



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

## Israel and the Middle East News Update

*Friday, October 6*

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# News Excerpts

October 6, 2017

## Times of Israel

### **Hamas Appoints West Bank Terror Chief as its Deputy**

Hamas on Thursday announced that top commander Saleh al-Aroui, who in recent years served as the terror group's head of West Bank operations, will be appointed as the organization's deputy political leader. Aroui will thus serve under Ismail Haniyeh, who himself replaced Khaled Mashaal as the group's political bureau chief in May. Aroui, who is believed by Israel to have planned the 2014 kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens in the West Bank, was expelled from Doha in June along with other Hamas officials due to pressures it faced by other Arab states. See also, ["Hamas picks new deputy chief whom Israel blames for helping spark Gaza war" \(Reuters\)](#)

## Jerusalem Post

### **Egypt: Israel Can't Act Against Hamas During Negotiations**

Details of Egypt's program for Hamas-Fatah reconciliation were presented on Tuesday to Israeli officials in Jerusalem by Major General Khaled Fawzy, the director of the Egyptian General Intelligence Directorate, Saudi news site Elaph reported. The Egyptian program includes the Palestinian Authority's complete control of the Gaza Strip, including a monopoly on weapons which will be closely monitored by Egyptian security. The first step to this will be Hamas handing over their weapons to the PA security forces, a high-level Egyptian official stated. A high-level Israeli official said that during the meeting Fawzy requested Israel not take action against Hamas leaders as they are working alongside the Egyptians to ensure this program will be successful.

## Ynet News

### **Hamas Blocks Reconciliation until Agreement Reached w. Israel**

Despite signs of an approaching Hamas- PA reconciliation earlier in the week, their basis for a truce continues to be tenuous, with Egyptian Minister Khaled Fawzy informing PA President Mahmoud Abbas on Thursday that Hamas is refusing to consider dismantling its military wing until certain preliminary requisites are met. Among Hamas' demands are that new elections be held among the Palestinians, and that an agreement be reached with Israel regarding the matter of the Palestinian state its people. See also, ["Hamas won't disarm before peace deal with Israel, Egypt said to tell Abbas" \(TOI\)](#)

## i24 News

### **Police Demand to Again Question Netanyahu Soon**

Israeli police are demanding that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu be questioned after the Jewish holidays over his suspected involvement in two bribery probes, the Israeli public broadcaster *Kan* reported on Tuesday. According to the report, the police are facing a surfeit of evidence in their investigation and want the prime minister to respond to their findings in a "relaxed" setting. Various Israeli media reports have suggested that Netanyahu is being investigated in Case 1000 -- involving the suspicion he improperly received gifts such as champagne and cigars from wealthy businessmen including film producer Arnon Milchan and James Packer.

## **Israel to Ease WB Closure due to Market Demand**

The full military closure of the West Bank will be eased due to demand by Israeli companies, government ministries and public institutions for Palestinians workers. Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman and IDF Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot held a security assessment Thursday evening after which they ordered the IDF's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories to assess entry requests based on the market's requirements. The West Bank and Gaza Strip were to be completely sealed off for 11 days from the start of Sukkot through the following Shabbat (Oct. 4-14), with the exception of humanitarian cases. Israel regularly imposes closures on the West Bank and Gaza for Jewish holidays, but weeklong festivals like Sukkot usually have closures imposed only at the end of the holiday. See also, ["Israel won't let Palestinians cross from Gaza and West Bank over Succot" \(Jewish News\)](#)

## **Over 180 Democrats Urge Trump to Re-Certify Iran Deal**

More than 180 of the 194 Democratic members of Congress sent a joint letter to US President Trump on Wednesday, urging him to re-certify that Iran is complying with the nuclear deal Orchestrated by Rep. Ted Deutch from Florida and Rep. David Price from North Carolina, the missive comes ahead of the looming October 15 deadline, when Trump will have to report to Congress whether Tehran is honoring the landmark pact. "Absent credible and accurate information confirming a material breach, we are concerned that withholding certification of Iran's compliance or walking away from the JCPOA would harm our alliances, embolden Iran and threaten US national security," the letter said. See also, ["Congressmen Letter to President Trump" \(Ted Deutch\)](#)

## **Former Agent Livni Hails Female Leadership in Mossad**

Israel's former foreign minister and ex-spy Tzipi Livni has hailed the the appointment of two women as division heads at the Mossad, Israel's feared overseas intelligence agency, and said that she hopes to soon see a female as the country's top spymaster. On Sunday, the *Yedioth Aharonot* newspaper reported that two agents were recently appointed as heads of two unspecified divisions, meaning they will also sit in the spy agency's top command forum. While it is not the first time a woman has filled the position of division head, what was unprecedented is that the two women have simultaneously headed branches of the Mossad, defying the traditionally male-dominated upper echelons. See also, ["In first, two women appointed as Mossad division heads" \(TOI\)](#)

## **Netanyahu: I Hope My Children Will Stay Out of Politics**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in an [interview with Harvey Levin on Fox News](#) that he does not want his children to go into politics. Fox News has released three previews of the interview, which took place at the Prime Minister's Residence in Jerusalem, three days ahead of its full screening. Responding to Levin's inquiry whether Netanyahu encourages his children to become politicians, the prime minister responds with a firm "no." Netanyahu is then asked if he persuades them to stay out of politics, to which he answers in the affirmative, but adds that "it doesn't help."

