



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

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October 14, 2021

Israel Hayom

US says all options on the table if JCPOA talks fail

The United States is ready to consider all options if Iran rejects a return to the constraints of the 2015 nuclear deal, US Special Envoy for Iran, Rob Malley said on Wednesday. "We will be prepared to adjust to a different reality in which we have to deal with all options to address Iran's nuclear program if it's not prepared to come back into the constraints" of Tehran's 2015 nuclear deal with six major powers, he said in a virtual appearance at a Washington think tank. Malley's comments echoed those said by President Joe Biden during an Oval Office meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, in which the US leader stressed that he would see that Iran "never" had a nuclear weapon and that "if diplomacy fails, we're ready to turn to other options."

Times of Israel

New Shin Bet chief: Agency won't stand by as crime rises in Arab community

Ronen Bar on Wednesday began his tenure as head of the Shin Bet, succeeding Nadav Argaman as director of the security service. The agency is chiefly responsible for dealing with Palestinian terror. But in recent weeks, as communal violence in Arab society has continued to spiral out of control, government officials have proposed enlisting the Shin Bet in law enforcement activities. It is not yet clear to what extent the agency would be used to curb the ongoing violence. Since the start of 2021, there have been 98 victims of apparent homicides in Arab society, according to a tally by the Abraham Initiatives nonprofit. The organization said that 81 of those killed this year were victims of gun violence.

Jerusalem Post

Israeli delegation working to advance normalization deal with Sudan

Nearly a year after former US President Donald Trump announced that [Sudan](#) agreed to make peace with Israel, with little progress toward an actual agreement signed between the countries, a senior Israeli delegation met with Sudanese Justice Minister Nasredeen Abdulbari in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday. Among those in the delegation were Regional Cooperation Minister Esawi Frej, Deputy Foreign Minister Idan Roll and Knesset Foreign Affairs Subcommittee chairwoman Emilie Moatti. "Cooperation with Israel in the areas of education and culture are even more important to us than economic cooperation," Abdulbari said, according to Frej. "We must get to know one another and strengthen the human ties between us."

Palestinians: 250 prisoners held by Israel go on hunger strike

At least 250 Palestinian prisoners held by Israel have begun a hunger strike to protest their relocation to isolated cells, officials said Wednesday. The hunger strike, led by the militant Islamic Jihad group, comes amid heightened tensions in Israeli detention facilities following the escape of six prisoners from a high-security prison last month. [All six were recaptured within a couple of weeks](#), but the escape embarrassed Israeli authorities and was hailed as a stroke of defiance by Palestinians. Israel is currently holding more than 4,600 Palestinians in connection with the Mideast conflict. The prisoners range from senior militants convicted of deadly attacks against Israelis to political activists who took part in demonstrations and teenagers detained for throwing stones at Israeli soldiers.

Ayelet Shaked: The haredim are an integral part of Israel

Minister of Internal Affairs Ayelet Shaked responded Wednesday to Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's call Tuesday to limit haredi political influence. Speaking to the Knesset's Finance Committee Wednesday afternoon, Shaked said: "The haredi public is very important in the State of Israel. The haredim are an integral part of the State of Israel and they should also be part of the Zionist effort to settle the Negev. The potential for growth in the country will come from integrating the haredim into the labor force. My brother has a high-tech company, he employs a lot of haredim, and this practice can grow."

U.S. will move forward with reopening Consulate in Jerusalem

The Biden administration plans to press ahead with its plan to reopen the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem as part of efforts to deepen ties with Palestinians, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday. Blinken reiterated his pledge to move toward re-establishing the consulate, which had traditionally been a base for diplomatic outreach to the Palestinians before it was closed by President Joe Biden's predecessor, Donald Trump, in 2018. But Blinken, speaking at a Washington news conference with visiting Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and United Arab Emirates Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, stopped short of setting a date for reopening the consulate, which is opposed by Israel's new cross-partisan government.

Qatar rules out normalization of relations with Israel

Foreign minister says no diplomatic ties with Jewish state as long as 'occupation of Arab lands' continues Qatari Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani on Wednesday ruled out an Abraham Accords-style normalization of relations with Israel as long as "there is no prospect of ending the occupation." The minister made the remarks on the second day of the Global Security Forum held in the Qatari capital, Doha. "We should not focus on economic normalization and forget the (Israeli) occupation of Arab lands," the Gulf state's top diplomat said.

Ha'aretz

Bethlehem fears Christmas in peril due to Israeli COVID rules

Israel's coronavirus policies will not permit foreign tourists to stay overnight in Bethlehem in November, and the restriction has enraged municipal officials in the Palestinian city, who are concerned about its implications in the run-up to the Christmas season. Sources in the Israeli Health Ministry explained that visits by foreign tourists, who generally cross into the [West Bank city](#) from Israel, will be allowed only where there is compliance with Israel's so-called green passport regulations. These are not in force in Bethlehem or anywhere else in the Palestinian Authority. A staffer at the Israeli Tourism Ministry issued a notice to travel agents informing them that the arrival of foreign tourist groups in Bethlehem is part of a pilot program that does not include overnight stays in the city. "Requests that include overnight stays in Bethlehem will not be approved," the notice states. The ministry said it was following directives from the Israeli Health Ministry.

