



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM  
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## Israel and Middle East News Update

*Tuesday, October 13*

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- Cabinet Approves UAE Deal, PM Says Will Meet Its Leader
- Palestinians Facing Pressure to Resume Peace Talks
- Israel and Hamas Said to Reach a 6-Month Ceasefire
- Israel Would Oppose Any U.S. F-35 Sale to Qatar
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- Lebanon and Israel to Start Talks on Disputed Waters
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# News Excerpts

October 13, 2020

## Ynet News

### **PM Praises Virus Lockdown, More Financial Aid to Citizens**

Netanyahu praised the strict lockdown, which led to a drastic decline in coronavirus infections and promised more grants and loans to citizens affected by the financial crisis. [President Rivlin](#) called on the government to pass a state budget for the coming year and appoint a new police chief. Israel's lawmakers returned to the [Knesset](#) for the start of the winter session, with battle lines already being drawn over the state budget and the ever-present threat of another round of elections. Political pundits believe that Likud is refusing to unite the votes in order to give Netanyahu and his party two opportunities – in December, when the 2020 budget has to be passed and again in March, when the 2021 budget must be passed - to dissolve the Knesset and instigate fresh elections, which occurs when the government cannot get its state budget approved. [See also “Weary of Netanyahu, Benny Gantz Delivers Last Ultimatum” \(AI-Monitor\)](#)

## Reuters

### **Cabinet Approves UAE Deal, PM Says Will Meet Its Leader**

Israel's cabinet approved a normalization deal with the UAE and Netanyahu said he and Abu Dhabi's crown prince and UAE's de facto leader had spoken and agreed to meet soon. Mohammed bin Zayed tweeted that he and Netanyahu had discussed strengthening bilateral ties and the prospects for peace in the area. A source familiar with plans for the delegations' visits said Israeli representatives accompanied by U.S. officials will fly to Bahrain on Oct. 18 and travel on to the UAE the next day before returning to Israel with a UAE team on Oct. 20. In a sign of burgeoning Israel-UAE cooperation, [a ship](#) from the UAE docked at Israel's port of Haifa, carrying a cargo of 15 containers along a shipping line between India, the UAE, Israel and the US. [See also “Smotrich to PM: Release UAE-Israel Agreements Regarding Temple Mount” \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

## Jerusalem Post

### **Palestinians Facing Pressure to Resume Peace Talks**

[The Palestinian leadership](#) is facing immense pressure from several parties to resume peace negotiations with Israel, Palestinian sources said. Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Egypt, Jordan, France, Germany and Britain are urging Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to agree to hold direct negotiations with Israel, the sources said, adding that EU officials were also involved in the effort. The Palestinian leadership is also under pressure to rescind its decision to renounce all signed agreements with Israel and suspend security coordination between the PA security forces and the IDF in the West Bank, the sources added. Western diplomats have warned the Palestinian leadership that failure to resume the peace negotiations with Israel would result in an erosion of international support for the two-state solution. [See also “Palestinian Two-State Support at 39% After Israel-UAE Deal, Shikaki Says” \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

## **Israel and Hamas Said to Reach a 6-Month Ceasefire**

Israel and Hamas reached a truce agreement mediated by Qatar that will see quiet for 6 months, Channel 12 news reported. In return, Qatar will transfer \$100 million to Hamas in a deal coordinated with Doha by Mossad head Yossi Cohen alongside the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories. Qatar's envoy to Gaza, has regularly visited the strip in recent years with Israeli approval, bringing funds for purchasing fuel, paying civil servants and helping Gaza's poor. The most recent set of funding was set to run out within weeks. With the exception of 2 incidents of rocket fire, an unofficial agreement between Israel and Hamas has mainly held since the end of August, when Hamas Gaza chief's office announced that the terror group had accepted ceasefire terms negotiated by Qatar. Israel tacitly indicated its consent by lifting the restrictions imposed on the Strip since the beginning of the August escalation in violence. The recent understandings were not welcomed by local Israeli leaders in the south. [See also "90% of Arab World on Social Media Against Normalization - Israeli Study" \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

