

Ynet-News, March 15, 2021 – Monday

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03.15.21
Pandemic wards close at last & entire adult population is vaccinated by April

03.15.21
As Pandemic eased, Tel Aviv hospital closes last COVID-19 ward
As more restrictions imposed to slow the spread of coronavirus are lifted Israelis profit from a successful vaccine drive which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says will have covered the entire adult population by April and senior health official says will include children 12-year old and up this summer

TPS| Published: 03.15.21 , 17:36

Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv announced Monday that it has closed its last active ward treating Coronavirus patients, following the current decline of the pandemic in Israel.

The last 18 Corona patients hospitalized in Ichilov, the main hospital complex serving Tel Aviv and its metropolitan area, were moved to a designated compound.

In another ease of the COVID-19 related restrictions in Israel, the Cabinet approved on Sunday night field trips for youth movements in open areas and overnight field trips for grades 11 and 12 and post-secondary boarding schools in which at least 90% of pupils have been vaccinated.

The Cabinet also approved opening Israel's skies to flights from any destination.

The operator of the airport will be restricted in the allocation of slots for arriving flights in accordance with the daily quota of 3,000 entries in total, the social distancing rules and the carrying out of tests at the airport.

The improvement in Israel's situation vis-à-vis the coronavirus is attributed to its success to rapidly vaccinate its population.

When asked about returning to a completely normal routine, Israel's Corona czar Prof. Nachman Ash told Ynet News that "the closest thing to that will happen when we can achieve herd immunity, at least seven million vaccinated. That means children will also need to be vaccinated. I hope that will happen in the summer. We are waiting for the results of Pfizer's research on the subject."

The Ministry of Health updated Monday that it documented 1,339 new COVID-19 cases over the past day.

Of the 56,929 tests done over the past day, 2.4% returned positive.

627 of the patients hospitalized with Corona are in serious condition, 212 of them are on life support. The numbers here have been steadily dropping.

Over 5,165,000 Israelis have received the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine, some 55.55% of the population, and over 4.2 million Israelis – about 45% – have received the second dose.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu estimated this week that by the end of April the entire adult population in Israel will be vaccinated.

However, Israel marked a grim milestone on Monday when it counted 6,025 who Israelis have died of the virus.

03.14.21

Israel unveils GPS and laser guided mortar system for accurate urban warfare

03.14.21

Israel unveils guided mortar system for future urban warfare

After a decade of development, the 'Iron Sting' system will become operational in several months and will serve infantry battalions, bringing about a real revolution on the battlefield

Associated Press| Published: 03.14.21 , 23:25

The Defense Ministry on Sunday said it has completed the development of a new guided mortar system, giving the army a formidable new weapon against enemies embedded in crowded urban environments.

Officials said the "Iron Sting" system, using both GPS and laser technology, would provide Israeli land forces a new level of precision while minimizing the risk of harming nearby civilians.

Defense Minister Benny Gantz said the system "changes the battlefield and provides our forces with more accurate and effective means."

The IDF has found itself in recent years grappling with the challenge of battling Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip, while also training for the possibility of war against Lebanon's Hezbollah terrorist group.

The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court this month opened a preliminary investigation into possible war crimes by Israel during its 2014 war in the Gaza Strip, when hundreds of civilians were killed during fighting between Israel and Hamas militants.

Israel has blamed Hamas for the civilian casualties, citing the group's attacks launched from residential neighborhoods. But human rights groups have said the military did not take sufficient precautions to distinguish between militants and civilians.

Col. Assaf Shatzkin, head of the land systems department in the ministry's research division, said the new mortar system would help the army against enemies like Hamas and Hezbollah. He said it could strike short-range targets within several kilometers (miles) with precision of just a few meters (yards).

"With this precise mortar shell, it can be more focused on the enemy ... without collateral damage to those that are not relevant to the fighting," he said.

The system is expected to be activated in the coming months, he said.

03.14.21

Brazil AF flight from Israel to Algeria stirred Arabs as plot to defame Algeria

03.14.21

Direct flight from Israel to Algeria sparks Arab outcry

Ynet reporters reveal on Twitter Brazilian jet carrying diplomats made direct stop in the north African state en route from Israel, catalyzing wave of denials and condemnations from online users and officials alike

Itay Blumenthal, Daniel Salami| Published: 03.14.21 , 17:50

A Brazilian Air Force plane carrying a diplomatic delegation has stirred controversy in the Arab world after Ynet reporters revealed on Twitter it had made a stop in an Arab country en route from Israel to the South American country.

