

Ynet-News, December 10, 2020 – Thursday

12.10.20 – Th - - - News Placed in Dec 10 spot – Thursday

Israel to normalize Morocco & strengthen their West Sahara dispute over Algeria

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December lockdown 5:30pm every day & fine for visiting other people's homes

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UAE arms sales passed House, Trump will veto removal of Confederate history

12.10.20 – Th - - - News Placed in Dec 09 spot – Wednesday

Norway cut aid to PA schooling jihad & martyrdom & monthly salary to terrorists

12.06.20 – Su - - -

Trump rallies in Georgia for Jan-5 runoff to maintain Senate majority

12.10.20 – Th - - - News Placed in Dec 11 spot – Friday

Refusing to see evidence, Supreme Court determined no evidence of election fraud

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12.10.20

Trump announces Israel, Morocco to normalize relations

Both countries will open representations in Tel Aviv and Rabat, Morocco will grant overflights and direct flights to and from Israel; U.S. will recognize Morocco's sovereignty over Western Sahara; Kushner says Israel-S. Arabia normalization 'inevitable' Reuters| Published: 12.10.20 , 18:40

Israel and Morocco agreed on Thursday to normalize relations in a deal brokered with the help of the United States, making Morocco the fourth Arab country to set aside hostilities with Israel in the past four months.

As part of the agreement, U.S. President Donald Trump agreed to recognize Morocco's sovereignty over the Western Sahara, where there has been a decades-old territorial dispute with Morocco pitted against the Algeria-backed Polisario Front, a breakaway movement that seeks to establish an independent state in the territory.

Trump sealed the agreement in a phone call on Thursday with Morocco's King Mohammed VI, the senior U.S. official said.

Morocco is the fourth country since August to strike a deal aimed at normalizing relations with Israel. The others were the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan.

Under the agreement, Morocco will establish full diplomatic relations and resume official contacts with Israel, grant overflights and also direct flights to and from Israel for all Israelis.

"They are going to reopen their liaison offices in Rabat and Tel Aviv immediately with the intention to open embassies. And they are going to promote economic cooperation between Israeli and Moroccan companies," White House senior adviser Jared Kushner told Reuters.

"Today the administration has achieved another historic milestone. President Trump has brokered a peace agreement between Morocco and Israel - the fourth such agreement between Israel and an Arab/Muslim nation in four months.

"Through this historic step, Morocco is building on its longstanding bond with the Moroccan Jewish community living in Morocco and throughout the world, including in Israel. This is a significant step forward for the people of Israel and Morocco.

"It further enhances Israel's security, while creating opportunities for Morocco and Israel to deepen their economic ties and improve the lives of their people."

A White House statement on the phone call between Trump and the king of Morocco said Trump "reaffirmed his support for Morocco's serious, credible, and realistic autonomy proposal as the only basis for a just and lasting solution to the dispute over the Western Sahara territory."

"And as such the president recognized Moroccan sovereignty over the entire Western Sahara territory," the statement said.

Palestinians have been critical of the normalization deals, saying Arab countries have set back the cause of peace by abandoning a longstanding demand that Israel give up land for a Palestinian state before it can receive recognition.

With Trump to leave office on Jan. 20, the Morocco deal could be among the last his team, led by Kushner and U.S. envoy Avi Berkowitz, is able to negotiate before they give way to President-elect Joe Biden's incoming administration.

Much of the momentum behind the deal-making has been to present a united front against Iran and roll back its regional influence.

The Trump White House has tried to get Saudi Arabia to sign on to a normalization deal with Israel, believing if the Saudis agreed other Arab nations would follow, but the Saudis have signaled they are not ready.

After the announcement of Israel-Morocco ties, Kushner said that normalization of diplomatic relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia is inevitable.

One more Middle East breakthrough is possible. Last week Kushner and his team traveled to Saudi Arabia and Qatar seeking an end to a three-year rift between Doha and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries.

A tentative deal has been reached on this front but it was far from clear whether a final agreement to end a blockade of Qatar will be sealed. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt have maintained a diplomatic, trade and travel embargo on Qatar since mid-2017.