### Reuters

## **Israel Would Oppose Any U.S. F-35 Sale to Qatar**

Israel would oppose any U.S. sale of advanced F-35 warplanes to Qatar, Israel's intelligence minister said, citing a need to maintain Israeli military superiority in the region. Minister Eli Cohen made the comments in response to a Reuters report that Qatar - whose Iran links trouble Israel - had submitted a formal request to Washington to buy the Lockheed Martin Corp. LMT.N stealth jet. The US consults with Israel on proposed sales of advanced arms to other countries in the region, under a principle of preserving Israel's "qualitative military edge". Asked whether Israel would oppose an F-35 sale to Qatar, Cohen told Army Radio: "The answer is yes. Our security and military superiority in the region are the most significant things for us. Our region has still not turned into Switzerland." Qatar's F-35 request follows an August deal in which Washington agreed to consider giving the UAE approval to buy the jets in a side deal to a U.S.-brokered agreement normalizing ties between Israel and the UAE.

### I24 News

## **56% of Israelis Prefer Trump as US President Over Biden**

56% of Israelis preferred President Trump over Joe Biden; a new poll published by the Israel Democracy Institute shows. Chairman of Republicans Overseas Israel marked Trump's various gestures which coincided with Israel's interests as a key reason for the poll outcome. He noted the moving of the American Embassy to Jerusalem and recognizing it as the Jewish state's capital, Trump's recognition of the Golan Heights as Israeli sovereign territory, as well as the US withdrawal from the nuclear deal with Iran. Dahlia Scheindlin, pollster and political strategist, attributed the results of the poll to a couple of reasons. Israelis are not aware of who Joe Biden is, Scheindlin said. "They have been coping with a pandemic and 25% unemployment...we have a prime minister who has been in power for the last 11 years and pretty much every day, between 2009 and 2016, he said how horrible the Obama administration was for Israel," she concluded.

## **Lebanon and Israel to Start Talks on Disputed Waters**

Lebanon and Israel, formally still at war after decades of conflict, launch talks to address a long-running dispute over their maritime border running through potentially gas-rich Mediterranean waters. The U.S.-mediated talks follow 3 years of intense diplomacy by Washington and were announced less than a month after the U.S. stepped up pressure on political allies of the Iran-backed Lebanese group [Hezbollah](#). They also come after the UAE and Bahrain agreed to establish full relations with Israel, under U.S.-brokered deals which realign some of Washington's closest Middle East allies against Iran. Hezbollah, which fought a five-week conflict with Israel in 2006, says the talks are not a sign of peace-making with its long-time enemy. Israel's energy minister also said expectations should be realistic. The meeting will be hosted by the UN's peacekeeping force UNIFIL, which has monitored the disputed land boundary since Israel's military withdrawal from south Lebanon in 2000, ending a 22-year occupation. A Lebanese security source says the two sides will meet together in the same room in UNIFIL's base in south Lebanon but will direct their talks through a mediator. [See also "Lebanon Names Team for Maritime Border Talks with Israel" \(Ynet News\)](#)

## **Armenia, Azerbaijan Clash as Russia Urges Halt**

Russia urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to immediately start observing a ceasefire agreed over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region after two weeks of fierce clashes. The fighting, the worst since a 1994 ceasefire, has sparked fears of a regional conflict, with Turkey backing Azerbaijan, Armenia seeking to pull ex-Soviet ally Russia in on its side and Iran looking on warily. After 11 hours of talks between the Armenian and Azerbaijani foreign ministers in Moscow, the two sides agreed to a humanitarian ceasefire. But repeated clashes have so far made a mockery of the truce deal, with both sides accusing the other of repeated violations. "We expect that the decisions that have been adopted will be rigorously observed by both parties," said Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in Moscow after hosting his Armenian counterpart Zohrab Mnatsakanyan. Lavrov said he believed the "all-night vigil" that clinched the ceasefire would "not be in vain" and that the issue could be resolved on the ground "in the nearest time". [See also "Nagorno-Karabakh Truce Buckles as Both Sides Allege Violations" \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

