

Ynet-News, March 01, 2021 – Monday

03.11.21 – Th - - - News

Hungary & Czech opened embassies in Jerusalem, & join vaccine plant in Israel

03.11.21 – Th - - - News Placed in Mar 12 spot – Friday

Egypt & Jordan talks with UN urged two-state solution, did not release details

03.11.21 – Th - - - News

Virtual meeting by US security to engage Israel & resurrect nuclear deal in Iran

03.11.21 – Th - - - News

Hamas says Gaza fishermen killed by drone caught in nets, IDF had no comment

03.11.21 – Th - - - News Placed in Mar 11 spot – Thursday

Jordan prince night of ascension visit canceled due to Security - PM's flight refused  
Wednesday - -

03.11.21 – Th - - - News

Abbas ejects nephew of Arafat after he announced his own Gaza electoral list

03.10.21 – We - - -

Protesters burn 100 tires a day to block Beirut Palace in economic abyss

03.11.21 – Th - - -

Israel in 2019, stopped over 12 tankers violating trade embargoes on Iran & Syria

03.11.21

Hungary & Czech opened embassies in Jerusalem, & join vaccine plant in Israel

03.11.21

Netanyahu holds vaccine summit with Czech, Hungarian PMs in Jerusalem

PM says heads of state agreed to collaborate on research, development and production of vaccines; Hungary's Orbán says considers Israel as role model in dealing with virus;

Czech opens diplomatic mission in Jerusalem

Ynet,i24NEWS| Published: 03.11.21 , 23:04

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with his Hungarian and Czech counterparts on Thursday to discuss policies to fight COVID-19 as a third wave of the coronavirus pandemic sweeps central Europe.

Speaking to the press in Jerusalem, Netanyahu said that the three heads of state discussed the promotion of collaborations in the fields of research, development and production of vaccines.

"We've discussed several topics, including the green pass. It's a good idea adding the Czech Republic and Hungary to this," Netanyahu said. "We also want to bring them in for the international vaccine plant that we will establish in Israel."

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán commended Israel on its successful COVID-19 vaccination campaign and said his country considers Israel as a role model in dealing with coronavirus.

Orbán added that "we have some good ideas about the green passport. We are presenting domestic options for the green passport and are about to join the global initiative."

Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš said that his arrival in Israel "proves the Czech Republic has a friend it could rely upon" and that he draws inspiration from the Israeli vaccination campaign.

Babiš also slammed the International Criminal Court's decision to launch a probe into alleged war crimes committed by Israel against the Palestinians.

"We think it is intolerable. The Czech Republic does not recognize Palestine as a state, it is a political ruling," Babiš said. "The court should stop being selective. We will not forgive for anything that will endanger the State of Israel, which is the only democracy in the region."

Netanyahu also said that Israel would gladly help other countries in handling the pandemic and supply them with vaccine surpluses once the Jewish state is done vaccinating its own population.

"I promise we will do whatever we can. We live in an age of pandemics and we do not know if this will continue, so we need to organize ourselves against these possibilities," Netanyahu said. "We must become a seller and not just a buyer, become a producer. Together we can do it. Unfortunately, it will take two years, but we will be able to not only provide vaccines to our own population, but also to others."

Beforehand, Netanyahu and Babiš delivered a celebratory joint statement to the media after the Czech Republic opened an official diplomatic mission in Jerusalem.

The occasion was marked by an official ribbon-cutting ceremony in the capital, which was attended by Babiš, Netanyahu, Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi, and several other officials and dignitaries from both countries.

Orbán also attended the ceremony. Hungary opened its mission in the capital back in March 2019, making it the first to do so in the European Union, going against EU rules which stipulate that members of the bloc must open their diplomatic missions in Tel Aviv.

Netanyahu hailed the two leaders for their support and opening diplomatic missions in Jerusalem, adding that "we are better together."

Netanyahu was able to attend the ceremony after he was forced to cancel his first-ever official visit to the United Arab Emirates after neighboring Jordan blocked the premier from traveling through its airspace. i24NEWS contributed to this story.

03.11.21

Egypt & Jordan talks with UN urged two-state solution, did not release details

03.11.21

European, Arab diplomats try to revive Mideast peace efforts

Panel says moves will depend on outcome of elections both in Israel and PA amid new tensions between Israel and Arab countries around Jerusalem; Egypt, Jordan call to 'save two-state solution'

Associated Press| Published: 03.11.21 , 22:49

Leading European and Arab world diplomats announced potential "small steps" Thursday toward reviving Mideast peace efforts after upcoming Israeli and Palestinian elections.