## **Israel's Failed Foreign Policy**

*Crisis with Jordan following embassy shooting could have been solved through three simple measures, but both National Security Council and Foreign Ministry have become neutralized bodies. If prime minister himself fails to personally initiate or lead diplomatic activities—nothing happens.*

By Giora Eiland, Former Chief of Israel's National Security Council

- Two events took place simultaneously about two months ago: A terror attack at the Temple Mount, which left two Border Police officers dead and the metal detector saga that followed, and the incident in which an Israeli security guard shot to death a young man who attacked him in his apartment in Jordan.
- These two incidents increased the tensions between the two countries. The Jordanian king is angry and is refusing to let the Israeli ambassador return to Amman. His anger is justified, as the Israeli security guard also shot to death his landlord, who was present at the apartment at the time and was likely uninvolved in the incident.
- In this state of affairs, Israel would have been expected to do three simple things: One, to appoint a professional team to investigate the shooting incident. There is no need for a police investigation here. A professional team would have completed the investigation and prepared a detailed report within two weeks. The team should have been led by a well-known security official. Had that been done, and had the head of the team presented the report to the Jordanians as early as a month ago, the affair would already be over by now.
- In 2003, at the height of the intifada, during a Duvdevan Unit activity near the United Nations camp in Jenin, the force's commander detected a person with a suspicious object in his hand, assumed it was a gun and ordered his soldiers to shoot him to death. It later turned out that the man had been holding a phone. He was a senior British intelligence official, who had volunteered to serve as head of the UN office in the area. Israel got into trouble both with Britain and with the UN.
- At the time, I served as head of the IDF Planning Directorate and was appointed to lead the team investigating the incident. Within a week, I traveled with the findings to the UN secretary-general in New York and to the British deputy foreign secretary in London. I admitted to them that professional mistakes had been made, unintentionally. The tensions were over.
- The second thing Israel should do is launch a professional dialogue with the Jordanians about the security arrangements at the Temple Mount. Now that calm has been restored, along with the prayer routine, it's time to hold consultations with Jordan about future solutions or acceptable responses to different scenarios. That isn't happening either, as far as I know.
- The third thing is to appoint a person of stature as the Israeli ambassador. The current ambassador, Einat Shlain, is obviously a persona non-grata in Amman after she was photographed with the prime minister when he greeted the security guard. The next

ambassador shouldn't be an anonymous diplomat from the Foreign Ministry but a well-known Israeli figure, a former minister or a security official who is highly regarded by the Jordanians. Jordan is one of the 10 most important countries to Israel, the relations between the two countries are explosive, there is a high potential of deterioration, which is why it is very important to appoint a top official as the ambassador.

- The three things I just mentioned—a quick investigation of the incident by a senior team and a presentation of the findings to the king of Jordan, initiating a dialogue on the Temple Mount and appointing an ambassador with a very good reputation—are simple measures with hardly any cost.
- It has already been said that a national interest is not a heart's desire. A national interest is something so important that we should be willing to pay a price to achieve it. In this case, we are talking about a top interest which can be achieved with hardly any cost. This isn't happening because both the National Security Council and the Foreign Ministry have become neutralized bodies. If the prime minister himself fails to personally initiate or lead diplomatic activities—nothing happens.
- As talented as the prime minister may be, this isn't the way to run a foreign policy. The failure in handling the crisis with Jordan is likely just one example.

**SUMMARY:** The three things that must be done vis-à-vis Jordan—a quick investigation of the incident by a senior team and a presentation of the findings to the king of Jordan, initiating a dialogue on the Temple Mount and appointing an ambassador with a very good reputation—are simple measures with hardly any cost. It has already been said that a national interest is not a heart's desire. A national interest is something so important that we should be willing to pay a price to achieve it. In this case, we are talking about a top interest which can be achieved with hardly any cost. This isn't happening because both the National Security Council and the Foreign Ministry have become neutralized bodies. If the prime minister himself fails to personally initiate or lead diplomatic activities—nothing happens.

