



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

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News Excerpts

September 15, 2020

Jerusalem Post

Israel-UAE Agreement Will Be Full Peace Treaty

The historic deal Israel and the UAE will sign at the [White House](#) will be a peace treaty, Prime Minister Netanyahu said, upgrading the event from a formal recognition of ties with two Gulf states, including Bahrain. Netanyahu promised that more countries are on the way. Israel will be signing two separate documents – one, the peace treaty with the UAE, and the other, a declaration of intent to make peace with Bahrain – because there was not enough time to draw up a full agreement since ties were announced. The peace treaty will have to be brought to a vote in the cabinet and then the Knesset after Netanyahu signs it, which is the same process as past peace agreements. The treaty will say it only goes into effect after the cabinet's authorization. As for the Palestinians, the source in the prime minister's delegation said, "The diplomatic fruits will come later." [See also "After UAE and Bahrain Deals, Is Saudi Arabia Softening Its Stance on Israel?" \(Reuters\)](#)

Times of Israel

Gantz Speaks to Bahraini Counterpart, Invites Him to Israel

Defense Minister [Benny Gantz](#) spoke with his Bahraini counterpart, Abdullah al-Nuaimi over the phone, according to Israeli and Bahraini officials. The phone conversation appeared to be the first publicly acknowledged call between the two defense ministers. In an interview, Gantz praised the agreement. Though a large number of representatives from Manama and Abu Dhabi will attend the event, Prime Minister Netanyahu will be the only Israeli minister in attendance. Gantz invited al-Nuaimi to come to Israel for an official visit. Bahrain released a similar account of the call through its official state media outlet. Gantz held a similar call with the UAE's Minister of Defense shortly after it was announced that the two countries were normalizing ties. [See also "Israel Deal Protects Bahrain's Interests Amid Iran Threat, Minister Says" \(Ynet News\)](#)

Ha'aretz

Palestinian PM Blasts Israel-UAE-Bahrain Deal

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh [condemned](#) the upcoming peace deal ceremony, calling it "a dark day in the history of the Arab nation and of the Arab League." Shtayyeh called on Arab countries not to send delegations to the ceremony. He added that the Palestinian government will recommend to President Mahmoud Abbas to re-evaluate the PA's relations with the Arab League. The League, said Shtayyeh, has become a divisive factor rather than a unifying framework. "Tomorrow the [Arab peace initiative](#) dies, as will the Arab consensus, and it is our duty as Palestinians to come out of this crisis united," he said. [See also "Top Emirati Diplomat: Peace with Israel Will Better Serve Palestinian Cause" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Peace in Exchange for Sovereignty & Freezing Construction

Meretz MK Nitzan Horowitz said that the peace agreement with the UAE includes renouncing sovereignty and freedom of action in Judea & Samaria. "Tomorrow in Washington the Prime Minister and the Foreign Ministers of the Emirates and Bahrain will sign a normalization of relations. Many people ask why the agreements were not brought for gov't approval, weren't presented to the Knesset, and even in the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee they weren't discussed. These agreements are not 'peace in exchange for peace'. These agreements are renunciation of annexation in exchange for normalization. I know from authorized sources that an Israeli agreement was given to freeze construction in the territories," Horowitz said. He added, "Meretz welcomes both the normalization agreements and the cancellation of annexation, but we dislike and condemn Netanyahu's plagiarism and attempt to exploit the agreements to deny the need for peace with the Palestinians. [See also "Israeli Opposition Chief Says Netanyahu Will Not Talk to Palestinians" \(Ynet News\)](#)

Jerusalem Post

Jewish Terrorist Gets Three Life Sentences for Duma Attack

The Lod District Court sentenced Amiram Ben-Uliel to 3 life sentences based on his conviction in the terrorist arson murders of the Palestinian Dawabshe family. The July 2015 attack killed 18-month-old Ali and his parents, Sa'ad and Riham, and destabilized Israeli-Arab relations throughout the region. Despite Ben-Uliel's acquittal for membership in a terrorist group, the court said he had murdered the Palestinians for ideological reasons, something that could lead to a harsher sentence or to preventing lenient treatment at some later date. The court said even though it had disqualified confessions Ben-Uliel gave when the Shin Bet used enhanced interrogation tactics on him, his confessions 36 hours later were given freely and compellingly. Joint List Party leader Ayman Odeh and other Arab activists have demanded that harsh justice be meted out to Ben-Uliel if Israel is to avoid accusations that it cracks down harder on Palestinian terrorism than on Jewish terrorism.