The officials — from the UN, EU, Egypt, Jordan, Germany and France — did not release any specific details, however. And the meeting came amid new tensions between Israel and Arab countries around Jerusalem.

There have not been any serious Israeli-Palestinian peace talks in over a decade and it is unclear what the diplomats can do concretely to create conditions to bring the two sides closer together, especially without the participation of the U.S.

The Biden administration has called on both sides to refrain from unilateral steps that could harm peace efforts but has yet to announce any major effort to resolve the decades-old conflict as it focuses on the coronavirus, the economy and other domestic issues.

"We are going to initiate meetings with both parties within a timeframe built around the electoral calendar to identify, with them, the steps they are in a position to take to kickstart mutual trust," French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said. He mentioned possible health and economic measures, without elaborating.

Any next moves will depend on the outcome of the Israeli election on March 23, as well as the Palestinian elections later this year.

The election results could complicate relations, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas warned, stressing the importance of pursuing dialogue in the meantime. "It is very important that the subject remains on the agenda," he said.

The Egyptian and Jordanian foreign ministers urged efforts "to save the two-state solution."

The new UN special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, Tor Wennesland, also took part in Thursday's talks.

03.11.21

Virtual meeting by US security to engage Israel & resurrect nuclear deal in Iran

03.11.21

Biden aides hold talks with Israel on Iran, regional issues

Virtual meeting, led by national security adviser Ben-Shabbat and U.S. counterpart Sullivan, comes as POTUS' national security team steps up efforts to engage Israelis about Iran efforts

Associated Press | Published: 03.11.21 , 21 :58

Top U.S. and Israeli national security officials met Thursday by secure video conference for their first round of talks on Iran and other regional issues as the Biden administration looks to avoid antagonizing Jerusalem while attempting to resurrect the U.S.-Iran nuclear deal.

The first virtual U.S.-Israel Strategic Consultative Group meeting led by national security adviser Jake Sullivan and his Israeli counterpart, Meir Ben-Shabbat, comes as President Joe Biden's national security team has stepped up efforts to engage the Israelis about his Iran efforts.

Sullivan has also held at least two lengthy calls with Ben-Shabbat prior to Thursday's meeting.

National Security Council spokeswoman Emily Horne said in a statement that "the two sides shared perspectives on regional security issues of mutual interest and concern, including Iran, and expressed their common determination to confront the challenges and threats facing the region."

The talks came after Secretary of State Antony Blinken in his first appearance before Congress stressed that Biden is committed to consulting with Israel, and other Gulf nations, "regarding anything that we might do going forward on that agreement" with Iran.

"We need to be engaged with them since it affects them on the takeoff, not on the landing," Blinken told members of House Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday.

"And we're committed to doing that."

Biden is trying to avoid the sort of strain that President Barack Obama faced in the leadup to the signing of the Iran nuclear deal, in which Tehran agreed to eliminate its enriched uranium stockpile, open itself to monitoring by the International Atomic Energy Agency and more in exchange for sanctions relief.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu savagely criticized the deal, including during an address to Congress where he called Obama's effort a "farewell to arms control."

President Donald Trump, who counted Netanyahu as one of his closest allies among foreign leaders, withdrew from the nuclear deal in May 2018.

Biden announced last month his administration is ready to join talks with Iran and world powers to discuss a return to the 2015 deal, in a sharp repudiation of Trump's "maximum pressure campaign" that sought to isolate the Islamic Republic.

White House officials have said the U.S. is prepared to return to the nuclear deal as soon as Tehran shows "strict compliance" with the terms of the deal. Iran, however, has held firm to demands that there be a full lifting of the sanctions Trump reimposed before it will return to the negotiating table.

03.11.21

Hamas says Gaza fishermen killed by drone caught in nets, IDF had no comment

03.11.21

Gaza fishermen killed by Israeli drone caught in nets, Hamas says  
Hamas spokesman says no Palestinian rocket had hit the fishing boat, and that parts of an Israeli quadcopter drone that carried explosives were discovered in its nets  
Reuters, Elinor Levy/Ynet | Published: 03.11.21 , 17:46

Three Palestinian fishermen who died in an offshore blast on Sunday had encountered an explosive-laden Israeli drone that had fallen into the sea and blew up in their nets, the Hamas-run Interior Ministry in Gaza said on Thursday.

