



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and the Middle East News Update

Monday, July 31

Headlines:

- **Netanyahu, Two Ministers Call to Pardon Hebron Shooter After Appeal Loss**
- **PA Resumes Security Coordination with Israel**
- **PA Said to Offer \$20 Million in Subsidies to East Jerusalem**
- **Jordanian Media Reveals Identity of Embassy Security Officer**
- **Netanyahu's Lawyer Stood to Earn Millions from Submarine Deal**
- **Former Shin Bet Heads Blast Critical Politicians Over Temple Mount**
- **Thousands Rally in Istanbul Against Israel's Al-Aqsa Mosque Measures**
- **Hezbollah, Al Nusra Exchange Bodies in Syria-Lebanon Truce**

Commentary:

- **Yedioth Ahronoth: "Netanyahu, Give Backing to Eisenkot"**
 - By Amos Yadlin, Director, Institute for National Security Studies
- **Jerusalem Post: "Five Post-Abbas Possibilities"**
 - By Seth Frantzman, Op-Ed Editor, Jerusalem Post

News Excerpts

July 31, 2017

Ha'aretz

Bibi, Two Ministers Call to Pardon Azaria After Appeal Loss

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and two other cabinet ministers called on Sunday for Sgt. Elor Azaria to be pardoned, after a military court denied the appeal of his manslaughter conviction for killing an incapacitated Palestinian attacker last year in Hebron. Azaria shot and killed Abdel Fattah al-Sharif on March 24, 2016 after the latter had stabbed an Israeli soldier. The soldier was sentenced in February to 18 months in prison. The military appellate court upheld Azaria's conviction on Sunday and denied a prosecution appeal seeking a harsher sentence.

See also, [*"Israel to Investigate Shooting by Embassy Guard in Jordan" \(Forward\)*](#)

See also, [*"Slain Palestinian Assailant's Family Surprised Azaria Not Exonerated" \(Times of Israel\)*](#)

BICOM

PA Resumes Security Coordination with Israel

Palestinians officials have confirmed that security coordination between Israel and the Palestinian Authority (PA) has resumed in a gradual manner. The decision was made during a meeting between PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas and Commander of the General Intelligence Service Maj. Gen. Majed Faraj, a high-ranking Palestinian security official told *Israel Hayom*. A senior PA official from Abbas's office confirmed the decision, which included the renewal of economic cooperation, but noted that security coordination would be reinstated gradually and on the basis of developments on the ground.

Times of Israel

PA Said to Offer \$20 Million in Subsidies to East Jerusalem

The Palestinian Authority has reportedly earmarked some \$20 million to support East Jerusalem Palestinians in the wake of mass protests over Israeli security measures around the Temple Mount compound. According to Channel 2, the 500 "guards of the Al-Aqsa Mosque" will each receive a \$1,000 stipend from the PA. Some \$15 million will go toward upkeep and repairs on homes in East Jerusalem, and all small business owners in the Old City will receive a grant of \$1,000 over the next three months.

Jerusalem Post

Jordanian Media Reveals Identity of Embassy Security Officer

Jordanian newspaper *Al-Ghad* revealed on Sunday night the identity of the Israeli security guard who shot dead two Jordanians in an incident at Israel's embassy in Amman last week. "This is the Israeli that killed two Jordanians, Mohammad Jawawdah and the doctor Bashar Hamarnah, in what has been termed the 'Israeli embassy crime'," wrote the newspaper. "The shooting was carried out in a building that belongs to the embassy in Amman, last Sunday night." The report noted that, according to documents obtained, the guard carried a diplomatic identity card. Although the newspaper did not write the guard's name, a photo shows an identity card supplied by the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs Protocol Department with the name "Ziv Chai Mordechai Moyal" written in Arabic.

See also, [*"Tensions Still High Between Israel and Jordan" \(Jerusalem Post\)*](#)

Ha'aretz

Netanyahu's Lawyer Stood to Earn Millions from Sub. Deal

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's personal lawyer was due to earn tens of millions of shekels from an agreement, since suspended, to buy three submarines from Germany. That, according to statements reportedly made to the Israel Police by a state's witness in the case. Michael Ganor's testimony about David Shimron was reported by Israel's Channel 2 and Channel 10 television on Sunday. Ganor told police that Shimron's commission from the deal between the state and ThyssenKrupp was to be 20% of Ganor's own fee from the German conglomerate for brokering it. A 20 percent cut would have amounted to tens of millions of shekels, Ganor said.

