



S. DANIEL ABRAHAM
CENTER FOR MIDDLE EAST PEACE

Israel and Middle East News Update

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S. Daniel Abraham Center for Middle East Peace
1725 I St NW Suite 300, Washington, DC 20006
The Hon. Robert Wexler, President

News Excerpts

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Ha'aretz

Bill for Facial Recognition Surveillance Cameras Advances

A [bill](#) permitting the police to place facial recognition cameras in public spaces was approved by the Ministerial Committee for Legislation. According to the proposal, submitted by National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir and Justice Minister Yariv Levin, the police will also be able to place portable cameras at events such as protest demonstrations, on the condition that the “human factor” [a police officer] is convinced that the operation of the biometric camera does not amount to an undue invasion of any individual’s privacy.” According to a source, the proposal was approved subject to the explicit exception to demonstrations from the list of events where the cameras can be placed. The ministers also agreed to add the offense of extortion to the list of offenses for which the cameras are intended to prevent. [Read More “Controversial Bill Would Allow Shin Bet to Vet All Teachers for Terror Ties” \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Israel Hayom

New National Guard Could Report Directly to Police Chief

The Committee on the Establishment of a National Guard has completed its work, and some of its emerging and definitive recommendations have been obtained by Israel Hayom. The committee is poised to recommend that a national guard be established based on the manpower of the Border Police, and be part of the Israel Police, under the direct command of the police commissioner, with policies to be decided by the national security minister. It also suggested that the guard be built gradually, starting with 1,300 soldiers recruited this and next year, and thousands more over the next five years. The committee, which includes both representatives of the government and the public, discussed the security challenges facing Israel, such as the possibility of a multi-arena conflict, including riots by [Arab Israelis](#), the lack of governance, and the spiraling crime wave in the Arab sector. [Read More “Mossad, Shin Bet to Take In Haredim in New National Service Program” \(Times of Israel\)](#)

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IDF Thwarts Penetration From Gaza as Riots Continue

[Gazan demonstrators](#) returned to the border fence with Israel, with the [Israel Defense Forces](#) (IDF) saying that hundreds of rioters gathered. During the incident, the military said a number of explosives were detonated. Using riot control means, Israeli forces managed to disperse them without any wounded on the Israeli side. This is the fourth consecutive day of riots returning to the border, with Israel launching an attack on a known Hamas post in retaliation on Friday. Border crossings to and from Gaza [remained closed](#) as a result, after Israel shut them over the Rosh Hashanah holiday, the Jewish New Year. [Dig Deeper “ Hamas Is Fueling Fires in Gaza, Lebanon – And Then Putting Them Out” \(Jerusalem Post\)](#)

World Bank Report: Palestinian Health Services Face Crisis

The Palestinian economy is expected to continue to operate below its potential, according to a new World Bank report. Growth is expected to hover around 3%, and considering population growth, the GDP will not increase - which will negatively affect the standard of living. [The Palestinian Economic Surveillance Report, entitled "A Race Against Time,"](#) will be presented to the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee (AHLC) to hold a policy meeting in the area of assistance for the development of the Palestinian people, in New York. The report highlights the economic challenges faced by the Palestinian territories and describes the constraints affecting health services. In 2023 so far, the income of the Palestinian public has increased considerably, but expenses have also increased. The World Bank report states that the PA's reform efforts are necessary, but not sufficient to achieve necessary growth and economic sustainability. Mobilizing additional support from the donor countries is also important, and cooperation on the part of the Israeli government is essential.

Saudi FM: Two-State Solution Must Return to the Forefront

Saudi foreign minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud told Al Arabiya TV that there will be no solution to the Israeli-Palestinian Arab conflict without an independent Palestinian state. "The two-state solution must return to the forefront," he said, adding that "the solution to the Palestinian issue supports the stability of the region and the world." Prince Faisal's remarks follow a report that the US had requested a pause in the discussions on normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia, a report which the US later [denied](#). Saudi officials have repeatedly said that a Palestinian state with eastern Jerusalem as its capital is a prerequisite for Saudi Arabia normalizing ties with Israel. [Read More "100% Carrots': Arab States, EU Unveil Plan to Entice Israel, Pa to Sign Peace Deal" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Hundreds Protest as Netanyahu Meets Elon Musk