The aircraft, carrying dignitaries such as Brazilian Foreign Minister Ernesto Araujo and the son of President Jair Bolsonaro, Eduardo, took off from Ben Gurion Airport last Tuesday after a diplomatic visit, landing directly at an airport in Algeria for a refueling stop.

This has sparked anger in the Arab world, with many considering the stop as Algeria recognizing Israel. Both nations do not currently have official ties between them. Arab officials denied the reports of the aircraft's flight route and presented evidence they claimed was proof of a "Zionist plot" to defame Algeria, which, unlike its neighbor Morocco, refuses to normalize relations with Israel.

A source from the European Organisation for the Safety of Air Navigation, commonly known as Eurocontrol, confirmed has confirmed to Ynet that the jet had landed in the north African country.

Aircraft traffic is most often tracked by civilian tracking software, the most popular of which, FlightRadar24, captured the plane taking off from Israel.

However, due to a lack of receivers operating in ADS-B technology in the region, the plane was only spotted before landing through a technology called TMLT. Planes' approximate location can be traced by measuring time and signal reception by several receivers as they are required to transmit Mode-S signals — which made it possible to locate the plane prior to its landing in Algeria.

Another tracking software called Adsbexchange, has picked up two signals along the aircraft's route — one nearby Tel Aviv, and another next to the island of Malta, which was the result of a glitch.

Algerian officials and the Arab world predicated a new narrative on the glitch in which the plane made a stop in Malta and only then arrived in Algeria, so it did not fly directly from Israel to the north African country.

Arab media covered the report on the first direct flight from Israel to Algeria extensively.

Qatar-based television personality Faisal Al-Kasim, who is known for hosting the controversial live debate show The Opposite Direction on Al Jazeera shared the report to his more than 5 million Twitter followers.

BBC Arabic presented the incident in a skeptical manner, without mentioning the Brazilian jet's flight route as picked up by Eurocontrol. At the end of a piece channel ran on the incident, which also featured tweets from Ynet reporters, Algerian government spokesman Ammar Belhimer denied the report, saying that "our country is undergoing an electronic defamation campaign in light of its refusal to normalize relations with Israel." The Iranian Arabic-language news network Al-Alam also ran a story on the incident in a skeptical light, later following up with another story presenting a host of tweets from different sources supposedly debunking the original report and dismissing it as fake news.

Lebanese news channel AlMayadeen, which is affiliated with the Hezbollah terrorist group, also covered the incident, adding that an official Algerian source from denied any reports of an aircraft from Israel landing in Algeria and said they were "propaganda targeted to influence the Algerian position on the Zionist enemy."

Following the reports, the hashtag "#Algeria_in_the_Zionists_net" began to circulate on social media.

"Every Algerian who loves their country must share this hashtag and respond to the Jewish-Moroccan allegations against Algerian foreign policy. Everybody can see that the Brazilian plane did not even pass through Algeria," wrote one user on Twitter.

Other users considered the alleged landing of the plane in Algeria as a chance to receive some help in the country's COVID-19 response from Israel, which leads the world's fastest vaccination campaign against the disease.

"Algeria will always be on the side of the Palestinians, but it would not be so bad if Algeria would get a vaccine shipment from the military plane that has arrived from Israel," another user wrote.

A researcher residing in Algeria told Ynet that anger within the country does not stem from anti-Semitism, but criticism against Israeli policies.

"Our anger is not targeted at the Jews or at the people in Israel, but against the Israeli government that has been long turning its back on Arab peace initiatives and then spinning it as if we're the ones not interested in peace," he said. "That is why we are finding it hard to believe that the plane had landed in Algeria. If you have definitive proof, such as landing documentation or permit, present it."

03.14.21

Kosovo opens embassy in Jerusalem; Turk President warns of future relations

03.14.21

Kosovo officially opens embassy in Jerusalem

Following establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel last month, the Balkan nation becomes the first European country and Muslim-majority one to establish its mission in the Holy City

Associated Press| Published: 03.14.21 , 16:55

Kosovo's Foreign Ministry said on Sunday it has formally opened its embassy to Israel in Jerusalem.

A statement said the move was made after the establishment of diplomatic ties with Israel on Feb. 1 and a Kosovo-Serbia summit held at the White House in September.

