



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM  
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

## Israel and the Middle East News Update

*Monday, July 9*

### Headlines:

- **With Peace Plan Stalled, Trump Admin Focuses on Gaza**
- **Three More MKs Ascend Temple Mount After Ban Lifted**
- **Qatar: Hamas Will Only Return IDF Bodies in Prisoner Swap**
- **Abbas: PA Will Continue Paying Families of Prisoners**
- **Official Use of Arabic Dropped from Nationality Bill**
- **MKs to Vote on Allowing Jews to Purchase West Bank Land**
- **UK to Lead Review of Incitement in Palestinian Textbooks**
- **Israel Says Monitoring Social Media Cuts ‘Lone Wolf’ Attacks**

### Commentary:

- **Jerusalem Post: “Oslo is Obsolete: Time for a Victory Mindset”**
  - By Gideon Sa’ar, former Israeli Minister from Likud
- **AI Monitor: “International Pressure Sways Israel on Village Demolition”**
  - By Shlomi Eldar, Analyst, AI Monitor

# News Excerpts

July 9, 2018

## Washington Post

### **With Peace Plan Stalled, Trump Admin Focuses on Gaza**

With President Trump's peace plan stalled, US officials are focusing on improving conditions in the Gaza Strip. The larger peace proposal has been stymied by the Palestinian Authority, which remains incensed at Trump's decision to move the US embassy to Jerusalem. A group of U.S. officials came away from a crucial trip to the region last month without breaking the impasse. Three senior Arab diplomats said their countries did not budge on long-standing Palestinian demands for a state based on 1967 borders and a capital in East Jerusalem. That has led U.S. officials to consider options for an infusion of aid into Gaza, including projects to improve electrical and water services, most likely funded by Gulf states.

## Jerusalem Post

### **Three More MKs Ascend Temple Mount After Ban Lifted**

Three members of Knesset ascended the Temple Mount on Monday, continuing a wave of MKs visiting the site after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lifted a three-year ban. Yehuda Glick (Likud), Amir Ohana (Likud) and Shuli Moalem-Rafaeli (Bayit Yehudi) visited the site on Monday, a day after Minister of Agriculture Uri Ariel (Bayit Yehudi) and Sharren Haskel (Likud) ascended the Mount. The PA accused the Israeli government of targeting Islamic religious sites in Jerusalem.

## Times of Israel

### **Qatar: Hamas Will Only Return IDF Bodies in Prisoner Swap**

A Qatari mediator between Israel and Hamas said Sunday that Hamas will not return the bodies of IDF soldiers Hadar Goldin and Oron Shaul unless Israel releases Palestinian security prisoners in exchange. Israel has reportedly offered to establish a seaport in Cyprus for Gaza in exchange for the release of the remains. "The rehabilitation of Gaza in exchange for the return of the Israeli captives is not possible," Muhammad al-Amadi, who has been part of indirect and informal talks between Israeli and Hamas officials, told the Israeli Kan public broadcaster.

## Jerusalem Post

### **Abbas: PA Will Continue Paying Families of Prisoners**

The Palestinians will not allow Trump's yet-to-be-announced plan for peace in the Middle East to pass, and will continue paying salaries to families of Palestinian prisoners and "martyrs," PA President Mahmoud Abbas said on Sunday. Speaking in Ramallah, Abbas said that the Arab countries have told the Palestinians that they too were opposed to Trump's plan. At the beginning of his speech, Abbas praised Palestinians who were protesting along the Israel-Gaza border and against the Trump plan and plans to evict the Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar.

Ynet

## **Official Use of Arabic Dropped from Nationality Bill**

An amended version of the controversial nationality bill features Hebrew as Israel's main official language, with the official state use of Arabic to be determined in separate legislation, Ynet learned on Monday. Netanyahu plans to bring the bill to a vote in the Knesset for its second and third readings next week. The nationality bill proposal seeks to enshrine into law the status of the State of Israel as the nation state of the Jewish people. This includes legally enshrining Israel's democratic character, its state symbols, Jerusalem as the capital, Hebrew as the official language and the right of return for Diaspora Jewry.

