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CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and the Middle East News Update

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News Excerpts

May 3, 2019

Ha'aretz

Kushner: Hope Israel Won't Take Unilateral Steps Before Peace Plan

Jared Kushner, U.S. President Donald Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser who is overseeing the Trump administration's plan for Middle East peace, said Thursday that he hopes Israel and the Palestinians will examine the American peace plan before taking any unilateral steps on the ground. Kushner made the remark in reply to a question on whether he had discussed the possibility of unilateral Israeli annexation of areas in the West Bank with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Kushner gave a rare 45 minute interview about the plan at a dinner event hosted by the Washington Institute for Near East Policy. He provided almost no new information on the content of the plan or on when it will be released. See also, "[Kushner tight-lipped on Trump Middle East peace plan](#)" (*Israel Hayom*)

Times of Israel

Mitt Romney: Two-State Solution is All There Is

Sen. Mitt Romney returned from a Middle East tour saying that he saw no alternative to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict other than the two-state solution. The Utah Republican, his party's 2012 presidential nominee, has just assumed the chairmanship of the Middle East subcommittee in the Senate. Romney's conclusion could put him at odds with the Israeli government, which now says that the two-state solution is all but moribund, and with the Trump administration, which has retreated from US policy endorsing a two-state outcome. "I would say I don't know what the alternative is other than a two-state solution," Romney said Tuesday in his first meeting with reporters since returning from the region last week. See also, "[Romney returns from Mideast praising two-state solution as Trump moves away from it](#)" (*WIN*)

Jerusalem Post

Abbas Bypasses EU, Asks Russia Help Avert Collapse Over Payments

The Palestinian Authority has demanded that Russia resolve the terror-payment crisis that could lead to the PA's collapse as it rejected a European Union compromise solution. "There have been attempts to find alternative channels to pay the prisoners and martyrs allowances, which we will not accept," PA Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Information Nabil Abu Rudaineh said on Thursday. To protest Israel's withholding of taxes equal to the sum of money that the PA uses to pay terrorists and their families, the PA has refused to accept any of its tax revenues, a move which many believe could lead to its financial collapse. According to the UN, tax revenues make up 65% of the PA's budget. See also, "[Abbas draws line in the sand over payments to terrorist](#)" (*JNS*)

Ha'aretz

Amid Reports of Plot, Jordanian King Sacks Intel Chief

Jordanian King Abdullah II fired several senior officials over the past week following reports of a plot to destabilize the kingdom, including the general intelligence chief, the king's adviser on policy and information and several other senior advisers. The Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Qabas reported that several senior and influential Jordanian figures had conspired to hold a mass protest outside the royal palace in Amman to demonstrate a lack of public confidence in Jordanian Prime Minister Omar Razzaz and to create instability in the kingdom. The newspaper cited sources that it described as reliable. See also, "[Jordan in crucible of Middle East peace deal and Syrian refugee crisis](#)" (*The Hill*)

The Marker

Study: Ultra-Orthodox Political Power Threatens Israel's Economy

The ultra-Orthodox parties emerged from April's election stronger than ever, which will enable them to demand more cabinet posts as well as bigger budgets for yeshivas, while empowering them to push back on plans to draft Haredi men and require more secular studies at Haredi schools. But as Prof. Dan Ben-David, the Tel Aviv University economist and head of the Shores Institution, points out in a study released this week the latest ultra-Orthodox gains are part of a long-term trend with an important impact on Israeli society and the economy. The study says that rising Haredi political power has translated into changes in Israeli government policy that have placed a burden on the economy and social welfare. "The nearly unbroken inclusion of religious and Haredi parties in Israeli coalitions has intensified the changes in national priorities," Ben-David said in the report. See also, "[STUDY SUGGESTS UNITY GOVERNMENT NEEDED FOR ISRAEL'S SOCIOECONOMIC GROWTH](#)" (JPost)

Ynet News

Jewish Group Alarmed after German Police Let Neo-Nazis March

Germany's leading Jewish organization expressed alarm Thursday over footage of flag-waving neo-Nazis in self-styled uniforms marching through an eastern German town on May Day unhindered by police. Footage of the march Wednesday prompted widespread outrage in Germany and calls for authorities in the state of Saxony, where far-right sentiment is particularly strong, to step in. "The images of the neo-Nazi march by The Third Way party in Plauen are disturbing and frightening," said Josef Schuster, the head of Germany's Central Council of Jews. Schuster added that "right-wing extremists are marching in Saxony in a way that brings back memories of the darkest chapter in German history." Bellow footage of the rally.

