



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and the Middle East News Update

Friday, August 30

Headlines:

- **Blue and White Leads in Latest Israel Hayom Poll**
- **Netanyahu Promises Cannabis Laws as Part of Deal with Feiglin**
- **IDF Cancels Leave for Combat Brigades on Northern Border**
- **UN Renews Mandate for Peacekeepers at Israel-Lebanon Border**
- **Egypt, UN Tell Hamas: Stop Firing at Israel**
- **Netanyahu 'Frantically' Tried to Reach Trump Over Iran Talks Fears**
- **Thousands of Israeli Women Participate in Journey of Hope**

Commentary:

- **Jerusalem Post: "10 Steps American, Israelis and Palestinian Can Take"**
 - By Robert Wexler, *president of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace, previously served as a US representative from Florida from 1997-2010*

News Excerpts

August 30, 2019

Israel Hayom

Blue and White Leads in Latest Israel Hayom Poll

With slightly less than three weeks to go until the Sept. 17 election, no bloc can allow itself to lose as much as a single vote, this week's i24NEWS-Israel Hayom poll, conducted by the Maagar Mohot institute, shows. And there is movement: In terms of dry numbers, if the election were held today, the center-left Blue and White list would win 32 seats, moving ahead of the Likud for the first time in the campaign. The poll predicted 30 seats for Likud. The poll predicted 11 seats each for the Joint Arab List and Yisrael Beytenu; 10 seats for Yamina (formerly the New Right); eight seats for Shas, and seven seats for United Torah Judaism. Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak's Democratic Union was projected to win six seats, and Labor-Gesher was projected to win five. In terms of the major blocs, the poll showed that if the election were held today, the right-wing bloc would win 55 seats, with the center-left bloc winning 54 seats. Yisrael Beytenu leader Avigdor Lieberman would win 11 seats, keeping him in the position to decide how the election will play out after the voting.

Ynet News

PM Promises Cannabis Laws as Part of Deal with Feiglin

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Zehut Chairman Moshe Feiglin officially announced Thursday they will run together in the upcoming elections under a special agreement. The deal apparently includes promotion of legislation on imports of medical marijuana and promises the Zionist party leader would become a minister in the sphere of economics or social welfare in the Netanyahu government. Feiglin hasn't left Zehut as was reported earlier but rather joined his faction to the Likud. The 57-year-old, an ultranationalist libertarian with a criminal record who left Likud to establish his own fringe party based on promises to legalize marijuana, has gathered a strong following among cannabis proponents during the run-up to the last elections. "We are embarking on a joint path to promote values of personal freedom and free economy," said the prime minister during a press conference at Maccabiah Village in Ramat Gan.

See also, ["Zehut bows out of elections after Netanyahu promises Feiglin a cabinet post" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Times of Israel

IDF Cancels Leave for Combat Brigades on Northern Border

The army's Northern Command said Thursday it had canceled all leave for combat brigades on Israel's northern border, just hours after the military's commander in the north warned Israel would offer a "harsh" response to any Hezbollah attack. Israeli troops on the Lebanese and Syrian borders have been on high alert this week over fears of a reprisal attack from Hezbollah following an alleged Israeli strike on the terror group in Beirut on Sunday and confirmed airstrikes on an Iranian position in Syria that killed two Hezbollah members on Saturday night. The Israel Defense Forces believes Hezbollah intends to attack IDF soldiers or a military installation on the border, and not civilians.

UN Renews Mandate for Peacekeepers at Israel-Lebanon Border

The UN Security Council on Thursday renewed the mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon that monitors compliance by both Lebanon and Israel with the agreement that ended the Second Lebanon War in 2006. The 15-member council called on both Israel and Lebanon to comply with the terms of that agreement, which is set out in Resolution 1701. Among the issues of concern were ensuring that UNIFIL could inspect Hezbollah attack tunnels against Israel on the border and the continued flow of arms to Hezbollah. Israel's Mission to the UN welcomed new provisions in the mandate which it said were "a clear call on the Lebanese government to allow access to UNIFIL forces and increased reporting on the transfer of weapons to terrorists in Lebanon."

Ma'ariv

Egypt, UN Tell Hamas: Stop Firing at Israel

Although yesterday passed relatively quietly, the IDF has decided to maintain a high state of alert in the southern sector, given the large number of security incidents, the rocket fire and the attempts to carry out terror attacks at the fence, coupled with the high internal tension between the various Palestinian organizations. After Wednesday's rocket fire, Egyptian officials summoned the Hamas leaders to an urgent meeting in Cairo, and warned them not to fire additional rockets at this time, since any action they took would make them look as though they were operating in the service of Iran. Conversely, the Palestinian factions demanded that the Egyptian top intelligence officials pressure Israel to implement the understandings that had been reached, and to ease the blockade on the Gaza Strip, as they said had been agreed upon.

Times of Israel

Netanyahu 'Frantically' Tried to reach Trump over Iran talks fears

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reportedly urgently tried to dissuade US President Donald Trump from meeting with Iran's foreign minister, who made a surprise visit to a summit of world leaders in France earlier this week. According to the report Thursday by Israel's Channel 13 news, Netanyahu was unable to reach Trump to warn him off the meeting despite "frantic" efforts, reflecting growing unease in Jerusalem with the prospects of direct talks with Iran. Israeli authorities have reportedly expressed alarm after Trump said Monday he was open to meeting Iranian President Hassan Rouhani

Ma'ariv

Thousands of Israeli Women Participate in Journey of Hope

Thousands of women participated yesterday in the closing event of Women Wage Peace's Journey to Hope, which was held in the city of Sderot, and demanded a peace agreement. Participating in the march, which began in Jerusalem, passed through Lod, Tel Aviv, Ashdod and Rahat and ended in Sderot, were thousands of women from across the country and from all sides of the political spectrum—settlers, secular, religious, Arab, bereaved mothers and more. Neta Peleg, a Beeri resident who is active in the movement, said: "We, the residents of the south, are fed up with living from one siren to the next, from one cease-fire to the next. We are tired of raising our children in fear, in anxiety and in an ongoing post-traumatic state. We, Women Wage Peace, are confident and know that things can be done differently, that a diplomatic path can be found to a real solution."