Ha'aretz– October 14, 2021

The Critical Questions for the New Shin Bet Chief

- **“Worthy,” “brave” and “a warrior” were among the accolades in profiles of the new head of the Shin Bet security service, Ronen Bar. Such traits are presumably de rigueur for these positions, but they’re not enough. The public deserves to know the professional and moral positions of the people who lead the country’s most powerful organizations, and the Shin Bet is obviously one of them. The Shin Bet’s involvement in quarantine tracking taught Israelis about the agency’s power to spy on innocent individuals, and also about the limitations of this “instrument.” The Shin Bet is a domestic security service and its work is essential, but its power over people’s lives, both inside Israel and in the territories, cannot be overstated. Its actions and recommendations affect human life, individual liberties and even family life.**
- **History teaches us that inappropriate or unrestrained use of such tools, over which there’s little oversight to begin with, can be a genuine threat to democracy and human rights. Given this, how did it happen that in a state where there is lively public debate over almost everything, the Shin Bet remained out of the spotlight? One can think of many questions for Bar. For instance, what is his position on the cabinet’s decision to use his agency for coronavirus contact tracing? Does he think gathering such information accords with democratic values? What steps does he intend to take to prevent illegitimate use of this “tool” for mass surveillance? How much restraint will he display, if any, in the face of the inevitable pressure on him to use tools meant for thwarting terrorism for civilian purposes? Would he agree to judicial oversight of searches of communications databases?**
- **Bar should also be asked where he stands on pressure to use the Shin Bet to [fight crime in Israel’s Arab communities](#). This is a question of current relevance, but it’s also an ethical question about a step that, according to a recent ruling by the attorney general, would be illegal. How sensitive is he to individual rights? What is his position on a draft law that would allow the widespread use of facial recognition cameras in public areas?**
- **What is the Shin Bet director’s position on transparency? For example, isn’t it time for sessions of the Knesset Subcommittee for Intelligence and Secret Services, which supervises his agency, to be opened to the public? The old adage “sunlight is the best disinfectant” is also true for abuses of power and human rights violations. It’s essential to know whether Bar will lead the Shin Bet into an era of transparency or leave it in the shadows.**
- **What is Bar’s view on the use of [so-called administrative detention](#) against both Palestinians and Israelis? The public deserves to know his position on depriving people of their freedom without trial. We also deserve to know his position on a proposed amendment to the Citizenship Law that seeks, once again, to deny Palestinian spouses of Israelis any possibility of obtaining permanent residency or citizenship in Israel. This proposal aims to revive a racist law that the High Court of Justice upheld by a single vote, a law born during the terror attacks of the second intifada. Would Bar support continuing this discrimination, especially given the fact that politicians now admit that the law’s real purpose is demographic and the security argument, based on an opinion issued by the Shin Bet, was merely a cover?**

- Freedom of expression is a key feature of a free and democratic society. So we should ask if Bar will continue his predecessors' tradition of summoning social activists for "warning talks." His answer could shed light on his professional perspective on the hazy topic of "subversion" and the importance he attaches to freedom of expression and of protest on controversial issues like the occupation. The Shin Bet is too important not to talk about. Understanding the worldview of its leader is much more critical than all the superlatives attached to his name.

Yisrael Hayom – October 14, 2021

First help the existing Negev towns, then build new ones

By Jalal Bana

- Interior Minister Ayelet Shaked is pursuing an ambitious plan to build 16 new communities in the Negev, as reported by *Israel Hayom*. This sounds like an important decision, meant to strengthen the Negev as the country's weakest and most far-flung peripheral region and solve the housing shortage crisis in Israel. However, a deeper analysis of the plan raises questions about its motivations and quickly leads one to the conclusion that these new communities are earmarked for those who are already socio-economically strong and for real estate investment – and that any relation to bolstering the periphery is declarative at best.
- Even before the plan was approved the communities were named, and soon the wrangling will begin over the street names. But what about the existing communities in the Negev? They are starving for attention and help, from Kuseife and Tel Sheva to Yeroham and Ofakim. The minister and her staff have yet to provide even one solution to the serious troubles afflicting the residents of the area, and are already pushing a grandiose plan that will cost taxpayers and the state tens and perhaps hundreds of billions of shekels, and it's doubtful these communities will contribute to strengthening the Negev. Perhaps the opposite, they will only exacerbate the current gaps and hurt the existing communities.
- Beyond the issue of the harsh treatment toward Bedouin communities, for example with home demolitions, the population in the Negev doesn't receive the proper care in any regard. The State of Israel is perhaps the only country in the world that invests a fortune in building dozens of new communities for just one sector of the population – while refusing to recognize the existing ones, some of them from before the state's creation.
- It seems the idea to build 16 new Jewish communities stems more from political motives than a desire to ease the housing crisis. This plan is the answer Shaked has planned for the criticism she is bound to face once the government fulfills its coalition commitments to the Ra'am party and recognizes three Bedouin communities in the Negev. Shaked will have to ratify this recognition with her own signature to ensure the coalition's survival. And what are three measly and meager Bedouin communities compared to 16 brand new communities for the Judaization of the Negev and enhancement of governability?
- Imagine to yourselves the feelings that Arab citizens of Israel have had to carry throughout the seven decades since the country's inception: hundreds of communities – towns, moshavs, kibbutzim, cities – erected for Jews throughout the years, expanded and cultivated. In all that time, however, the state couldn't find one opportunity to establish a new Arab city with modern infrastructure attractive to young, urban, middle-class Arabs. Most young Arab couples who can't buy land or afford to build a home in the Arab communities are "forced" to live in mixed or predominantly Jewish cities in order to buy a home and start a family.
- What is actually needed is to strengthen the 16 communities in the Negev that already exist, Jewish and Arab alike, not to run ahead with 16 new ones that will not only deepen the gaps and perpetuate the neglect but also fail to achieve the stated goals – social, Zionist, economic and otherwise.