JTA

Survey: Jewish Americans are Least Islamophobic Faith Group

A majority of Jewish Americans have positive feelings about Muslims – and the feelings are mutual — according to a survey released Wednesday. The 2019 American Muslim Poll, conducted in January, found that 53 percent of Jewish Americans reported having positive views of Muslims — the highest of any non-Muslim faith group surveyed — compared to 13 percent with negative views. The same percentage of Jews reported that a candidate's endorsement of a Muslim ban would decrease their support for that individual. Likewise, 45 percent of the Muslim-American respondents had favorable views of Jews, while just 10 percent reported having negative views. The remaining respondents were neutral. See also, "[American Muslim Poll 2019: Full Report](#)" (ISPU)

Jerusalem Post

UC Berkeley Creates its First Faculty Chair in Israel Studies

The University of California, Berkeley announced the establishment of its first faculty chair in Israel Studies, the university announced on Thursday. The chair has been named after the Helen Diller Family, whose foundation put up \$5 million for it. Associate professor of political science Ron Hassner, the Berkeley institute's faculty co-director and an international relations expert on the relationship between religion and conflict, will hold the newly-created chair. "I am moved and humbled by the generosity of the Helen Diller Foundation," said Hassner. "The foundation recognized the urgency of teaching Israel in an even-handed and professional manner on campus and sprang into action. The chair will endow courses, research and programs of the Berkeley Institute for Israel Studies.

The Torch is Now Passed On to the Younger Generation

By Reuven (Ruvi) Rivlin, President of The State of Israel

- **My dear young boys and girls, Youth from around the world, future leaders. 74 years have passed since the gates of hell were shut and the ovens of Auschwitz extinguished. Auschwitz as a symbol of the Holocaust, the darkest, most monstrous event in human history. Six million Jews, a third of the Jewish people – were tortured, starved, slaughtered, burned and wiped off the face of the earth, in the Holocaust.**
- **1.5 million of them babies and children whose only crime was being Jewish. The holocaust was horrible low point for humanity and the worst crisis in Jewish history. Never have the Jewish people been in such danger of annihilation.**
- **Today it is clear the Nazi destruction machine would not have succeeded in their horrific scheme, unless it was constructed on a foundation of hate-filled anti-Semitism, of Europe. The Nazi's were not alone. They were aided by others, from other nations.**
- **Anti-Semitism remains a deep-rooted disease. It did not begin with Hitler and did not end when World War II did. It can be found anywhere; in the right and in the left, supported by nationalism or religion, manifested by hate towards Jews or by de-legitimizing the existence of the state of Israel.**
- **In recent years we are again witnessing, the rise of hate crimes against Jews, furthermore, we now see the denial of the Holocaust, and the loss of its memory. Half of all young people around the world, have never heard of Auschwitz. Many others know very little about the Holocaust. A cry must come out of Auschwitz as the biggest manufacturer of death, where our innocent brothers and sisters were burned alive. A cry to end anti-Semitism, bigotry and hate.**
- **Fighting anti-Semitism and all forms of racism must be the common goal of humanity in its entirety. It must be a strong and unequivocal fight. We must invest in education, commemoration and history, if our promise of 'never again' is to be kept. Holocaust survivors are fewer in number now. Within one generation, there will be none left to testify to what they have seen with their own eyes.**
- **The commemorative torch is now passed-on to you, the younger generation. You are our future. You are our future leaders, scientists, athletes and intellectuals. In each of you lives the spirit of leadership, creativity and hope.**
- **We are counting on you to create a better, more tolerant and more compassionate world. A world that will love people, where the state of Israel can flourish in peace and security. As you take part in the 'March of the Living', remember you are marching from Auschwitz to Jerusalem, from the Holocaust to resurrection**

NO REASON TO FEAR PA ECONOMIC COLLAPSE

By Efraim Inbar, president of the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security

