

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, HEAD OF IAEA SPAR OVER IRAN NUKE INSPECTION LOCATIONS (JPost 10/2/18)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's UN address last Thursday continues to make waves, with the head of the UN's nuclear watchdog agency refusing to take at face value evidence presented by the prime minister about a secret atomic warehouse in Tehran, and Lebanon's president saying Netanyahu's allegations of Hezbollah precision missiles in his country were false.

"The agency sends inspectors to sites and locations only when needed. The agency uses all safeguards relevant to information available to it but it does not take any information at face value," International Atomic Energy Agency chief Yukiya Amano said in a statement on Tuesday.

Amano's statement made no specific reference to Israel or Netanyahu's comments but it is his first public pronouncement since Netanyahu's speech. He said the IAEA has carried out complementary access inspections, which are often at short notice, at all locations in Iran it has needed to visit.

"All information obtained, including from third parties, is subject to rigorous review and assessed together with other available information to arrive at an independent assessment based on the agency's own expertise," Amano said. "In order to maintain credibility, the agency's independence is of paramount importance," he added.

But Netanyahu urged the IAEA to do much more. A statement released from his office in response to Amano's comments said the IAEA chief's comment was related to inspections the agency has carried out in different sites in Iran, but does not deal with the site the prime minister revealed in his UN speech.

"There is no reason to wait," the statement said. "The IAEA should inspect the site and immediately send inspectors there with Geiger counters, and the prime minister's words will be proven to be true."

During his UN speech, Netanyahu said that he was disclosing for the first time that Iran has "a secret atomic warehouse for storing massive amounts of equipment and material for Iran's secret nuclear weapons program.

Netanyahu then held up a map of where the site is located in the Turkuzahbad District of Tehran, and then a picture of the building which he said houses the facility. He said Iranian officials are "desperately trying" to empty it of radioactive material.

Turning directly to Amano, whom he called a "good man," Netanyahu called on him to "do the right thing" and "go inspect this atomic warehouse. Immediately. Before the Iranians finish clearing it out."

RUSSIA COMPLETES DELIVERY OF S-300 DEFENSE SYSTEMS TO SYRIA (Israel Hayom 10/3/18)

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced Tuesday that the delivery of S-300 air defense systems to Syria has been completed.

Shoigu said Russia had delivered four S-300 launchers along with radars and support vehicles to the Syrian military, and said it would take three months to train Syrian personnel in how to operate the system.

The move followed the Sept. 17 incident in which Syrian air defenses trying to counter an Israeli strike downed a Russian reconnaissance plane over Latakia, and has sparked concerns in both Israel and the United States.

Jerusalem and Washington both contend that giving Syria S-300 surface-to-air missiles will embolden Iran and escalate the Syrian civil war.

Shoigu insisted Tuesday that the S-300s would improve the security of Russian military personnel in Syria.

Israel expressed regret at the deaths of 15 Russian crewmen in the incident, but said the Syrian forces' incompetence was at fault and that Israel is

compelled to continue taking action against suspected deployments of Iranian-backed forces across its northern border.

The Kremlin has rejected the Israeli Air Force's findings on the incident, saying the Russian plane was shot down because of the presence of Israeli fighter jets in Syrian airspace.

In Washington, State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert could not confirm reports that the S-300 missiles had been delivered.

"I cannot confirm that that is accurate. I hope that they did not," she told a press briefing. "That would be, I think, sort of a serious escalation in concerns and issues going on in Syria."

A senior Israeli official said Sunday that Syria's possession of the S-300 posed a "complex challenge" and that Israel was working on ways to prevent this from becoming a major threat to the country's security.

Also on Tuesday, the U.S. envoy to NATO said Russia must halt its covert development of a banned cruise missile system or the United States would seek to destroy it before it becomes operational.

The United States believes Russia is developing a ground-launched system in breach of a Cold War treaty that could allow Russia to launch a nuclear strike on Europe at short notice, but Moscow has consistently denied any such violation.