While Biden is expected to move U.S. foreign policy away from Trump's "America First" posture, he has indicated he will continue the pursuit of what Trump calls "the Abraham Accords" between Israel and Arab and Muslim nations.

12.10.20

December lockdown 5:30pm every day & fine for visiting other people's homes

Israel set to approve NIS 500 fine for those visiting other people's homes on Hanukkah
Outline says from 5:30pm every day, there will be a halt in movement between cities and almost all trade, with finance minister pushing for later start time; most restrictions likely to take effect Friday

Itamar Eichner | Published: 12.10.20, 10:41

Israeli government on Thursday is expected to approve a partial nighttime lockdown for the duration of holiday of Hanukkah, including a fine of NIS 500 for those visiting other people's homes during the festival.

The government failed to reach an agreement during a meeting on Wednesday reconvened in the morning hours to approve tightening of coronavirus restrictions across Jewish municipalities on Hanukkah, and across Christian localities for the holiday of Christmas.

According to the outline tabled for the ministers all movement between cities as well as almost all trade will halt operations from 5:30pm. While some restrictions on movement are set to take effect on Thursday evening, curbs on trade and congregation are scheduled to take effect starting Friday to give businesses time to prepare.

Finance Minister Israel Katz, however, at the start of the meeting demanded for the hour to be moved to 6:30pm or 7pm. "The proposals would cause severe damage to tens of thousands of business owners in the trade sector who have just returned to full activity and to hundreds of thousands of people who will return to the cycle of unemployment," said Katz at the meeting.

Business designated as "essential" will be allowed to operate as usual and so will restaurants and cafes providing takeaway services only.

Israelis will also not be allowed to visit other people's homes during the holiday, with celebrations limited to nuclear family members. Those violating the order by visiting other people's homes will be fined NIS 500.

The exceptions to that rule include instances of provision of essential products or services, medical care, essential social care or alternative medicine, assisting a person in distress, handing over a child between two parents who do not live together or to a carer, providing care for an animal.

People will be allowed to congregate outside with up to 10 people. Congregation in confined spaces will be banned, once again with the exception of the nuclear family, from 5:30pm.

Synagogues, however, are exempt from the rule with up to 10 people allowed inside confined places of worship and up to 20 in open areas.

12.10.20

UAE arms sales passed House, Trump will veto removal of Confederate history

12.10.20

U.S. Senate falls short of halting Trump's \$23B arms sales to UAE

Senators argue the deal, formally authorized after Abu Dhabi normalized relations with Israel, is unfolding too quickly and the Emirates' track record in war-torn Yemen and Libya raises more questions than answers

Associated Press | Published: 12.10.20, 11:38

The U.S. Senate fell short Wednesday in trying to halt President Donald Trump's administration's proposed \$23 billion arms sales to the United Arab Emirates, despite bipartisan objections to the package of F-35 fighter jets and drones stemming from a broader Middle East peace agreement.

Senators argued the sale of the defense equipment, which Secretary of State Mike Pompeo formally authorized last month after the Abraham Accords normalizing relations with Israel, was unfolding too quickly and with too many questions. The administration has billed it as a way to deter Iran, but UAE would become the first Arab nation — and only the second country in the Middle East, after Israel — to possess the stealth warplanes.

“Can a lasting peace be purchased with more weapons?” said Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., in a speech ahead of the vote.

Congress has shown a willingness to confront Trump in one main area — on defense policy. But on Wednesday the effort to turn back the arms sales failed to reach the 51-vote majority needed for passage. Trump was expected to veto the two resolutions anyway.

The showdown over the sale, alongside sweeping bipartisan support for the annual defense bill despite Trump's threats to veto it, is potentially a final power play between the executive and legislative branch in the final weeks of Trump's presidency. The Senate will take up the broader defense bill soon.

Action is halted for now, though the House, where Democrats have control, would likely be able to pass them easily.

Sen. Chris Murphy, D-Conn., said in a statement after the vote he was eager to work with President-elect Joe Biden's administration “to take a closer look at each of these sales before any transfers are completed.”

