

Ynet-News, September 17, 2020 – Thursday

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Israel 3-week lockdown may add restrictions & lower salaries of ministers & Knesset

09.17.20  
Netanyahu: There may be no choice but to tighten restrictions  
PM says will not hesitate to add more restrictions if necessary as Israel set to enter 2nd coronavirus lockdown; finance minister announces fresh financial measures for individuals, businesses hurt by restrictions, will push for pay cuts for ministers, MKs  
Itamar Eichner | Published: 09.17.20 , 21:40

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned on Thursday that the government will consider further tightening restrictions imposed on the citizens of Israel as part of the national effort against coronavirus.

"I estimate that in light of the current state of the disease and according to experts' recommendations, we may have no choice but to tighten restrictions," the premier said in a televised announcement from his residence. "I'll tell you this. I will not impose a lockdown on the citizens of Israel for nothing and I will not hesitate to add more restrictions if necessary."

Netanyahu's words follow a last-gasp round of discussions with Health Minister Yuli Edelstein, coronavirus czar Prof. Ronni Gamzu, and various experts.

Netanyahu stressed that the upcoming 3-week lockdown that corresponds with the High Holidays follows a "red flag" raised by the health care system against the backdrop of a dramatic spike in coronavirus cases in recent days.

"My duty and obligation as prime minister are to safeguard not only your health but also your life," the veteran prime minister said. "This is a situation in which medical teams struggle to keep up even after we have added beds and ventilators."

After Netanyahu was done speaking, Finance Minister Israel Katz announced a number of measures to help individuals and businesses hurt by the government-mandated restrictions aimed at containing the pathogen.

He also said he will push a proposal to lower the salaries of ministers and Knesset members.

09.17.20

El Al airline - 27-year-old New Yorker Eli Rozenberg bought 42.85 %

09.17.20

El Al welcomes new owner - 27-year-old New York yeshiva student Eli Rozenberg purchases controlling stake in Israel's flag carrier after placing \$150 million offer in bid to carry embattled airline out of coronavirus crisis  
i24NEWS| Published: 09.17.20 , 17:10

Israel's flag carrier El Al welcomed its new owner on Thursday, as 27-year-old New York-born yeshiva student Eli Rozenberg placed the only bid at a share offering at the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

Rozenberg's company, Kanfei Nesharim (Wings of an Eagle), bought a controlling 42.85 percent stake in the struggling airline with a \$150 million offer.

"The state, which had committed to buying any unwanted shares as part of a rescue package, bought some \$30 million worth of shares for a stake that could equal between 12 and 15 percent of the company," according to The Times of Israel.

In June, the Finance Ministry formulated a NIS 1.4 billion (\$400 million) rescue package, in which the government agreed to back loans for a total of \$250 million with a guarantee for 75 percent of the loan in case of defaults.

Three prospective buyers - including Rozenberg - were in the running to purchase the embattled airline. The other two, David Sapir, a Russian-Israeli tourism and telecommunications mogul and Meir Gurvitz, a British-Israeli real estate multi-millionaire did not make any bids Wednesday.

It is thought that El Al's new management will put a premium on "punctuality" and work to upgrade food services across all classes.

El Al, alongside dozens of airlines worldwide, found itself struggling to survive due to the coronavirus pandemic and the subsequent travel bans.

The Israeli airline was forced to send more than 90 percent of its workforce out on unpaid leave and the company released horrific financial statements in the first and second quarters of 2020.

09.17.20

Shin Bet arrested Jerusalem woman recruited by Hezbollah & Iran for terror

09.17.20

Shin Bet reveals East Jerusalem woman recruited by Hezbollah, Iran

The security agency says Yasmin Jabar, who works at the National Library at the Hebrew University, was recruited by the terror group in 2015 in an effort to form a clandestine cell collecting intel for future terror operations

Yoav Zitun, i24NEWS | Published: 09.17.20, 15:26

The Shin Bet domestic security service revealed Thursday it had arrested an East Jerusalem woman on suspicion she was recruited by Hezbollah and Iranian army officials to spy against Israel.

