



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

## Israel and the Middle East News Update

*Wednesday, October 11*

### Headlines:

- **Hamas Chief Voices Content After Day of Talks With Fatah**
- **Of 3,800 Pledged Settlement Homes, Only 600 To Be Built**
- **Likud Ministers Slam Netanyahu Over Settlement Limits**
- **Schumer Renews Call For Jerusalem Embassy Move**
- **Egypt Expands Buffer Zone Along Gaza Border**
- **Belgium Suspends Funding for Palestinian Schools**
- **Lebanese Army Asserts it's Independent from Hezbollah**
- **Americans Embrace Iron Dome**

### Commentary:

- **Al Monitor: "Hamas Leadership More Militant Than Ever"**
  - By Shlomi Eldar
- **Ha'aretz: "It's Women Who Will Make an Arab-Jewish Peace"**
  - By Bradley Burston

# News Excerpts

October 11, 2017

Ha'aretz

## **Hamas Chief Voices Content After Day of Talks With Fatah**

Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh voiced content Wednesday from the first day of reconciliation talks with Fatah. Haniyeh was briefed on the Egyptian-mediated talks in Cairo to see the warring Palestinian factions reach a deal to consolidate Palestinian Authority rule over the West Bank and Gaza. A report by a Palestinian news agency said an Israeli delegation landed in Cairo on Tuesday to meet with Egyptian officials.

Ha'aretz

## **Of 3,800 Pledged Settlement Homes, Only 600 To Be Built**

Under pressure from the settler lobby, the Prime Minister's Office has over the past few days invested a great deal in creating the impression that a new wave of settlement construction is in the offing. But a close examination of the list of construction plans expected to be approved next week shows that despite declarations that plans for some 3,800 new homes are being advanced, the government is expected to approve only around 600 new units. Of these, 300 homes will be in Beit El, promised to the settlement after the demolition of the homes in Ulpana Hill over five years ago.

Times of Israel

## **Likud Ministers Slam Netanyahu Over Settlement Limits**

In an unusual move, senior lawmakers from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's party implicitly criticized him for the limited construction in the West Bank and accused him of failing to provide necessary infrastructure for settlements. Transportation and Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz, who earlier this week announced that he would run for leadership of the Likud party after Netanyahu steps down, described the settlement movement as a battle for Israel. *See also, ["Judea and Samaria construction practices must change" \(Arutz Sheva\)](#)*

JTA

## **Schumer Renews Call For Jerusalem Embassy Move**

Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer renewed his call for President Donald Trump to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem after the president said he wanted to wait to give his relaunched peace push a chance. President Donald Trump in an interview last week with Mike Huckabee, a former Arkansas governor turned TV personality who is known for his pro-Israel activism, said the time was not ripe to move the embassy.

Associated Press

## **Egypt Expands Buffer Zone Along Gaza Border**

Egypt's military has bulldozed at least 140 homes and more than 200 acres along the Gaza Strip border, expanding a buffer zone in an effort to cut off the flow of weapons and militants. Egypt has struggled to combat an Islamic State-led insurgency in the northern Sinai since 2014, and has built the buffer zone to prevent the militants from using a vast tunnel network under the border that was created to evade a decade-old Israeli and Egyptian blockade on the territory.

Ha'aretz

## **Belgium Suspends Funding for Palestinian Schools**

The Belgian government is suspending funding for two school construction projects in the Palestinian territories after it emerged that a school it backed was later renamed after a woman it considers a terrorist. Belgium said it backed a school in the south of Hebron only to find out in 2013 that local authorities changed its name to "Dalal Mughrabi Elementary School." Belgian Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said that Mughrabi was "a Palestinian terrorist" who led a 1978 attack against Israel which killed 38, including 13 children.

See also, [\*"Belgium suspends funding for Palestinian schools" \(Associated Press\)\*](#)

Times of Israel

## **Lebanese Army Asserts it's Independent from Hezbollah**

A Lebanese military source on Tuesday rebuffed claims by Israel's defense minister that the Lebanese Army is controlled by the Hezbollah terror group, saying such a statement "cannot be taken seriously." The source asserted that "the Lebanese army has total independence and is subject to the decisions of the political authority, and its leadership is the sole arbiter of its military policy."