Murphy said the UAE's track record in war-torn Yemen and Libya and its "complicated" relationships with China and Russia raise more questions than answers.

"I'm not here to say that we shouldn't be in the security business with UAE," Murphy, a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, said during the debate.

But, he said, "without resolving those issues, is this the moment to be selling for the first time ever F-35s, armed drones into the heart of the Middle East?"

The arms sale emerged after the U.S. brokered the Abraham Accords to normalize relations between the UAE, Bahrain and Israel.

In notifying Congress last month, Pompeo said the authorization of the sale was in recognition of the "deepening relationship" with the UAE and its need to deter threats from Iran.

Pompeo said the "historic agreement" reached with the Abraham Accords offered a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to transform the region's "strategic landscape."

The sale, worth up to \$23.37 billion, includes dozens of F-35s, advanced armed drone systems and a package of air-to-air and air-to-ground munitions. It may not become final until next year.

Sen. Bob Menendez of New Jersey, the top Democrat on the Foreign Relations Committee, said a list of questions senators sent to Pompeo and then-Defense Secretary Mark Esper about the arrangement remains unanswered.

A classified briefing for senators did not appear to adequately answer their questions.

"We must assert our congressional prerogative," Menendez said. Voting "sends a message to the executive branch."

Israeli officials have previously expressed some concern about an F-35 sale. But in October, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to confirm Israel's consent.

On Wednesday, senators narrowly rejected one resolution to disapprove of the F-35 sales, 47-49, and the other over the sale of armed drones, 46-50, in procedural votes largely along party lines. That's far short of the two-thirds majority that would have been needed to overcome a potential presidential veto.

Even after Wednesday's setback, Congress is poised to approve the sweeping annual defense bill despite Trump's objections.

Trump has warned he would veto the bill over a provision to study stripping the names of Confederate leaders from U.S. military bases. He also wants lawmakers to include an unrelated provision to clamp down on the big technology companies over what Republicans, and some Democrats, say is unfair treatment on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. But lawmakers say the tech provision doesn't belong in the defense policy bill.

12.10.20

Norway cut aid to PA schooling jihad & martyrdom & monthly salary to terrorists

12.10.20

Norway votes to cut aid to Palestinian Authority over anti-Semitic textbooks

Lawmakers reportedly cut \$3.4 million aid package to PA and Palestinian territories for promoting anti-Semitism and violence against Jews in their school curricula

i24NEWS| Published: 12.10.20 , 21:32

Norwegian lawmakers have voted on Thursday to cut their country's financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority (PA) over anti-Semitic content and incitement to violence in its educational materials.

According to Wednesday's report by the American-based newspaper Algemeiner, the cuts, which come as part of the country's state budget arrangements, will amount to some \$3.4 million.

This includes cuts to the assistance packages of both the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian territories.

Norway's right-leaning Progress Party (Fremskrittspartiet, FrP), third-largest in the Storting (Norway Parliament), spearheaded the push for the measure.

"Norwegian taxpayers will not pay the monthly salary to terrorists," lawmaker Himanshu Gulati, deputy chair of Friends of Israel in the Storting, said in a statement posted on the FrP website.

"When Norway provides aid to Palestine, the money goes into the same economy that is also used to pay prisoners' salaries," he added, calling for further cuts to PA aid as long as it continues to support families of those held in Israeli prisons.

The PA has been frequently accused of spreading anti-Semitic and radical views among schoolchildren through the curricula in its schools.

In late September, education watchdog IMPACT-se reported that Palestinian textbooks still maintained most of the controversial messaging, including encouragement of jihad and martyrdom, despite PA pledges to the opposite.

12.06.20

Trump rallies in Georgia for Jan-5 runoff to maintain Senate majority

12.06.20

Trump assails vote integrity while urging turnout in Georgia

With Jan. 5 Senate runoffs set to determine balance of power in Washington after Biden takes office, Georgia Republicans worry outgoing-president is stoking so much suspicion that voters might decide to sit out the two races

Associated Press| Published: 12.06.20 , 08:28

Outgoing-U.S. President Donald Trump pressed his grievances over losing the presidential election Saturday, using a rally to spread baseless allegations of misconduct

in last month's voting in Georgia and beyond even as he pushed supporters to turn out for a pair of Republican Senate candidates in a runoff election in January.