Ynet News

Ex-Shin Bet Heads Blast Critical Politicians Over Temple Mount

Several former heads of the Shin Bet have spoken out in defense of their organization after several politicians strongly criticized the agency during the Temple Mount crisis. Minister of Sport and Culture Miri Regev (Likud) referred to the organization as "delusional," while Coalition Chairman David Bitan (Likud) called Shin Bet officials "cowards." "I would have never thought to listen to people like Bitan or Miri Regev, despite her splendid service," said Ami Ayalon, who was head of the Shin Bet from 1996-2000. "Their understanding of what they define as fear or courage, delusion or real, has no bearing, and no one should take them seriously. Unfortunately, there are apparently people who take these things seriously, and thus weaken those who maintain a measure of sanity in the decision-making process in the State of Israel, thus preventing unnecessary bloodshed.

Reuters

Thousands Rally in Istanbul Against Al-Aqsa Mosque Measures

Thousands of people rallied in Turkey's largest city on Sunday against security measures Israel has imposed at the Al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem, shortly after Israel removed other measures that led to two weeks of violent Palestinian protests. The rally in Istanbul, called "The Big Jerusalem Meeting" and organized by Turkey's Saadet Party, drew some five thousand people to the Yenikapi parade ground on the southern edge of Istanbul. Protesters were brought in by buses and ferries from across the city, waved Turkish and Palestinian flags, and held up posters in front of a giant stage where the chairman of the Saadet party and representatives from NGOs addressed the crowd.

Times of Israel

Hezbollah, Al Nusra Exchange Bodies in Syria-Lebanon Truce

Lebanon's Hezbollah terror movement and jihadists on Sunday started exchanging the bodies of fighters as part of a ceasefire deal for the restive Syria-Lebanon border. The truce, announced by the movement and confirmed by Lebanon's General Security agency on Thursday, ended six days of a Hezbollah-led assault on Al-Qaeda's former Syrian branch in the mountainous Jurud Aarsal border region. Hezbollah's "War Media" outlet reported on Sunday that the "first phase of the deal" had begun. "The bodies of nine Al-Nusra fighters will be handed over to the Lebanese General Security in exchange for the remains of five Hezbollah fighters who died in the Jurud battles," the outlet said.

See also, [*"Thousands Poised to Leave Lebanon-Syria Border Zone Under Deal"*](#) (Reuters)

Netanyahu, Give Backing to Eisenkot

By Amos Yadlin

- The Elor Azaria affair generated a firestorm in Israeli society and touched on the heart of a number of central issues that have become mixed up with each other in the public discourse: the ethical question, the professional handling by the IDF and the court case. The harsh language employed against IDF commanders in the 1.5 years that have elapsed since the incident often marked them as “the enemies of the people.” If we couple this with the accusing finger that was pointed at the GSS in the incidents on the Temple Mount, we see a process. A worrying process that must be stopped.
- If we return to the event in Hebron in March 2016, from the military aspect, it is the commanders’ obligation, in every such incident, to undertake an initial operational inquiry on all the command levels and to draw the operational lessons. The inquiry does not seek the guilty but is meant only to learn and to improve. If the inquiry finds suspicion of a criminal offense, the commanders transfer the matter to the judicial track. On the face of it, the inquiry into an incident in which an injured and neutralized terrorist was shot a long time after the danger had passed, indicates a clear-cut undermining of the IDF’s code of ethics: purity of arms, human life, professionalism and credibility.
- On the military level, deterrence is not obtained by shooting a terrorist who is badly injured and neutralized. On the moral level, revenge is not a component of the ethical norms of the IDF, even if the masses demand this. Therefore, after the picture had been clarified as a result of the operational inquiry, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot ruled that the matter should be transferred to the legal establishment to handle and yesterday, the military court of appeals, in its ruling, gave full backing to the chief of staff’s decision (which was backed at the time by the defense minister, Yaalon). The command level and the ethical and judicial handlings of the affair converged at this point.
- Now that the appeal has been denied, the public-political discourse, which divided Israeli society in the last 1.5 years, should accept the court’s ruling and view it as another layer bolstering the power of the IDF’s code of ethics and should give full backing to the chief of staff.
- The fact that the ruling in the Azaria affair intersected with the crisis on the Temple Mount, where fierce criticism was made of the IDF’s and the GSS’s assessments and recommendations, cannot be ignored. The chief of staff and the GSS director, together with all the leaders of the security branches, do not question for a moment their subordination to the political echelon. But it is their responsibility and their professional duty to express their opinion, and to act, within the framework of the responsibility assigned them upon their appointment and as expected of them according to their professional code and their ethical code.
- It is the right of the political echelon not to accept the IDF’s and GSS’s recommendations. Oftentimes, these assessments are overly negative to the point of being wrong, for example, in the prediction of a third Intifada or the Middle East erupting like a volcano. It is the right and

