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Israel and Middle East News Update

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News Excerpts

September 3, 2020

Jerusalem Post

UAE's MBZ Wants Visit to Jerusalem After Historic Deal

UAE's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed wants to visit Jerusalem as he seeks a "comprehensive peace" with Israel, a senior UAE official told All Arab News. A visit by the Crown Prince would underscore the historic nature of the deal recently hammered out between Israel and the UAE, indicating not only that the Gulf State wants a state of peace between the nations, but a "warm" peace of mutual co-operation of a sort thought unimaginable in the Middle East for decades. Speaking to All Arab News on Tuesday, Dr. Ali Rashid al Nuaimi, chairman of the Defense, Interior and Foreign Affairs Committee at the UAE's Federal National Council, explained the Crown Prince's strategy. "Our crown prince is a visionary person. And he has the courage to take the hard decision," al Nuaimi said. [See also "Former Shin Bet Chief: Israel Working to Lower Technology Level in F-35 Jets to UAE" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

I24 News

Saudi Arabia Allows Israel-UAE Flights Over Its Airspace

Saudi Arabia announced that starting today, flights between Israel and the UAE will be permanently allowed to travel through its airspace, Walla News reported. The historic statement arrived after the Emirates submitted a formal request on the matter and on the trail of diplomatic efforts by special White House advisor Kushner who visited Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. El Al Flight was the first commercial flight to pass over Riyadh's territory, carrying a US-Israeli delegation to Abu Dhabi. The return traveled again through Saudi's airspace, but this time, carrying only the Israeli delegation. Prime Minister Netanyahu hailed the decision, saying he had been working to open the skies to Israel's east for years. [See also "Opening Saudi Skies to Israel May Pave the Crown Prince's Way Back to Washington" \(Ha'aretz\)](#)

Ynet News

Egypt's Sisi: UAE-Israel Deal 'Step to Mideast Peace'

Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi said the UAE-Israel normalization accord represents a step towards regional peace by preserving Palestinian rights and Israeli security. In a phone call with Netanyahu, Sisi voiced his support for "any steps that would bring peace" to the volatile Middle East. He welcomed measures that "preserve the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, allow for the establishment of their independent state and provide security for Israel". The UAE-Israeli agreement announced on August 13 was a "step in that direction", he said. Sisi warned against any unilateral decisions that "would undermine the chances for peace" and called for talks between the Israelis and Palestinians. The UAE became the third Arab country to agree to normalize, after Egypt signed a peace deal. [See also "Sisi to Netanyahu: I Support UAE Deal, Refrain from West Bank Annexation" \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

Bahrain to Announce Normalization of Ties with Israel Soon

Bahrain is expected to announce the normalization of ties with Israel very soon, a senior Israeli official told Kan 11 News. According to the official, it is believed that the announcement will follow the signing of the agreement with the UAE. The US is interested in holding the signing ceremony before Rosh Hashanah, the report said. Recent reports indicated that, in the wake of the Israel-UAE agreement, Bahrain has signaled that it aims to be the next country to sign an agreement with Israel. The matter has reportedly been discussed for some time, but Bahrain is now pushing for it to happen sooner rather than later. Bahrain, like other Arab countries, has no official diplomatic relations with Israel, though there have been reports in recent years of improved ties between the Jewish state and several Gulf countries. Minister Yisrael Katz last year held a first public meeting with Bahraini Foreign Minister Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa during a visit to Washington. [See also “Palestinians Lead Arab Artists to Boycott UAE Cultural Events After Israel Deal” \(Times of Israel\)](#)

I24 News

Qatar: No Normalization Until Creation of Palestinian State

Qatari leader Emir Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani told Jared Kushner that normalization of ties with Israel would only come after the implementation of the two-state solution with East Jerusalem as the capital of a Palestinian state. During his conversation with Kushner, Hamad al-Thani reaffirmed his country's commitment to the 2002 Arab peace initiative, by which all Arab nations will normalize relations with Israel in exchange for its withdrawal from the West Bank and Palestinian independence. Kushner is in Qatar as part of a diplomatic effort to convince more Arab states to follow the UAE and publicly announce official diplomatic ties with the Jewish state. [See also “The Real Peacemaker This Week Was Qatar, Not UAE. Here’s Why” \(Ha’aretz\)](#)

