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11.05.20

Yamina lawmaker urges Israel to apply sovereignty in West Bank before Biden takeover
Smotrich calls to pressure Netanyahu to apply sovereignty in case President Trump ends up losing presidential race but says he has no doubt a Biden administration will maintain friendly Israel policy

i24NEWS| Published: 11.05.20 , 18:24

Yamina NK Bezael Smotrich called for Israel to apply sovereignty over the West Bank before the next U.S. presidential term begins, in the event Democrat nominee Joe Biden wins the 2020 presidential elections.

U.S. President Donald Trump, currently behind in projected election results, is considered particularly pro-Israel. Trump made no move to limit Israel on settlement expansion in the West Bank, and his peace plan included extending Israeli sovereignty over large swathes of the West Bank.

Polls say over 60 percent of Israelis favor the Republican president over Biden, the former vice president in the Obama administration.
Biden has asserted that he and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu are friends after years of being a pro-Israel politician in Washington, D.C., despite the view that former President Barack Obama was less friendly.

"If Trump indeed loses," Smotrich said in an interview with Army Radio, "we will have to pressure Netanyahu to apply sovereignty and establish it before Biden arrives."
"I have no doubt that Biden will also continue the American administration's long-standing friendly policy toward Israel," he said, despite Biden's position on settlements.

"There may be disagreements," if Biden wins, the Yamina lawmaker said, but added that, "this can be managed."

U.S. vice-presidential candidate and Biden's running mate Kamala Harris said she and Biden would oppose unilateral action by Israel that "undermine" a two-state solution and reinstate funding for the Palestinians, according to an interview published last Wednesday by The Arab American News.

Harris said a Biden presidency is "committed to a two-state solution, and we will oppose any unilateral steps that undermine that goal. We will also oppose annexation and settlement expansion."

11.05.20

Mandelblit Radio Recording in 2016 reveals Bar Association contrived PM indictment

11.05.20

Senior Likud MK questioned over allegedly extorting AG

Miki Zohar grilled over radio interview in which he threatened to release recordings of Mandelblit if he did not drop corruption charges against PM; coalition chair slams 'delusional investigation' targeting right-wing figure
Eli Sinyor, Moran Azulay | Published: 11.05.20 , 16:24

Likud MK Miki Zohar was questioned under caution on Thursday for four hours on suspicion of extorting Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit.

The Israel Police said that, "the investigation is being conducted with the approval and cooperation of the State Prosecutor's Office" and that they "would not be able to provide further details."

Zohar on Thursday posted on Facebook: "A sad day for our democracy. I was called in for questioning by the police in the Mandelblit case. I will not hide the fact that I was surprised, probably in light of the fact that this is an investigation to silence me based on my expressing a position in a radio interview. In my humble opinion, this is a delusional investigation against an elected official in general and an elected official from the right in particular."

The coalition chairman added: "In recent years, I have led an uncompromising dialogue regarding the conduct of the State Prosecutor's Office and the police. I did so without fear - despite all the warnings I received. 'Be careful, they'll try to stitch you up,' I was warned. And I replied: 'I will always go with my truth, and whatever the price may be'. "I knew that as a right-winger who fought for the truth for us all that I might pay the price, but it seems that I had no idea how far they would go in trying to threaten me.

"I have never committed a criminal offense, I have never been investigated by the police and I have never been suspected of anything and if this is my first investigation, I'll take it.

"I believe that the decision of the prosecution and the police to open an investigation against me in order to prevent me from criticizing Mandelblit's conduct will be detrimental to the judicial system and may even lead to a complete loss of public trust which is already at an all-time low."

Last month, Zohar criticized Mandelblit in an interview on 103FM Radio, saying that "there would be an earthquake" if he did not resign and cancel the indictment against the prime minister.

He was referring to a recording revealed a day earlier of a 2016 conversation between Mandelblit and the disgraced former head of the Israel Bar Association Efi Nave, who is currently facing his own criminal charges. In the conversation, the attorney general is heard slamming then-state prosecutor Shai Nitzan.

If you don't quit, Zohar said to the attorney general on the radio, if you don't drop the criminal charges against Netanyahu, more recordings will be revealed.

Netanyahu immediately distanced himself from Zohar's comments and shortly afterwards the coalition chair himself retracted his threat.

Public Security Minister Amir Ohana, also of Likud, expressed support for Zohar on Twitter, writing: "I agree with you Miki, my dear friend. Regarding investigations into public figures, I can probably not instruct the police who to investigate, but this is a badge of shame for the police, the Attorney General and the State Attorney's Office that an investigation was conducted into an unsuccessful statement in a radio interview that was clarified afterwards. pure shame."

"When will someone from the State Prosecutor's Office be questioned about things they wrote and did?" she said. "Rest assured, it will never happen because there is no one to investigate or criticize the prosecution. They are above the law."

11.04.20

IDF destroys entire 80 home Bedouin village without permits in Jordan Valley

11.04.20

IDF destroys Palestinian village in Jordan Valley

Israeli bulldozers demolish 80 homes in the West Bank village of Tubas; army says the houses were built illegally in a training area, while anti-occupation NGO blames Israel of making use of the fact the world's attention is turned to the U.S. election and coronavirus
AFP| Published: 11.04.20 , 23:07

The IDF has demolished the homes of nearly 80 Palestinian Bedouins in the West Bank, officials and witnesses said Wednesday, in a rare operation targeting an entire community at once.

Late Tuesday, Israeli bulldozers razed the village -- including tents, sheds, portable toilets and solar panels -- near Tubas in the Jordan Valley, according to an AFP photographer at the scene, who found dozens of people left homeless.