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Diaspora announces that the Kosovo Embassy in the State of Israel, with headquarters in Jerusalem, officially has been opened," said the statement.

Palestinians claim East Jerusalem, captured by Israel from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed, as the capital of a future state.

Most of the international community doesn't recognize the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem and says the competing claims to the city should be resolved through negotiations. Most international embassies are in Tel Aviv.

Kosovo becomes the first European country and Muslim-majority one to establish its embassy in Jerusalem, following the U.S. and Guatemala.

Kosovo's decision was taken when outgoing Prime Minister Avdullah Hoti met with Serb President Aleksandar Vucic at the White House in September with then-U.S. President Donald Trump.

"Setting of the plaques and the state flag at the Kosovo Embassy in Israel reflects the Government of Kosovo's commitment to comply with the pledge for establishing the diplomatic mission to Jerusalem," it said.

Albin Kurti, prime minister-designate, has found himself in a difficult diplomatic position ahead of taking up his post after pressure from Turkey, a close ally of the new Western Balkan country to change its mind about the Jerusalem location.

Kurti has said that "The place where the embassy will be located is to be considered following checking of the documentation of the outgoing government."

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has warned Kosovo that the move could damage future relations with his country.

03.14.21

Saudi denied airspace to Israel for refusing armed security in Jerusalem Mosque

03.14.21

Israeli reality show flight to Dubai stalls over Saudi permission

Sources say Foreign Ministry and Civil Aviation Authorities in talks to secure approval from Riyadh; PM says he refrained from using Saudi airspace to visit Dubai last week, insinuating danger posed by Iran-backed Houthi rebels

Ran Boker, Itay Blumenthal, Itamar Eichner | Published: 03.14.21, 15:48

A flight to Dubai carrying the crew of a top Israeli was delayed Sunday after Saudi Arabia failed to give permission to use its airspace.

The flight was meant to transport a production team for the Survivor reality show to Dubai, from where they were to head to the Philippines, and had been scheduled to leave Ben-Gurion International Airport at 7 am.

A source told Ynet that discussions were underway to secure the Saudi permission. Saudi Arabia began allowing Israel to use its air space last year, when Israel signed normalization deals with the UAE and Bahrain.

The Foreign Ministry and the Civil Aviation Authorities were dealing this "sensitive and complex matter," the source said. "We filed our request and are waiting for an answer." The source also said that the delay was not linked to the ongoing feud with Jordan, which led to the cancellation of a recent flight by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to Abu Dhabi.

On Thursday, Amman reportedly refused to allow Netanyahu to use Jordanian airspace to attend a meeting with de facto Emirati leader Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Netanyahu said Saturday that the UAE trip was actually cancelled after he was deterred from flying instead via Saudi airspace due to a threat of missile fire from Iranian proxies based in Yemen, who have frequently attacked targets in Saudi Arabia.

Rather than bypass Jordanian airspace and take a more southerly route across Saudi skies, Netanyahu told Channel 13 television that, "There were also problems a week ago in the skies of Saudi Arabia."

Netanyahu did not elaborate, nor did he say his plane was targeted by the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels in Yemen.

The prime minister insisted that relations between Jordan and Israel were positive, adding that "Jordan needs good relations with us no less than we need good relations with Jordan."

The Jordanian refusal to grant permission to use its airspace came after Jordan's crown prince Hussein bin Abdullah on Wednesday canceled a visit to Muslim holy sites in Jerusalem when Israel refused to allow dozens of his armed security to enter the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound, which is under Jordanian custodianship.

"By the time we sorted things out with the Jordanians," Netanyahu said, "it was too late to fly, and we had to cancel the visit."

Israeli officials claimed the Jordanians violated earlier agreements about the crown prince's security and when the visit.

The Prime Minister's Office had blamed the Jordanians for the fact that Netanyahu was unable to travel to the Gulf state.

03.14.21

Campuses approved to open after Passover will require vaccine certificate or test

03.14.21

Israeli students return to campuses after year of remote studies

New regulations mean those returning to in-class sessions must present proof of coronavirus vaccination or recovery from COVID-19 or recent negative test; rest of student body expected to return to some campuses after Passover

Tamar Trabelsi Hadad | Published: 03.14.21 , 11:34

Students at a number of universities and institutions of higher education across Israel returned to class for in-person studies Sunday morning, after a year of mostly remote sessions via Zoom.