U.S. Ambassador to NATO Kay Bailey Hutchison said Washington remains committed to a diplomatic solution but is prepared to consider a military strike if the development of the medium-range system continues.

ANTI-ISRAEL GROUP CALLS ON E.U. TO CANCEL ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN GATHERING (JPost 10/3/18)

The anti-Israel Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI) has called on the EU to cancel a program to bring together

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young Israelis and Palestinians in December under the pretext that the event promotes normalization between the two people.

The group said that it sent a letter last month to Ralph Tarraf, Head of the EU delegation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, protesting the planned event, which is scheduled to be held in the context of a program called "Israeli and Palestinian Young Leaders at the European Parliament."

The campaign targeting the EU program is likely to prompt some of the Palestinian participants to withdraw from the events out of fear of facing a shame campaign on social media.

Palestinian activists regularly target meetings between Israelis and Palestinians, claiming that such encounters promote normalization between the two sides. Last month, Palestinian activists, some affiliated with the ruling Fatah faction, disrupted a meeting at east Jerusalem's American Colony Hotel marking the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Oslo Accords. Israeli and Palestinian participants were forced to call off the meeting.

The PABCI letter claimed that the EU program "violates the relevant BDS guidelines agreed upon by the vast majority of Palestinian civil society." The letter also accused the EU of being "highly complicit in Israel's violations of Palestinian rights and international law." It urged the EU to "end all forms of complicity and to halt all its normalization programs."

The group said it decided to publish the letter in public after it did not receive a response from the EU delegation chief. "We therefore share the letter publicly so that Palestinians and Europeans alike will realize how harmful these EU-funded normalization projects are to the popular Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality."

The group also called on Palestinian participants to cancel their participation in the event so as to "avoid becoming themselves complicit in undermining the Palestinian struggle for our inalienable rights under international law."

ELI COHEN'S WIFE 'SEEKING MERCY' (Arutz-7 10/3/18)

Nadia Cohen, widow of Israeli spy Eli Cohen, who was executed by hanging after being caught in Syria, asks Syrian President Bashar Assad to transfer her husband's bones for burial in Israel.

"Please, I'm asking for mercy; release Eli, release the bones. I'm 83 years old, see us differently, forgive," Cohen said at a conference for treatment of war victims held at the Galilee Medical Center in Nahariya.

"I thank those who initiated my talking to Bashar Assad. I had a correspondence with him about 18 years ago, and we wrote to him, took children's photos and the grandchildren, to soften his heart for the sake of bringing the body. I was happy when he replied that it would happen 'in time'. I had the two words to console me," Cohen said.

"In the meantime, it's been a long time and Bashar has been through a difficult period, a revolution has taken place among your people, and within your country your people have paid a price, and you too have been anxious about this nation. I turn to you with love, so there will be peace," added the widow.

She said "Eli is an angel who came, I don't really want to believe it, an angel to play a certain role, to protect the country and the people. He was crazy about this nation and the State and the piece of land we received. Eli was simply a Zionist who contributed, helped, and left three children who don't know him."

TEL AVIV MUNICIPALITY PETITIONS HIGH COURT AGAINST MINISTER KATZ (YNet 10/3/18)

The Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality petitioned the High Court of Justice on Wednesday against Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz and Ayalon Highways Co., demanding to resume construction work on the Yehudit Bridge.

In late August, Katz decided to halt planned construction work on the new pedestrian and cycling Yehudit Bridge, which will connect Yigal Alon Street and the Montefiore neighborhood.

The plans entail closing parts of the Ayalon Highway over the course of six weekends starting August 31, 2018. Each time, one direction of the Ayalon Highway was to be closed to traffic for 24 hours, from 6pm Friday to 6pm Saturday.

In its petition, the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality said it has yet to receive an explanation why the Transportation Ministry decided to halt the construction work, despite repeat requests and after the ministry received an extension on the deadline to provide such an explanation.

