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CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

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Headlines:

- In Paris, Lapid Continues to Call For More Sanctions on Iran
- Official: Killing of Top Scientist Didn't Slow Iran's Nuke Work
- Israel Received \$22m From Morocco, Allegedly for Drones
- Minister Promotes First Israeli-Palestinian Airport
- Over 100 Palestinian Families Face Home Demolitions
- Abbas Meets Qatari Emir Amid Hamas Tensions
- Hamas Threatens Legal Action Against UK
- UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees Faces Funding Crisis

Commentary:

- **Yedioth Ahronoth: "Don't Let a Small Handful Win"**
- By Sarab Abu-Rabia
- **Yedioth Ahronoth: "Southern Israel is Being Terrorized"**
- By Oded Shalom

News Excerpts

December 1, 2021

AI-Monitor

In Paris, Lapid Continues to Call For More Sanctions on Iran

Foreign Minister [Yair Lapid](#) met with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace. The focus of the meeting was the resumption of the Iran nuclear talks in Vienna over Israeli protests. Lapid's office noted in a statement that Lapid reiterated Israel's stance that Iran is trying to stall for time to advance its nuclear program. Lapid also stressed the immediate need for world powers to restore sanctions on Iran and to formulate what he called a Plan B. Paris is not ready to backtrack on its support for the talks. In the statement published by the Elysee spokesperson's office, Iran was not mentioned. Macron called upon his Iranian counterpart Ebrahim Raisi to return to fulfilling his country's obligations under the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action "without delay." In the telephone conversation, Macron urged Raisi to engage in a "constructive manner" in the Vienna talks. [Dig Deeper "Iran Backtracks on Previous Months of Nuclear Talks" \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

Times of Israel

Official: Killing of Top Scientist Didn't Slow Iran's Nuke Work

Israel's alleged assassination of top Iranian nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh did not have the desired effect of slowing down Iran's nuclear work, an official told Channel 12. "The killing of Fakhrizadeh a year ago did not brake Iran's progress as was hoped," the anonymous Israeli official was quoted as saying. "The current situation is the most advanced that Iran has ever reached." Therefore, the official added, "there is a huge global Israeli effort, both publicly and behind the scenes, to push for an upgraded agreement as well as simultaneously building a large and significant attack plan." This comes after [The New York Times](#) quoted United States officials as saying that they warned Israel that its attacks against the Iranian nuclear program were counterproductive. Without citing a source, Channel 12 also reported that Israel was increasing the amount of intelligence on Iran's nuclear activities it shares with world powers.

I24 News

Israel Received \$22m From Morocco, Allegedly for Drones

Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) received \$22 million in an arms deal with Morocco, amid foreign reports of sales of Harop loitering munitions, known as kamikaze drones. Moroccan media reported that the country is planning to manufacture drones using Israeli technology, according to The Media Line. Sources in Morocco told Defense News weekly last month that Israel intends to sell Morocco drones as part of normalization between the two countries. In September, the Africa Intelligence website reported that a joint venture of kamikaze drone manufacturing in Morocco was being planned. This comes after Defense Minister Benny Gantz visited Morocco last week, signing a defense memorandum with his Moroccan counterpart. The memo reportedly "lays the foundation for security cooperation, intelligence sharing, and future arms sales" between the two states, according to [The Washington Post](#).

Minister Promotes First Israeli-Palestinian Airport

Regional Cooperation Minister Issawi Frej is promoting the construction of an airport that would become the first-ever airfield under joint Israeli-Palestinian ownership. The plan comes a week after the Jerusalem municipality green-lit what it described as a new eastern neighborhood on lands located over the West Bank boundary, near the Palestinian hub city of Ramallah. The site, which is known by the name Atarot, once housed an airport in the days of British rule but has been since abandoned. According to the minister's plan, the airport will be rebuilt, and a Palestinian terminal will be built next to it. Subject to security arrangements, it will allow residents of the Palestinian Authority (PA) to fly directly from Jerusalem to various destinations around the world. Frej believes that the airport could serve as many as 5 million passengers annually and will be a boon for the Israeli economy as a whole and Jerusalem's economy in particular. [Dig Deeper "Israel Backs off Housing Project at Atarot Airport Site Amid US Pressure" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Over 100 Palestinian Families Face Home Demolitions

More than 100 Palestinian families in East Jerusalem are in immediate danger of having their homes demolished after the Jerusalem municipality hardened its stance on master plans for the area. A large clinic and hundreds of other buildings are also at risk of demolition in the near future. There are currently some 20,000 illegal buildings in East Jerusalem, and demolition orders have been issued against thousands of them. Most were built illegally because the city's Palestinian neighborhoods have no master plans that would enable legal construction. Residents have therefore tried to prevent the demolitions by proposing their own master plans, which include the legalization of existing buildings. On Sunday, the Jerusalem District Court rejected an appeal by 58 Palestinian families against the demolition of their homes in the Silwan neighborhood's Wadi Yassul section. The last master plan approved for that area dates from 1977 and zoned it all as open public space. Residents have been trying to get it rezoned as residential for 15 years, but to no avail.