## **Moneyed Interests Blocking Path to Peace in Mideast**

By Akiva Eldar, columnist at AI Monitor Israel Pulse

- Once Israeli commentators had said everything they could possibly say about alleged connections between the perpetrator of the Las Vegas massacre and Islamic terrorism, the media shifted its attention to Americans' "intolerably easy access to guns," mixing a measure of scorn with pity. Newspapers stressed that after the Oct. 1 mass shooting deaths, President Donald Trump made do with claiming, "We'll be talking about gun control as time goes by." White House spokeswoman Sarah Huckabee Sanders said, "There will certainly be a time for that policy discussion to take place, but that's not the place that we're in at this moment." Standing out in particular was Democratic Sen. Chris Murphy of Connecticut, who said, "It is positively infuriating that my colleagues in Congress are so afraid of the gun industry that they pretend there aren't public policy responses to this epidemic."
- The links between terrorist attacks, politics, money and ideology are nothing new to Israel. Here as well, lobbies and big businesses whose core economic interests are wrapped up in a thick layer of ideology contribute to the violence. While the contribution is circular, it penetrates the depths of Israeli society and even crosses the ocean. The people and organizations contributing do not provide arms to Israel's enemies on the Palestinian side. Instead, they provide financial means to the enemies of diplomatic compromise on the Israeli side, including the settlement enterprise. Even if it is not entirely linear, the link between the settlements and the occupation and the occupation and terrorism is no less obvious than the link between the Second Amendment to the US Constitution, which protects the right to bear arms, and the horrific scope of attacks like the one in Las Vegas.
- In the past decade, no one has caused more harm to efforts to reach an agreement with the Palestinians while solidifying the occupation than Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He, in turn, was helped to power and has managed to stay there with the support of Las Vegas gambling tycoon Sheldon Adelson. The Jewish billionaire, who is married to an Israeli, has an extremist right-wing worldview, believing that the Palestinians are a "made-up" people. He uses his vast wealth to advance Israeli (and American) politicians who share this perspective. At the same time, his money also opens doors for him to advance his profitable business interests.
- An investigative report in Yedioth Ahronoth in September 2001 related that the day after the 1996 election, Netanyahu — having defeated Shimon Peres by a handful of votes — paid a visit to the Adelsons in Jerusalem to thank them for their generous financial support, about \$1 million, for his election campaign. A 2008 investigative report, this one in the New Yorker, revealed that in December 2007, Adelson had met with the chairman of Yisrael Beitenu, Avigdor Liberman, and the leader of Shas, Eli Yishai, in an attempt to convince them to quit Ehud Olmert's government. Shortly before that, Adelson had founded the free daily newspaper Yisrael Hayom. Now dubbed the "Netanyahu News," it became the most widely distributed paper in

Israel, and through it, the American billionaire has been able to disseminate the most extreme opinions held by Netanyahu and the members of his government.

- Following a Supreme Court ruling in response to a petition by the journalist Raviv Drucker, records were released showing that between 2012 and 2015, Netanyahu and Adelson spoke on 120 separate occasions. During that same period, Netanyahu also spoke with the paper's editor, Amos Regev, on 230 occasions. Before the 2013 election, Netanyahu and Regev spoke 15 times in 19 days. On the night that the preliminary reading passed for the "Yisrael Hayom Law to limit the paper's distribution, Netanyahu spoke three times with the newspaper's owners. That the law passed that vote was one of the main reasons elections to the 20th Knesset were advanced. After it was reported that Netanyahu had been in talks with Arnon Mozes, publisher of Yedioth Aharonot, to limit the distribution of Yisrael Hayom in exchange for more positive coverage from Mozes' paper, the American tycoon transferred his support to Naftali Bennett, the leader of HaBayit HaYehudi.
- Adelson is not the only foreign businessman to intervene in Israeli politics in an effort to keep the right in power and prevent a compromise with the Palestinians. Netanyahu's rise to power in 1996 can be attributed largely to the "Netanyahu is good for the Jews" campaign funded by the Australian businessman Joseph Gutnick, then a prominent figure in the Chabad Hasidic sect. Gutnick later severed ties with Netanyahu, claiming that he did not do enough to prevent the disengagement from Gaza.
- According to the 2001 report in Yedioth Ahronoth, Netanyahu, at the meeting with Adelson after the election, promised the businessman that the Prime Minister's Office would always be open to him. In fact, the gambling magnate had access not only to the Prime Minister's Office, but also to the offices of other ministers. Meetings with other ministers were not limited to ideological issues. At the time, the magnate and the lobbyists he hired wanted to change Israel's gambling laws to allow a casino to be built in the southern coastal town of Eilat or along the Dead Sea coast, in collaboration with Jordan.
- The tragedy in Las Vegas underscores the steep price that American society is paying because moneyed interests with extremist views control its life. Nothing better illustrates the weakness of Israeli democracy's immune system than the way ultra-wealthy American and Australian extremists are similarly seizing control of Israelis' future.

**SUMMARY:** In the past decade, no one has caused more harm to efforts to reach an agreement with the Palestinians while solidifying the occupation than Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. He, in turn, was helped to power and has managed to stay there with the support of Las Vegas gambling tycoon Sheldon Adelson. The Jewish billionaire, who is married to an Israeli, has an extremist right-wing worldview, believing that the Palestinians are a "made-up" people. He uses his vast wealth to advance Israeli (and American) politicians who share this perspective. At the same time, his money also opens doors for him to advance his profitable business interests.