Reuters

Pompeo Says Administration Eager for End to Gulf Rift

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo pressed for a solution to the three-year rift between the Gulf state of [Qatar](#) and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, saying the Trump administration was eager to see it resolved. Speaking at a State Department meeting with Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed Al-Thani, Pompeo said it was important to concentrate on countering Iranian activity in the Middle East. "The Trump administration is eager to see this dispute resolved and to reopen Qatar's air and land borders currently blocked by other Gulf states. I look forward to progress on this issue." Pompeo said. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic and trade links with Qatar 2017, accusing it of backing terrorism. Qatar denies the charge and has accused its neighbors of seeking to curtail its sovereignty. Kuwait and the US have tried to mediate the rift, which has undermined Washington's efforts to confront Iran, which is struggling for regional supremacy with Saudi Arabia.

NATO in Bid at Deconfliction Between Turkey, Greece

In an unusual effort to mediate between fellow members, NATO has stepped in to ease the maritime row between Turkey and Greece, which has been escalating since early June amid signs of growing increasingly militarized in the past several weeks. NATO announced Sept. 3 that Ankara and Athens had agreed “to enter into technical talks at NATO to establish deconfliction mechanisms to reduce the risk of incidents and accidents” in the eastern Mediterranean, where a multilateral rivalry over energy resources has exacerbated long-running territorial disputes between the two neighbors. Greece believes to be in a strong position diplomatically and has little interest in de-escalation, given that Turkey is diplomatically isolated and unable to enlist support from EU members. The [EU](#) is considering [sanctions](#) against Turkey unless it stops unilateral hydrocarbon explorations in disputed waters, with the next EU summit scheduled for Sept. 24. From Ankara’s perspective, the EU can no longer be an impartial mediator. [See also “Turkish, Russian Officials to Meet in Ankara for Talks on Syria, Libya” \(Reuters\)](#)

Jerusalem Post

UAE Begins Teaching About Normalization to Grades 1-12

The UAE has already begun including mention of the recent agreement between the UAE and Israel in the 2020 Islamic Studies curriculum and textbooks, according to an [IMPACT-se report](#). The textbook, which covers the Moral Education curriculum for grades 1-12 introduced into the UAE in 2016, commends the Abraham Accords and teaches the importance of peace initiatives in real world settings. It also adds that the UAE is fully supportive of future efforts of reconciliation between the Israeli and the Palestinians. The chapter regarding the UAE-Israel agreement states that the "historic" agreement "stems from the values of our true Islamic religion" which pushes towards creating and "building bridges of cooperation." Along with the lesson plan, students are tasked with creating a presentation focusing on the importance of peace initiative and their country's specific role in achieving peace. The Moral Education curriculum has been an effort of the UAE to push towards modernization and national development, according to the report. [See also “Bahraini Jewish Community Sees Opportunity to Grow with Normalization” \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

Three Bridegrooms, One Bridesmaid

By Nahum Barnea

- The south lawn of the White House has hosted every festive waystation along the long and circuitous road towards reconciliation between Israel and the Arab world. The road between one celebration and the next has been strewn with landmines. That does nothing to detract in the least from the sense that history is being made today and from our rejoicing that achievement. There are several fathers to this success, and each deserves praise. Topping the list is President Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner. The agreements, first and foremost, are his handiwork. Next are Mohammad bin Zayed, the ruler of the Emirates, King Hamad of Bahrain and Binyamin Netanyahu, the prime minister of Israel. All three showed courage: bin Zayed and King Hamad, who decided to risk the consequences of Iran's wrath, and Netanyahu, who agreed to pay the requisite price.
- Today is a holiday: there is to be no talk about prices, even though we know what those prices are. The Palestinians will also be on the White House lawn today. Not in body—they are zealously boycotting the ceremony—but the Palestinian problem will be there. "I told the Palestinians," Jared Kushner said in a private conversation in one of his visits to Israel, "If you talk to us, we will give you a great deal. If you continue with your rejectionism, we will get up and leave." "That's the difference between us and you," his Israeli interlocutor said to Kushner: "You can leave, but we're left here with them."
- For the host, President Trump, today's festival is important. It provides an abundance of video footage for his election campaign. No less importantly, it provides him with a winning argument in his televised debates with Joe Biden, the Democratic candidate. Normalization with the Emirates and Bahrain is Trump's single real foreign policy achievement, and the president's only effort that enjoys a consensus in the American political establishment. The evangelicals will welcome it, the majority of the other voters don't know the difference between one oil emirate and the next, but are happy to see a victory, an achievement.
- Ironically, it is America's growing weakness that made the agreements possible. The Persian Gulf states realized that they could no longer count on American willingness to protect them militarily. Trump often threatens but is very wary about acting on his threats. It is very hard to rely on him. Israel has filled that vacuum. The wedding has another important bridesmaid, the most important one, even though its representatives were not invited: Iran. The street in the Sunni countries might hate Israel more than it hates Iran, but their rulers prefer Israel. Israel's military and technological prowess; Israel's resolve; its willingness to use force; and the fact that we essentially have no choice—all these are qualities make Israel an attractive partner. The previous agreements that were signed on the White House lawn all bore fruit, but the reality that unfolded on the ground was a far cry from the hopes that had filled the festive speeches.