The municipality asked the court to issue a temporary injunction that would suspend Katz's decision to postpone or halt the construction work on the bridge and would require Ayalon Highways Co. to resume the work as planned until the court rules on the petition.

"What possessed the transportation minister all of a sudden? Why did he decide, on a whim, to order a government company without having the authority to do so? The answer to that is known: Political pressure, which is of course a clear foreign consideration," the Tel Aviv-Jaffa municipality wrote in its petition.

The municipality's petition argued that "the delay in the construction of the bridge and the foot-dragging on the matter is causing serious damages to the residents of the city of Tel Aviv and the greater Tel Aviv area."

The petition also claimed Katz's decision to postpone the construction works was unlawful, as he has no authority to order Ayalon Highways Co., and more specifically he has no authority to give the company orders with regards to work on Shabbat, the Jewish day of rest.

This, the municipality claims, was determined in a legal opinion by the Transportation Ministry's legal advisor, which was approved by Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit only a year ago.

"The construction works in question have already been coordinated with all relevant bodies and planned long ago and were supposed to take place during six specific weekends," the petition said. "At the last minute and right before the work was due to start, it became clear respondent 2 (Ayalon Highways Co.) had no intention of carrying it out in light of a rushed and clearly unlawful instruction by respondent 1 (the transportation minister)."

Katz's decision to postpone the planned construction of the bridge over the weekend came after ultra-Orthodox parties in the coalition protested the fact the work was due to take place on Shabbat. Katz ordered Ayalon Highways Co. to submit new plans to carry out the construction in other ways, including late at night, "as has been done in similar cases in the past and as is common both in Israel and abroad."

The Transportation Ministry offered the following response to the story: "The petition has yet to be received by the ministry."

The Ayalon Highways Co. company declined comment.

ISRAELIS LOVE TRUMP MORE THAN ALMOST ANY OTHER NATION, POLL SHOWS (Ha'aretz 10/2/18)

U.S. President Donald Trump's popularity among Israelis has significantly grown over the past year and is much higher than in most European countries, according to a poll released Monday by the Pew Institute. The two countries where Trump has the highest support are Israel and the Philippines.

The researchers interviewed people in 25 countries including all of America's key allies. The poll shows historically low support for Trump among leading U.S. allies such as Germany, Britain, Japan, Australia and Canada.

But it shows very high support among Israelis following policy moves over the past year such as the transfer of the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv and the American withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear deal.

According to the poll, 69 percent of Israelis expressed confidence in Trump as president, compared with 57 percent who did so in last year's survey. Trump had a higher confidence rating only in the Philippines, at 78 percent.

In Britain, only 28 percent said they had confidence in Trump, while in France and Germany the numbers were below 10 percent. Throughout his

eight years in office, Barack Obama enjoyed a confidence rating topping 60 percent in these countries.

In Japan, while 78 percent of respondents expressed confidence in Obama by the time he left office, only 30 percent expressed confidence in Trump this year. That number, however, is better than Trump's performance last year: 24 percent.

The pollsters highlight Israel as an exception. In 2016, 49 percent of Israelis said they had confidence in Obama, compared with Trump's 69-percent performance today.

But Obama's high mark during his presidency among Israelis, in 2014, was higher than Trump's today. Back then, a year before Obama clashed with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the Iranian nuclear deal, 71 percent of Israeli respondents had confidence in Obama. His number dropped over the next two years while the Iran deal was negotiated and signed.

Trump's current figure is also lower than the high mark of George W. Bush among Israelis. Back in 2003, as the United States was entering the Iraq War, 83 percent of Israeli respondents had confidence in Bush. His numbers then deteriorated, though when he left the White House more than 50 percent of Israelis still had confidence in him.

The pollsters also noted that in this year's poll, Israelis "are more likely than any other public surveyed to say the U.S. is doing more to address global problems than a few years ago." They added that "Israel tops the list in terms of the share of the public – 79 percent – saying that relations with the U.S. have improved in the past year."