“Let them steal Georgia again, you'll never be able to look yourself in the mirror,” Trump told rallygoers.

Trump's 100-minute rally before thousands of largely maskless supporters came not long after he was rebuffed by Georgia's Republican governor in his astounding call for a special legislative session to give him the state's electoral votes, even though U.S. President-elect Joe Biden won the majority of the vote.

The Jan. 5 Senate runoffs in Georgia will determine the balance of power in Washington after Biden takes office. Republicans in the state are worried that Trump is stoking so much suspicion about Georgia elections that voters will think the system is rigged and decide to sit out the two races.

The latest futile attempt to subvert the presidential election results continued Trump's unprecedented campaign to undermine confidence in the democratic process, but overshadowed his stated purpose in traveling to Georgia — boosting Sens. David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler.

Republicans need one victory to maintain their Senate majority. Democrats need a Georgia sweep to force a 50-50 Senate and position Vice President-elect Kamala Harris as the tiebreaking vote. Party officials had hoped the president would dedicate his energy to imploring supporters to vote in the runoff, when Perdue and Loeffler try to hold off Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock, respectively.

Trump did echo Republican rhetoric that the races amounted to “the most important congressional runoff, probably in American history.” That is only true because he lost.

But after Air Force One landed, it quickly became apparent that Trump was intent on airing his own complaints and stoking baseless doubts about the conduct of last month's vote, rather than boosting his party.

“I want to stay on presidential,” Trump said minutes into his speech. “But I got to get to these two.” He praised the GOP lawmakers, Perdue for his support for military spending and Loeffler for pushing for early coronavirus relief spending. But he quickly pivoted back to his own defeat.

Trump pulled out a piece of paper and read a list of his electoral achievements, including falsely asserting he won Georgia and the White House. Biden carried the state by 12,670 votes and won a record 81 million votes nationally. Trump continued to reiterate his unsubstantiated claims of fraud, despite his own administration assessing the election to have been conducted without any major issues.

Chants of “Fight for Trump” drowned out the two senators as they briefly spoke to the crowd.

Hours before the event, Trump asked Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp in a phone call to order the legislative session; the governor refused, according to a senior government official in Georgia with knowledge of the call who was not authorized to discuss the private conversation and spoke on the condition of anonymity. A person close to the White House who was briefed on the matter verified that account of the call.

Kemp, in a tweet, said Trump also asked him to order an audit of signatures on absentee ballot envelopes in his state, a step Kemp is not empowered to take because he has no authority to interfere in the electoral process on Trump's behalf.

Trump, though, vented his frustrations with Kemp on Twitter and at the rally.

"Your people are refusing to do what you ask," he complained in a tweet, as if speaking with Kemp. "What are they hiding? At least immediately ask for a Special Session of the Legislature. That you can easily, and immediately, do."

At the rally, he took aim once again at Kemp, saying he could assure him victory "if he knew what the hell he was doing."

Trump's personal contact with the governor demonstrated he is intent on amplifying his conspiratorial and debunked theories of electoral fraud even as Georgia Republicans want him to turn his focus to the runoff and encourage their supporters to get out and vote.

In his tweet, Kemp said: "As I told the President this morning, I've publicly called for a signature audit three times (11/20, 11/24, 12/3) to restore confidence in our election process and to ensure that only legal votes are counted in Georgia."

While the governor does not have the authority to order a signature audit, an audit was initiated by Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger and it triggered a full hand recount that confirmed Biden's victory in Georgia. The race has been certified for Biden and affirmed by the state's Republican election officials as a fairly conducted and counted vote, with none of the systemic errors Trump alleges.

But after two pro-Trump lawyers this past week questioned whether voting again is even worth it — in echoes of the president's baseless accusations of widespread voter fraud — even Vice President Mike Pence betrayed concerns that the Republican coalition could crack under the force of Trump's grievances.