the duty of the political echelon to choose another course of action if it sees fit. But it is wrong to prevent them from stating their opinion, and certainly it is wrong to lash out at them.

- After a week filled with populist suggestions to appease his political base after his decisions relating to the Temple Mount, Binyamin Netanyahu spoke at the start of the cabinet meeting today about “leadership that must make decisions level-headedly and judiciously.” Nice sentiments. It is now more important than ever for the prime minister to stand behind and give full backing to the chief of staff and to the GSS director, even if this runs counter to the gut feelings of his supporters.
- Mr. Prime Minister, at a time when the discourse is ugly, shallow and dangerous, you must set a personal example, display leadership, pound on the table and call for order, including from among some of your close associates at the cabinet table and in the coalition, who libel and incite against the security establishment leaders. Israel’s citizens sleep more soundly with Eisenkot, Halevy and Argaman at the helm—you know this too. At this time, you must not neglect and trample the statesmanlike responsibility demanded of the political echelon, of which the lack thereof was recently strongly demonstrated.

Amos Yadlin is the director of the Institute for National Security Studies.

Summary:

Therefore, after the picture had been clarified as a result of the operational inquiry, Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Gadi Eisenkot ruled that the matter should be transferred to the legal establishment to handle and yesterday, the military court of appeals, in its ruling, gave full backing to the chief of staff’s decision (which was backed at the time by the defense minister, Ya’alon). The command level and the ethical and judicial handlings of the affair converged at this point.

Five Post-Abbas Possibilities

Every time Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas gets sick, commentators rush to wonder what will come next when the 82-year old leader leaves office.

By Seth Frantzman

- Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas was briefly hospitalized July 29 for what various sources said was fatigue and a routine checkup. Each time Abbas gets sick, commentators rush to wonder what will come next after the 82-year old leader leaves office. The question of succession has both a sense of urgency and also dread, with one official describing it in 2014 as like “Samson in the temple,” ready to bring it all down.
- Abbas was reelected president of Fatah in 2016, but analysts also see his reign as stifling democracy and becoming more authoritarian. They worry that he has not named a successor, that elections have been postponed too long, and freedom of the press has been eroded in the PA. All of that, combined with lack of realization of a Palestinian state, leads to a combustible situation should he leave office. Here are a few scenarios of what might be expected.
- The next generation?
- Palestinians in their 50s born after the 1948 war whose formative years were post-1967, contain some possibilities for post-Abbas leadership.
- Fatah insiders such as Majid Faraj, head of PA intelligence has had his name tossed around. Grant Rumley, research fellow at Foundation for Defense of Democracies and coauthor of a biography on Abbas, told Reuters in 2014: “The Americans love him and the Israelis love him.”
- Another name that always comes up is Marwan Barghouti, who is serving five life sentences in prison. Rumley and others have pointed to Jibril Rajoub, currently sports czar and a former security chief; Mohammad Shtayyah, a politician and economic expert and Mahmoud Aloul, a new Fatah vice president.
- Chaos or Hamas
- In 2015, Nathan Thrall, a senior analyst with the International Crises Group, wrote in the London Review of Books that there would be a new round of Israeli-Palestinian violence at the “end of the Abbas era.” He claimed that Palestinians were taking “matters into their own hands,” doing so “gradually at first, in areas outside PA control: Jerusalem, Gaza, Israeli prisons and villages and refugee camps.” The street protesters were “crushed and divided,” he said, but even in weakness they pursued national goals. This depiction of bubbling leaderless chaos, is one many fear will come after Abbas. Without an authoritarian center and absent democratic elections, Palestinian politics might devolve onto the village and city level.
- This would feed the interests of new salafist or religious extremist groups that might like to inch into the vacuum or of existing opposition such as Hamas, which, for instance, is not well liked in Gaza after a decade of failed rule but in the West Bank presents itself as the younger and active anti-corruption “change” party.