Hundreds of Israelis and members of the American Jewish community protested Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's arrival at the San Jose San Francisco airport, chanting "shame" and holding signs against his government's judicial overhaul plan that has polarized the country. Demonstrators also awaited Netanyahu outside San Francisco's Signia Hotel, where he is staying for his one-day visit to the city. They kept demonstrating later that day as he met with X owner Elon Musk. Netanyahu kicked off his first visit to the United States since taking office end of December 2022. He is scheduled to be in New York today, where he will meet with world leaders including US President Joe Biden, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy before addressing the United Nations General Assembly at its annual summit. [Dig Deeper "Netanyahu: Original Overhaul Proposal 'Was Bad,' but Must Fix How Israel Chooses Judges" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Iran's President Warns Against Normalization with Israel

Iran's president warned against normalization with Israel, denied his country had sent drones to Russia for use in the war in Ukraine, and decried the US for "interfering" in the Middle East. Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi warned other countries in the region not to get too close with Israel as he met with media executives on the sidelines of the world's premier global conference, the high-level leaders' meeting at the UN General Assembly. "The normalization of relations with the Zionist regime does not create security," Raisi said. The US has been looking to broker a normalization deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel, a goal long sought by Israel that could have a dramatic impact in the Middle East. Israel has already normalized relations with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Morocco. Raisi also denied Iranian military support for Russia, even as the United States accuses Iran of not only providing the weapons but also helping Russia build a plant to manufacture them. The Iranian leader spoke just hours after five Americans who had been held in Iranian custody arrived in Qatar, freed in a deal that saw US President Joe Biden agree to unlock nearly \$6 billion in frozen Iranian assets. [Dig Deeper "Biden Takes Political Risk Ahead of Election with Iran Prisoner Swap" \(Times of Israel\)](#)

Associated Press

UN Warns Disease Outbreak in Libya's Flooded East

Officials warned that a disease outbreak in Libya's northeast, where floods have killed thousands, could create "a second devastating crisis" as adults and children fell ill from contaminated water. In a statement, the United Nations Support Mission in Libya said it was particularly concerned about water contamination and the lack of sanitation after two dams collapsed during Mediterranean storm Daniel, sending a wall of water gushing through the eastern city of Derna on Sept. 11. The death toll has varied, with government officials and aid agencies giving tallies ranging from about 4,000 to 11,000 dead. Nine UN agencies responding to the disaster are working to prevent diseases from taking hold and creating another crisis in the devastated country, which is receiving 28 tons (25 metric tonnes) of medical supplies from the World Health Organization, the mission said. The disaster has brought some rare unity to oil-rich Libya, which has been divided between rival administrations since 2014. Both are backed by international patrons and armed militias whose influence in the country has ballooned since a NATO-backed Arab Spring uprising toppled autocratic ruler Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. The opposing governments have both deployed humanitarian teams to the port city and other affected areas, but poor coordination, difficulty getting aid to the hardest-hit areas and the destruction of Derna's infrastructure, including several bridges, have hampered their efforts. [Dig Deeper "Libya Was Mired in Chaos and Corruption. For Years, Warnings the Derna Dams May Burst Went Unheeded" \(Associated Press\)](#)