An IDF spokeswoman had no immediate comment. At the time of the blast, the Israeli military had denied it had any involvement in the incident.

The incident came at a time when Palestinian militants have been test-firing rockets into the sea, and a Gaza-based human rights group, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, said on Sunday the fishing boat may have been hit by accident.

But Eyad Al-Bozom, the Gaza Interior Ministry's spokesman, said no Palestinian rocket had hit the fishing boat, and that parts of an Israeli quadcopter drone that carried explosives were discovered in its nets. The drone had blown up as the fishermen were lifting their nets, killing all three.

Bozom said the drone had probably been in the water since an Israeli attack on a Palestinian naval craft on Feb. 22 off Gaza.

The IDF said at the time its forces noticed suspicious naval activity off Gaza's shore and thwarted a "potential threat to Israeli naval vessels", without elaborating on the weapons used.

The military rarely comments publicly on the use of explosives-carrying drones. Hamas, an Islamist militant group, took control of Gaza in 2007, and the seaside strip, home to 2 million Palestinians, has since been under a blockade imposed by Israel and Egypt, which cite security concerns for the measure.

The military wing of the Gaza-based Islamic Jihad also blamed Israel for the death of the fishermen and vowed to retaliate.

"Israel has committed a crime and the Palestinian resistance will surely respond," the terrorist organization said. "The Palestinian opposition emphasizes that it will not be possible to change the rules of the game set with Israel."

03.11.21

Jordan prince night of ascension visit canceled due to Security - PM's flight refused Wednesday

03.11.21

Netanyahu cancels UAE trip after Jordan refused to okay air route

Prime Minister's Office says the visit was canceled over Jordan's refusal to authorize PM's flight path over the kingdom after Jordanian crown prince's visit to Temple Mount was scrapped over disagreement; Jordan says Israel harms peace prospects

Ynet,News agencies| Updated: 03.11.21 , 14:26

A much-publicized trip to the United Arab Emirates by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday was canceled shortly before he was due to depart after Jordan stalled on authorizing his flight path over the kingdom.

Sources reported the planned visit on Wednesday, saying Netanyahu would meet Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan. Commentators deemed it as a chance for Netanyahu to flourish his diplomatic credentials ahead of Israel's March 23 election.

After hours of uncertainty, Netanyahu's office said it was forced to reschedule the Israeli leader's visit to the UAE, citing disagreements with the Jordanian government. Netanyahu's office said in a statement that "because of difficulties in coordinating his flight in Jordanian airspace the visit was postponed" until further notice. It said the conflict stemmed from the cancellation of the Jordanian crown prince's visit to a contested shrine in Jerusalem on Wednesday "due to a disagreement over the security and protection arrangements at the site."

The Prime Minister's Office said the historic visit, the first by an Israeli prime minister since the establishment of bilateral relations last year, would be rescheduled with Emirati authorities.

Deputy Prime Minister and Jordan's Minister of Foreign Affairs responded by saying the steps that Israel has been taking recently are harmful to peace prospects.

"It will be difficult to achieve peace as long as there are illegal moves on the part of Israel. Action must be taken to reduce the activity that harms peace, such as building new settlements and harming holy sites in Jerusalem. These are all steps that distance peace," he said.

"The crown prince wanted to visit Jerusalem on the night of ascension of the Prophet Muhammad into heaven [an event of great importance to Muslims] but Israel changed the visit's plan in a way that would make it difficult for Jerusalem residents, so the crown prince decided to cancel his arrival so as not to make it difficult for Palestinians to come and pray."

Defense Minister Benny Gantz slammed Netanyahu on the incident Jordan, blaming the premier for damaging ties with the Hashemite kingdom.

"Jordan is Israel's strategic partner. The defense and diplomatic ties we share are a cornerstone of our national security approach. I wish to state clearly that Israel is committed to the agreements we share with Jordan and has the highest regard for King Abdullah and the Jordanian government.

"Unfortunately, Netanyahu's conduct in recent years has done significant damage to our relations with Jordan, causing Israel to lose considerable defensive, diplomatic and economic assets," Gantz said. "I will personally work alongside the entire Israeli defense establishment to continue strengthening our relationship with Jordan, as well as with Egypt — countries with whom we've had enduring peace accords for years — while also deepening ties with other countries in the region."