## **Israel and I**

By Mohammed Al-Arab

- **Write it down, I am an Arab [an allusion to a famous Palestinian poem by Mahmoud Darwish]. I've lived my entire life as an Arab and I will die an Arab. I have visited 63 countries. I have been working in journalism for 27 years. I am 45 years old, and I've hated Israel for 40 of them. I've hated it my entire life, even though I didn't know how exactly that hate was born. Around a month ago I decided to stop hating or, rather, it would be more correct to say that I decided to discover Israel. But to do so slowly, on my own, far from the channels of influence that feed us with inherited [beliefs]. I decided to boycott the belligerent, interest-laden media outlets that are pushing for continuing the state of enmity between Israel and the Arabs.**
- **I decided to quench my thirst with information about that controversial country that is enveloped in hundreds of stories. Stories that are sourced in places that aren't managed by people who derive benefit from the ongoing outbursts of hatred. It wasn't an easy decision since the desire to rid oneself of decades of hatred within a few days' time is like swimming against the current in a tempestuous ocean. I have memories that have built up and enmity that we have been fed continuously. I announced that that was my decision, and I even declared it to the Israeli media. The Arab world that used to embrace me turned me from that moment onward into a traitor, and the loving Israeli street saw me as an agent. But I also received dozens of encouraging messages from Arabs and Israelis who believe in peace and in coexistence.**
- **They supported my decision. I am the one who bears full responsibility for my decision and its repercussions. I don't want to waste the rest of my life on hate. Anyone who wants peace—welcome. Israel, Iran, Turkey. They are all welcome. My peace is a just peace, which respects the privacy of the other, which strives to solve the Palestinian problem and the Iranian Ahvaz problem, the conflict in Syria and to end the Turkish occupation in Iraq. All of you are welcome, as long as we put an end to all those fights, which cannot be resolved at the expense of one of the parties while the other side emerges victorious alone. The world is big enough for everyone, and justice will be achieved through coexistence and peace, and not through war and reciprocal killings. A just peace is possible, as long as genuine desire and coexistence are there.**
- **We, the Arabs who support peace, need to wait now to see how Israeli society will be influenced by the idea of a just peace. How that will influence [i.e. lead to] the end of war and opting for the two-state solution, because that is the feasible solution at present. I don't see any solution other than it. Israel won't be able to wipe Palestine off the map, and Palestine won't be able to do that either. Therefore, there is no choice but coexistence in peace. Anyone who supports peace and wants it needs to make his voice heard. I will stand up firmly against those who act for continued war and instability. That peace will be possible if we rid ourselves together of the hatreds that were handed down to us as inheritances. If we rise above our old wounds and we arm ourselves only with a sense of pure remorse and responsibility. If we decide not to foist on today's leaders the**

**mistakes of the past, and if we block the path to the ignorant and the war mongers. And, yes, if all sides in this conflict first engage in internal reconciliation. Remember: we aren't such great angels that we have the privilege of calling one another "devil."**

