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CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and the Middle East News Update

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News Excerpts

August 1, 2017

i24 News

China Unveils 4 Point Plan to Resolve Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

In a further sign of China's ambition to overtake US on the international arena, the country's envoy to the United Nations on Monday urged the member states of the global body to support President Xi Jinping's new four-point plan to resolve the decades-old Israeli-Palestinian conflict and establish a Palestinian state. The key points of the plan as announced by Liu Jieyi are 1) advancing the two-state solution based on 1967 lines with East Jerusalem as the capital of a new Palestinian state; 2) enshrining the "concept of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security," 3) international efforts to put forward "peace-promoting measures that entail joint participation at an early date" and 4) "development and cooperation" between the Palestinians and Israel. See also, ["CHINA URGES SUPPORT FOR NEW ISRAEL-PALESTINIAN PEACE PLAN" \(AP\)](#)

Jerusalem Post

PA, Morocco Press Leaders to Boycott Africa-Israel Summit

The Palestinian Authority and Morocco are working to upend an Africa-Israel summit scheduled for Lomé, Togo, at the end of October, *The Jerusalem Post* has learned. According to African diplomatic officials, the PA is putting pressure on Togolese President Faure Gnassingbé to cancel the summit, and is also urging Muslim countries in Africa not to attend, saying that going to the conference will show support for Israel and be a setback for the Palestinian struggle. Togo will send invitations to all 54 African states to attend the, while between 20 and 30 heads of state are expected to take part.

Times of Israel

Austria Sentences Hamas Man to Life for Terror Plot in Israel

Austria sentenced a Hamas operative to life in prison for enlisting Palestinians in the West Bank to carry out terror attacks against Israeli targets. The Palestinian man, whose name is being held under gag order in Austria, was sentenced last week, Israel's Justice Ministry said in a statement. The Hamas operative was previously serving a life sentence in Israel, but was released to the Gaza Strip in the 2011 prisoner exchange deal for IDF soldier Gilad Shalit. He later relocated to Austria. In 2016, the Palestinian man contacted two residents of the West Bank over the internet and enlisted them to carry out grenade attacks in Jerusalem and to assemble additional cell members. The planned attacks were never carried out. See also, ["Israeli Intelligence Led to Arrest of Hamas Man Sentenced to Life in Austria" \(Ha'aretz\)](#)

Israel Radio News

Palestinian PM Threatens to Appeal to ICJ over Taxes

Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah has threatened to appeal to international courts if Israel decides to stop transferring tax funds to the Palestinians in order to pressure the Palestinian Authority into resuming security coordination with it. Every time a crisis arises with Israel this is the first action that it takes, Hamdallah said in an interview to Palestinian television. He noted that this was a violation of international law, because the tax funds in question belong to the Palestinians. Palestinian media outlets reported that Israel has threatened to stop transferring to the Palestinian Authority the full amount of tax funds if the latter were to continue to suspend security coordination.

If Voices Regret, IDF Chief Might Reduce Azaria's Sentence

If Sgt. Elor Azaria expresses regret for the shooting that led to his manslaughter conviction, Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot will seriously consider reducing his 18-month sentence, army sources said on Monday. On Sunday, the Military Court of Appeals rejected Azaria's appeal of his conviction and sentence for killing a Palestinian assailant, Abdel Fattah al-Sharif, while the latter was already lying on the ground gravely wounded in Hebron last year. Azaria's attorney, Yoram Sheftel, is expected to announce within the coming week whether or not his client will seek to appeal this decision to the Supreme Court. If Azaria decides against appealing, his next move would presumably be to ask Eisenkot for clemency. See also, ["Hebron Shooter's Best Shot at a Shorter Sentence: Clemency From the Israeli Army Chief" \(Ha'aretz\)](#)

Defense Minister Bans Bitan from Visiting Hebron Squatters

The Defense Ministry banned coalition chairman David Bitan (Likud) from making a solidarity visit to 15 families who on July 25 moved into a three-story apartment building in Hebron known as Beit Hamachpela without permission. Bitan is among those politicians who have called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to allow the families to remain in the structure until they are able to prove their claim of purchase, which they first made five years ago in 2012. Bitan believes "the settlers legally purchased Beit Hamachpela," his spokesman said. Initially Bitan protested the Defense Ministry's decision, explaining the ban was "scandalous." "I have a right to visit Hebron," Bitan said. The Defense Ministry said that it had received a request to approve the visit only that morning and that it needed more time to process it. See also, ["Former IDF chief calls MKs Regev and Bitan monkeys" \(Jpost\)](#)