Jordan's ruling Hashemite dynasty is the custodian of the Al Aqsa compound, an icon of the Palestinian statehood struggle and the third holiest site in Islam. Israel, which made peace with Jordan in 1994, maintains security control around the site, which Jews revere as the vestige of their two ancient temples.

Jordan says Israel has no sovereign rights over the compound and has long chafed at organized visits there by religious Jews.

Sources involved in the planning initially said the trip was canceled due to illness suffered by Netanyahu's wife.

An official in the Prime Minister's Office said earlier that Sara Netanyahu felt unwell and was taken to Jerusalem's Hadassah Medical Center, where she will remain hospitalized for several days and undergo an operation. The official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the press.

Neither Israel nor the UAE have formally confirmed that such a visit — the first by the prime minister to the Gulf power — was to have taken place, nor that it was being reviewed. First published: 12:18 , 03.11.21

03.11.21

Abbas ejects nephew of Arafat after he announced his own Gaza electoral list

03.11.21

Abbas' Fatah movement ejects senior member ahead of elections

Move comes after Nasser al-Kidwa, nephew of late Palestinian leader Arafat and a long time possible successor to the aging Palestinian president, announces he will form his own list consisting of independents, business and young people

Associated Press| Published: 03.11.21 , 14:12

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party has stripped a senior official of his membership after he announced he would run on his own electoral list, in the latest sign of internal turmoil ahead of elections planned for later this year.

Nasser al-Kidwa, the 67-year-old nephew of the late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat, had announced he would form his own list consisting of independents, business people and youth. He previously served as Palestinian foreign minister and representative to the United Nations.

He had long been seen as a possible successor to the 85-year-old Abbas, and held talks with the popular jailed Palestinian leader Marwan Barghouti about possibly joining his list.

In the end, Barghouti, who is serving five life sentences in an Israeli prison for terrorism during the 2000-2005 Second Intifada, declined to endorse al-Kidwa.

On his own, al-Kidwa is only expected to win a few seats.

Abbas has decreed presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in the coming months. They would be the first general election since 2006, when the Islamic terror group Hamas won a landslide victory, in part because of divisions within Fatah. That set off a series of crises and internal clashes culminating in Hamas' bloody seizure of power in Gaza the following year.

It's far from certain that the elections will actually be held. Fatah and Hamas have been bitterly divided since the Hamas takeover of Gaza, and several attempts at reconciliation have failed.

Abbas must also contend with rivalries within Fatah that could see other current or former members follow in al-Kidwa's footsteps and launch their own lists. That would risk diluting Fatah's support and paving the way for another victory by Hamas.

Abbas' popularity has plummeted in recent years as he has failed to advance Palestinian hopes for statehood, or mend ties with Hamas.

There have been no substantive peace negotiations with Israel in more than a decade, and the PA is widely seen as having become increasingly corrupt and autocratic. Abbas, who was elected to a four-year term in 2005, has not named a successor.

03.10.21

Protesters burn 100 tires a day to block Beirut Palace in economic abyss

03.10.21

With burning tires, Lebanon protesters send dark, angry message

The tactic has become the hallmark of a new flare-up of demonstrations in the Levantine nation as its political class refuses to cooperate while the country slides further toward the political and economic abyss

Associated Press| Published: 03.10.21 , 23:02



It's an expression of anger but also of helplessness: Anti-government protesters in Lebanon are burning tires to block key roads, releasing dense palls of smoke that rise above the capital of Beirut and other parts of the country.

The tactic has become the hallmark of a new flare-up of demonstrations against an intransigent political class that appears to do little as Lebanon slides toward political and economic abyss. The country is mired in the worst economic crisis in its modern history, and the situation has been exacerbated by pandemic restrictions and an overwhelmed health care sector.

"The fire releases our anger. It quiets our hearts," said Mounir Hujairi, a 23-year-old protester from Baalbek in northeastern Lebanon, who juggles his time between low-paying day jobs and protests.

The tire soot and smoke blacken the faces of protesters in anti-virus masks at makeshift roadblocks that cut off traffic around Beirut and between cities. The persistence of the protesters and the daily burning of tires underscore how intractable the country's problems have become.

Anti-government rallies first began gripping Lebanon in late 2019. Since then, the local currency has collapsed, after being pegged to the dollar for nearly 30 years. Salaries have remained the same as inflation skyrocketed. People lost their jobs and poverty affected nearly 50% of the population.

Meanwhile, Lebanon's sectarian-based political system is stuck. Politicians have refused to compromise on forming a government or on making difficult financial decisions for fear of losing their clout or support base.