Yasmin Jaber, a staffer with the National Library at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, was arrested by the agency, along with several other acquaintances from East Jerusalem and Ramallah, who are suspected of having been involved in the secret cell.

The woman is said to have appeared on Hezbollah's radar after attending a Palestinian youth conference in Lebanon in 2015, set up by the group to scout out potential recruits.

During another visit to Lebanon in 2016, she was approached by members from Hezbollah and Iran's Quds Force - one of Revolutionary Guard Corps' units. Once back in Israel, she remained in touch with her handlers on social media through coded messages and also met with them several times in Turkey to receive orders and pass intelligence information.

According to Shin Bet, her mission was to recruit more agents, specifically women, and form a clandestine cell in Israel to gather intelligence and information for possible future terrorist activities.

“This Shin Bet investigation is the product of a lengthy intelligence operation to locate those suspected of being recruited by Hezbollah. It is another step in the counterterrorism efforts carried out in the past year against Quds Force and Hezbollah's attempts to recruit Israeli Arabs,” a senior Shin Bet official said in a statement.

09.17.20

UN chief urges Israel & Palestine to seize the opportunity for negotiations

09.17.20

UN chief urges Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate now

Antonio Guterres reiterated UN welcomes bilateral agreements that formalized the normalization of Israel's already ties with the UAE and Bahrain but says Palestinians and Israelis must 'restart their dialogue'

Associated Press| Published: 09.17.20 , 11:54

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres urged Israel and the Palestinians on Wednesday to seize the opportunity for negotiations following the diplomatic agreements between Israel and two Gulf Arab states that resulted in the suspension of any Israeli annexation of territory that the Palestinians want for a future state.

He said at a news conference that the United Nations has been pushing hard not only to promote direct contact but also to try to find a format in which the Quartet of Mideast mediators — the UN, U.S., European Union and Russia — or a group of countries linked to the Quartet could meet.

“Until now, we were not able to gather the consensus necessary for that, but we will persist in our efforts,” he said. “It is very important not to give up on the peace process in the Middle East.”

Guterres reiterated the UN's welcome for the U.S.-brokered bilateral agreements that formalized the normalization of Israel's already thawing relations with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, in line with their common opposition to Iran, saying “international cooperation is an absolutely essential aspect to solve problems.”

The agreements were signed Tuesday at a White House ceremony with U.S. President Donald Trump, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the foreign ministers of the UAE and Bahrain.

Guterres focused on the UAE agreement, which requires Israel to suspend its contentious plan to annex West Bank land sought by the Palestinians.

“We always have said that annexation would have dramatic consequences to the peace and stability in the region, would undermine the two state solution,” the U.N. chief said. “And we believe that the two state solution is the only way to address the problem of the two peoples that need to be able to live together in peace and security.” “The annexation was suspended, and we believe it’s the moment in which it’s important that Palestinians and Israelis restart their dialogue in order to find a political solution in line with what are the Security Council resolutions,” he said.

Guterres noted that Defense Minister Benny Gantz said Wednesday “that it’s important to restart those negotiations, which show that there is an agreement with this perspective.”

Gantz also serves as “alternate” prime minister until he is expected to replace Netanyahu late next year, under a power-sharing agreement that ended more than a year of political turmoil.

09.16.20

Iran says UAE & Bahrain will bear consequences of Israel deals

09.16.20

Iran says UAE, Bahrain will bear ‘consequences’ of Israel deals

Iranian President laments normalization accords, accuses Gulf nations of abandoning Arab world and aiming to allow Jerusalem to set up military bases

AFP| Published: 09.16.20 , 22:22

Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday that the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain will be responsible for any "consequences" resulting from their normalization of relations with Tehran's arch-foe Israel.

The remarks came a day after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the foreign ministers of Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates signed agreements establishing full diplomatic ties at a ceremony at the White House.