Pal' Chief Negotiator Awaits Lung Transplant in Israel

Saeb Erekat, chief Palestinian negotiator with Israel for the past 20 years who also serves as secretary-general of the PLO's executive committee, suffers from a very serious lung disease and is on the waiting list for a lung transplant in Israel or the United States. Erekat's temporary replacement has been announced as Palestinian intelligence chief Majid Faraj. Erekat, 62, suffers from pulmonary fibrosis, which is characterized by the development of scars in lung tissue. He was diagnosed more than a year ago. So far, Erekat has been treated with drugs, but a few months ago his condition worsened dramatically. See also, ["Erekat slams Trump admin's handling of recent crisis" \(Jewish Journal\)](#)

Jewish Visitors to Temple Mount Jump 15% this Year

On the eve of the fast of Tisha Be'av, statistics were published showing an increase of more than 15% in the number of Jewish visitors to the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism. According to the Yeraeh organization, which promotes Jewish visitation and prayer rights at the Mount and desires to rebuild the Jewish Temple there, at least 17,000 Jews have visited the site since the beginning of the Hebrew year 5777 last October. In the Hebrew year 5776, 14,908 Jews visited the site, while 5777 still has another six weeks to run, with at least a thousand Jewish visitors expected on the Temple Mount on Tisha Be'av alone. See also, ["Israelis gather in Old City after weeks of tensions over Temple Mount" \(TOI\)](#)

A Dishonest Fallacy: Israel's Occupation Isn't Why anti-Semitism's Spiking

Anti-Jewish agitators in every era claim they're only responding to the 'actual' misdeeds of Jews. For violent Islamists and the left, Israel's occupation is just the latest iteration

By Dave Rich, Deputy Director of Communications for the Community Security Trust

- Identifying anti-Semitism and working out how to challenge and overcome it is no easy task, but in more than two decades of work and study in this field I've come up with one simple rule: Don't mimic the anti-Semites you're fighting.
- At least, you'd think this is a simple rule; but British writer and activist Tony Klug fell straight into this trap when he wrote recently in Haaretz ([If Israel's Occupation Doesn't End, Anti-Semitism Worldwide Will Rise to Sinister Heights](#)) of an acquaintance who, he claimed, said to him: "I thought an anti-Semite was someone who hated Jews, not someone whom Jews hated."
- I first heard Klug use this line two months ago, at a conference on Zionism and anti-Semitism held in London by the Pears Institute for the Study of Anti-Semitism. You can hear Klug make the comment [here](#), followed by some laughter and applause. (Full disclosure: I am an Associate Research Fellow of the Pears Institute, on its Advisory Group and spoke at the same conference as Klug, but I had no role in the planning or organization of that conference).
- However, this wasn't the first time I'd heard the line itself, because for many years it was one of David Irving's favorite jokes. He would tell it in his speeches to audiences of anti-Semites and Holocaust deniers, and he usually got a much bigger laugh than Klug did.
- I pointed this out to Klug, publicly, at the conference in May. I suggested that as he had used the same joke as David Irving – a man described by a British court, on losing his [2000 libel action](#) against Professor Deborah Lipstadt, as "an active Holocaust denier [] anti-Semitic and racist and [...] associates with right wing extremists who promote neo-Nazism" – he might want to rethink.
- At the time, Klug seemed unperturbed by the revelation that he was parroting David Irving. He was much more animated by the suggestion that he had intended to make a joke. He was deadly serious, he assured the gathered academics, in implying that Jews have inverted the meaning of anti-Semitism to create a weapon of Jewish hatred against others. Apparently he still thinks it is a line worth using, despite knowing what company it puts him in.
- In fact, Irving was not the first to come up with this quip. That dubious honor probably belongs to the late Joseph Sobran, who came up with it in the early 1990s. Sobran was fired by National Review in 1993 for writing a series of anti-Semitic columns, and became a fixture on the international Holocaust denial conference circuit where he, like Irving, [would tell people](#) that "an anti-Semite used to mean a man who hated Jews. Now it means a man who is hated by Jews."
- Thanks to Klug, this line has now made its way from the proceedings of the Institute for Historical Review to a conference of the Pears Institute for the Study of Anti-Semitism. Perhaps Klug was unaware of the joke's origins when he used it in May, but he has no such excuse when

deciding to repeat it in Haaretz this week. Why does this joke work? I think it is because it plays to a stereotype of the complaining Jew; the paranoid Jew who sees anti-Semitism everywhere; the dishonest, cunning Jew who uses his cleverness to confound his unsuspecting foe. It's a joke that gives permission to laugh dismissively at Jewish fears of anti-Semitism.