See also, [\*"Lebanese Army Blasts Israeli Defense Chief for Saying It's Being Run by Hezbollah" \(Ha'aretz\)\*](#)

Ynet

## **Americans Embrace Iron Dome**

For the first time, an Iron Dome battery has been placed in Washington D.C., the capital of the United States. The battery is in Washington not because the Americans are worried about a surprise rocket attack by Canada or Mexico, but rather is on display at the AUSA Exposition in Washington. The Iron Dome battery, including its operational radar and launchers, is on display against the backdrop of mounting interest within the American Department of Defense in the weapon system to protect its troops in Europe and in other locations. The US Army currently does not have a similar system that is capable of intercepting rockets, planes, helicopters and unmanned aerial vehicles.

## **Hamas Leadership More Militant Than Ever**

By Shlomi Eldar

- The appointment of Saleh al-Arouri as deputy head of Hamas' political bureau completes the overhaul of the movement's leadership since the departure of Khaled Meshaal as bureau chief this past summer. The leadership now consists of Meshaal's successor on the bureau, Ismail Haniyeh, born in Gaza's al-Shati refugee camp; the movement's leader in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar, a Khan Yunis resident; and Arouri, Haniyeh's deputy and a native of the West Bank village of Aroureh, near Ramallah. The triumvirate's members are all second-generation Palestinians from Gaza and the West Bank, grew up in poverty and hardship in teeming refugee camps, and worked their way to the top of the pyramid.
- Arouri has been living outside the Israeli-occupied territories in recent years. After his release from an Israeli prison in 2010, he was banned from living in the West Bank and Gaza and ended up in Turkey. In 2015, the Turks expelled him. He moved to Qatar, only to be expelled from there in 2017. Arouri now resides in Beirut. Previous Hamas leaders — Meshaal, Moussa Abu Marzouk (from Rafah, in Gaza) and others — could have settled in the besieged Gaza enclave, but chose instead to live in more luxurious surroundings. Arouri, however, has no choice but to live abroad.
- The transformation of Hamas' leadership was clearly reflected in the manner of Arouri's selection for the No. 2 position. In the past, the Shura Council, the top religious and decision-making body of the Islamist movement, made decisions on all issues of significance, such as the leadership structure and ideology. In Arouri's case, however, Haniyeh, Sinwar and Mohammed al-Deif, leader of Hamas' military wing, picked Arouri, leaving the Shura Council to rubber-stamp the appointment.
- In fact, the Shura Council's standing had begun to erode in 2004 after Israel assassinated Hamas founder Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, who deferred to the council on every decision despite his indisputably strong leadership, granting it respect and ultimate authority. The council was further diminished during the tenure of Ahmed Jabaari, head of the military wing, whom Israel assassinated eight years later. It now stands devoid of any real influence. The decision by Haniyeh, Sinwar and Deif to make Arouri second-in-command adheres to the principle that at least one member of the top leadership resides beyond Israel's reach, so it cannot wipe out the entire top echelon. This guideline was adopted after the assassination of Yassin and Hamas co-founder Abdel Aziz al-Rantisi over the course of two months, April and May 2004.
- Under the leadership of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz, Israel decided that wiping out Hamas' political leadership was the best way to stop suicide bombings by its emissaries. Following the blow to its leadership, and fueled by concern for its survival, Hamas adopted two strategic decisions. One was to appoint the head of the political bureau at

the time, Meshaal, to lead the movement, mainly because he was living in Damascus and not easily reachable by the Israeli Apache helicopters used to kill some of his colleagues. Since then, the head of the political bureau has also served as the movement's overall leader. The second decision was to pull the plug on the suicide bombings and turn Hamas into a political movement to compete with Fatah for leadership of the Palestinian Authority (PA).

