

# ISRAEL REPORT

To provide greater exposure to primary Israeli news sources and opinions in order to become better informed on the issues, and to gain a better understanding of the wide range of perspectives that exist in Israeli society and politics.  
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## NETANYAHU PRAISES US DECISION TO SHUT PALESTINIAN OFFICE IN WASHINGTON (YNet 9/12/18)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu praised on Wednesday the US decision taken earlier this week to close down the Palestinian diplomatic mission in Washington in reaction to the Palestinian refusal to enter into peace negotiations with Israel. "The US made the correct decision when it decided to close the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) offices in Washington. The Palestinians refuse to enter negotiations with Israel even as they attack Israel with false claims in international forums," Netanyahu said at the opening of the weekly Cabinet meeting.

The State Department said the US step came after a review of the office of the Palestine Liberation Organization centered on the fact that no "direct and meaningful negotiations with Israel" are underway despite previous warnings. State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert officially announced the move in a press briefing. "To the contrary, PLO leadership has condemned a US peace plan they have not yet seen and refused to engage with the US government with respect to peace efforts and otherwise," Nauert said.

"Israel very much appreciates the Trump administration's decision and supports American actions that are designed to make it clear to the Palestinians that the refusal to enter into negotiations with Israel and the unbridled attacks against Israel will not only not advance peace but will certainly not make things better for the Palestinians," the prime minister said, full heartedly rallying his government once again behind President Trump.

## LIKUD MINISTER: TRUMP PEELS PALESTINIAN LIE LIKE AN ONION (Arutz-7 9/12/18)

Transportation and Intelligence Minister Yisrael Katz (Likud) on Wednesday welcomed US President Donald Trump's decision to close Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) offices in Washington DC.

"This decision joins the decision to recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and the decision to stop funding UNRWA, which is an organization that perpetuates the refugees' pretend right of return," Katz said. "All these steps reach the roots of the conflict and tell Palestinian Authority Chairman Mahmoud Abbas that he can not continue his double-talk."

"Trump is peeling the Palestinian lie like an onion - layer by layer. Their educational system as well teaches their children that 'big Palestine' is from the Jordan River to the sea. Trump comes and says: 'If you want to sit and negotiate, do it from a realistic place - Jerusalem is the capital of Israel, and there is no right of return. Abbas' response shows exactly what he thinks of these issues."

## ISRAEL LAGS BEHIND OECD AVERAGE IN EDUCATION SPENDING (Israel Hayom 9/12/18)

Even though Israel has increased funding for education in recent years, it still lags behind other developed countries when it comes to investing in education, according to a new report by the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development.

The report, which covered the year 2015, found that Israel invested \$7,971 for each elementary school student, compared to the OECD average of \$8,539 per elementary school student. The gap was bigger in post-elementary education: While OECD nations invested an average of \$9,868 per student in middle and high school, Israel invested \$7,987.

The gap was largest for early childhood education, with Israel investing less in children under the age of 3 than any other OECD member state. Some

110,000 young children are currently enrolled in government-supervised and subsidized nursery schools and day care centers in Israel. The report found that Israel spent \$2,700 per child up to age 3, compared to the OECD average of \$12,400.

Israeli students also spend more hours in school than most other students. First- to sixth-graders in Israel have an annual average of 5,755 school hours, compared to 4,600 in other developed countries.

"The report proves that Israel has made education a top national priority, with public funding 4.6 times greater than private funding. At the same time, the report points out areas that still need improvement," the Education Ministry said in response to the findings.

## JEWISH AMERICAN LEFT-WINGER, HEADED TO ISRAEL TO STUDY, DETAINED AT BORDER (Times of Israel 9/12/18)

Another Jewish-American left-wing activist was detained at the Israeli border and threatened with deportation before being allowed to enter the country.

Julie Weinberg-Connors, 23, arrived in the country on Wednesday to begin a year of study at the Pardes Institute, a nondenominational yeshiva in Jerusalem. Weinberg-Connors was detained at Ben Gurion Airport upon landing and was questioned by Interior Ministry officials before being allowed to enter the country. The whole experience took more than three hours.