- **The Palestinian Authority is refusing to accept any funds transferred from Israel because Israel has begun deducting the value of stipends the PA pays to terrorists and their families, commonly known as “pay for slay.” The PA’s refusal has added to its chronic budget crisis. International financial support to the PA has declined in recent years, and the Palestinian economy has deteriorated accordingly. As a result, the PA is now telling the world it faces economic collapse.**
- **The Palestinian strategy is clear. PA President Mahmoud Abbas is trying to scare Israel and the world community into believing the relative stability in the West Bank will come to an end, leading to chaos and terror. The PA leadership is emulating Hamas’s behavior by threatening that a humanitarian disaster will ensue unless more financial aid is rendered. Hamas has been playing this same game for years in Gaza. Israel and other international actors (the United States is a sober exception) seem to fall repeatedly for these Palestinians schemes.**
- **It is true that a certain level of economic prosperity in the PA is conducive to stability. Hungry neighbors always pose trouble. Unfortunately, poverty is often cynically employed by authoritarian regimes such as Hamas and the PA as a foreign policy tool to gain attention and financial aid. In fact, the Palestinian leadership needs a certain number of hungry subjects as a precondition for continuous international support. And Palestinian leaders are far less susceptible to economic difficulty than responsible leaders are. Palestinian elites eat well in any case.**
- **Abbas will soon be facing the “deal of the century” proposed by an American administration that is very critical of Palestinian policies. Washington has reduced its financial support for the PA and eliminated all aid to UNWRA. In response, the Palestinians have announced their rejection of any plan coming from the Trump administration. One way to reject the American peace proposal and yet not be blamed for its failure is to engineer an economic crisis that diverts attention from continuous Palestinian intransigence regarding any and every attempt at peacemaking.**
- **Fortunately for the PA, the economic crisis can always be attributed to Israel, which serves as a constant and historic villain in the Palestinian narrative. Attention to Palestinian economic ineptitude and corruption can also be diverted by blaming the high-handed Israelis. And finally, Israel’s insistence on not financing terrorist activities can mobilize some much-needed political support at home for the unpopular Abbas. All polls show a gradual loss of legitimacy for Abbas among Palestinians.**
- **Fears of an imminent collapse of the PA – long a darling of the international community – also serves to force the Palestinian issue back to the top of the world’s agenda. For a while the world has been busy with other more burning issues, such as Iran. Indeed, the Iranian threat has lowered the interest of most Arab states in the Palestinian issue, as well, and brought them closer to the Israeli position – which basically considers the Palestinians a strategic nuisance. The conclusion reached by many Arab and other actors is that in the absence of a Palestinian**

leadership ready to make difficult decisions, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict can, at best, be managed for the medium term.

- It should be noted that Israel is doing more than its share to bolster the Palestinian economy – providing jobs to Palestinians in the Israeli work market; supplying water, electricity and health services to Palestinians; and keeping Hamas from overthrowing Abbas’s PA. Moreover, it is active in raising funds internationally for the PA.
- And thus, nobody should cave to Palestinian blackmail. While it is best for all concerned to ensure a decent standard of living for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, it is highly unlikely that the PA will economically collapse. After all, the PA is a very good business for the kleptocratic leaders of the regime in Ramallah. Marked by corruption and nepotism, the PA is source of significant income for Abbas and his coterie. This gang will not kill the goose that lays golden eggs. As dysfunctional as the Palestinian national movement has become, it has excelled in perpetuating the pork barrel born in Oslo.

SUMMARY Abbas will soon be facing the “deal of the century” proposed by an American administration that is very critical of Palestinian policies. Washington has reduced its financial support for the PA and eliminated all aid to UNWRA. In response, the Palestinians have announced their rejection of any plan coming from the Trump administration. One way to reject the American peace proposal and yet not be blamed for its failure is to engineer an economic crisis that diverts attention from continuous Palestinian intransigence regarding any and every attempt at peacemaking. Fortunately for the PA, the economic crisis can always be attributed to Israel, which serves as a constant and historic villain in the Palestinian narrative. Attention to Palestinian economic ineptitude and corruption can also be diverted by blaming the high-handed Israelis. And finally, Israel’s insistence on not financing terrorist activities can mobilize some much-needed political support at home for the unpopular Abbas. All polls show a gradual loss of legitimacy for Abbas among Palestinians.