- Yet those fears are real and justified. Klug acknowledges that anti-Semitism is rising, but the best he can do to explain why this is the case is to blame it on the occupation; and the only solution he offers is for Israel to make peace with the Palestinians and, with a wave of its magic wand, end anti-Semitism at a stroke.
- History tells us that life is not so simple. Anti-Jewish agitators in every era have claimed that they are only responding to the actual misdeeds of Jews. Anti-Semitism, being a conspiracy theory, a prejudice and a closed worldview all rolled into one, does not behave rationally. If Israel does make peace, social media will probably fill with theories about how it is a Rothschild plot to subjugate the region under the yoke of Jewish capital, or some similar nonsense that will be believed by millions.
- Klug cites the Oslo period as one when anti-Semitism declined due, he claims, to hopes of peace in Israel and Palestine. But those years also saw a surge in Islamist terrorism in Israel and overseas designed specifically to derail that peace process. Tell the Jews of Argentina that they were safer in the 1990s, when Iran and Hezbollah destroyed the AMIA Jewish community center killing 85 people, than they are now.
- This violent jihadist terrorism, combined with the conspiracy theories that circulate unchallenged in parts of Muslim communities and on the hard left as well as the far right, are what alarm European Jews today. Too much of the left has too little to say about this and even less to offer Jews in terms of solidarity. Instead we are told to distance ourselves from Israel or face the consequences.
- Israel needs to make peace for its own reasons, but it is naïve to imagine that the likes of David Irving will end their anti-Jewish propaganda if such a day comes to pass; and it is foolish for people who claim to oppose anti-Semitism to mimic that propaganda now.

SUMMARY: History tells us that life is not so simple. Anti-Jewish agitators in every era have claimed that they are only responding to the actual misdeeds of Jews. Anti-Semitism, being a conspiracy theory, a prejudice and a closed worldview all rolled into one, does not behave rationally. If Israel does make peace, social media will probably fill with theories about how it is a Rothschild plot to subjugate the region under the yoke of Jewish capital, or some similar nonsense that will be believed by millions. Klug cites the Oslo period as one when anti-Semitism declined due, he claims, to hopes of peace in Israel and Palestine. But those years also saw a surge in Islamist terrorism in Israel and overseas designed specifically to derail that peace process. Tell the Jews of Argentina that they were safer in the 1990s, when Iran and Hezbollah destroyed the AMIA Jewish community center killing 85 people, than they are now.

Trump's Plan for Mideast Peace Fades

By Ben Caspit, Columnist at AI Monitor Israel Pulse

- **By now it is obvious that the "ultimate deal" between Israelis and Palestinians, which President Donald Trump promised in his first days in office, was little more than an optical illusion. A series of conversations with Israeli, Palestinian and diplomatic sources depicts a very different picture. The diplomatic process is bogged down. President Trump is not involved in any way, nor does he have any interest in getting involved. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is severely disappointed with the United States, and the US "peace team" has lost what limited credibility it had on the Palestinian side. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government is rubbing its hands eagerly beneath the table and dismissing all the serious concerns that sullied the mood of the past few months. Nothing will happen, because there is nothing there, ministers from the Likud and HaBayit HaYehudi whisper with smug satisfaction. We can all calm down.**
- **The story that best illustrates this situation occurred last week when the Temple Mount crisis threatened to ignite the entire Middle East in a global conflagration originating in the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Throughout that entire crisis, the US administration was effectively AWOL. Although they attempted to take credit for some deep involvement in efforts to reach a solution, the truth is that the Americans were not a significant factor during the harshest days of the crisis, when it looked like the entire Middle East would spiral downward into a new round of violence.**
- **President Trump himself was not involved in events as they unfolded. His special envoy, Jason Greenblatt, lost his standing as an "impartial mediator" in the very first days of the crisis. One senior Palestinian source told AI-Monitor on condition of anonymity that "Greenblatt picked a side and represented Netanyahu throughout the crisis." According to a senior Palestinian source who spoke on condition of anonymity, the Americans adopted the Israeli government's positions at every stage. "When the metal detectors were installed, they supported that. Then they supported the installation of smart cameras, and then, when there was talk of manual checks, they supported that too."**
- **The Americans' behavior throughout the crisis only furthered the feeling prevalent in Ramallah over the past few weeks that Greenblatt and Jared Kushner are irrelevant. "It's not a nice thing to say," another Palestinian source told AI-Monitor on condition of anonymity, "but they are both ardent supporters of the settlements. They are completely unfamiliar with the other side, they don't understand the region and they don't understand the material. You can't learn about what is happening here in a seminar lasting just a few weeks."**
- **At one point, matters reached a head. In response, Abbas decided to send Greenblatt for an intimate conversation with his close adviser, Saeb Erekat, and the head of Palestinian intelligence service, Majid Faraj, considered to be the most powerful person in the West Bank. A senior Palestinian diplomatic source speaking on condition of anonymity described the talk as a "reprimand." He said, "Greenblatt received a very firm explanation about the way things stand. He was told to go back to Netanyahu and tell him to remove everything that was installed on Temple Mount. 'There is no other solution, nor will there be one,'" Erekat and Faraj told him.**