"I know we've all got our doubts about the last election, and I hear some of you saying, 'Just don't vote,'" Pence said Friday while campaigning with Perdue in Savannah. "If you don't vote, they win."

Few Republicans in Washington or Georgia believe wide swaths of the electorate in this newfound battleground would opt out of voting because of Trump's false claims or his denigration of the Georgia governor and secretary of state for certifying Biden's victory in the state.

The risk for the GOP is that it wouldn't take much of a drop-off to matter if the runoffs are as close as the presidential contest: Biden won Georgia by about 12,500 votes out of 5 million cast. There's enough noise to explain why Pence felt the need to confront the matter head on after two Trump loyalists floated the idea of the president's supporters bailing on Perdue and Loeffler.

Trump's false claims have resonated with voters such as Barry Mann, a 61-year-old business owner who came to hear Pence in Savannah. Mann hasn't decided whether he'll vote for his senators a second time.

"I think there's some issues with our election and more investigation needs to be done," Mann said, adding that he doesn't think Perdue and Loeffler have done enough to support Trump's efforts to overturn the results. "I want to see what happens between now and January," Mann said.

12.10.20

Refusing to see evidence, Supreme Court determined no evidence of election fraud

12.10.20

With time running out, Trump and GOP allies turn up pressure on Supreme Court in election assault

By David Nakamura and Robert Barnes Dec. 10, 2020 at 6:42 p.m. CST

With his legal options dwindling and time running out before a key electoral college deadline, President Trump on Thursday ramped up pressure on the Supreme Court to help overturn Joe Biden's victory, gaining the support of more than 100 congressional Republicans in the unprecedented assault on the U.S. election system.

In a morning tweet, Trump called on the court to "save our Country from the greatest Election abuse in the history of the United States," repeating his baseless claims of widespread fraud. He had a private lunch at the White House with some of the attorneys general from 18 Republican-led states asking the court to dismiss the results in four swing states that Biden won, an effort supported by the Trump administration.

By late afternoon, 106 GOP House members — a majority of the 196-member Republican caucus — had signed on to an amicus brief to support the Texas-led motion, among them Minority Whip Steve Scalise (La.) and Rep. Tom Emmer (Minn.), the chair of the National Republican Congressional Committee.

In fact, his campaign's legal team has suffered more than three dozen defeats in federal and state courts, including the high court's ruling Tuesday denying a motion to block Pennsylvania from certifying Biden's win in that state.

Democrats denounced the last-ditch legal effort — filed this week by Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, a staunch Trump supporter who attended the White House lunch — to negate 10.4 million votes in favor of Biden in Georgia, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin.

The appeal to the Supreme Court came days before the statutory deadline Monday for electoral college representatives in each state to vote on final certification of the results and send them to Congress for ratification early next month. The justices could decide as soon as Friday whether to accept the case, which seeks to take advantage of the allowance that lawsuits between states may be filed directly at the Supreme Court.

Election results under attack: Here are the facts

But officials in the targeted states said any claims in the filings have already been dismissed in lower courts. In all, 20 states, along with the District of Columbia, Guam

and the U.S. Virgin Islands, filed a motion calling on the high court to reject the Texas request.

“Texas’s effort to get this court to pick the next President has no basis in law or fact,” Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro (D) said in a court filing that labeled the case a bid to construct a “surreal alternate reality.”

He added that the court “should not abide this seditious abuse of the judicial process, and should send a clear and unmistakable signal that such abuse must never be replicated.”

Each of the targeted states filed an objection to Texas’s intentions and, taken together, offered the court a wide range of reasons not to get involved: that Texas lacks legal standing to file such a complaint; that the court shouldn’t get involved in the ultimate political question, a presidential election; that Texas has not shown there were any constitutional violations; that the claims come too late; and that its filing simply recycles allegations that have already been rejected by state and local courts.

Connecticut Attorney General William Tong, who joined the states opposing the lawsuit, called the case unconstitutional and said that Americans “cast their ballots in a free and fair election. Their decision must be respected.”

Trump has waged relentless attacks on the U.S. election system, beginning on election night and continuing even as Biden has run up a margin of victory of more than 7 million votes nationwide, along with an electoral college advantage of 306 to 232, matching Trump’s 2016 advantage over Hillary Clinton.