- **The warm peace with Egypt became a cold peace, an effective peace between governments and a hated peace by the street; the warm peace with Jordan became a bitter peace, a wavering peace between the governments and a hated peace by the street. The most stinging failure is the agreement with the Palestinians. It barely survives today; it is running on the last drops of trust.**
- **There is a lesson to this: peace is not a one-time festival. It requires constant tending. It must not be left only in the hands of governments. Netanyahu can view today's celebration as his greatest foreign policy achievement. He has left his mark; he has created a legacy. He is reminiscent of Janus, the Roman god who had two faces. Today we will see Netanyahu the statesman going about the White House feeling at home, embracing the world; yesterday and tomorrow we get to see Netanyahu the politician, the man who led Israel to a colossal failure in the war against the coronavirus. Netanyahu has two faces: one inspires admiration, the other is embarrassing.**

New Peace

By Ari Shavit

- This new peace is a strange peace. The left is having a hard time with it because it's Netanyahu's peace. And Trump's peace. And peace without the Palestinians. The right wing hasn't yet fully assimilated its significance. It is intent on believing that this is a "peace for peace" deal. Peace without concessions. Peace with [while retaining] the greater Land of Israel. And the general [Israeli] public is having a hard time getting excited about a remote and distant peace process during hard times. At a time that the coronavirus is pummeling us, we are having a hard time feeling uplifted. Few people hear the fluttering of history's wings. But history is here. Now. The event that is scheduled to be held this evening [Israel time] on the south lawn of the White House is going to be more than just a dazzling photo-op. It is going to be the inaugural event that launches a new Middle East. Naturally, every one of the participants at the event has his own interests and angles. That is the way the world works. But when push comes to shove, peace is bigger than Donald Trump and Binyamin Netanyahu. Peace is bigger than all of us.
- How so? Because for Israel, peace is an existential need. In the long term, we are not going to be able to survive here without peace. But after the success of our first peace (with Egypt) and our second peace (with Jordan), came a series of failures—from Oslo (1993) up until Trump (2020). The reason for that was that for thirty years, the old paradigm for peace was based on two assumptions: the land for peace principle and the centrality of the Palestinian problem. However, since the Palestinians are not ready yet for genuine reconciliation, every attempt to give them territories has failed to generate peace and has engendered rejectionism. Or terrorism. Or a combination of rejectionism and terrorism. That led us to a dead end. The Israeli left abandoned the idea of peace and replaced it with "anyone but Bibi." The Israeli right pushed for dangerous Messianic annexation. And the Palestinians fell in love with the notion of a single state—which would make our lives hell. Whereas old peace died, no one replaced it with an alternative program. Israel was on a path that was liable to lead it to catastrophe.
- And then, within the space of a single summer, a new peace process evolved that no one had either anticipated or planned. A new peace. What does this new peace say? That the road from Jerusalem to Abu Dhabi (and Bahrain. And Khartoum. And Riyadh) no longer passes through Ramallah. To the contrary. The road from Jerusalem to Ramallah passes through Abu Dhabi (and Bahrain. And Khartoum. And Riyadh). Israeli-Palestinian peace isn't going to pave the way to Israeli-Arab peace but, to the contrary, Israeli-Arab peace is going to lead to Israeli-Palestinian peace. With that being the case, the initial stage of this new peace is based on four elements of the 2020 Arab-Israeli alliance: a shared hawkish strategy vis-à-vis Iran; strategic patience vis-à-vis the Palestinians; security and intelligence cooperation vis-à-vis radical jihad; and economic-technological cooperation vis-à-vis backwardness and radicalism. Succinctly—progress, progress, progress. Life-loving pragmatism that soberly deals with the threats of Middle Eastern radicalism.

- **But this new peace has a second stage as well. Once Mahmoud Abbas leaves the arena, the United Arab Emirates and its sisters in the Persian Gulf will revisit the Palestinian issue. Until that moment, Dubai is likely to be the new Turkey: hundreds of thousands of Israelis will vacation in its hotels and shop in its malls. The dynamic of life that this new peace will create will soften the extreme right wing's hold within Israel. And so, once a ring of peace encircles Judea, Samaria and Gaza—Israel and the Arabs will begin to work in cooperation in an attempt to try to end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Once that stage arrives, the current cries of celebration on the Israeli right will prove to have been premature.**
- **And the skepticism on the left will prove to have been unjustified. Paradoxically, the moderate Arabs are going to be the ones who accomplish something that the Israeli center-left never was able to do—and will save Israel from itself. All of which means that we ought to rejoice this evening with all our hearts. We can all raise our heads above the coronavirus and politics and despair to see how history is beginning to move down a new and promising path. The Israeli-Arab conflict is beginning to end today. Peace.**