Ha'aretz

## **MKs to Vote on Allowing Jews to Purchase West Bank Land**

Israel's Ministerial Committee for Legislation considered a bill on Sunday that would allow Jews to acquire land rights in the West Bank. The current situation is based on a 1953 Jordanian law, which prevented anyone from buying land in the West Bank unless they were Jordanian citizens or citizens of another Arab country. In the early 1970s, a way was found to circumvent the law via a special order stating that anybody could buy land through a company registered in the West Bank. Smotrich's bill aims to eliminate this disparity and simply state that anyone can buy land.

Times of Israel

## **UK to Lead Review of Incitement in Palestinian Textbooks**

The British government and other donors to the Palestinian education system will undertake a review of incitement against Israel and Jews in Palestinian textbooks. "There is no place in education for materials or practices that incite young minds toward violence," said Parliament member and Foreign Office minister Alistair Burt during a debate Wednesday in the House of Commons. "We are in the final stages of discussions to take forward a textbook review jointly with other donors." The review should be completed by September 2019, he added.

Washington Post

## **Israel Says Monitoring Social Media Cuts 'Lone Wolf' Attacks**

Amid a wave of stabbing, shooting and car-ramming attacks that began nearly three years ago, Israel has stepped up its monitoring of social media and has questioned or jailed users such who are deemed to have posted incendiary messages. Israel says its methods are working, pointing to a sharp drop in attacks carried out largely by young, disaffected Palestinians. But those methods have generated serious questions about an erosion of privacy, freedom of speech and human rights. For many Palestinians, the knowledge that Israeli authorities are tracking their social-media activities is seen as just another level of oppression and restriction in an intractable, decades-old conflict.

## **Oslo is Obsolete: Time for a Victory Mindset**

By Gideon Sa'ar, former Israeli Minister from Likud

- Finding a solution to any conflict or disagreement between two sides demands the will and mutual understanding. It cannot be accomplished unilaterally. This is just as true for the so-called, “two-state solution,” which on a practical level was never more than a “two-state slogan” or a theoretical idea – and not an especially successful one at that. It is unsuccessful even theoretically, because Israel cannot live with the inevitable outcome – the loss of control between the River and the Sea in two crucial aspects: security and demography. What can we learn from history? And in our case we are talking about a history of 100 years. It never worked. At the crucial moment, the Palestinians always said “no” to any solution based on this idea, regardless of where the lines were drawn or how the land was divided. We saw this all the way back in 1937, when the Peel Commission made their proposal, and again in 1947, when the UN Partition Plan was passed – even though the Palestinians were offered the majority of the country. The same goes for the generous offers made by former prime ministers Ehud Barak (in 2000) or Ehud Olmert (in 2008), even though both of them accepted most of the Palestinian demands.
- This Palestinian rejection also explains why bilateral negotiations – that have lasted for a generation since Oslo – have not only failed to solve the conflict, but have not brought us any closer to peace, security or stability. So what is the reason behind this rejectionism? Very simple: The Palestinian side never wanted to end the conflict. Their goal was always to carry on the conflict with a better hand. The Palestinian goal was and remains not the end of the conflict, but the end of Israel’s existence. In this regard, there is no difference between the various Palestinian factions, such as Hamas and Fatah, but rather in how effective their different methods are in achieving their goal. When we understand this, we understand that almost every Palestinian achievement damages Israel, and vice versa (with very few exceptions). When we understand this, we also understand that Palestinian achievements have worsened our situation, without bringing us any closer to a solution. It is also important to understand that all the achievements of the Palestinians are as a result of our actions. For example: Territory: They did not acquire one meter militarily.
- The Palestinian Authority was established on land that was handed over by Israel under the Oslo Accords. This was after Israel returned the PLO gangs from Tunis (expelled from Lebanon in the First Lebanon War in 1982). And another area given after a unilateral withdrawal from Gaza as the result of an Israeli decision. Political status: The Palestinian’s political status as a so-called “state” at the United Nations, and other international institutions, was granted only after Israel accepted the model of two states – that is, the acceptance of their right to a state between the Sea and the Jordan River. As long as Israel opposed a Palestinian state, that didn’t happen. Since the early days of the conflict, Ze’ev Jabotinsky proposed an alternative approach to the left-wing idea, centered on the understanding that there is no possibility of reaching an

