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Iran's sole nuclear power plant up and running after technical overhaul

07.05.21

Joint List MK hailed Syrian martyr killing Israelis & children, protected by High Court

07.05.21

Police investigate former Joint List MK over alleged incitement, identifying with terror  
Heba Yazbek was barred from running for Knesset in 2019 by the Central Elections  
Committee over controversial posts shared on social media, which the High Court  
overturned in a 5-4 ruling

TPS, Ynet | Updated: 07.05.21 , 20:32

Former Joint List MK Heba Yazbak was questioned by police on Monday on suspicion of  
incitement and identification with a terrorist act.

Yazbak was investigated at the offices of the Lahav 433 investigation Unit following  
videos and messages she posted on social media before becoming a legislator in 2019.

Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit approved the investigation.

A 2015 Facebook post featured a photo of Lebanese terrorist Samir Kuntar, who took  
part in a 1979 terror attack in Nahariya, killing Danny Haran and slashing the skull of his  
four-year-old daughter, Einat Haran.

She shared the post following Kuntar's death in Syria, calling him the "martyr."

In addition, she shared a post in 2013 with a picture of female terrorist Dalal Mughrabi,  
who led the terrorist squad that carried out the attack on Highway 2 in 1978, in which 35  
Israelis were killed, including 12 children.

Yazbak added to the picture of Mughrabi the words "Dalal Mughrabi lived 20 years and did  
it all. Blessed be the women of the resistance."

The former lawmaker slammed the investigation as "political and illegitimate," stating  
that the posts in question were "already discussed in the Supreme Court" when she was  
disqualified from running for Knesset.

Yazbak served as an MK for Joint List's Balad faction, being elected to the 23rd Knesset  
after the High Court of Justice approved her candidacy after reversed a decision of the  
Central Elections Committee to block her run over the same posts she is now being  
investigated for.

In the final verdict, the Justices, who voted 5-4 in favor of overturning Yazbak's barring, wrote that "the narrow result we reached illustrates how close Yazbak would be to finding herself outside Knesset. There is no place to 'celebrate' the end result. There is room for introspection if this is the way to advance the cause of Israeli Arabs."

07.05.21

Bennett supports renewal to ban automatic Israel status by marriage

07.05.21

PM slams opposition: Voting against Citizenship Law is 'harming state security'

Bennett says ahead of the vote on the law that bans Palestinians married to Israelis from automatically receiving citizenship that opposition should show 'national responsibility'; Lapid says if law doesn't pass, it won't bring down government

Moran Azulay | Published: 07.05.21 , 15:46

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on Monday slammed opposition MKs for planning to vote down a law denying residency to Palestinians with an Israeli spouse, accusing them of harming state security.

The Knesset was set to vote Monday evening on renewing a temporary law that prevents Palestinians married to Israelis from automatically receiving permanent status in Israel, for the first time without a guaranteed majority to pass it.

"There are things that you do not play with, state security is a red line and the state needs control over who enters it and who becomes a citizen," Bennett said ahead of the vote, adding the opposition must "take national responsibility".

"Bringing in thousands of Palestinians and naturalizing them harms state security, all for another political point."

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said Monday if the Knesset vote on the law doesn't pass, it will not bring down the coalition government, which came to power only last month.

"This is not a big disaster, even if it does not pass, the cases will go to individual review in the Foreign Ministry. Governments do not fall or rise on it."

Some members of the new coalition, including MKs from the left-wing Meretz and Islamist Ra'am parties, have also said they will not vote to extend the temporary measure that has been renewed every year since its inception in 2003.

Lapid, who also holds the post of alternative prime minister, said he understands the law has its shortcomings.

"Our partners from Ra'am and Meretz have presented quite a few cases in which the law caused unnecessary humanitarian damage. We will establish a mechanism to reduce them," he said.

"Israel is not only a Jewish state but a democratic one. There will be no easy solutions to difficult problems, but they will improve the situation."