The Connection Between Gaza and Bombs

By Yossi Yehoshua

- **The security establishment is currently preoccupied with two urgent issues in addition to the fight against the Iranian nuclear threat: the Gaza border that is heating up because of riots on the border fence, and the introduction of standard-issued bombs into the arena that, if detonated, will change the picture of the fight against terrorism in Judea and Samaria (West Bank), picture that is bad enough to begin with. Two unusual events took place last week, illustrating that the situation is worsening. The first was a large bomb in Yarkon Park in Tel Aviv. At this stage, its ultimate objective is not yet clear. The second was the disturbances along the border fence in Gaza, which led the IDF to carry out an unusual attack on a Hamas position using a drone. Planting bombs inside Israel is a serious matter. The investigation into the Yarkon Park bomb is ongoing.**
- **The GSS detectives are trying to learn from the two suspects who were arrested on Route 431 what the target of the bomb was, who planted the bomb, was this a local initiative and whether other cell members were involved. The two suspects are from al-Azariya, with blue [Israeli] ID cards, who work permanently in Israel. Bombs planted in Israel indicate that terrorism is transitioning from knives and gunfire to bombs, and also expose Israel's strategic problem on its borders. On its eastern border, Jordan, weapons are seized daily by the GSS, the IDF and the police. The assumption is that far more smuggling operations have gone undetected. The eastern border has been porous for many years. In the last two years, the IDF, the GSS and the police increased their efforts to prevent arms smuggling operations, as demonstrated by the quantity of weapons seized. But until the construction of the border fence is completed, the smuggling operations—with Iranian help—will continue.**
- **On the northern border, the arms that are smuggled are earmarked for criminal activity. The intelligence ability to locate and immediately alert the GSS and police to arrest the two Israeli Arabs once again shows how deeply the GSS is involved in the seamline between criminal and nationalist activity in Israel. There were two reports last month on the involvement of Israeli Arabs in terrorism. A raid was made on an apartment on Lod where bombs that were ready for use for criminal purposes were found. Involving the GSS in handling criminal/security matters has proven itself effective. The bomb confiscated in Lod a few weeks ago tells the entire story. The security establishment's assessment is that the use of standard-issued bombs is becoming more widespread.**
- **Regarding the demonstrations on the border fence, Hamas is trying to recreate what it views as the success of its previous demonstrations on the fence. Hamas has interpreted the domestic situation in Israel as a sign of weakness and is trying to shift into high gear and pressure Israel. Hamas wants more civilian relief measures and thinks that now is the time to get them while manufacturing and echoing fake news about the Temple Mount on social media and circulating fake videos showing attacks on Palestinians. The facts on the ground are the exact opposite.**

- **It was quiet on the Temple Mount/Haram Al-Sharif, prayer services were held as usual and Israel has been trying to refute the fake reports, which are liable to set fire to the ground in Judea and Samaria (West Bank), Jerusalem and in the Gaza Strip. Israel must not cave to this pressure and must not accede to Hamas's demands, even if it is in Israel's interest to improve the economic situation in Gaza. If Hamas is able to extort Israel, this will encourage others to do the same. Hamas, compared to Israel's other enemies, is a very easy rival and we must not alarm ourselves, but quite to the contrary: now is an opportunity to increase deterrence against the other enemies.**

The Oslo Peace Accords Killed Palestinian Independence

By Seraj Assi

- **Thirty years ago, on a bright September day in 1993, after months of secret negotiations, leaders of Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization met on the White House lawn and signed the Oslo Accords. Watching Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin shake hands and recognize Israel and Palestine's national rights at long last, the world was witnessing what seemed to be a happy ending to a decades-long conflict. But as we all know painfully well, the Oslo honeymoon collapsed fairly quickly and the sad truth of the Oslo Accords is that they were negotiated in bad faith to start with. The two parties had little trust in each other as it was and exacerbating tensions, even during the negotiations, the "Likud lobby" in America, led by Benjamin Netanyahu, was campaigning to sabotage them.**
- **Previous peace efforts between Israelis and Palestinians had fallen apart before they even started. In 1979, for example, Yasser Arafat asked Norway to provide a secret back channel to the Israelis, but Israel refused to negotiate directly with him and the PLO. A decade later, at the end of 1987, the Palestinian Intifada broke out, catching both Israel and the PLO off guard. Israel was now facing worldwide condemnation for its violent crackdown on Palestinian demonstrators. It was under growing international pressure that Israel finally agreed to start peace talks with the PLO through secret channels in Oslo.**
- **Seizing the moment, Arafat extended an olive branch to Israel, announcing that the PLO would accept granting Israel a window to "secure and recognized boundaries," and to continue its occupation in strategic parts of the West Bank. The exiled Palestinian leadership was clearly negotiating from a position of weakness, which Israel was happy to capitalize on. Having been expelled from Lebanon, and Jordan before that, the debilitated PLO was desperate to return home. Arafat was also losing political clout in the wake of the Gulf War. Having sided with Iraq, the Palestinian leader alienated both Arab allies and Western countries, who turned on him following the defeat of Saddam Hussein in the war. Palestinian negotiators, fresh out of guerrilla warfare, proved callow and incompetent at the negotiation table.**
- **As Palestinian intellectual Edward Said confessed at the time: "You can't improve on a bad situation that is largely due to the technical incompetence of the PLO – which negotiated in English, a language that neither Arafat nor his emissary in Oslo knows, with no legal adviser – until on the technical level at least you involve people who can think for themselves and are not mere instruments of what is by now a single Palestinian authority." It was becoming clear that Israel would denominate the talks. During previous negotiations, both in Madrid and Washington DC, the Palestinian delegation focused its efforts on negotiating an end to the illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip. Come Oslo, all the permanent questions, known as "final status issues", were set aside by Israel and taken out off the negotiation table at that stage: Security, Jerusalem, Palestinian refugees, borders, and self-determination. I**