agreement against their will. Jabotinsky wrote about the concept of the Kir Barzel (Iron Wall). This is the correct basis for understanding today's reality also. What he said remains relevant: "This does not mean that there can be no agreement with the Arabs of the Land of Israel; only that it is not possible to have an agreement against their will. As long as the Arabs have one spark of hope to get rid of us, they will not give up that hope, not in exchange for sweet talk and not for different promises... The only way to reach such an agreement is the Iron Wall... In other words, the only way to reach an agreement in the future is to completely relinquish attempts to reach an agreement in the present." Of course, according to Jabotinsky's view, the type of understanding or agreement that would be possible to reach in the future would be quite different in nature.

- If we accept this analysis, we must move to a binary approach – to the concept of “zero-sum game” in the struggle between us and the Palestinians, in all its different aspects. The victory paradigm assumes – like the Iron Wall – that an agreement may be possible in the future, but only after Israel's victory is clear and absolute. In other words, when there is a lack of choice on the part of those who do not want compromise (i.e., the Palestinians). But we must understand that moving to the “Israel Victory Paradigm”, requires the abandonment of the Oslo concept. That is, the concept that peace and security will be achieved through two states between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. At the end of the day, the only way to find a solution is to find a way to link Palestinian autonomy in Judea and Samaria to the Kingdom of Jordan. Don't forget that the Palestinians of Judea and Samaria were Jordanian citizens until 1988, when the King, unilaterally and illegally, took their citizenship away.
- Israel must return to the classic Zionist idea of creating and securing critical mass between the Sea and the Jordan River. What does this mean? Well, let me give you some examples: On the political side, I praise Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's efforts to bring more embassies to Jerusalem. I would add that the Jewish majority in Jerusalem must be strengthened, and there is a need to promote large-scale construction in the Jewish neighborhoods of Jerusalem. The future of Jerusalem will be determined, first and foremost, by the facts on the ground – by the clear Jewish demographic majority, which has begun to be challenged. The Victory Concept requires a clear Israeli claim to Area C. It needs us to set the objective of Israeli sovereignty in this territory, including in the Israeli settlements of Judea and Samaria and in the Jordan Valley.
- The Victory Concept requires Israel to take action to stop the Palestinian attempt, supported by the European Union, to take control over lands in Area C. The classic Zionist approach understood the importance of, and the need to take action in order to see positive change – especially in the demographic balance. It did not attempt to create a false conflict between our territorial and demographic interests. We must return the issue of aliyah, Jewish immigration, to the very heart of the national agenda. We must take advantage of the opportunities that exist today to support and realize the dream of bringing the Jewish people back to their homeland. All of these important policy points are guided by the principle of ensuring an “Israeli victory.” Such a policy must also see a change in the way Israel conducts its public relations around the world, and talks about its principles. Instead of continuing to swear allegiance to a dangerous and

unrealistic idea, Israel's representatives must begin to tell and explain to the world the truth – the reality and our real interests. We have many friends waiting to hear it – and they are waiting to hear it from us.