07.05.21

Bennett and Putin discuss recovery of Israelis held by Hamas in Gaza

07.05.21

Gaza swap on agenda as Bennett and Putin talk for first time

Prime Minister's Office says two leaders discussed a number of security and political issues, while Bennett thanked the Russian president for the role Russia plays in maintaining stability in the region

Itamar Eichner | Published: 07.05.21 , 14:42

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on Monday spoke with Russian President Vladimir Putin for the first time since taking office last month, with the issue of Israeli prisoners held in Gaza taking the spotlight.

According to Prime Minister's Office, the two discussed a number of security and political issues but the talk primarily focused on two dead Israeli soldiers and two Israeli civilians held by Hamas in Gaza.

Bennett also thanked the Russian president for the role his country plays in maintaining regional stability.

In addition, Bennett said that he appreciates the historical connection between the two peoples, and that he attaches great importance to the Russian Aliyah, which he said represents a "bridge between the two countries."

The two leaders agreed to meet in person soon.

One of the main issues on the agenda between Israel and Russia in recent years has been Israeli fear of Iran's military entrenchment in Syria, where Russia has military forces aiding Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and the IDF's activity in the region to prevent it. Moscow apparently fears that Israeli activity in Syria will harm its interests in the region and wants coordination between the two countries.

Former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu has claimed on several occasions that thanks to his close relationship with Putin, Russian opposition to IDF activity in Syria has been minimized.

07.05.21

MKs vote on law that prevents Arabs from receiving status in Israel by marriage

07.05.21

With clock ticking, MKs row over law targeting Palestinians married to Israelis

Temporary legislation denying automatic residency to Palestinians with Israeli spouse is due to expire Tuesday, as Netanyahu-led opposition refuses to back its renewal; some members of government say they will vote against intifada-era law that they say is racist and outdated

Ynet, Associated Press | Published: 07.05.21 , 12:32

The Knesset was set to vote Monday evening on renewing a temporary law that prevents Palestinians married to Israelis from automatically receiving permanent status in Israel, for the first time without a guaranteed majority to pass it.

Some members of the new coalition, including MKs from the left-wing Meretz and Islamist Ra'am parties, have said they will not vote to extend the temporary measure that has been renewed every year since its inception in 2003.

MKs from former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party, which was in power from 2009 until last month, have also said they will not support the renewal of law - in an apparent move to stymie the government that replaced it.

Without support from the opposition, the law will not be renewed ahead of its expiration on Tuesday.

Even so, some coalition MKs struck an optimistic note ahead of the Monday vote, expressing doubt that right-wing opposition lawmakers would let the legislation lapse in the name of political point-scoring.

"I assume that the Zionist parties will vote in favor as an issue of national responsibility," MK Nir Orbach of Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's Yamina party said Monday, according to local media.

Critics, including many left-wing and Arab lawmakers, say it's a racist measure aimed at restricting the growth of Israel's Arab minority, while supporters say it's needed for security purposes and to preserve Israel's Jewish character.

The Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law was enacted as a temporary measure at the height of the second intifada, when Palestinian terror groups launched scores of deadly terror attacks inside Israel.

Proponents of the law say Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza are susceptible to recruitment by armed groups and that security vetting alone is insufficient.

"It was passed in the middle of the intifada, and now we are in a very different period in time," said Yuval Shany, a legal expert at the Israel Democracy Institute.

Not only are attacks far rarer, he said, but Israel has vastly improved its technological abilities to monitor Palestinians who enter.

"I don't think the security argument is very strong at this point in time," said Shany.

Because of the law, Arab citizens have few if any avenues for bringing spouses from the West Bank and Gaza into Israel. The policy affects thousands of families.

Male spouses over the age of 35 and female spouses over the age of 25, as well as some humanitarian cases, can apply for the equivalent of a tourist permit, which must be

regularly renewed. The holders of such permits are ineligible for a driver's license, public health insurance and most forms of employment. Palestinian spouses from Gaza have been completely banned since the Hamas terror group seized power there in 2007. Israel's Arab minority, which makes up 20% of the population, has close familial ties to Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and largely identifies with their cause. Arab citizens view the law as one of several forms of discrimination they face in a country that legally defines itself as a Jewish nation-state.