According to the outline approved by the coronavirus cabinet, returning students are required to present a certificate showing full vaccination against coronavirus or that they have recovered from COVID-19 or a new negative test. Staff and faculty, however, are exempt from this requirement.

The number of students in each lecture hall will not exceed 75% of the site's maximum occupancy, while large halls will hold no more than 300 people.

The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Bar Ilan University in Ramat Gan and the university at the West Bank settlement of Ariel was only allowing physics, chemistry and biology students to return, as they are required to work in a lab to continue their studies. The rest of the students at these three universities were expected to return after the Passover holiday in April.

Natan Rahat, a third-year chemistry student at the Hebrew University is one of those who was finally returning to in-person studies after a year of remote learning.

“Learning via Zoom is difficult. On campus you study with other people, walk around in the open air - you are active. At home, you need to concentrate for hours at the computer,” he said.

Also returning was Karin Siman Tov, a first-year law student at Bar Ilan University.

“The first semester had a lot of introductory courses which were not always interesting and learning them via Zoom sometimes made them particularly challenging,” she said.

The long period of remote learning prompted several studies that sought to understand the effects of the coronavirus pandemic on the behavior of those who were forced to learn away from their classmates and in a disconnected manner.

One such study was conducted by Dr. Tali Gazit, a senior faculty member at the Department of Information Science at Bar-Ilan University. Her research involving 550 students showed that just 30% said their remote learning experience was positive, while 40% described it as negative.

Other research by Prof. Yair Amichai-Hamburger, Dr. Tal Azran and Dr. Tsahi Hayat at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya showed that extroverted students found the lack of human contact caused feelings of loneliness and dissatisfaction with their studies to a greater degree than introverted students.

03.14.21

Israel car finance firm client info accessed, exposing weak server security

03.14.21

Hackers infiltrate Israeli finance firm, demand ransom

Black Shadow group releases some of the information accessed from KLS Capital; ex-Shin Bet cyber expert says group using demands for money to hide true purpose of attack - to expose Israeli security weaknesses

Tal Shahaf | Published: 03.14.21 , 11:02

A hacking group said Saturday that it had managed to infiltrate the servers of Israeli car-financing company KLS Capital and steal a substantial amount of client information.

The Black Shadow group began releasing large swathes of the stolen data on Saturday, which included information on KLS customers in Israel and abroad.

The hacker group is the same one that carried out a major cyberattack against Israel's Shirbit insurance company in December, during which they demanded a ransom of no less than 200 Bitcoins, or \$3.8 million, for the return of the stolen information. The hackers on Saturday demanded that KLS pay a ransom worth NIS 1.9 million in Bitcoin (to a value of \$570,000), a demand that the finance company rejected.

KLS said it had received initial assistance from the government's cyber security branch to stop the attack and the attempt to steal money from the company.

The National Cyber Security Authority said following the attack on KLS that there was a need even for small companies to have strong defenses against potential hackers. Meanwhile, Dr. Harel Menashri, head of the Cyber department at Holon Institute of Technology and a former member of the Shin Bet domestic security service, said he believes the hackers' ransom demand was intended to mask the true purpose of the attack. According to Menashri, the hackers' real aim was to embarrass Israeli companies by exposing their security weaknesses.

"It is completely clear that the attack was not carried out for ransom purposes as the hackers claim but other purposes are at hand," said Menashri. "The ransom is a smoke screen just like the events at Shirbit."

02.23.21

National Library gifted 1465 Portuguese Hebrew Purim scroll brown ink on leather

02.23.21

One of world's oldest scroll of Esther finds its final home in Jerusalem

Experts say that the extremely rare mid-15th century Purim scroll, also known as a megillah, was written by an Iberian Jewish scribe around 1465, citing stylistic and scientific evidence, including Carbon-14 dating

TPS| Published: 02.23.21 , 22:50

One of the world's oldest known Esther scrolls, also known as a megillah, has found its final home in Jerusalem after recently being gifted to the National Library of Israel (NLI), which has the world's largest collection of textual Judaica.

Esther scrolls contain the story of the Book of Esther in Hebrew and are traditionally read in Jewish communities on the festival of Purim, which will take place on February 25-28 this year.

Scholars have determined that the newly received scroll was written by a scribe on the Iberian Peninsula around 1465, prior to the Spanish and Portuguese Expulsions at the end of the 15th century. These conclusions are based on both stylistic and scientific evidence, including Carbon-14 dating.

The megillah is written in brown ink on leather in an elegant, characteristic Sephardic script, which resembles that of a Torah scroll.