Speaking at a cabinet meeting, Rouhani said Israel was "committing more crimes in Palestine every day".

"Some of the region's countries, their people are pious Muslims but their rulers neither understand religion nor (their) debt... to the nation of Palestine, to their brothers speaking their language," he said in televised remarks.

"How could you reach out your hands to Israel? And then you want to give them bases in the region? All the severe consequences that would arise from this are on you."

U.S. President Donald Trump said similar Washington-brokered deals were close between Israel and several Arab countries, including Iran's regional rival Saudi Arabia.

"After decades of division and conflict we mark the dawn of a new Middle East," Trump said.

An aide of Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said on Wednesday that some Gulf states had become "puppets" of the U.S. and Israel in the "vain hope" of getting their support.

"They have pinned their hopes on nothing and built a house on water, and they will pay for this cowardly act," foreign affairs adviser Ali Akbar Velayati was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency.

The remarks were made during a meeting of the council of the "International Society for the Islamic Awakening", Tasnim said.

Iran had previously warned Bahrain that its deal made it a partner to Israel's "crimes" and accused the UAE of betraying the Muslim world.

In 2016, Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with Iran and the UAE downgraded relations amid rising tensions between Saudi Arabia and the Islamic republic.

Sunni-ruled Bahrain has faced long-running unrest among its large Shiite community that it has consistently blamed on Iran.

09.16.20

On eve of Rosh Hashanah, Israel population tops 9,246,000 residents

09.16.20

On eve of Rosh Hashanah, Israel population tops 9 million

According to Central Bureau of Statistics, number of residents has grown by 150,000 since Jewish New Year of 2019, and is actually expected to reach 10 million in less than five years; life expectancy reaches 84.7 years for women and 81 years for men

Yaron Druckman | Published: 09.16.20, 19:53

There are today some 9,246,000 residents of Israel, the Central Bureau of Statistics said Wednesday, as it released its annual population report on the eve of Rosh Hashanah, which begins on Friday.

The CBS also predicted that, 000 Israel's population was set to reach 10 million people by the end of 2024, 15 million by the end of 2048, and 20 million by 2065.

According to the CBS, since September 1, 2019 approximately 170,000 babies have been born in Israel, 44,000 people have died, and 20,000 people have made aliyah. All in all, Israel's population has grown by 150,000 people since Rosh Hashanah 2019.

About 1,946,000 (21%) are Arab and some 459,000 people are non-Arab Christians, members of other religions and people without a religious affiliation.

The data also shows that 43.1% of Jews in Israel define themselves as secular, 21.1% as traditional, 12.8% as traditional-religious, 11.3% as religious and 10.1% as ultra-Orthodox.

The data also shows that life expectancy for women in Israel is 84.7 years and 81 years for men.

The data also show that about 74% of Israelis live in cities, about 15% in local councils, about 10% in regional councils and 0.7% in localities without municipal status.

The data also show that 11.5% of Israelis experienced poverty in the past year - 6.9% of them Jews and 30.9% Arabs. In addition, 20.2% of Israelis feel permanently or periodically stressed; 19.6% feel often or occasionally lonely and 24.9% have felt discriminated against in the past year.

09.15.20

Ashdod & Ashkelon under Gaza rocket fire during White House ceremony

09.15.20

Southern Israel comes under Gaza rocket fire during White House ceremony  
Palestinian militants launch two projectiles into cities of Ashdod and Ashkelon, wounding three people in an attack that was timed to coincide with the signing of the normalization agreements between Israel, the UAE and Bahrain  
Ynet, Reuters | Published: 09.15.20, 22:02

Air raid sirens sounded Tuesday night in the southern cities of Ashdod and Ashkelon when two rockets were fired from the Gaza Strip during the signing ceremony at the White House between Israel, the UAE and Bahrain.

According to the IDF, one of the two rockets was successfully intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system.

The attack was apparently timed to coincide with the ceremony at the White House to normalize relations between Israel and the Gulf states.

