might ___ _____ ___ ______ the Middle East peace process. Mr. Sharon urged his people to understand that this release and the August withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza will “not strengthen the ______ __ ______ ________”. He said it is necessary “to strengthen the principal moderate element in the Palestinian Authority and honor our commitments”.

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HOMEWORK

1. VOCABULARY EXTENSION: Choose several of the words from the text. Use a dictionary or Google’s search field (or another search engine) to build up more associations / collocations of each word.

2. INTERNET: Search the Internet and find more information on the Palestinian prisoner release. Share your findings with your class in the next lesson.

3. THE ROAD MAP: Write your proposals for an end to the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Show them to your classmates in your next lesson.

4. LETTER: Write a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon telling him what you think of the latest round of prisoner releases. Read your letters to your classmates in your next lesson. Did your classmates have similar opinions?

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ANSWERS

TRUE / FALSE:
- a. T
- b. T
- c. T
- d. F
- e. T
- f. F
- g. F
- h. T

SYNONYM MATCH:
- a. release - emancipation
- b. batch - bunch
- c. detainees - prisoners
- d. ceasefire - truce
- e. stipulated - specified
- f. essential - paramount
- g. branded - labeled
- h. withdrawal - disengagement
- i. principal - cardinal
- j. moderate - middle-of-the-road

PHRASE MATCH:
- a. the long-awaited release
- b. set free
- c. in accordance to an agreement
- d. crack down on Palestinian militants
- e. a clause that stipulated ...
- f. fulfill its obligations
- g. ahead of upcoming Palestinian elections
- h. branded as terrorists
- i. derail the Middle East peace process
- j. moderate element

GAP FILL:
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