Weinberg-Connors is in the process of immigrating to Israel, and will be living in the country on an A-1 visa, which is intended to be a stepping-stone to immigration.

"They said, 'We're re-booking your flight and putting you on a new flight back to the US,'" Weinberg-Connors told JTA Wednesday. "They put me in a holding area. It made me really sad," Weinberg-Connors added later. "I love this land very deeply and it's very important to me that it is a place that is a

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safe home for the people who call it home. That we have a government now that's trying to deny people entry based on their political beliefs is scary."

Weinberg-Connors is the latest Jewish-American left-wing activist to be detained by Israel at the border and questioned over their politics before being allowed into the country. Earlier this year, Israeli officials detained prominent journalist Peter Beinart, author Moriel Rothman-Zecher, and activists Simone Zimmerman and Abby Kirschbaum.

In March 2017, the Knesset passed a law that denies entry to foreigners who support the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, or BDS. But some of the detained activists are not supporters of BDS.

Weinberg-Connors was detained after the Interior Ministry learned that they had visited Area A in the West Bank, which is under full Palestinian civil and security control. American citizens are allowed to visit Area A; Jewish Israelis are not. (Weinberg-Connors prefers they/them as gender-neutral pronouns.)

Weinberg-Connors also has been involved in left-wing activism. According to a Haaretz article published in February, they were a member of All That's Left, a left-wing activist collective in Israel. Weinberg-Connors also visited the West Bank Bedouin village of Khan al-Ahmar, which Israel has slated for imminent destruction.

"When I said Khan al-Ahmar, the man said, 'You can't enter into Israel,'" Weinberg-Connors said, referring to an official questioning her. "I said, 'Why?' and he said, 'Because you're here to make trouble.'"

After being threatened with deportation due to the Khan al-Amar visit, Weinberg-Connors spoke to their lawyer and was eventually asked to sign a document pledging not to visit Area A while in Israel without receiving a permit. After signing the document, Weinberg-Connors was allowed to enter the country, according to the Interior Ministry.

"It was clear from [Weinberg-Connors'] interrogation that it was her intention to go to the territory of the Palestinian Authority," a spokesperson for the Interior Ministry told JTA in a statement Wednesday. "Investigations conducted with relevant security officials led to an unequivocal recommendation not to allow her entry. However, after pledging to obtain a permit before going to Palestinian territory, her entry was permitted."

Weinberg-Connors is from Boston and is a 2017 graduate of Beloit University, where they majored in critical identity studies and minored in religious studies. They studied abroad at Tel Aviv University, and have been involved with Jewish organizations such as Achvat Amim, a Palestinian-Israeli solidarity group; Encounter Programs, which leads listening tours to Palestinian areas of the West Bank for Jewish Americans; and Adamah, a Jewish-American farm that has a fellowship for young adults.

As part of their coursework, Weinberg-Connors created "The Jewish American Princess Zine," an online publication that "seeks to understand the emergence, use, and meaning(s) of the Jewish American Princess stereotype."

Weinberg-Connors said the experience has not dimmed their desire to become a citizen of Israel. Along with feeling dedicated to living there, Weinberg-Connors said being an Israeli citizen affords them more rights should something like this detainment happen again.

"I definitely want to still make aliyah," Weinberg-Connors said. "I really care about this place and making it into the place I think it should be for the Jewish people and all people is really important to me. I do worry about my ability to stay here if I'm not a citizen."

## **CZECH LEADERS ENDORSE ISRAELI EMBASSY MOVE TO JERUSALEM** (Arutz-7 9/12/18)

Czech leaders on Wednesday endorsed moving the country's embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, following a similar move by the US administration earlier this year.

In a joint statement, the Czech president, prime minister, parliament speaker and the foreign and defense ministers said the opening of a "Czech House" there in November would be "the first step in the plan to move the Czech

embassy to Jerusalem."