"This law sees every Palestinian as an enemy and as a threat, just because of his ethnic and national affiliation," said Sawsan Zaher, a lawyer with Adalah, an Arab rights group that has challenged the law in court. "The political message is very racist and very dangerous."

Palestinians who are unable to get permits but try to live with their spouses inside Israel are at risk of deportation. If their children are born in the West Bank, they would be subject to the same law preventing spouses from entering Israel, though there is an exception for minors.

The citizenship law also applies to Jewish Israelis who marry Palestinians from the territories, but such unions are extremely rare.

But even as Defense Minister Benny Gantz, a political centrist, recently urged the opposition to support the law on security grounds, he also evoked demographic concerns. "This law is essential for safeguarding the country's security and Jewish and democratic character, and security considerations need to be put before all political considerations," Gantz said in a statement.

"Even in difficult times politically, we put Israel before everything."

07.05.21

Norway pension excludes West Bank linked companies as breach of ethics

07.05.21

Nordic fund excludes 16 companies over links with West Bank settlements

KLP says companies facilitate Israel's presence in region, risk being complicit in breach of international law, human rights abuse and against company ethical guidelines; fund sells 31.8 million dollars worth of shares

Reuters| Published: 07.05.21 , 08:59

Norway's largest pension fund KLP said on Monday it would no longer invest in 16 companies including Alstom and Motorola because of their links to Israeli settlements in the West Bank.

Along with a number of other countries, Norway considers the settlements a breach of international law. A 2020 United Nations report said it had found 112 companies that have operations linked to the region, home to around 650,000 Israelis.

The companies, which span telecoms, banking, energy and construction, all help facilitate Israel's presence and therefore **risk being complicit in breaches** of international law, and against KLP's ethical guidelines, it said in a statement.

"In **KLP's assessment**, there is an **unacceptable risk** that the excluded companies are contributing to the abuse of human rights in situations of war and conflict through their links with the Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank," KLP said.

The move by KLP **follows** a **decision by Norway's** sovereign wealth **fund** in May to **exclude two companies** linked to construction and real estate in the Palestinian territories.

KLP said it had sold shares in the companies worth 275 million Norwegian crowns (\$31.81 million) and as of June had completed the process. In Motorola and Alstom, it had also sold its bond holdings.

Selling Motorola Solutions was "a very straightforward decision" as its video security and software was used in border surveillance. Telecoms companies including Bezeq and Cellcom Israel were removed as the services they provide help make the settlements more attractive residential areas, KLP said, while banks including Leumi helped finance the infrastructure.

In a similar vein, construction and engineering groups such as Alstom and local peers Ashtrom and Electra were responsible for building the infrastructure, while Paz Oil helped power them.

The **other companies** to be excluded were: Bank Hapoalim, Israel Discount Bank, Mizrahi Tefahot Bank, Delek Group, Energix Renewable Energies, First International Bank of Israel and Partner Communications. Telecoms company Altice, which was listed until January 2021, was also excluded. (\$1 = 8.6460 Norwegian crowns)

**07.05.21**

**Collapsed Florida condo demolished ahead of storm, search to resume**

**07.05.21**

**Collapsed Florida condo demolished ahead of storm, search to resume**

Tropical Storm Elsa with **winds** of 60 miles per hour (95 kph) **forecast** to approach western **Florida** on Tuesday or Wednesday; **Surfside** mayor says search to resume for 121 residents of partially **collapsed tower** still missing

Reuters| Published: **07.05.21** , 08:42

The partially collapsed **Miami-area condo** where 24 people are confirmed dead was **demolished on Sunday night**, **ahead of** the possible arrival of Tropical **Storm** Elsa.

**Search-and-rescue efforts for 121 people** missing have been **suspended**. Miami-Dade County Mayor Daniella Levine Cava told reporters earlier on Sunday that rescue efforts **would resume after** the **demolition**, noting it was 11 days since the collapse.