According to reports, damage was caused to property in Ashdod, and three people were wounded by broken glass. A 62-year-old man was in moderate condition and a 28-year-old man sustained light wounds. A woman was also wounded and taken to Assuta Hospital in the city.

Four more people were treated for shock by Magen David Adom personnel shortly after the attack.

“When we arrived, there was commotion and destruction,” said medics Shahar Edri and Aharon Weinstein, who arrived at the scene to treat the wounded.

“Two wounded people were lying on the ground, including a 62-year-old man who suffered shrapnel wounds to his limbs and chest. We provided him with life-saving medical care and evacuated him to hospital.”

The medics added: "Another 28-year-old man suffered minor injuries from shards of glass and after initial treatment on the spot, we evacuated him to the hospital. We treated four other victims for shock and also evacuated them for further treatment at hospital."

Israel Police said that several sappers arrived at the scene of the strike in Ashdod. "Police forces have closed off the scene of the incident and are carrying out their mission to remove any danger at the scene," they said.

The attacks occurred as UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan was delivering his remarks at the White House during the signing of the accords. The treaties are viewed by the Hamas terror group, which rules Gaza, as a betrayal of the Palestinian cause.

Foreign Affairs Minister of the United Arab Emirates Abdullah bin Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan speaks as U.S. President Donald Trump looks on during the signing ceremony of the Abraham Accords

"The normalization agreements between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain are not worth the ink with which they were written. The Palestinian people, who are committed to continuing the struggle until their rights are achieved, will deal with these agreements as if they were never drafted," said Hamas shortly after the attack.

Hamas deputy leader Saleh al-Aroui said: "Ignoring very important issues will not save [U.S. President Donald] Trump and [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu. Arab organizations have shown that they are ready to turn to the White House at any moment. The position of the Arab League is disappointing and it is very unfortunate, its disintegration has allowed American pressure to bear fruit."

09.15.20

Israel history made with UAE & Bahrain treaties signed at White House ceremony

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Israel makes history with UAE and Bahrain treaties signed at White House ceremony

Trump hails 'dawn of a new Middle East' while Netanyahu calls agreements 'peace among peoples'; Gulf states become third and fourth Arab states to sign treaties with Israel; Gaza militants fire rockets at southern Israel as event gets underway

Itamar Eichner, Matan Tzuri, News Agencies | Updated: 09.15.20, 21:10

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain signed treaties on Tuesday as U.S. President Donald Trump hosted the landmark signing ceremony at the White House.



The two Gulf states become the **third and fourth Arab nations to sign agreements with Israel**, after Egypt in 1979 and Jordan in 1994.

"We're here this afternoon to change the course of history," Trump said from the balcony overlooking the South Lawn of the White House at the start of the ceremony. "After decades of division and conflict, we mark the dawn of a new Middle East." Calling it "a major stride in which people of all faiths and backgrounds live together in peace and prosperity," the president said the three Middle East countries "are going to work together, they are friends."

Israel and UAE have been doing secret defense deals for years

In an event aimed at showcasing presidential statesmanship, Trump was hosting more than **700 guests on the South Lawn** to witness the sealing of the agreements.

"This is a pivot of history, a new dawn of peace," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said as he took Trump's place on the balcony. "This is a not a peace between leaders, but a peace among peoples."

During the ceremony, Emirati Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the brother of Abu Dhabi's powerful crown prince, thanked Israel for "halting the annexation of Palestinian territories," although Netanyahu has insisted that Israel has only temporarily suspended its plans to annex West Bank settlements.

"Today, we are already **witnessing a change in the heart of the Middle East** -- a change that will send hope around the world," Al Nahyan said.

Bahraini Foreign Minister Abdullatif al-Zayani said his country would stand with the Palestinians.

"Today is a truly historic occasion," he said. "A moment for hope and opportunity."

He added: "Today's agreement is an important first step and it's now incumbent upon us" to follow up with an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal.

"We have shown today that such a path is possible, even realistic. What was only dreamed of a few years ago is now achievable, and we can see before us a golden **opportunity for peace**, security, and **prosperity for our region**."