- Arouri's appointment once again leaves Abu Marzouk, political bureau founder, out of the loop. He also lost out to Haniyeh in the recent competition to lead the movement. Abu Marzouk twice saved Hamas from oblivion by managing to raise funds for its survival from Islamist foundations around the world. He used the funds to arm the military wing, the Izz ad-Din al-Qassam Brigades, after Israel arrested Yassin in 1989 and again during the second Palestinian intifada, 2000-2005. Unfortunately for Abu Marzouk, no one remembers his crucial contributions. He is now considered a member of the old guard and has been left behind, disappointed and powerless. Arouri's promotion reflects the new leadership's desire to preserve and improve relations with Iran, Hezbollah and Syria. It believes Arouri to be the right man for the task, whereas Abu Marzouk is considered pro-Egyptian and a welcome guest in Cairo. Thus, Arouri is expected to bolster and maintain the Tehran-Damascus-Hezbollah axis.
- The current goals of the movement and the composition of its new leadership appear to be divergent. On the one hand, the heads of the movement are maneuvering to end the 10-year siege by Israel and Egypt against Gaza and its 2 million residents. They understand that this can only be achieved through diplomatic means — that is, through Egyptian mediation. That is why Hamas leaders have embraced Egyptian-sponsored reconciliation efforts with Fatah, which controls the PA. To ensure Hamas' survival, they are even willing to sever ties with their mother ship, the Muslim Brotherhood, to appease Egypt, its savior and Brotherhood nemesis.
- On the other hand, the new Hamas administration is the most militant the movement has known. Sinwar and Arouri are among the founders of the military wing. The two of them, along with Deif, are creating a leadership system of a distinctly military bent. This group, however, has been forced to shift its thinking, perceptions and strategies. Although a jihadist movement dedicated to Israel's destruction, it now has to put all its energies into its survival. Haniyeh is the only member of the ruling triumvirate who did not rise through the ranks of the Qassam Brigades. Will he be able to harness his colleagues' military leanings? In the past, Haniyeh always tried to appease the movement's military leaders, whom he feared and apparently still does, despite his seniority. Even if he has his doubts about Arouri's appointment as his deputy, he is being forced to bow to the collective will, so Deif and Sinwar can have one of their own flesh and blood in a senior leadership position.

## **It's Women Who Will Make an Arab-Jewish Peace**

By Bradley Burston

- It will happen. Women will make peace in Israel and Palestine. It will be women – like the members of Women Wage Peace, the pioneering grassroots group that organized the Journey to Peace, a 17-day series of marches, rallies and other events that brought together women from across deep divides of identity, religion, nationality, age and politics. These and other extraordinary women activists working in other groups and as individuals will one day do what women do every day – the impossible. And around here, nothing at all feels more impossible than peace. But women will do anything, go to any length, cross any divide, make any sacrifice to keep their children safe.
- It's going to happen. But it won't be soon. You, reading this, may not live to see it. It may well take what feels like forever. Tragedy and ruined lives, warfare and murder will go unprevented. Not because thousands of extraordinary women didn't work hard enough. They work plenty hard. They work with astounding imagination and good humor, and they keep at it no matter what. It's not that. It's going to take an obscene amount of time because of the rest of us. It's because of men. It's because of what we have inside.
- Here it is: Peace scares men. Not war. War excites us. We can pretend otherwise. But something about war quickens our blood. It's built in. It's as much a part of us as the need to take sides, to do what we believe protects our own side at the expense of another. It's as much a part of us as our weakness for weaponry and our urge to possess, to avenge, to vanquish. To rescue but also to conquer. To repair but also to wreck. To focus on certain truths, but to hide or hide from others. It's how we're built.
- Peace scares us because to us, deep down, something about it smells like what we fear the most: betrayal. Loss. Loss of control. Loss of position. Loss of dominance. Loss of what we most firmly believe. No matter which side we're on here, we men say of the other side – the only thing they understand is force. And, for once, maybe the men on both sides are right. Because we cannot trust what we do not understand. And force, we understand. Not peace. In force we trust. Peace we see as so fragile that one single man with a handgun could fire three shots at the back of a prime minister and kill peace for 21 years. And counting.
- We treat peace the way we treat women. With that thin, knowing smile of disdain. And little wonder. Because, when all is said and done, women scare men. We know that we do not understand women in the slightest. And that's just the day-to-day. The process of bringing life into the world is, to us, a mystery beyond all imagination. The stamina and physical resources, the sheer fact of the ability to do what it takes to grow an entire new life, to contain and sustain and survive the cataclysm necessary to give birth, is so far beyond our experience as to occupy a constellation all its own, distant and untouchable as a night sky.

- In the very essence of what they are capable of accomplishing, women threaten us men. Deep down, we know that they are the stronger sex. Why else would we need to interrupt them, bully them, belittle and silence them, mansplain, underpay, overwork and underappreciate them, brand them naive and unrealistic, bury them under glass ceilings and guilt trips and gaslighting. And yet. There is clear momentum building within Women Wage Peace and other movements and communities in which women, especially young women, are taking the lead. Their journey to peace is likely to be maddeningly frustrating, all but impossible. But they will get there. We men can't hold them back forever. We're not built for it.