## **A Smoking Cannon**

By Ben Caspit

- Forget about Bogie Yaalon, who has already gone hoarse [from talking about the submarines and naval vessels affair so often]. Netanyahu and his lackeys have successfully turned the former defense minister and former IDF chief of staff into a deranged man, a half-crazy alien who is perpetually in search of a fleet of imaginary submarines on the horizon. I hope that somewhere, at some point, they will be punished for that. Let's talk about three generals: Amos Gilad, Udi Adam and Dan Harel. You won't find anyone in the entire Middle East who might dispute that trio's integrity, patriotism and credibility. Gilad is the ultimate "Mr. Intelligence."
- The man who was always there, who spotted the dangers first and was the national warner as far back as the days of Sabra and Shatila. Udi Adam, the former OC Northern Command (who assumed responsibility immediately after the Second Lebanon War and resigned) —the son of Maj. Gen. Yekutiel (Kuti) Adam, who was killed in the first Lebanon War—who served until recently as the director general of the Defense Ministry. Dan Harel was the former OC Southern Command, the former director of the IDF Operations Branch, the former deputy chief of staff and the former director general of the Defense Ministry. None of them are members of the left. None of them have any political aspirations. All three have demanded an immediate investigation of the submarines and naval vessels affair. All three know what they are talking about. All three are well-informed, concerned and are unable to sleep at night.
- Only Avichai Mandelblit sleeps soundly. Actually, he doesn't sleep soundly, but for the wrong reasons. Maj. Gen. Harel's affidavit that was reported yesterday by Guy Peleg (we'll get back to that shortly), is a disturbing document. It's true that Harel gave a statement to the police during the investigation, but the affidavit was full of details and forceful plastic descriptions that leave no room for doubt: this isn't a smoking gun, it's a smoking cannon. Everything that can be said about Mandelblit has already been said by this point. The attorney general, whose integrity I don't dispute, owes the public a detailed explanation as to how this affair has been put to rest with such a whimper. And no, I don't mean by foisting the blame for that on the police. Everyone does that. I mean real explanations.
- There's a second person who owes us quite a few explanations on this issue as well. His name is Benny Gantz. The supposed alternate prime minister and the incumbent defense minister. He wields tremendous power. He doesn't need a cabinet decision and he doesn't need the Knesset's cooperation. He can form a commission of inquiry by the security establishment as the responsible minister. He can take matters into his own hands. He can salvage the last vestiges of his self-respect after he campaigned three times on the demand for a commission of inquiry. But that man, who is incapable of instating order in his own backyard, who is afraid of the shadows of mountains, has been silent. Yesterday he mumbled something about a new ultimatum to Netanyahu about the budget. Instead of pounding on the desk, calling on a former chief of staff (Mofaz?),

forming a commission that is comprised of experienced experts—members of the security establishment, the army and the navy—and arming them with the authority to access the entire security establishment, and instructing them to get to work. Let's see Binyamin Netanyahu stop him.

- Let's revisit Dan Harel's affidavit that Guy Peleg reported about yesterday [on Hahadashot]. "I served in the IDF for 35 years," wrote Harel in his affidavit, and described his rich military career and the "worrisome and puzzling" turn of events as pertains to the submarines and naval vessels affair. "Intense pressure was applied on the ministry by the Prime Minister's Office and representatives of the National Security Council, all of which was designed to avert issuing a tender in an attempt to get the ministry to make the acquisition in Germany," wrote Maj. Gen. Harel, "and specifically from the ThyssenKrupp corporation. In this context I recall, among other things, written instructions from the prime minister's military secretary forbidding a tender from being issued, and numerous oral requests by National Security Council Director Yossi Cohen and his deputy, Avriel Bar-Yosef, who reached out to various ministry officials, including the director of acquisitions and the ministry's legal counsel, the latter of whom apprised me. My position was that only by means of a tender would it be possible to force any manufacturer, including ThyssenKrupp, to give the optimal price and that any shipyard that had the capability of manufacturing the desired model was welcome to make a bid, even if it enjoyed a government subsidy."
- Harel described the immense pressure that was applied to prevent an international tender from being issued for the defensive ships for the natural gas rigs, with the goal of having that acquisition be made from ThyssenKrupp. He tied the prime minister directly to that intense pressure. This detailed and compelling affidavit that was reported yesterday casts the entire affair in its proper light: how all of the government officials allegedly collaborated to increase as much as possible Israel's security acquisitions from ThyssenKrupp while the prime minister's lawyer and cousin served as ThyssenKrupp's representative in Israel by proxy of the former state's witness, Mickey Ganor.
- It is hard to believe that this affair is now gradually evaporating, that it has become blurred by the bubbling political lava that Netanyahu and his lackeys churn out. It is hard to believe that our publicly-elected officials haven't bothered even to form a professional commission of inquiry to look into whether the national Israeli holy of holies was violated and, if so, by whom. Blue and White promised to do that in their election campaigns. That promise was suspended when they joined the coalition government. Now that Netanyahu is inducing the collapse of that same government, the state and the economy, the time has come to pull that commission of inquiry out of the emergency storehouses. If only so that it might serve as Blue and White's legacy.