Exhausted, scared and restricted by the coronavirus, Lebanese have watched as members of the ruling elite blame each other for the crisis.

Last week, the currency hit a record low, trading on the black market at 11,000 Lebanese pounds to the dollar, down from the official 1,500 pounds for \$1 — sparking a new wave of protests.

"The solution will only come through the streets," said Hujairi, who has taken part in protests since October 2019. "Of course, those whose streets — or the streets of their political parties — are blocked will be angered."

The roadblocks are a desperate way to reclaim the anger felt nationwide in 2019, when the government was forced to resign, sparking a brief period of euphoria and hope that change may be possible.

relatives of victims of the Aug. 4, 2020 Beirut port explosion hold portraits of their loved one who were killed, as they burn tires to block a road outside the Justice Palace, in Beirut, Lebanon

Relatives of victims of the August 2020 Beirut port explosion hold portraits of their loved ones as they burn tires to block a road outside the Justice Palace in Beirut (Photo: AP) The national mood is now more fearful. Officials have warned of chaos and some have argued the protests were manipulated by political groups to ignite violence or extract concessions from rivals.

Many fear the social tension has reached levels not seen since before the civil war broke out in April 1975. For the next 15 years of conflict, burning tires became common — a cheap way to set up roadblocks between warring factions.

Tire fires are hard to put out and can go on for hours, drawing attention and keeping rivals away.

The tactic has been used in the Palestinian territories, Iraq and Sudan.

Palestinians burned tires during protests against Israel, starting in the First Intifada (uprising) that erupted in 1987. Three decades later, during protests against an Israeli-Egyptian border blockade of the Gaza Strip, young men formed “tire crews” that drove around the small coastal territory in motorcycle rickshaws to collect tires for burning. The dark black smoke served to obscure the identities of those throwing stones at Israeli forces.

Open tire fires, which were used in some countries to power kilns, have been outlawed in most of the world because of their high emission of pollutants.

Sahar Mandour, a Lebanon researcher with Amnesty International, said the practice of burning tires as a form of protest picked up in many countries in the 1980s. But it has since fallen out of favor because of the environmental impact.

“The world moved on. ... But Lebanon didn’t,” she said. “We have the same parties and the same leaders, so the tools are the same.”

Hujairi claims he and his friends burn between 100 and 150 tires a day. He said they collect used and punctured tires from refuse piles, dismissing claims that political parties hand them out.

“A little black smoke won’t hurt,” Hujairi said, in response to criticism. “There is no way for us to reach the houses of politicians.”

On Wednesday, Lebanese troops deployed to prevent protesters from setting up roadblocks, two days after the president, Michel Aoun, called for action to prevent them.

03.11.21

Israel in 2019, stopped over 12 tankers violating trade embargoes on Iran & Syria

03.11.21

US officials say Israel targeted at least 12 tankers headed for Syria -WSJ

The report alleged that since 2019, Israel has been using naval weapons, including water mines, to strike vessels which were either Iranian, or carried Iranian cargo, as they made their way to Syria.

By IDAN ZONSHINE MARCH 11, 2021 23:40

US and regional officials have accused Israel of targeting "at least a dozen" tankers bound for Syria and mostly carrying Iranian oil due to concerns that petroleum profits were funding extremists, the Wall Street Journal reported on Thursday.

The report alleged that since 2019, Israel has been using naval weapons, including water mines, to strike vessels which were either Iranian, or carried Iranian cargo, as they made their way to Syria.

The report said that while most of the tankers carried oil, some of the targeted vessels have made efforts to move other cargo, including weaponry.

According to Greenpeace, Iranian oil tankers routinely violate trade embargoes on Iran and Syria to smuggle oil into Syria through the Suez Canal. The organization said that the practice of turning off tracking systems is also commonly done such vessels, to avoid detection for violating the trade embargo.

The practice is so common in fact, that between August of 2018 and July of 2019, Syria received around 17 million barrels of crude oil from Iran this way.

The WSJ report added that other ways that these ships avoid international scrutiny is through the declaration of false destinations, transferal of oil from one ship to another at sea, or through the use of old, rusted tankers which are harder to detect.

The report comes after Israel's Environmental Protection Minister Gila Gamliel accused Iran of "eco-terrorism," blaming the country for a recent oil spill which likely came from an Iranian tanker.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz said that the Israeli defense establishment had no evidence to suggest that Iran deliberately caused the oil spill.