As of Sunday afternoon, Tropical Storm Elsa was off the coast of Cuba with winds of 60 miles per hour (95 kph). After moving across Cuba later on Sunday and Monday, the storm was forecast to approach western Florida on Tuesday or Wednesday. In the wreckage of the Champlain Towers South complex in Surfside, workers drilled into columns where small explosive charges were placed to bring the remains of the building down in a small area, officials said. Residents in nearby buildings did not need to evacuate but were instructed to stay indoors and turn off air conditioning due to dust. Instead of the usual fireworks and flag-waving parties, beachside communities in the area planned more subdued events for the Fourth of July. **Miami Beach canceled its Independence Day celebrations.**

Investigators have not determined what caused the 40-year-old complex to **collapse on June 24**. A 2018 engineering report found structural deficiencies that are now the focus of inquiries that include a grand jury examination.

All residents of **another building**, Crestview Towers **in North Miami** Beach, were **told** on Friday **to leave** immediately after engineers found serious concrete and electrical problems, officials said.

The move was considered urgent because of the approach of Elsa, North Miami Beach City Manager Arthur Sorey said, adding that the building's owners had not yet begun a **mandatory safety recertification** process required 40 years after it was built.

"It's definitely not an easy decision," Sorey said. "It's just the right thing to do during these times. It's **uncertain** what's going to happen with the **storm.**"

**07.04.21**

**Israel arrests Palestinian rights lawyer who protested Abbas**

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**Israel arrests Palestinian rights lawyer who protested Abbas**

**Independent Commission for Human Rights says Farid al-Atrash was detained at an Israeli checkpoint, transferred to Hadassah Hospital for undisclosed reasons, and then released and questioned by Israeli security forces**

Reuters| Published: **07.04.21** , 17:55

A **Palestinian** human rights **lawyer** was **detained by Israeli forces** early **Sunday** after taking part in a **protest in the West Bank against** Palestinian President Mahmoud **Abbas**, his rights group said.

The Independent Commission for Human Rights said Farid al-Atrash was detained at an Israeli checkpoint while **returning from a protest against** the Palestinian **Authority in**

Ramallah, where the PA is headquartered. It said al-Atrash was transferred to Israel's Hadassah Hospital.

Issa Amro, a prominent Palestinian activist and friend of al-Atrash, said he was released from the hospital hours later and was still being questioned by Israeli authorities. It's unclear why he was hospitalized.

Neither the Israeli military nor the police responded to requests for comment. Both Amro and al-Atrash have been arrested by Israel in the past for organizing and taking part in protests against its military occupation of the West Bank.

But Amro said al-Atrash had recently focused his efforts on protesting the PA over Nizar Banat, an activist who died shortly after being violently arrested by Palestinian security forces last month.

He said another rights lawyer, Mohannad Karajah, who is defending protesters arrested by the PA, was briefly detained by Palestinian authorities on Sunday.

Amro himself was detained by the PA last month and held overnight, days before Banat died in custody.

The Palestinian Authority does not comment publicly on arrests.

Israel and the Palestinian Authority coordinate security in the West Bank in order to suppress Hamas and other militant groups that both view as a threat.

That policy is deeply unpopular among Palestinians and is one of several long-standing grievances fueling the recent protests.

Thousands of Palestinians have joined demonstrations in recent weeks against the PA, which governs parts of the West Bank.

The PA has grown increasingly unpopular and autocratic in recent years, even as Western countries continue to see it as a key partner in the moribund peace process.

07.04.21

Israel fields & groves will take 3 decades to recover from Gaza arson balloons

07.04.21

'Israeli fields will take decades to recover from Gaza firebombing'

KKL agriculture expert says it will take 'up to 30 years' to rehabilitate scorched land; local security official says Israel must respond to every incendiary balloon, warning if not, rockets will be fired next

Alexandra Lukash, Attila Somfalvi | Published: 07.04.21, 17:39

An agriculture expert on Sunday warned that it will take decades for Israeli fields to recover from massive fires caused by incendiary balloons sent from Gaza over the years.

Since a May 21 ceasefire ended 11 days of Israel-Hamas fighting, Palestinians in Gaza have renewed the years-long practice of sporadically launching balloons laden with incendiary material across the border, causing fires that have burned many fields and forests in Israel.