- It's not surprising that Palestinian parties outside of the PLO, notably Hamas and Islamic Jihad, opposed the accords as a betrayal of the Palestinian right of return. They would soon take up arms against Israel, and on several occasions, against other Palestinian parties like Fatah. Many Palestinians have grown convinced that the Oslo Accords were hatched up to contain the Palestinian resistance against Israel and to relieve Israel of its obligations regarding the occupation. As it transpired, the Oslo Declaration of Principles signed on that historic September day thirty years ago, was not really a peace treaty, but an agreement to establish interim governance arrangements and a framework to facilitate further negotiations for a final solution within five years. This never happened.
- Instead, the agreement enabled Israel to boost its settlement enterprise at almost no cost, which deepened the occupation and dealt a final blow to Palestinian aspirations for statehood and independence. Rather than envisioning an end to the occupation, the agreement unburdened Israel from managing the occupation. It transferred control of major Palestinian cities and towns in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip to the newly created Palestinian Authority (PA), an interim structure whose job was to oversee administration and internal security. But in reality, the new authority was created as a security apparatus tasked with administering the occupation on Israel's behalf. The PA proved up to the task: For three decades, it has systematically suppressed Palestinian dissent and resistance, imposing law and order, and turning itself into a police state under occupation. Its members were now acting as statemen without a state. Ultimately, security cooperation was the only part of the agreement that was honored by Israel.
- Meanwhile, Israel has exploited the endless interim period specified in the agreement to create irreversible "facts on the ground" in the form of Jewish settlements. The Oslo Accords committed the original sin of slicing the West Bank into three administrative zones: Area A, where the PA administers civil and security matters; Area B, where it administers only civil matters, and Area C, where Israel maintains full control. In both Palestinian areas, while the PA is in charge of education, health and the economy, Israel has full control of external security and retains the right to enter at any time, whether to detain Palestinians or conduct an extrajudicial execution. Area C, which constitutes 60 percent of the West Bank and includes all the Israeli settlements, is the most fertile area to perpetuate occupation. Israel has seized tens of thousands of acres of agricultural land for the benefit of living settlers there, through a host of military orders and extrajudicial measures. Control of this area was supposed to be handed over to the PA, but the transfer never happened. Instead, Israel has retained total control over all matters, including security, planning and construction. This kind of division is enabling Israel to de-facto annex the West Bank piecemeal, an approach known as the salami tactic.
- Thirty years after Oslo, the settlement project is far from finished, as the new Israeli government actively seeks to shift the demographic balance in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and ultimately render the settlements an irreversible political reality, or fait accompli. Settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank has tripled, growing at unprecedented rates. The settler population growth in the West Bank has reached the fastest pace of growth ever.

- Today there are over half a million settlers in the West Bank, living in over 140 Jewish settlements. In East Jerusalem, about 340,000 Jewish settlers live in 13 illegal settlements built by the Israeli authorities on private lands (and private homes) taken over from Palestinians under discriminatory schemes. This puts the total settler population well above 700,000 settlers. Together, the settler population represents 12 percent of Jews living in Israel today. Meanwhile, some 3.5 million Palestinians live in the West Bank including East Jerusalem, mostly in segregated cantons behind Israel's separation barrier, called the "apartheid wall" by Palestinians, and the newly constructed highway, Route 4370 in the Jerusalem area also dubbed the "Apartheid Road," as it opens in Palestinian towns and cities between Jewish settlement blocs behind a network of segregated roads, security barriers, and military installations. The Oslo Accords was a moment of hope gone awry. While the agreement purported to find a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it has only made the conflict more permanent, peace less feasible, and all but killed off the dream of Palestinian independence.