I24 News

Liberman Warns Hamas Will Reach Hezbollah Military Level

Avigdor Liberman, leader of the right-wing secular Yisrael Beiteinu party, warned that Hamas' military capabilities will soon match those of Lebanese terrorist group Hezbollah if Israel continues to placate terrorists in the [Gaza Strip](#). "The rate at which its activities are expanding is alarming," the former defense minister said during an interview with Israeli media. Liberman pointed to Israel's recent Qatar-brokered ceasefire agreement with Hamas, which will see fuel and economic relief funneled into the coastal enclave, as a temporary solution to a long-term problem. "This is an agreement that surrenders to terrorism, Hamas proves once again that they will resort to violence if it benefits" their movement, he added. Liberman also touched on Jerusalem's peace agreement with the UAE, saying that it was an important development but argued that Israel's promise to halt its [annexation](#) plans comes at too high a cost. [See also “After Understandings with Hamas, Israel Pushes for Comprehensive Cease-Fire” \(Al-Monitor\)](#)

Guard Injured in Clashes Following Prisoner's Death

An officer was wounded as clashes erupted at the Ofer Incarceration Facility located near Ramallah following the death of a Fatah member, the Prisons Authority reported. According to the Prisons Authority, an unnamed member of the Palestinian Authority's ruling Fatah faction collapsed in his cell. An MDA Advanced Life Support Ambulance and the prison's medical unit reportedly failed to resuscitate the 45-year-old. The man was chronically ill, according to the authority. An investigation has been opened into the circumstances surrounding his death. Imprisoned in April 2002, the man was sentenced to 18 years and 8 months in military prison for harming state security, placing an explosive device and illegal residence in Israeli territory, the Prisons Authority said. The incarceration facility was transferred from the IDF's control to the Prison's Authority in 2006. [See also "Cabinet Okays Policy to Hold Bodies of All Alleged Attackers" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Israel Exceeds 3,000 New Coronavirus Cases in 24 Hours

Israel saw a record-breaking 3,074 confirmed COVID-19 cases in the past 24 hours, the Health Ministry said, with a 9.4% positivity rate out of the 32,700 tests conducted. There are currently 834 people hospitalized for treatment of COVID-19. Of that number, 426 are in serious condition, including 124 patients on ventilators. Since the start of the pandemic, 969 Israelis have succumbed to the virus out of the 122,539 infected. More than 100,000 of those cases have been diagnosed since June. Since February, one in every 75 people in Israel was confirmed to have COVID-19. Coronavirus czar Prof. Ronni Gamzu visited the northern city of Tiberias, which has been designated a "red" zone because of a continued rise in cases. He told local leaders that their city is showing a 14% positivity rate and rebuked them for a lack of adherence to health directives.

Times Have Changed

By Amos Gilboa

- **“We’ll eat hummus in Damascus,” used to be the slogan that was designed to persuade the Israeli public to support a peace agreement with Syria. In other words, we’ll agree to withdraw from the entire Golan Heights, to uproot all the communities there, to hand it over to a tyrannical despot named Hafez al-Assad. Times have since changed, but deep-seated thinking patterns are hard to change. I am not referring to such inanities as whining about how the Emirates is a dictatorship that persecutes LGBTs, and therefore needs to be off limits. I am referring to what was said here in Israel about selling F-35 planes to the Emirates. First, there was a false report as if Netanyahu agreed in the context of the agreement that was announced in Washington by President Trump, for the US to sell F-35 planes to the UAE, even though Israel was fiercely opposed. Netanyahu was immediately accused of treason and of selling out Israel’s security. The truth is: no such consent was given; Israel’s opposition has remained strong and firm; and there are even some people who are demanding that Israel enshrine this opposition in the detailed agreement that is soon to be signed with the UAE.**
- **My opinion is that no damage will be caused to Israel’s security if the US provides the Emirates with F-35 planes, and that Israeli opposition doesn’t stand a chance (aside, of course, from a ban on exporting the improvements that were installed on the plane as a result of Israeli combat experience). Quite to the contrary, the peace agreement with Israel facilitates the UAE’s longstanding request of the US to buy the F-35 planes. I will explain. First, a technical matter: the planes will need to be refueled twice in the air (on a flight to Israel) and it will take between seven to ten years until they become operational in the UAE’s air force. In contrast, in the Tabuk airfield, 150 kilometers from Eilat, the Saudis regularly deploy a squadron of F-15 planes.**
- **Saudi Arabia held drills in the past with the Egyptian air force, which included a simulated attack on Eilat. That is an actual, immediate security threat, one that is far more serious than any vague future threat from the UAE. Second, the UAE’s air force is extremely advanced (with the latest developments in aerial technology). It has 80 F-16 planes of the most advanced kind in the world, and it has rich combat experience from the coalition with the Americans and Egyptians. The F-35 would not only give it more capabilities, it would also grant the UAE a standing of respect in the Arab world.**
- **Third, the UAE’s main enemy is Iran. We have a quasi-alliance with the Persian Gulf states, with Egypt, Saudi Arabia and of course with the US, against Iranian aspirations. So why should we appear to be objecting to restricting the capability of the Emirates versus Iran? Fourth, ever since 1968, the view has taken root that the US must maintain Israel’s conventional “qualitative edge” versus its neighbors, either singly or in a coalition. This view was ratified by US Congress, most recently in legislation in 2007. But this is a flexible principle. No Israeli objection, even the most firmly stated, can withstand the resolve of the US administration to stray from this view when there are changes in the Middle East, when mountains of petro-dollars are at stake, and when it is under**

pressure from the American arms industries. Not only that, the peace agreement with Israel enabled Egypt to acquire F-16 planes and the most advanced Abrams American tanks.