## **International Pressure Sways Israel on Village Demolition**

By Shlomi Eldar, Analyst, AI Monitor

- On the backdrop of the protest by five European states, Israel's Supreme Court ordered a stay in the razing of the Bedouin West Bank village of Khan al-Ahmar and the eviction of the 32 families living there. Justice Anat Baron's temporary injunction on July 5 gave the state until July 11 to respond to the residents' petition against the destruction of their homes and their relocation to an area near the village of Abu Dis east of Jerusalem. The international interest in their small village and media coverage of the campaign by Germany, France, Spain, Italy and the UK more than likely provided residents of Khan al-Ahmar with the stamina to persevere in their decade-long struggle and to petition the high court once again after being turned away repeatedly. Since 2009, the residents of Khan al-Ahmar have appealed to the court numerous times in a bid to force the state into an accommodation and prevent the destruction of their village. As recently as May 24, Israel's top court — the same court that stayed the demolition order this week — rejected yet another petition and gave military authorities the go-ahead to raze the village within a month. Justices Noam Sohlberg, Yael Willner and Anat Baron (the same judge who now suspended the demolition) ruled that there was no legal basis for intervening in the 2017 decision by Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman to demolish the villages of Khan al-Ahmar and Susya in the Israeli-controlled part of the West Bank designated Area C.
- The 170 residents of Khan al-Ahmar are members of the Jahalin tribe. In 1952, they were evicted from their lands in sovereign Israel near the southern archaeological site of Tel Arad, which the state turned into an area for live-fire military drills. They roamed about until reaching the Jerusalem hills, then under Jordanian control, where they settled. After Israel captured the area in the 1967 Yom Kippur War and established the settlement of Kfar Adumim and the industrial zone of Mishor Adumim on the land where they were living, they found themselves boxed in between the settlement and the industrial zone. They are currently living near the Dead Sea, their village divided in two by the busy Jerusalem-Jericho road. Human rights organizations claim Israel wants to evacuate the residents to expand nearby Israeli settlements, bisect the West Bank and de facto annex parts of Area C without their Palestinian population.
- For years, the Israeli Civil Administration refused to authorize the construction of permanent buildings in Khan al-Ahmar, not even of a school, and given no choice, residents built homes without permits. This infraction became the legal basis for the eviction notice they were served. According to the human rights organization B'Tselem, between 2006 and 2018 Israel demolished 26 homes, leaving homeless 132 people, among them 77 children and teens. With funding from Italy, Belgium and the European Union, the Italian nongovernmental organization Vento Di Terra built a school for the village children using mud and rubber tires. Following the Supreme Court's May ruling, the Civil Administration accelerated preparations for the demolition. All that was left for human rights organizations was to try to generate public protest within Israel against the injustice. B'Tselem argued that razing the village homes violates

international law and constitutes a war crime. However, its protracted campaign and the many legal petitions were to no avail. On July 4, workers of the Civil Administration accompanied by police and heavy machinery dismantled part of the railings separating the village homes from the busy road and began paving an access road into the village to enable Israeli forces to carry out the eviction and demolition.

- When it appeared that all the protest activity had failed and that the demolition was inevitable, opponents reverted to what has become both an option of last resort and the Achilles' heel of Israeli human rights organizations: mobilizing international pressure on Israel. Israel's main beef with the human rights organizations operating in the country is that they mobilize the support of foreign countries, mostly of European states considered supportive of the Palestinians, to exert pressure on the government and impose sanctions on Israel. Such activity generates strong resentment in Israel, not only on the part of the political right that regards the organizations as "Israel bashers" tarnishing the state's image abroad. Alon Liel, a former Israeli ambassador to South Africa and ex-director of the Israeli Foreign Ministry, reportedly once told representatives of the anti-occupation Breaking the Silence organization, "The sanctions on South Africa were imposed the minute public opinion understood that in South Africa, the black is the white and the white is the black. You are the vanguard telling the world that the occupation is insufferable for us and insufferable for them." His comments set off a storm of controversy and illustrated the dilemma faced by human rights organizations in Israel that believe the Israeli public has become indifferent to the human rights violations in the occupied territories and that change cannot be brought about the way things stand now, under the rule of a strong right-wing government.
- Knesset members on the political right have been advancing a series of bills in recent years designed to restrain the activity of human rights groups and limit their funding by foreign governments and organizations. The legislation includes a law on NGO funding and the so-called transparency law instigated by Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked of right-wing HaBayit HaYehudi. The case of Khan al-Ahmar proves that the human rights organizations are correct. Outside help is probably the only recourse left to those seeking to affect change. Since 2009, residents of the village have conducted public and legal campaigns, but the threat of demolition and expulsion remained. On the day five European countries threatened Israel with international condemnation and sanctions, everything ground to a halt. Even the Supreme Court overturned its own decision.