Abbas Meets Qatari Emir Amid Hamas Tensions

PA President Mahmoud Abbas met in Doha with the emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, against the backdrop of increasing tensions between the PA and Hamas in the wake of a security crackdown on Hamas's members in the West Bank. It also came amid an acute financial crisis in the PA, which has repeatedly appealed to Arab countries to fulfill their promises to support the Palestinians. Qatar hosts several Hamas leaders, including Ismail Haniyeh and Khaled Mashaal, and has been supportive of the Gaza-based Islamist movement for several years. Attempts by Qatar and other Arab countries over the past 14 years to resolve the dispute between Abbas's ruling Fatah faction and Hamas have been unsuccessful. PA officials have frequently criticized Qatar's support for Hamas, especially the delivery of cash grants to the Gaza Strip in coordination with Israel. [Dig Deeper "Hamas Announces Deal for Qatar to Subsidize Gaza Public Employees" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Hamas Threatens Legal Action Against UK

Hamas announced plans to take legal action against the British government over its decision to designate the Islamist group as a terrorist organization. The UK outlawed Hamas' military wing, the Izzadin al-Qassam Brigades in 2001. On Nov. 19, London's parliament voted to outlaw Hamas as a whole. In doing so, Britain joined a host of other countries that have already labeled Gaza's rulers a terrorist group, including Israel, the United States, Canada, Japan, the European Union, and Egypt. Arab media cited senior Hamas official Mousa Abu Marzouk as saying that the group is "actively working on a strategy with British lawyers for the cancellation of the decision." Marzouk also urged the Fatah movement to reconcile "on the basis of the interests of the Palestinian public, partnership and resistance. Causing division in Palestine would not serve the interests of Hamas." The Fatah-led PA ruled the West Bank and the Gaza Strip until 2007, when Hamas, ousted PA President Mahmoud Abbas' government from the coastal enclave in a military coup, effectively splitting the Palestinian territories into two political entities. So far, the efforts made over the past decade to promote a reconciliation between the rival Palestinian factions – headed mostly by Egypt – have failed. [Dig Deeper “Israel Protests as UN Marks Partition Plan with Palestinian Solidarity Event” \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Associated Press

UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees Faces Funding Crisis

The head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees said it was unable to pay its 28,000 employees on time this month because of a major funding crisis, warning of potential cuts in vital services to millions of people amid a global pandemic. UNRWA runs schools, clinics and food distribution programs for millions of registered Palestinian refugees across the Middle East, mainly the descendants of Palestinians who fled or were driven out of what is now Israel during the 1948 war surrounding its creation. The 5.7 million refugees mostly live in camps that have been transformed into built-up but often impoverished residential areas in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, east Jerusalem and Gaza, as well as Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. UNRWA head Philippe Lazzarini told reporters in Jordan that the resumption of American support for the agency this year — which had been halted by the Trump administration — was offset by a reduction in funding by other donors. Lazzarini said the agency raised enough donations at a recent conference in Brussels to cover up to 48% of its budget in 2022 and 2023. It also generated \$60 million toward a \$100 million shortfall until the end of the year to keep services running. [Dig Deeper “US Envoy to Security Council: Settlement Building Has ‘Reached a Critical Juncture’” \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Don't Let a Small Handful Win

By Sarab Abu-Rabia

- I was born and grew up in Beer Sheva. I attended primary school in Tel Sheva, along with dozens of other children from Arab families, both from the southern region or who migrated from the northern region to make their homes in the city to find work and to look for better opportunities than the ones that existed in their [home] Arab communities, which have been neglected for many years by the Israeli government. During the 1980s many kids took school buses from Beer Sheva to school in Tel Sheva. For high school, when the travelling became too much, most people moved to schools in Beer Sheva so they could be closer to home. Despite the fact that there are many Arab residents who live and study in the city there is no educational or cultural framework for them, apart from the bi-lingual school that was built there about 10 years ago. The events of recent weeks have inflamed public discourse against the Bedouin population of the south that we and our children are a part of.
- I'm sorry to say that a small gang of criminals have gotten outsized coverage that has stained an entire population that works and studies in the city's public and academic institutions alongside the Jewish population. The monstrous, inciting discourse has re-framed the image of the "Arab," and especially that of the "Bedouin," as a violent, out-of-control criminal. The community as a whole is hard-pressed to reconcile [with this image]. An entire population that lives and works in and around the city has no answer. As a mother I am very terrified about what will happen to my children. It's hard for me to send them shopping or to play with their friends without worrying that someone might attack them because of the language they speak or the color of their skin.
- That isn't the future I had hoped to see for this city, which is so very close to my heart. As a teenager, my closest friends were Jewish and Arab girls alike. We visited each other's homes, and over the years our families developed close ties. The monstrous discourse has blown apart what has been built here in an irresponsible manner, for thousands of Arab students who live in the Negev, doctors and academics, businesspeople and the employees who come to the city every day to study, to work, or just to drink coffee. They are a large percentage of the target community for Soroka Medical Center, for local shopping and entertainment centers. I call on decision-makers in the city to create a language and discourse of partnership and to advance dialogue projects. Don't allow a small minority to dictate the public agenda for those who want a life of coexistence.