- A top Palestinian source claimed that Greenblatt displayed utter ignorance throughout the entire incident, failing even to understand the various sensitivities pertaining to the Temple Mount. Once the Palestinians explained their positions, he began to look pensive. At times he expressed surprise and amazement. At some point he even admitted to them that he wasn't aware of some of the information that was relayed to him.
- Conversations with the Israeli side offer a similar account, though this came from a completely different perspective and worldview. A senior Israeli political figure admitted to Al-Monitor on condition of anonymity that, "As of now, Trump's peace initiative looks like it is completely bogged down." He added, "The Palestinians have lost trust in the peace negotiations teams. Greenblatt is rapidly approaching the status of persona non grata, just like Ambassador to Israel David Friedman and UN Ambassador Nikki Haley. The president is not involved, and it looks like he has distanced himself considerably from Middle East affairs, particularly given the serious problems he has inside the White House."
- Israeli sources involved in the issue say that Greenblatt continues to apply heavy pressure on Israel to make gestures and take steps to improve the daily lives of Palestinians. Then they say that nothing will come of this.
- At one time, the predominant feeling in Ramallah and Jerusalem was that President Trump himself was committed to reaching a historic agreement. He was thought to be willing to step outside the box and do things never before done in the region. That feeling has since faded into oblivion. "As of now, Trump has lost any credit that he had managed to amass in the Middle East," said one senior Israeli source on the condition of anonymity. A top Palestinian source also speaking on condition of anonymity added, "Even the automatic sense of awe that people once had of him is not what it used to be. The more time passes, the more it becomes clear that he is a paper tiger focused on internal affairs and incapable of mustering up the inner strength necessary to reconcile Israelis and Palestinians." A senior Israeli minister speaking on condition of anonymity added, "The Americans aren't really a presence here. They let us do whatever we want. They don't set the tone, and they don't dictate the agenda."
- Ostensibly, this near freedom of action should be the dream of the Israeli right. But even among them, people are beginning to express their concern about how things are unfolding. "This was as clear as can be during the Temple Mount crisis. There was no responsible adult in the mix. There was no sheriff on the ground. The Americans gaped in amazement at what was happening there. Every so often they'd pick up the phone, but they had no real influence on the course of events that happened, and they saw that. The situation is dangerous, perhaps even unprecedented," a source on the right told Al-Monitor on condition of anonymity.
- Two other disconcerting facts should be added to this mix. The first is news making its way across Israel about the declining health of Abbas. The second is the fact that during his talks with the American team working on the peace process, Netanyahu brought up an old plan suggested long ago by Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman for a territorial and population swap. In it, Israel would hand over land populated by Israeli Arabs — mainly in the Wadi Ara northern region — in exchange for the annexation of the settlement blocs. Liberman's idea is considered a clear "nonstarter," even if there is a certain healthy logic behind it. Anyone who brings it up knows that the Palestinians will immediately reject it out of hand, while Israeli Arabs will be outraged by it. It is now thought that the main reason Netanyahu brought up the idea in the

first place was to intensify the sense of embarrassment felt by the Americans and to provoke maximum opposition from the other side.

- As of now, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has been left to its own fate. Abbas is at the end of his rule, the Americans are focused on other hotspots around the globe and Israel's right-wing government has no meaningful checks and balances in place. Taken together, this is a recipe for serious problems down the road.

SUMMARY: At one time, the predominant feeling in Ramallah and Jerusalem was that President Trump himself was committed to reaching a historic agreement. He was thought to be willing to step outside the box and do things never before done in the region. That feeling has since faded into oblivion. "As of now, Trump has lost any credit that he had managed to amass in the Middle East," said one senior Israeli source on the condition of anonymity. A top Palestinian source also speaking on condition of anonymity added, "Even the automatic sense of awe that people once had of him is not what it used to be. The more time passes, the more it becomes clear that he is a paper tiger focused on internal affairs and incapable of mustering up the inner strength necessary to reconcile Israelis and Palestinians." A senior Israeli minister speaking on condition of anonymity added, "The Americans aren't really a presence here. They let us do whatever we want. They don't set the tone, and they don't dictate the agenda."