Palestinian prime minister Mohammed Shtayyeh accused Israeli troops of having "completely demolished the village of Homsa al-Baqia, leaving around 80 people homeless".

The branch of IDF responsible for civilian affairs in the West Bank, COGAT, said it had destroyed structures "built illegally in a firing zone (military training area) in the Jordan Valley".

The Jordan Valley falls in the West Bank's Area C that is fully controlled by Israel, which has controlled the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Under Israeli rules, Palestinians cannot build structures in the area without permits, which are typically refused, and demolitions are common.

According to Abdelghani Awada, left homeless by the operation, the Israelis who arrived in vehicles and with bulldozers gave people "10 minutes to evacuate our homes".

"Then they started bulldozing," he told AFP.

He stressed that his family had lived in the area for generations and accused Israel of trying to "empty the Jordan Valley of its Palestinian population".

The late-night operation in Homsa al-Baqia was unusual given that so many homes were targeted at the same time, according to the Israeli anti-occupation non-government organization B'Tselem.

"The wiping off of a whole community at once is extremely rare, and it seems like Israel was making use of the fact that everyone's attention is currently set elsewhere to move forward with this inhumane act," B'Tselem said in a statement sent to AFP, referring to the U.S. presidential election.

In a separate statement B'Tselem said that "while the world deals with the coronavirus crisis, Israel has devoted time and effort to harassing Palestinians instead of helping... residents living under its control".

B'Tselem, which tracks demolition data, said that 798 Palestinians in the West Bank have been left homeless by Israeli demolitions so far this year.

That is already the highest annual tally since 2016, the year the organization began collecting such data.

11.04.20

Coronavirus Ministers okay reopening of high street shops next week

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Coronavirus cabinet okays reopening of high street shops next week

Stores will only be allowed to serve four customers at a time; renewed lockdown to be decided for three Druze Golan towns with high morbidity; outgoing pandemic czar proposes using cameras to survey use of face masks

Ynet, i24NEWS | Published: 11.04.20 , 21:50

Ministers in the coronavirus cabinet on Wednesday approved the reopening of high street shops in "green" areas that have low infection rates from Sunday, with a ban on serving more than four customers at one time. Malls and shopping centers will still remain closed.

The cabinet was set to meet again in the coming days to decide whether stores will also be allowed to open in "red" areas designated as infection hot spots.

On Thursday, the cabinet was set to decide whether the Druze communities of Majdal Shams, Buq'ata and Mas'ade on the Golan Heights will reenter lockdown due to rising morbidity rates.

"Exactly as we promised in our previous meeting, we will open high street shops next Sunday. We are allowing four customers at a time, not more," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a statement released after the meeting.

"We also know there is a certain increase in morbidity, so if we do see that there is an increase at the end of the week, we will have to stop and maybe even tighten the restrictions," he said.

During the meeting, outgoing coronavirus czar Prof. Ronni Gamzu proposed the use of security cameras in cities to monitor how many of the population are wearing the face masks that are mandatory in all public areas.

Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit rejected the recommendation at first, saying: "We are not going to complicate the situation with an array of cameras or people informing on one another. Only the police have the authority to hand out fines."

Gamzu then clarified that the use of the cameras would be to conduct surveys and not issue for fines, to which Mandelblit replied that in that case he would support the proposal.

The departing czar also recommended to start preventing Israelis from entering the Palestinian Authority as well as conducting coronavirus tests for Palestinian workers entering Israel and a renewal of "the traffic light" system for cities with high infection rates from November 15.

The Health Ministry on Wednesday evening reported 461 new coronavirus cases since midnight, putting Israel's total caseload at 317,206.

The national death toll from the pathogen also rose to 2,597.

Out of the 9,639 patients currently battling the disease, 364 are in serious condition, with 159 connected to ventilators.

With 24,210 tests conducted by Wednesday evening, the national infection rate stands at 1.9%.

11.03.20

Fine for opening businesses & mass gatherings increased to NIS 10,000

11.03.20

Ministers cut coronavirus-fine hike by half after pressure from ultra-Orthodox

Ultra-Orthodox lawmakers claim increased fines for opening educational institutions single out their sector and threaten to vote against motion in Knesset; penalties for opening businesses and holding mass gatherings in violation of health directives also reduced

Ynet| Published: 11.03.20 , 22:25

Ministers voted on Tuesday to raise fines for opening educational institutions in violation of health regulations from NIS 5,000 to NIS 10,000 - half the sum approved by the Coronavirus Cabinet - after ultra-Orthodox lawmakers protested.

As part of the measures to curb the spread of coronavirus, the entire education system has been shut down in all sectors, apart from preschools and elementary schools.

During a meeting of the Ministerial Committee for Legislation, Shas and United Torah Judaism (UTJ) ministers insisted that the increased penalty singled out their community since most violations of health directives have been recorded in ultra-Orthodox institutions.

Several MKs, egged on by United Torah Judaism co-leader Moshe Gafni, have threatened on Monday their parties will break with the coalition and vote against the bill in Knesset.

Ministers also agreed that the NIS-5,000 fine for opening businesses and holding mass gatherings, such as parties, conferences, ceremonies, festivals, and shows in violation of health regulations will be increased to NIS 10,000 instead of NIS 20,000 as proposed originally.

The Health Ministry reported Tuesday evening that 513 new cases of coronavirus have been diagnosed since midnight, putting Israel's total caseload at 316,411.

The death toll from the pathogen rose to 2,592.

Out of the 9,890 patients currently battling the disease, 392 are in serious condition, among them 171 patients on ventilators.

With 25,026 tests conducted by Tuesday evening, the national infection rate remained relatively low at 2.04%.