Jiri Ovcacek, spokesman for the pro-Israeli President Milos Zeman, told *AFP* that the Czech House would shelter government institutions including the foreign ministry's Czech Center, the trade agency CzechTrade and tourism agency CzechTourism.

"The Czech House in Jerusalem will be ceremonially opened by Mr. President during his visit to Israel in November," he said.

Zeman, 73, promoted the embassy move even before US President Donald Trump moved the US embassy to Jerusalem on May 14.

In May, the Czech Republic reopened its honorary consulate in Jerusalem following its closure in 2016 due to the death of the honorary consul.

The Czech Embassy has been in Tel Aviv since 1949, except during the interruption of diplomatic relations under the former communist regime in Prague between 1967 and 1990.

## **IDF PRESENTS NEW SIMULATION SYSTEMS** (YNet 9/11/18)

The requirement that every infantry soldier undergoes simulation training as part of his basic training and as a condition for being qualified as a combat soldier has turned mandatory this past year.

Advanced simulators have been deployed across the infantry brigades' training bases. Moreover, in the School for Infantry Corps Professions and Squad Commanders (also known as Bislamach) platoon and team drills have already been simulated while training the soldiers to handle fighting conditions such as in Gaza and Lebanon.

The infantry simulator halls are becoming more similar in their technological quality to those of the Israeli Air Force (IAF).

The combat soldiers undergo the simulation training before executing the live-fire training.

The simulation offers vast variety of scenarios, among them stabbing or ramming terror attacks similar to those the West Bank has seen in the past two years, advancement of a platoon in Gaza's streets as part of a big IDF operation against Hamas, underground attacks targeting Hezbollah while maneuvering in southern Lebanon.

The combatants are also trained individually while simulating scenarios with their personal weapon.

Givati and Golani soldiers also train on the simulators inside the armored personnel carriers (APC).

The training before going out to the field is conducted in a small booth similar to the one of the infantry soldier inside a real APC.

The IDF's new systems are attempting to simulate the developing operational reality as much as possible.

The trembling vibration of the simulation weapons identical in their weight and shape to the soldiers' real weapons alongside the simulator's ability to identify the hitting rates enable to produce a fast through debrief for all teams training on the simulators.

"The systems have existed for eight-nine years in the Ground Forces Command. However, today's training simulations demonstrate all possible battle scenarios," according to a senior Ground Forces officer.

"We have recently opened a special simulation instructors' course whose participants had underwent training in Bislamach," he added.

The simulated scenarios have expanded beyond fighting on Israel's fronts and now include a simulation of a terror attack in the Tel Aviv's HaKiryat headquarters.

## **ISRAELI RHYTHMIC GYMNAST WINS SILVER AT WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS** (Israel Hayom 9/12/18)

Israeli rhythmic gymnast Linoy Ashram won a silver medal at the Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championships in Sofia, Bulgaria, on Tuesday, twirling her way toward the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.

Ashram, 19, came second in the individual hoop final with a score of 20.000. Russian gymnast Dina Averina won the gold medal with a score of 20.850,

while her twin sister, Arina, won the bronze with a score of 19.700. Israeli gymnast Nicol Zelikman placed fifth in both the hoop and the ball finals.

Ashram failed to make the final for the ball event.

Still, this was the first time two Israeli athletes made it to the finals of the Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championships.

"This is a historic silver medal. But I'm also looking ahead to the next three days of close competition," Ashram told Hadashot evening news.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted his congratulations to Ashram.

"Congratulations to Linoy Ashram on her awesome achievement and silver medal. What a wonderful start to the new [Jewish] year. We're proud of you, Linoy," he wrote.

The all-around Sofia competition includes hoop, ball, clubs and ribbon. The gymnasts will compete in the clubs event on Wednesday.

Last month, Ashram won the gold medal and broke a world record with her clubs routine at the Gymnastics World Cup, with a score of 20.65.