The poll is consistent with previous surveys conducted over the past year. A survey by the University of Maryland earlier this year showed that almost 60 percent of Israeli Jews had a favorable opinion of Trump, with only 19 percent expressing a negative opinion.

RECORD NUMBER OF RELIGIOUS WOMEN ENLISTING, MILITARY SAYS (Israel Hayom 10/3/18)

Some 308 religious women have joined the IDF through the army's Jewish women's seminary track since the beginning of the year, a 15% increase from previous year and double the number in 2014, IDF says • Nearly 20% of the recruits pursue officers' training

Record numbers of religious women have enlisted in the Israel Defense Forces this year through the army's midrasha, or Jewish women's seminary, track, according to IDF figures.

The IDF said 308 religious women have joined the IDF since the beginning of 2018, a 15% increase from the previous year and more than double the number in 2014.

Nearly 20% of the women who enter the military through the midrasha track pursue officers' training, the IDF said.

"We aren't surprised at the numbers. The girls' preparation for military service and their option of enlisting through this designated track allows them to contribute in the most important places in the IDF," said Rabbi Ohad Taharlev, head of Midreshet Lindenbaum for Women in Jerusalem.

"Every year in recent years we've talked about record numbers among religious girls going to the military, and everyone tries to analyze the revolution the [national religious] sector is undergoing. In the past year, the girls were at the forefront of the discourse in the media and the sector over enlistment of religious girls, and therefore we aren't surprised about [the numbers], although we're always just as thrilled every time."

The increase in religious women joining the IDF is reflected in increased registration numbers for Midreshet Lindenbaum, the first women's seminary to establish a track combining Torah study for women and military service.

In addition to Jerusalem, the midrasha also has branches in the central city of Lod and the northern city of Karmiel.

In recent years, some 95% of the students at Midreshet Lindenbaum have gone on to serve in the army.

"Preparing the girls for military service through true and meaningful Torah

study, and allowing them to enlist through a track that allows them to preserve their lifestyle, enables them to do significant service and contribute in the best way possible to the IDF in its most important [units]. It's not for nothing that many of the girls go on to become officers and even sign on for extra service time," Taharlev said.

A NEW DAWN FOR BEDOUIN-JEWISH INTEGRATION IN THE NEGEV (Israel21c 10/2/18)

The 30 young men and women studying software development, graphic design and 3D printing at Yeruham's high-tech incubator earlier this month did not seem out of place in the Startup Nation. But for at least half the participants, it was a new world.

The two-week Tech2Peace seminar was sponsored by A New Dawn in the Negev, a non-profit organization founded in 2009 to improve the quality of life for Israel's Bedouin community. Some 130 candidates applied. Half of those accepted were Bedouins and other Arab Israelis; the other half were Jewish residents of Israel's south.

The integration of the two populations in the seminar was intentional, says Jamal Alkimawi, the 39-year-old founder and CEO of A New Dawn. "Change will only come through working together," Alkimawi tells ISRAEL21c. "We are less powerful if we are separate."

That's been Alkimawi's modus operandi since he started A New Dawn, following a seven-year position as the academic counselor for Arab students at Ben-Gurion University (BGU) of the Negev.

"Arab students face a lot of difficulties because they usually live with their families in their communities until the age of 18," Alkimawi says. "So when they get to university, it's often the first time they're exposed to Israeli society, to being an Israeli citizen. It can be shocking."

Alkimawi grew up in the Bedouin town of Rahat and founded A New Dawn there with the aim of exposing fellow Bedouins to what he calls the "outside world" at a young age.

The organization has established programs in and around Rahat. In addition to the high-tech training program in Yeruham, there's a club for at-risk youth, an afterschool classical music program dubbed "Strings for Change" (Sarab in Arabic), filmmaking classes and even a "cultural tour guide" course which Alkimawi hopes will bring Birthright and Masa Israel Journey groups to Rahat to experience Bedouin hospitality.

An emotional first-aid hotline – the first of its kind in Arabic – with 25 volunteers will launch in the coming months.