10 Steps American, Israelis and Palestinians Can Take

To work, steps must be taken by Israel and the Palestinian Authority in concert with the US. The sequencing can establish a sense of reciprocity.

BY ROBERT WEXLER

- **As Israel's staunchest ally, the United States must not allow electoral politics – including the tempest of Israel's regrettable travel ban on two Congresswomen – to distract from the more urgent priority of taking concrete steps to improve the lives of Israelis and Palestinians while minimizing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. There are two formulas: improve Palestinian quality of life without compromising Israeli security and minimize the conflict by narrowing the disagreements between Israelis and Palestinians.**
- **The goal of resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is laudable, but conditions on the ground are not ripe, including the worsening deadlock in US-Palestinian relations, which could reach the breaking point if a US peace proposal is seen as walking back commitments to Palestinians.**
- **The US president and Congress would do better to take bipartisan steps that substantially improve day-to-day quality of life for Israelis and Palestinians and offer a modicum of hope for both peoples. Doing so will preserve the possibility of a comprehensive agreement until a more favorable political dynamic develops and reduce the risk of renewed, all-out violence.**
- **To work, steps must be taken by Israel and the Palestinian Authority in concert with the US. The sequencing can establish a sense of reciprocity. Here are 10 steps the US could take right now:**

- 1. Reaffirm our commitment to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge and acknowledge Israel's security needs in the Jordan Valley.**
- 2. Reaffirm our commitment to confront Iranian aggression and commit to include Iran's support for terrorism in future negotiations.**
- 3. Reaffirm that Jerusalem is the capital of Israel.**
- 4. Encourage Arab states to advance normalization with Israel and increase economic assistance to the Palestinians.**
- 5. Enhance training and investment in Palestinian security forces.**
- 6. Restore USAID health care, education and democracy promotion programs for Palestinians.**
- 7. Reopen the Palestinian diplomatic office in Washington and reestablish the US consulate-general in Jerusalem, separate from the US Embassy.**
- 8. Acknowledge that Palestinians have a legitimate claim to a capital in east Jerusalem.**
- 9. Invest in Palestinian economic, transportation and technological development and promote joint Israeli-Palestinian projects.**

10. Pass the bipartisan Partnership Fund for Peace Act of 2019 to promote people to people relationships and economic cooperation.

- **PALESTINIANS CAN realize some of the benefits anticipated from the Oslo Accords over 25 years ago and demonstrate that they remain a “partner for peace” by taking these 10 steps:**
 - 1. Expand Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation.**
 - 2. Acknowledge Judaism’s historical connections to the land of Israel, including the existence of the Temple.**
 - 3. End payments to terrorists.**
 - 4. Remove language from official media and educational materials which incite violence.**
 - 5. Utilize accurate maps in textbooks and the media that acknowledge the State of Israel.**
 - 6. Demonstrate commitment to freedom of worship for Jews at holy sites not under Israeli sovereignty.**
 - 7. Engage with Israel and the international community on joint economic, environmental, health and transportation projects.**
 - 8. Articulate the possibility of Jewish settlements in the West Bank remaining under Palestinian sovereignty.**
 - 9. Halt punitive measures against Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip, and promote investment in healthcare, infrastructure and long-term development.**
 - 10. Pursue the political reintegration of Gaza with the West Bank.**
- **Israel also stands to gain strategic, diplomatic and economic benefits by taking these 10 steps:**
 - 1. Expand Israeli-Palestinian security cooperation and complete the security barrier in the West Bank.**
 - 2. Develop Palestinian transportation networks to create territorial contiguity and enable technological advances in the West Bank including 4G broadband.**
 - 3. Expand Palestinian autonomous zones and refrain from annexation of West Bank territory.**
 - 4. Increase the number of permits for Palestinians to work in Israel and encourage joint Israeli-Palestinian business ventures.**
 - 5. Continue building Israeli housing in settlement blocs and freeze construction east of the security barrier route.**
 - 6. Preserve territorial contiguity between Palestinian areas of east Jerusalem and the West Bank.**
 - 7. Enhance electricity and sewage capacity in Gaza and relax export restrictions.**
 - 8. Ease Palestinian travel abroad and increase the number of student visas.**

9. Facilitate building permits for Palestinian homes in Area C and transfer jurisdiction of Jerusalem neighborhoods beyond the security barrier to the Palestinian Authority.

10. Utilize accurate maps in textbooks and the media that acknowledge the Palestinian territories.

- **Taking these coordinated steps to improve living conditions and minimize the conflict would break the political impasse between Israelis and Palestinians and strengthen moderate camps in both societies and the Arab states. This tactical approach will engender transatlantic unity and even find common ground with Russia and China. Likewise, it will isolate Iran and put terrorist groups on the defensive. The international consensus that could develop around taking steps to minimize the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be the catalyst to spur otherwise moribund political leaders to act.**

The writer is president of the S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace in Washington and previously served as a US representative from Florida from 1997-2010.