Ashram also placed third in the all-around competition at the Rhythmic Gymnastics World Championships in Italy, making her the first Israeli to ever win a medal in the category.

She is widely considered one of Israel's best hopes for a medal at the 2020 Olympic Games.

### **ISRAELI STARTUP ENSURES PRIVACY IN GROWING WORLD OF FACIAL RECOGNITION (JPost 9/13/18)**

Forget usernames, passwords, security questions and fingerprints – facial recognition is increasingly becoming our unique identifier.

Although originally used primarily for security purposes – with the FBI said to have access to facial recognition databases containing photographs of approximately half of America's adults – the market for the technology is growing and concerns over privacy and security are growing in tandem.

Facial recognition technology is now increasingly being used by retailers to analyze our shopping behavior, by marketing professionals to assess our age and gender, and by banks to authenticate transactions, in addition to unlocking our phones and tagging friends on social media.

Conscious of the highly sensitive biometric data that can be obtained from photos and videos through unauthorized facial recognition, three graduates of IDF special forces and elite intelligence units have developed an innovative solution to restore privacy to our photos.

Influenced by being unable to share photos on social media during their military service due to the sensitive nature of their work, CEO Gil Perry, COO Sella Blondheim and CTO Eliran Kuta founded Tel Aviv-based company D-ID in January 2017.

D-ID's initial product, launched this week at the TechCrunch Disrupt 2018 Conference in San Francisco, digitally manipulates images and videos to render them unreadable by machine tools and artificial intelligence, while the human eye remains unable to detect any difference.

"Our photos contain biometric data. Using them with face recognition, anyone can track you, hack your devices and steal your identity. That's why our photos must be protected," said Perry. "We've moved too fast with face recognition and it is now a threat to our fundamental human right to privacy.

"We use advanced image processing and deep learning to process the photo or video in such a way that it will look similar to the human eye – but machines, AI, face recognition classifiers will not be able to recognize the individual," he added.

The company's product has come at an opportune moment with new data privacy regulations, including the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), threatening major fines and lawsuits for companies that fail to protect personal information, including facial images.

"People are aware and concerned about the security risks of face recognition. Now is the time to protect this data – and we are here to make sure it happens," said Perry.

Potential customers include cloud storage providers, social networks, financial institutions, health management organizations and governments wishing to protect their sensitive biometric databases.

Their first client, Cloudinary, is an image and video management platform assisting more than 350,000 companies manage more than 22 billion media items.

D-ID is a graduate of the renowned EISP 8200 and Y Combinator accelerators, and was recognized in April as one of the Gartner Research Group's five "Cool Vendors in Privacy Management."

The company has so far raised \$4 million in venture capital funding, led by Pitango Venture Capital with support from Y Combinator, Maverick Ventures, Foundation Capital and Fenox Venture Capital.

### **ISRAELI MEDICAL TEAM BRINGS CPR TO AFRICA (Israel21c, 9/10/18)**

Into a country where medicine, manpower and equipment are all in short supply came the Israelis. Their goal: to teach advanced CPR in the heart of Africa.

A senior delegation from the Ruth Rappaport Children's Hospital at the Rambam Health Care Campus in Haifa recently gave an emergency medicine course to local doctors and nursing staff in the village of Nakuru, Kenya.

The course, which included lectures, simulations and individual training, was initiated by Prof. Ruth Margalit, who is responsible for Global Medicine at the Technion — Israel Institute of Technology.

"It's very important to understand what we were up against," explained Prof. Itay Shavit, director of Rambam's Pediatric Emergency Department and head of the medical team.

"Through Israeli eyes, it is hard to imagine how quality medicine can be given to patients in the hospitals in rural Kenya. The infrastructure is old or non-existent, there is a great shortage of basic medical equipment ... doctors are almost non-existent and most of the work is done by nurses."

The Rambam team taught their local counterparts CPR equipment maintenance, case-management techniques, basic and advanced resuscitation methods and how to use equipment they had never encountered before. The Israelis brought medical equipment and simulation dolls.