All told, some 1,500 people have been through one of A New Dawn's offerings. But it's the programs for at-risk youth of which Alkimawi is most proud.

"Seventy percent of our graduates are integrated, whether that's continuing with higher education, volunteering or sherut leumi," Alkimawi says, referring to Israeli national service.

The need for programs like those A New Dawn offers is urgent: About 140,000 Bedouins reside in the Negev, and more than 40 percent of them earn less than the minimum wage. The high-school dropout rate is 35% and only 30% of students earn a full diploma. A New Dawn cites figures that only 5% of the Bedouin population is qualified to study at the university level.

In high-tech, only 3% of Israel's 270,000 workers are Arab Israelis.

A range of governmental and non-governmental programs aim to boost those percentages. Hadassah Academic College in Jerusalem, for example, offers pre-academic programs for Arab students. Non-profit organizations such as Tsofen work with the Israeli government to integrate more Arabs into the high-tech sector, mainly in the north.

CELL THERAPY FIRM GAMIDA TO RAISE \$69M IN NASDAQ OFFERING (Times of Israel 10/2/18)

Gamida Cell, a maker of cell and immune therapy technologies, is seeking to raise some \$69 million in a Nasdaq share offering to help finance a final-

stage trial for a drug it hopes will help increase the success of bone marrow transplants in blood cancer patients.

In a draft prospectus filed with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) and the Nasdaq exchange, the company said it is seeking to raise \$69 million in an initial public offering of ordinary shares on the Nasdaq. Terms of the pricing of shares were not disclosed.

The biotechnology company has started enrolling patients for a last-stage clinical trial for its most advanced drug, NiCord, which it believes will help increase the success of bone marrow transplants in blood cancer patients who do not have a rapidly available, fully matched, bone marrow donor, and help them better withstand the ordeal of the lifesaving procedure. In addition to hematologic malignancies, the company is also seeking to develop NiCord for the treatment of bone marrow failure disorders.

Gamida, which has not yet generated any revenue from sales and has incurred losses since its founding, said it intends to use the proceeds of the offering for the clinical development of NiCord, for a manufacturing plant and for expenses.

Should the results of the trial, as hoped, be positive, that would lead to the launch of a commercially available product in 2020, Gamida Cell's now former CEO Yael Margolin said in an interview last year.

Preliminary clinical data has revealed that the risk of NiCord not meeting its targets in the Phase 3 trial "is low," Margolin said in the interview.

The drug has already received a breakthrough therapy designation by the US Food and Drug Administration. The designation is given to a drug that is meant to treat a serious or life-threatening condition, and where preliminary clinical evidence indicates that it may demonstrate a substantial improvement on at least one clinically significant target (endpoint) over other available therapies. The designation also entitles the company to get more and closer FDA guidance to help bring the treatment faster to patients.

Last year the firm raised \$40 million from investors including Novartis, which was already a major shareholder in the firm. The funds were raised to support the Phase 3 trial for NiCord, whose first market will be the US. Other investors include Clal Biotechnology Industries Ltd., which holds an 18% stake in the firm, and Elbit Imaging Ltd. which also holds an 18% stake in Gamida via a unit, according to filings with the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

NiCord would be the first drug developed by Gamida to hit the market. As of end June the company employed 52 workers and is led by CEO Julian Adams, the Nasdaq filing said.

THE JORDANIAN OPTION – THE ONLY REALISTIC SOLUTION (Ted Belman, Arutz-7 9/30/18)

President Trump walked back his remark that he supports a two-state solution to he supports whatever the parties want. But that isn't an improvement. For 30 years the parties have not been able to reach an agreement based on what they want. President Obama tried to remedy that situation by imposing a solution on Israel, to no avail.

Since taking office, Trump has taken a different approach. He is seeking an agreement that ignores the PA, which he is currently destroying, and instead speaks directly to the Palestinian Arabs, who he believes are interested in a better life rather than in destroying Israel.