- Case in point is its new leader Yahya Sinwar, born in 1962. Journalist Khaled Abu Toameh told the Israel Public Diplomacy Forum in November 2016 that a weak Fatah “provides Hamas with a golden opportunity to boost standing in this area.”
- The old guard
- When the British Israel Communications and Research Center (BICOM), in 2016, presented the question of what happens after Abbas, Paul Scham, an academic, responded: “Of the half dozen likely candidates and a similar number of dark horses, there is none currently more likely to be chosen than the others.”
- Names such as Saeb Erekat are sometimes raised; born in 1955, he isn’t the oldest of the older players in the PA. Ahmed Qurei, who is 80, would be more representative. So would Yasser Abed Rabbo, a PLO insider who was born in 1945. But there is a chance that a post-Abbas era could include a triumvirate of elderly Fatah members, jealous of one another and seeking to cling to power and perpetuate the stagnation of the Abbas era. “I do think the likeliest result of a chaotic transfer of power is a situation where multiple parties have multiple levels of legitimate claims to the leadership,” said Rumley.
- This involves organs such as the Central Committee of Fatah, the Constitutional Court, the 120 members of the PLO Central Council and 22 members of the PLO Executive Committee and the Palestinian Legislative Council. This might be in the interests of the international community, but it doesn’t bring good tidings in terms of building civil society, elections or giving young people a voice.
- What about Dahlan?
- In the last few years Mohammad Dahlan, the one-time Gaza strongman, has made an interesting comeback among commentators and Palestinians, to be considered for a leadership role. He was the former head of the Palestinian security services in Gaza, but was unceremoniously expelled by Hamas in 2011 (conveniently, while he was abroad). In what seemed like a terrible defeat from which one cannot return, his forces were crushed by the Islamists.
- However, years make memory grow different, and in 2017 there is talk of his return. Dahlan is supported abroad by governments in the region such as the UAE and Israelis know him from the 1990s and 2000s.
- Annexation
- In May, Minister for Jerusalem Affairs and Environment Protection Ze’ev Elkin said Israel must prepare for the post-Abbas era. “The Palestinian Authority will not survive Abbas’s departure because he oppressed any political culture in the PA,” he was quoted as saying. What does Israel do in such a scenario? Voices on the Right have been arguing for annexation of Area C for years and, if Abbas leaves, a power vacuum might provide an excuse to act.
- A new “victory caucus” in the Knesset and other voices that believe Palestinians need to accept Israeli “victory” over them could push the government toward a new paradigm in the West Bank. This inevitably also leads other voices to conclude that the chances for a Palestinian state have faded and a one-state solution is all that is on the menu.

- In such a scenario, the international community may ramp up pressure on Israel as former US secretary of state John Kerry prophesied it would in his December 2016 speech before leaving office.
- If history teaches us anything, it is that there is always another leader – no one is irreplaceable. However, the recent era in the Middle East also teaches us that chaos can be unleashed by unseating long-serving leaders and that when nationalist paradigms break down they often are not replaced by more democratic and secular forms, but rather by religious extremism and sometimes localized factions or ethnic violence.
- Those watching the Palestinian Authority and Palestinians themselves all wonder what comes next.

Seth Frantzman is the Jerusalem Post's op-ed editor. He has covered the war on Islamic State in Iraq and reported from Turkey, Jordan, Egypt, west Africa and Eastern Europe.

Summary:

Abbas was reelected president of Fatah in 2016, but analysts also see his reign as stifling democracy and becoming more authoritarian. They worry that he has not named a successor, that elections have been postponed too long, and freedom of the press has been eroded in the PA. All of that, combined with lack of realization of a Palestinian state, leads to a combustible situation should he leave office.