The first panel, before the text of the Book of Esther, includes the blessings recited before and after the reading of the megillah, and attests to the ritual use of this scroll in a pre-Expulsion Iberian Jewish community.

According to experts, there are very few existing Esther scrolls from the medieval period in general, and from the 15th century in particular.

Torah scrolls and Esther scrolls from pre-Expulsion Spain and Portugal are even rarer, with only a small handful known to exist.

Prior to the donation, this scroll was the only complete 15th-century megillah in private hands.

The medieval scroll is a gift from Michael Jesselson and his family. His father, Ludwig Jesselson, was the founding chair of the International Council of the Library.

Dr. Yoel Finkelman, a curator of the NLI's Haim and Hanna Salomon Judaica Collection, said that the new addition is "an incredibly rare testament to the rich material culture of the Jews of the Iberian Peninsula. It is one of the earliest extant Esther Scrolls, and one of the few 15th-century megillot in the world."

"The Library is privileged to house this treasure and to preserve the legacy of pre-Expulsion Iberian Jewry for the Jewish people and the world," he added.

02.26.21

Netanyahu most qualified leader, Saar & Bennett challenge with few achievements

02.26.21

Netanyahu's biggest electoral threat is on the right

Analysis: While PM's Likud party is frontrunner, its center-right voter base overlaps with Yamina and New Hope, with the latter's leader Gideon Saar positioning himself as center-right alternative who will 'unequivocally not sit in Netanyahu-led government'

Ariel Ben Solomon | Published: 02.26.21, 08:56

As Israelis find themselves in yet another election season, this time during a raging pandemic, early indications are that the March election could result in another stalemate resulting in backroom deals to forge a coalition.

According to a Channel 12 poll published on this week, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud would get 28 seats, Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid 18, Gideon Saar's New Hope 13, and Naftali Bennett's Yamina 11.

While Likud continues to lead, its center-right voter base overlaps with the New Hope and Yamina parties.

New Hope leader and former Likud MK Saar has positioned himself as a right-wing and centrist alternative to Netanyahu.

“New Hope and Gideon Saar will unequivocally, indisputably, incontrovertibly, unquestioningly, not - I repeat not - sit in a Netanyahu-led government,” a New Hope party source told Ynet.

“There will be no need for further elections because Gideon Saar - and only Gideon Saar - stands able to form a coalition which will return Israel’s economic, political, and social stability,” the source added.

By ruling out sitting in a government with Netanyahu, Saar could block the Likud from forming a government.

The question is if Lapid and Saar could cobble together a coalition without Likud but instead with some combination that could include Yamina, Labor, Meretz, Blue and White, and Avigdor Liberman’s Yisrael Beytenu.

Saar, a long-time Likud party member who served as an MK in the party from 2003 to 2014 and has served as education minister and interior minister, quit to form his own party for the upcoming election. He failed in a primary challenge against Netanyahu in Likud in 2019.

There is also speculation that Bennett might side with the anti-Netanyahu bloc along with Saar and other Left-wing parties, but New Hope doubts this.

“While Naftali Bennett and Yamina continue to bemoan the government’s obvious failings, they remain on hand and at Netanyahu’s beck and call to keep him in office and deny the Israeli people the change and responsible leadership we so desperately need.”

The party insider added that a vote for Bennett would only make a government led by Netanyahu, including his allies Mansour Abbas from the United Arab List and Itamar Ben-Gvir from the extreme-right Otzma Yehudit, more likely.

“The choice in this election is very clear. Netanyahu, Ben-Gvir, and Mansour Abbas - facilitated by Bennett. Or a stable coalition led by Gideon Saar who will be prime minister for all Israelis.”

Saar has also criticized Netanyahu’s coronavirus policy, which has depended on extensive lockdowns. Saar’s alternative plan called for testing across the country, which would allow for targeted, localized lockdowns and a quicker opening up of the rest of the country.

Will Saar snatch away Likud voters?

Daniel Tauber, a lawyer and member of Likud’s Central Committee, told Ynet: “I don’t know any from the rank and file who left with Saar. Maybe one person.

“I sense that he doesn’t have much of a real draw electorally. He doesn’t have any big achievements he can point to, aside from challenging Netanyahu, and has not been active in politics the last few years,” said Tauber.

“Saar also is not very charismatic, so my prediction is that as time goes on, his poll numbers will continue to dip. The polls already show that he is mainly vying for votes of the left/center bloc that were forfeited by Blue and White,” he added.