In addition, he has recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and has proceeded to unravel UNRWA, thereby taking two final status issues off the table. Plus, he and his Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, have relentlessly attacked the UN and its agencies for their bias against Israel. Also, he has withdrawn America from both UNHCR and UNESCO.

Finally, in line with his rejection of multilateralism, he is ignoring the Quartet and the UN and going it alone to achieve a deal not bound by the dogmas of the past, but on the possibilities.

In my recent article, Trump's Deal of the Century, I wrote:

"In a recent interview, Jason Greenblatt, Pres Trump's special envoy, said 'our plan begins with reality. It recognizes the history of the conflict of

course, but [other plans] were always relying on tired notions of what it should be. Instead, it focuses on what it could be."

"In explaining why he is putting all this effort into achieving peace when there are bigger problems in the Middle east, namely Syria and Iran, Greenblatt said, "we think that there are unique circumstances now that warrant an attempt at trying to see whether or not we can do this. President Trump, as devoted and dedicated to the State of Israel as he is, he's also dedicated to trying to help the Palestinian people, and the way we can marry those two ideas is by trying to reach a comprehensive peace agreement."

"Thus, he is guided by two goals. He wants to strengthen Israel and he wants to help the Palestinian people. As he said, 'We do believe that many Palestinians want to live in peace, and they want to see their lives improved.'" "So how can he marry these goals? He said, 'Thus we must abandon all the old formulae and focus on what is doable'."

Trump drove this point home in his address to the U.N. by saying that US will not be 'held hostage to old dogmas, discredited ideologies'

The Jordan Option as proposed by Mudar Zahran, leader of the Jordanian Opposition Coalition, and myself, recognizes that nothing acceptable to Israel can be achieved by negotiating with King Abdullah or Mahmoud Abbas.

This option is very much in line with Trump's Deal of the Century which considers Jordan to be the Palestinian state east of the Jordan R. and Israel, the Jewish state west of the river.

Both Abdullah and Abbas rejected such a deal in their recent speeches to the U.N. Abdullah said, "Only a two-state solution based on international law and relevant UN resolutions can meet the needs of both sides: an end to conflict, a viable, independent, sovereign Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with east Jerusalem as its capital, and a secure Israel, fully part of its own region, recognised by Arab and Muslim states around the world,"

Abbas said, among the many lies and misrepresentations:

"But now our view of the United States is that it does not have the right to be a mediator on its own. We have the Quartet."

"I came before the Security Council on the 20th of February this year and presented an initiative calling for the convening of an international peace conference based on the relevant UN resolutions and the internationally endorsed terms of reference and parameters. Such a conference should involve broad international participation that includes regional and international stakeholders, led by the Permanent Members of the Security Council and the Quartet."

"Peace in our region cannot be realized without an independent Palestinian State, with East Jerusalem as its capital and with all of its holy sites."

"We want the right to self-determination. Nothing more or less. "

When the Trump team is optimistic about the chances of reaching a deal, everyone else is pessimistic and attacks them for being naive or worse.

Of course, he knows that if he sticks to the past he will meet with failure as everyone else has. His optimism is born out of the fact that he is rejecting "old dogmas" and "tired notions" and the demands of the PA and its backers. Instead he is focused on "helping the Palestinian people" to have a better life. This includes naturalizing them as Jordanian citizens and providing them with jobs and other forms of assistance.

After meeting with Prime Minister Netanyahu, he said "I like the two state solution." and added, to everyone's astonishment, "I want a plan that's solid, understood by both sides, really semi-agreed by both sides before we present. I would say two-three-four months."

Given the total rejection of his ideas by Abdullah and Abbas, how can he expect to have semi agreement within "two-three-four months"?

The only answer to that question is that he does not expect to have a semi agreement with either of them. He expects that Mudar Zahran, will replace Abdullah, and knows, based on my writings and Zahran's speeches and interviews that he would have Zahran's agreement on behalf of all Palestinians to his Plan. Eighty-three year old Abbas is irrelevant.

I can't think of any other way to achieve semi agreement. Can you?