“The election was not close. There was no evidence of fraud. The states have certified the results,” Clinton tweeted. “Yet Trump continues to try to overturn the election at the expense of our democracy. The emperor has no clothes. Republican electeds who continue to humor him have no spines.”

The president has continued to promote baseless conspiracy theories about the election on a daily basis, calling the Texas case “the big one” this week. On Thursday, he retweeted calls from GOP members of Congress, led by Rep. Lance Gooden (Tex.), for U.S. Attorney General William P. Barr to appoint a special counsel to investigate “election irregularities.”

Barr angered the president last week when he told the Associated Press that the Justice Department has uncovered no evidence of widespread voter fraud that could overturn the election.

More than half of House Republicans support Texas lawsuit challenging election results

Legal experts predicted that the Supreme Court will quickly dismiss the Texas filing.

Edward B. Foley, an election law professor at Ohio State University, said the court is likely to view the Texas filing as far different from the 2000 election dispute between George W. Bush and Al Gore, which was decided after the Supreme Court ruled in Bush's favor on a small number of disputed ballots in Florida.

The court would be “especially sensitive to making sure it isn't beholden to political pressure” from Trump, Foley said, suggesting a bigger concern over the president's relentless assault on the election system is that it has won support from a significant number of Republicans.

The Texas effort “will not make a difference who is inaugurated, but the optics look very different depending on how many Republicans object to Biden's election on the record,” Foley said.

White House aides said that the state GOP attorneys general who met with Trump were in Washington for a preplanned meeting not affiliated with the White House and that the lunch had been in the works for weeks.

The group “discussed issues important to their citizens and the country, and ways to continue to advance the shared federal-state partnership,” White House spokesman Judd Deere said.

Analysis: The Trump team throws in the towel on proving voter fraud

Trump has openly sought to pressure the court to side with his campaign, suggesting before the election that one reason he was moving quickly to name Justice Amy Coney Barrett to fill the vacancy after Ruth Bader Ginsburg's death in September was to be sure there was a strong conservative majority in anticipation of an extended legal battle over the outcome.

His strategy has put Barrett — who declined to say during her Senate confirmation hearings whether she would recuse herself from election challenges involving the president — in a difficult position. She participated earlier this week when the court denied a request for an injunction against Pennsylvania's election results. Neither she nor Trump's other nominees on the court, Justices Neil M. Gorsuch and Brett M. Kavanaugh, voiced dissent from the one-sentence, unsigned order.

“WISDOM & COURAGE!!!” Trump tweeted Thursday, repeating a mantra he has used to imply that judges and justices must summon inner fortitude to stand up for him.

Yet Trump's campaign has run into resistance even from some state-level Republicans. Ohio, a state Trump won, said it was not supporting Texas. The Constitution does not give courts the power to dictate how states exercise their constitutional authority, its attorney general said in a filing.

Georgia's Republican attorney general, Christopher M. Carr, said in his filing that the vote in his state was counted three times, "including a historic 100 percent manual recount."

The count has been defended against all lawsuits, he said, and Georgia has won each one.

"Texas nevertheless asks this court to transfer Georgia's electoral powers to the federal judiciary," Carr wrote. "Respect for federalism and the constitutional design prohibits that transfer of power, but this court should never even reach that issue."

Instead, the court should simply reject the request to file a complaint as inconsistent with the Supreme Court's rules, Carr said.

Joshua A. Douglas, a law professor at the University of Kentucky, said Trump's pressure will have no effect with the justices, calling it "a loser of a case" that he expect the court to "reject quite easily — probably with a one-sentence order."

But he warned that the effort from Trump and his GOP allies has, in his view, made clear that Republicans in Congress, if they held big enough majorities in both chambers, would plausibly attempt to "undo the will of the voter when they count the electoral college votes on Jan. 6."

With Democrats controlling the House, he added, such a scenario is impossible this year, "but we are only a few democracy-conscious representatives away from that potentially occurring. That itself is extremely concerning for the longer-term health of our democracy."