Indeed, polling has indicated that **Likud is regaining support** at Saar's expense. Saar's New Hope would win 13 seats today, down from 21 in a previous Channel 12 poll in December.

While polls will continue to fluctuate ahead of the March elections, one clear trend is that **most Israelis still view Netanyahu as the most qualified to lead the country.**

"Netanyahu has a **long list of achievements** and a **large and solid base**," said Tauber.

"The only **question is whether the personal ambitions and frustrations of ex-Likud members and ex-allies will prevent Netanyahu from forming a coalition.**"

Tauber explained that **Netanyahu deals with powerful internal Likud factions** and powerful vote **contractors** and **is forced to compromise with them.**

"From my experience, the **rank and file are very loyal to Netanyahu**, and that means that **people who seek to replace him were not given the jobs they wanted,**" he asserted, referring to Saar and other Likud MKs who quit the party with him.

However, Netanyahu could be facing his **biggest challenge yet if Saar and Bennett refuse to join a Likud-led government.** But, it remains to be seen if they will have enough votes without Likud to form a coalition.

The main problem facing the **anti-Netanyahu parties** is that they **are ideologically diverse**, and **therefore** it will be **more difficult for them to unite.**

But the increasing **desire to remove Netanyahu is what unites them** and could be enough this time around.

The author is the deputy online editor at JNS.org and a writer on Middle East affairs. He is now writing a PhD dissertation at Bar-Ilan University on the Islamic Movement in Israel. You can find him on Twitter at @Arielbensolomon

03.15.21

Arab culture agendas & slogans embrace violence to replace work or study

03.15.21

Israel's Arabs and Jews must redefine their relationship

Opinion: Despite **deep-rooted animosity** towards each other, **Israelis** of both sectors **must create a social** contract to change long-held **paradigms that have proven to be** nothing but **obstacles** for peace and prosperity for all

Michael Milshtein | Published: **03.15.21** , 00:22

While the relationship between Israel and its Arab citizens has been spotty ever since the establishment of the state in 1948, the last two years have proven that this somewhat **undefined relationship cannot continue as is.**

In the past, the Arab population was content with being a silent sector. Today though, many members of the community want to have a real say in the country's decision-making process, despite being painfully aware of the fact that Israel is first and foremost a Jewish state.

This **shift in the Arab sector** means that Israel must review the framework upon which the state's relationship with its Arab population is based.

First, Israel must abandon past paradigms - such as the **notion that Israel's Arabs are actually an enemy within** - that not only torpedoed any viable solution of coexistence, but also led to the radicalization of relations between Arabs and Jews.

A social contract in which the Arab sector consents to submit to the authority of the state in exchange for protection and rights is a necessity in the current climate.

The **Arab population is** growing increasingly **frustrated** for three main reasons:

1. The rising tide of **violence and crime in** predominantly **Arab communities**
2. The disappointment with **Arab political parties** that have **insisted on** adhering to past **agendas and slogans** that make it hard for members of the community to integrate and influence
3. The rigidity demonstrated by the **Jewish political** establishment **towards the Arab citizenry**

The aforementioned contract must ensure that the Arab sector has full civil rights, such as representation in government institutions and freedom of opportunity, in exchange for full civic obligations.

Young **Arabs** can be integrated in a myriad of civil services, including the police - a move that would both strengthen their connection to the state and provide a solution to the prevailing detachment many of them feel. **At least one-third of all 18-24 year olds in the sector do not work or study.**

More importantly, the contract must enshrine the legal status of Israel's Arab citizens. A possible **solution could be** the **formal recognition of Arab citizens as a minority group**, including the possibility of granting the sector autonomy in culture and education.

This solution would enable Arab society to fully integrate in Israel's society, in exchange for dropping all demands to change the very identity of the state, something that has proven to be an obstacle to establishing normal relations between the two sectors of society.

And while the next government will face many strategic issues, normalizing the relationship with the Arab sector must take precedence due to the volatile situation prevalent among that population.

Staying the current course or ignoring the current issues completely **will** potentially **cause** the situation to **escalate to dangerous levels.**

Both societies must understand that despite deep-rooted animosity, we all must change our behavior towards and views of the other, for the sake of peace and prosperity for us all.

Michael Milshtein is the **head of the Palestinian Studies** Forum at the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies **at Tel Aviv University**