- Fifth, the American arms industry is today the United States' main exporter. Another deal for selling F-35 planes means a lot more job in Texas. That is a very significant consideration for the American president two months before an election. And finally: anyone who is looking out for Israel's security must strive to apply sovereignty to the Jordan Valley and make it Israel's eastern border.

Netanyahu's Doctrine is Not "Peace for Peace," but Veni, Vidi, Vici

By Orit Lavi-Nesiel

- On the day that the El Al plane landed in Abu Dhabi, the prime minister wrote countless posts on his private Twitter account. The words "historic" and "peace for peace" were repeated over and over again, like someone pinching himself to make sure that he isn't dreaming. The tweet storm continued the following day. During the press conference that Netanyahu held to mark the occasion, he repeatedly checked to see which channels were broadcasting his remarks live. When he learned that the commercial stations had gone back to their usual programs, he complained, as he always does, that the media was hiding the truth from the public. He began with typical pomposity: "This is an historic day, a happy day for all of Israeli's citizen, a day of victory for the peace for peace doctrine." Netanyahu is justifiably proud of his achievement, but he feels that he has been given a cold shoulder. The media and the opposition were suspicious about the recompense that Abu Dhabi is going to receive from the Americans and, more generally speaking—who is in the mood to fantasize about hanging out in Abu Dhabi when there aren't any jobs, there's no economic horizon and the threat of another lockdown is looming closer than ever before.
- Describing diplomatic relations with an Arab state as "peace for peace" is a marketing slogan that is meant to be etched into our minds and to depict Netanyahu as a visionary statesman, not as a zigzagging and hesitant politician who acts on the basis of his personal whims and considerations. The press conference was meant to shape the narrative and the legacy that he wants to be engraved in the collective consciousness and inscribed in the history books. It was for good reason that he began with an excerpt from his book *A Place Among the Nations*, from 25 years ago: the State of Israel, in which eight or ten million Jews will live in a few decades, will be able to enjoy prosperity, momentum and independence. Precisely because the Jewish state will be so strong, the majority of the Arab world will ultimately make a true peace with it. That is how he wants us to remember him, as the first to discern that it will be possible to sign an agreement that does not entail dangerous concessions. Now he is on the same plane as the other great leaders of the nation: Herzl envisioned the state, Ben Gurion established it and Netanyahu ensured its future.
- Netanyahu has tried to frame the agreement with the UAE as the materialization of the vision that has guided him for more than a quarter of a century—that peace is made with the strong, and economic strength engenders military strength which becomes political strength. He is counting on our short memory and is elegantly ignoring the Wye agreement, the Hebron agreement and the disengagement plan that he voted for, the Bar Ilan speech in which he recognized the two-state solution and his reneging on his promise to apply sovereignty to Judea and Samaria. In regard to the Palestinians, he has been acting contrary to what he wrote in another book, *Terrorism: How the West Can Win*. Naturally, he did not forget to mention the tenacious battle that he waged all on his

own against Iran's nuclear armament. When Netanyahu talks about strength, he mainly means himself.

- And it is not only terrorism that he fights heroically. He also defeated "socialism" on behalf of free competition. He only forgot to note that during his time, many public services were privatized, the social gaps widened, and a tier of tycoons was created who enjoy public resources at the expense of the other citizens. Not to mention his problematic handling of the economy during the coronavirus era. But why confuse us with the facts? Instead of contending with the fierce criticism that was aired by Shaul Meridor, the Budgets Department director who resigned this week, he chose to attack his father, his nemesis, Dan Meridor.
- Netanyahu is promising us a different peace, a warm peace that is based on economic cooperation, a peace that creates investment and jobs. He mocks his predecessors and shrugs off his responsibility for the deep freeze in the peace agreements with Egypt and Jordan. As for the Oslo Accords and Israel's relations with the Palestinians, there's nothing to say, as far as he is concerned, they aren't part of the equation. This gratuitous press conference was full of "me." "I'm strong, I have a strong economy, I have a strong army, I have a strong and aggressive policy." To summarize Netanyahu's doctrine in three words, it isn't "peace for peace" but "veni, vidi, vici."