The president and his allies hope the occasion will burnish his credentials as a peacemaker at the **height of his reelection campaign** ahead of the November presidential elections.

Meeting Netanyahu earlier in the Oval Office, Trump said, "We'll have **at least five or six countries** coming along very quickly" **to forge their own accords with Israel**, but did not name any of the nations involved in such talks.

"This can lead to peace, real peace, in the Middle East," Trump said as he welcomed Al Nahyan.

Surrounded by flags from all four nations, Netanyahu and the Emirati and Bahraini foreign ministers then each signed the agreements in English, Hebrew and Arabic, in front of a crowd that included representatives of supporting nations from the Washington-based diplomatic corps but few other dignitaries from overseas.

Some congressional **Democrats who have offered muted praise were invited to attend**.

In addition to the individual bilateral agreements signed by Israel, the UAE and Bahrain, all three signed a trilateral document dubbed the "Abraham Accords" after the patriarch of the world's three major monotheistic religions. Trump also signed as a witness. The agreements won't end active wars but will rather formalize the normalization of Israel's already warming relations with the two countries. And while not addressing the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they may pave the way for a broader Arab-Israeli rapprochement after decades of enmity, a pair of wars and only two previous peace deals.

In a likely sign of Palestinian opposition to the agreements, air raid sirens sounded in two southern Israeli cities as the ceremony got underway, warning residents of Ashkelon and Ashdod of incoming rocket fire from the Gaza Strip. The coastal enclave is ruled by the Hamas terror group, which has vowed never to recognize Israel. Three people were wounded by rocket fragments at a shopping mall in Ashdod, one moderately and the other two lightly.

Skeptics, including many longtime Mideast analysts and former officials, have expressed doubts about the impact of the deals and lamented that they ignore the Palestinians, who have rejected them as a stab in the back by fellow Arabs.

Yet even the harshest critics have allowed that the agreements could usher in a major shift in the region should other Arab nations, particularly Saudi Arabia, follow suit, with implications for Iran, Syria and Lebanon. Other Arab countries believed to be close to recognizing Israel include Oman, Sudan and Morocco.

"These agreements are a huge accomplishment for the countries involved and have led to a tremendous sense of hope and optimism in the region," said Trump's son-in-law and senior adviser, Jared Kushner, who led the negotiations.

"Instead of focusing on past conflicts, people are now focused on creating a vibrant future filled with endless possibilities," he said.

The Palestinians have not embraced Kushner's vision.

A poll released Tuesday found that 86% of Palestinians believe the normalization agreement with the UAE serves only Israel's interests and not their own. Fifty-three percent of Palestinians described the agreement as a "betrayal" while 17% said it marked the "abandonment" of their cause.

The poll, carried out by the respected Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, found that 92% of Palestinians are opposed to Trump's Mideast plan. The poll, carried out Sept. 9-12, surveyed 1,270 Palestinians in the occupied West Bank and Gaza and has a margin of error of plus or minus 3%.

Palestinian activists held small demonstrations Tuesday in different parts of the West Bank and in Gaza, where they trampled and set fire to pictures of Trump, Netanyahu and the leaders of the UAE and Bahrain.

Trump remains undeterred, telling "Fox & Friends" on Tuesday that the Palestinians are "difficult" to deal with. Eventually, he said, "Palestinians will be brought in because all of their supporters, all of the people that give them lots of money are coming into the deal so otherwise they'll be left out in the cold."

Tuesday's ceremony follows months of intricate diplomacy headed by Kushner and Trump's envoy for international negotiations, Avi Berkowitz, that first bore fruit Aug. 13 when the Israel-UAE deal was announced. That was followed by the first direct commercial flight between the countries, and then the Sept. 11 announcement of the Bahrain-Israel agreement.

The specific contents of the individual documents to be signed were not known ahead of the ceremony.

The lack of clarity has raised some suspicions about the durability of the agreements.