Southern Israel is Being Terrorized

By Oded Shalom

- The incident in which an Egged bus was pelted with stones illustrates just how severe the situation is on the Negev's roads. The incident occurred on the Beer Sheva-Dimona road. The driver, Nimrod Harari, reported that most of the passengers on board the bus were asleep at the time of the attack. Photographs and video footage show the shards of glass strewn in the aisle between the passengers' seats were more than enough to understand just how lucky the outcome was [i.e. that no one was physically injured]. Stones that get thrown at a moving vehicle produce a ballistic equation with three variables: mass, velocity and luck. Had any of the stones that were thrown struck a window that one of the passengers' head was leaned up against, the stone would have killed that passenger.
- Had one of the stones struck the driver, the bus would have flipped over. The distance between a fatal incident and one that is limited to property damage is very small. Given that, it is important that everyone understand that any stone-throwing at a bus or any other moving vehicle is an act of terrorism. It isn't a naughty prank or child's play, as adults from the Bedouin community in the Negev have tried to describe it. Rather, it an act of terrorism that undermines Israel's national security. Anyone who tries to instill fear in the hearts of drivers, regardless if it happens in Wadi Ara or the Negev, is undermining national security. An iron hand needs to be used against criminals of that kind. Talk about the [gradual] loss of governance in the Negev is no longer relevant—it is already an established fact. When Southern District Police Commander Cmdr.
- Peretz Amar said in an interview to Yedioth Ahronoth this week that while the gunfire in a brawl outside Soroka Hospital should not have happened but that that is not reflective of radicalization—he is effectively saying that while opening fire outside a hospital is frowned upon, it isn't such a big deal; it is only more of the same, which we have already grown used to seeing. If that is the case, we have a very big problem. If an Egged bus on one of the main roads in the Negev is pelted with stones, it is a problem. And when the driver says it wasn't the first time that this has happened, and that his colleague had already been similarly attacked, then that is an even bigger problem because it means that that is the [pervasive] reality.
- Anyone who refrains from reacting quickly and forcefully in response to that reality has abdicated his responsibilities; fell asleep on his watch; was busy making excuses about manpower shortages and offering up all sorts of other mind- numbing palaver. The police officers and commanders who presided over the loss of control over the Negev in real time are all to blame. But the past is the past, and it can no longer be changed. In the face of the currently extreme reality there is no choice but to use extreme measures. A state that is capable of identifying and intercepting trucks making their way through the Syrian desert as vehicles that are transporting sophisticated weapons systems to Iranian militias or Hizbullah ought to be able to deliver security to its own civilians driving on the roads of the Negev.

- **The police may not be able to deploy a police car every 100 meters, but they can deploy cameras with night-vision in the air. Those cameras need to be hooked up to a joint Israel Police and Border Police command post. They need to be positioned over the roads in the south and the response needs to be in real time—even if the recordings need to be rewound to do so. The footage needs to be used to determine where the perpetrators fled to after throwing their stones, and they need to be taken into custody. The GSS needs to be used to help capture the perpetrators and it also needs to be used daily to preempt similar attacks in the future. If there are groups within Bedouin society in which nationalist sentiments are brimming, decisive actions need to be taken against them. If there isn't enough manpower to do that, then whoever is in charge needs to bang on the desk and demand more manpower.**
- **If the commander of the GSS's southern district thinks that he either isn't up to the task or that he doesn't have enough manpower to do it—he needs to speak up. If the commander of the Southern District Police thinks that the situation isn't really that bad—he needs to sit down to speak with local residents, who will tell him about what is really happening on the ground. He might start by meeting with Harari, the bus driver, and with the passengers who woke up in terror at the sound of the windows being shattered. If that isn't enough to convince him, he needs to ask for a transfer to a different district. The police needs someone in the Southern District Police who understands the severity of the situation and is willing to roll up his shirtsleeves. Now isn't the time for making excuses and offering analyses about how we reached the current situation. Now is the time to take the initiative and to provide security. Now is the time for action.**