"Because the gaps are great, the challenge is great, but it was exciting to see how quickly the changes were made and how easy it is to make a difference," said team member Ravit Idelman, a senior nurse in Rambam's ER department.

Rambam has given similar courses in Romania.

"When we accepted the proposal to hold the course in Africa, we did not hesitate for a moment," added Dr. Hadas Levin Kanani, a senior ER physician. "Knowledge and skills help save lives in places where the need is greatest."

The team intends to return to Africa to do more training on a regular basis and "to reach any place where we and our experience can help," Idelman said.

Rick Hirschhaut, National Executive Director of American Friends of Rambam Medical Center, described the team's work in Africa as "the highest humanitarian values of global citizenship."

### **ISRAELI JUDO DELEGATION TO COMPETE WITH ISRAELI FLAG IN UAE (YNet 9/12/18)**

The International Judo Federation (IJF) announced Monday that it will bring back the Grand Slam competition tour to the capital of the United Arab Emirates, Abu Dhabi, after the state has pledged to allow Israeli athletes to participate with the Israeli flag and accompanied by the national anthem during medal ceremonies.

In July, President of the IJF Marius Weiser, announced that he was canceling the federation's competitions in Tunisia and Abu Dhabi following incidents of

discrimination.

"In an attempt to take a firm and constructive stand against discrimination in sports, the IJF suspends Abu Dhabi and Tunisia from hosting any future competitions," he stressed.

The IJF published a statement saying the UAE had succumbed to the many pressures exerted on it and will permit the Israeli delegation to compete with the country's national symbols.

"The historic decision will allow all nations, including Israel, to be accompanied by their national symbols and anthem," the official statement read.

"The IJF salutes the efforts of the UAE for taking a major step toward promoting peaceful relations between all countries of the world. The UAE, along with our partners, remains committed to the struggle against all discrimination in sports, which should be used as a tool for reconciliation and promotion of peace in the world," concluded the statement.

Weiser in recent years has been making continuing efforts to allow Israelis to participate in competitions in Abu Dhabi and Tunisia without suffering discrimination for standing on the podium with the country's symbols and to the sounds of the Israeli national anthem.

Last year, Tal Flicker won the gold medal in Abu Dhabi. However, the Israeli flag was not hoisted, with the IJF flag raised instead. Flicker had to stand on the podium and sing the national anthem by himself. Since then, efforts have been made to put an end to this phenomenon.

Culture and Sports Minister Miri Regev sent letters to Weiser regarding the matter, and the two even met in person several times.

"I was surprised to hear that the members of the Israeli delegation will not be able to compete with the country's symbols," wrote the minister.

"This demand crosses all boundaries of the international sports associations' mandate, whose main goal is to kick politics out of sports, which serves as a bridge that connects between all nations, cultures and states," concluded Regev.

President of the Israeli Judo Federation Moshe Ponty, praised the UAE's decision, calling it "courageous."

"Weiser proved that he is a true friend of the Israeli Judo Federation and that he is not afraid to take far-reaching steps in favor of sports. I would also like to thank the UAE, who have shown that it is possible to take courageous steps and prove that sports can bring people closer," Ponty emphasized.

Ponty also thanked Regev for her efforts, praising her behind-the-scenes efforts to amend the neglect of the Israeli identity in international arenas.

"The Culture and Sports Minister has been acting behind the scenes so that we will be able to carry our flag proudly," he exclaimed.

"We've been working for over two years in order to achieve this result. I was prepared to endure criticism because I knew that in the long run, through quiet channels, we will be able to wave the Israeli flag everywhere. I am happy, happy and proud," Ponty concluded.

#### **DIPLOMATIC RETRIBUTION AT LAST** (Amnon Lord, Israel Hayom 9/12/18)

The closure of the Palestinian mission in Washington is just the latest in a series of moves by a U.S. administration that does not differentiate between the Palestinians' diplomatic warfare against Israel and the various terrorist methods it employs.