Even in Israel, where the accords have received widespread acclaim, there is concern that that they might result in U.S. sales of sophisticated weaponry to the UAE and Bahrain, thus potentially upsetting Israel's qualitative military edge in the region.

"They're very wealthy countries for the most part ... some are extraordinarily, like UAE," Trump said. "And they would like to buy some fighter jets and I personally would have no problem with it."

Meanwhile, a politically vulnerable Netanyahu is facing questions about appearing at such a large event just days after he announced a new nationwide lockdown to fight a surge in coronavirus cases that will impose severe restrictions on movement and gatherings. The White House encouraged those attending Tuesday's ceremony to wear masks.

And while the UAE and Bahrain have a history of suppressing dissent and critical public opinion, there have been indications that the agreements are not nearly as popular or well-received as in Israel. Neither country sent its head of state or government to sign the deals with Netanyahu.

Bahrain's largest Shiite-dominated opposition group, Al-Wefaq, which the government ordered dissolved in 2016 amid a yearslong crackdown on dissent, said there is widespread rejection of normalization.

In the UAE, there has been speculation that Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Zayed, widely seen as the country's day-to-day leader and architect of the Emirati push to improve relations with Israel, is steering clear of the signing ceremony.

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09.15.20

UAE wants to modernize its two decades old F-16 jets with F-35 warplanes

09.15.20

Trump: I would have 'no problem' selling F-35s to UAE

'They're very wealthy countries for the most part,' president tells Fox News, adding that 'some people do [object]... maybe they go to war'; comments come ahead of White House signing ceremony for agreements normalizing ties between Israel, UAE and Bahrain  
Reuters| Published: 09.15.20 , 17:35

U.S. President Donald Trump said Tuesday he would have "no problem" selling advanced fighter jets to the United Arab Emirates, despite opposition from some quarters.

"I personally would have no problem with it. Some people do, they say ... maybe they go to war," he told Fox News in an interview ahead of a White House signing ceremony for agreements normalizing relations between Israel, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain later Tuesday.

The U.S. has long supported Israel's qualitative military edge in the region and has even enshrined the preservation of this defense superiority in law. Even so, Ynet revealed last month that the normalization agreement between Israel and the UAE set to be signed Tuesday includes a secret deal for the U.S. to sell advanced F-35 fighter jets to Abu Dhabi.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denied that the provision existed, saying his government would oppose any U.S. F-35 warplane sales to the UAE, although senior American officials later confirmed the plan to the New York Times.

Trump also told Fox News on Tuesday that he would be willing to sell other countries in the Middle East the same weapons systems sold to Israel, noting the region's wealth and saying it would be good for the United States and U.S. jobs.

"They're very wealthy countries for the most part," Trump said.

Meanwhile, UAE Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash said on Tuesday that the Emirates wants to modernize its military and the request for U.S. F-35 warplanes has been on the table since before the normalization agreement with Israel.

The agreement, known as the Abraham Accords, should dispel "any grain of doubt" on why the Gulf state should get stealth F-35 fighter jets from the United States, Gargash told reporters.

Minister of State for Foreign Affairs for the United Arab Emirates, Anwar Gargash, speaks at an event at Chatham House in London, Britain July 17, 2017

UAE Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash (Photo: Reuters)

"The UAE seeks like any country that takes its military seriously, to modernize its military, always, so our request for the F35 and other systems pre-dates this agreement," he said.

The UAE's existing F-16 jets are now almost two decades old and it is time to renew them, he said.

Gargash said the country's decision to normalize ties broke a "psychological barrier" and is the way forward for the region, giving it more leverage.

He said Israel suspending its planned annexation of West Bank land would stop the two-state solution being undermined and that the United States' mediator role was assurance that further annexation would be suspended.

The Emirati minister said it was not the time to revise the Arab Peace Initiative, and that it remains the cornerstone of the UAE's commitment to the Palestinian cause.

A strategic breakthrough is needed, he said, but "it will not happen overnight".