The Palestinians have attempted to enlist the International Criminal Court in their efforts against Israel. Under President Donald Trump, the Americans announced they would "use any means necessary" against the ICC should it decide to begin proceedings against Israeli officials.

As the U.S. administration sees it, the Palestinians, along with the Iranians, are corrupting global democracy.

Under Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the Palestinians serve Iranian interests. Abbas and the PA are the ones fanning the flames in the Gaza Strip and they are responsible for the deteriorating situation there. Hamas, meanwhile, supplies the goods in return for Iranian funds. The

Palestinians also sent a senior delegation to attend North Korea's 70th-anniversary celebrations. This is the political and ideological environment of the PA.

The Trump administration is breaking norms. Instead of courting the Palestinians in the hope that they will enter negotiations, the White House is punishing them and acting to bring about their defeat. In Israel, many recoil from this strategy. We are the ones who live with the Palestinians and what their defeat will mean for us remains unclear. The last time the Palestine Liberation Organizations looked like it was about to be wiped off the map, the organization had its pieces pulled back together and the Oslo Accords were signed.

Another point that cannot be ignored: Abbas invited this retribution from the United States. He spoke rudely about President Donald Trump, made anti-Semitic remarks about U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman, and made anti-Semitic remarks about the Holocaust. Abbas is not "anonymous"; he stuck his head out of the trench and he got hit.

#### **SUICIDE PREVENTION** (David Fine, JPost 9/12/18)

This evening [September 12], the *Bishvil HaHayyim* (Path to Life) organization will sponsor its annual March for Life along the streets of Tel Aviv. The march is in conjunction with International Suicide Prevention Day, which takes place annually on September 10. The march's goals are to raise awareness of suicides in the State of Israel, help enable families that have been affected by suicide to get help, and provide suicide prevention.

There are more than 10,000 suicide attempts in Israel each year with over 500 actual suicides – more than the amount of deaths by traffic accidents. At any given time, over 20% of Israeli youth are having suicidal thoughts. We will march in the dark and in complete silence to mark the darkness in which people experiencing depression and suicidal thoughts live and the difficulty in speaking about it to their loved ones.

The Barkai Center for Practical Rabbinics and Community Development, based in Modi'in, was founded in 2011 with the aim of improving the fabric of Israeli society by intensively training Orthodox rabbis in all aspects of communal rabbinics so that they can develop and lead communities. In order to attain ordination in Israel today, one does not need to have any practical training whatsoever. In addition, the Diaspora model of community with the synagogue at its center and the rabbi its leader is mostly absent from Israeli society, thus leaving many Israelis without the support and envelopment of community.

Early Zionist leaders believed that the community was to be a relic of the past in the newly created State of Israel with the state the provider of all services – religious services included. Most synagogues in Israel do not have rabbis and in those that do, the rabbi's activity is often limited to the ritual area and not the pastoral/leadership sphere.

Barkai provides a one-of-a-kind, two-year intensive training program in Hebrew comprised of over 600 hours of practical rabbinic training. To date, close to 80 rabbis have either graduated from or are currently enrolled in the course. The rabbis come from all over Israel and represent the full gamut of Israeli society. The rabbis are trained in diverse areas including, listening skills, pastoral psychology, social work, couples therapy, public speaking, addictions, chaplaincy and more. Of course, the rabbi is not intended to be a professional mental health provider. The rabbis learn where their job ends and when they must refer to a professional. Although they are not professionals, very often the first phone call or knock on the door from people suffering is to the rabbi. The rabbi, almost like a family doctor, deals with all kinds of problems and therefore must receive this critical training.

One of the areas that Barkai has taken upon itself is the issue of suicides and suicide prevention. In conjunction with the Suicide Prevention Unit of the Ministry of Health, all Barkai rabbis receive the Unit's "Gatekeepers" training. A "gatekeeper" is trained to identify people in the community who are suicidal and to get them the help they need, sometimes immediately.