Moshe Baruchi, an expert from Keren Kayemet LeYisrael (JNF-KKL), told Ynet that around 10 acres of forest went up in flames since Thursday alone in fires caused by incendiary balloons.

"A fairly large area was burned here, including a nature reserve. There were some six or seven fires over the weekend," Baruchi said. "There are forests that will not recover on their own, and it will take us up to 30 years to rehabilitate them."

The IDF struck Hamas targets in Gaza late on Saturday in retaliation for incendiary balloons that were flown across the border and sparked at least one fire.

"Fighter jets attacked Hamas weapons manufacturing facility and a rocket launching site," the IDF Spokesperson's Unit said in a statement on Sunday. "The military will respond aggressively to any further attempts to initiate terror attacks across the border," the statement read.

Since the new government came into power 1 month, the IDF has responded to every incendiary device launched from the Gaza Strip in Israel.

A security official from an Israeli community bordering Gaza said that despite the previous government did not deal well with the dangerous phenomenon, which burned thousands of acres of land.

"We must not allow even the smallest of fires and our leaders must stay true to their word. We all understand the incendiary devices will be followed by rockets." Meanwhile, Israel announced last week that it would allow the transport of fuel into Gaza to operate its power station due to recent relative calm on the southern border. The government also approved an expansion to the fishing zone for Gaza fishermen to use, and the provision of raw materials for essential industries.

Israel has also continued negotiations with Egyptian mediators to secure the release of the remains of two dead IDF soldiers and two civilians, believed held by the Hamas terror group.

In addition, the UN agreed to assume responsibility for the distribution of monetary aid from Qatar to Gaza, to be given to families in need, according to a report on Sunday in the Palestinian Al Quds newspaper.

The report, which was not confirmed by Israel, the PA or Hamas Gaza, said that Jerusalem agreed to the UN role but insisted that the aid from Qatar will not be delivered in cash.

07.04.21

## Hezbollah group of Lebanon & Iran recruit Israeli Arabs for future terror operations

07.04.21

### Jerusalem woman jailed for Hezbollah recruitment plot

Yasmin Jaber, a resident of the Old City and former staffer at the National Library in the capital, was recruited by the terror group in 2015 in an effort to form a clandestine cell collecting intelligence for future terror operations

Gilad Cohen, TPS| Published: 07.04.21 , 15:46

A Jerusalem woman was sentenced to two and half years in prison Sunday for working to recruit Israelis and Palestinians on behalf of the Lebanon-based Hezbollah terror group and the Iranian army.

Yasmin Jaber, the 26-year-old resident of the Old City of Jerusalem and former staffer at the National Library in the capital, was apprehended in September last year by the Shin Bet domestic security service along with several acquaintances from East Jerusalem and Ramallah, who are suspected of having been involved in the secret cell.

The Jerusalem District Court sentenced Jaber following a plea agreement in which she was convicted of offenses including contact with a foreign agent, membership in a terrorist organization and unlawful exit from the country. She was also fined NIS 5,000.

According to the indictment, Jaber was contacted by a Hezbollah operative - with whom she later had a romantic relationship - in December 2015 after attending a Palestinian youth conference in Lebanon called "Return to Palestine."

To maintain the confidentiality of her identity, she was given an operational nickname by the unit - "Racheel."

During another visit to Lebanon in 2016, Jaber was introduced to a man known as "Fares Awda," a senior operative in a joint Hezbollah-Iranian terror unit.

Awda is actually Hezbollah operative Jaafar Kabisi, who is known to have been involved in other attempts to recruit assets in Israel for terrorist activity.

Following her recruitment by Hezbollah, Jaber was in secret contact with an operator via coded messages on social media.

She also attended meetings with Hezbollah and Iranian operatives in Turkey, during which she was instructed by Ranad Wahba, a Hezbollah operative in the joint terrorist unit who goes by the operational nickname "Wafaa."

Jaber was directed to recruit other activists in Israel who would serve in a squad under her command. Hezbollah emphasized the importance of recruiting elements from among Israeli Arabs, especially women, who would use their ability to move about freely in Israel to carry out attacks.

According to the indictment, the defendant knowingly and illegally left Israel for Lebanon, knowingly had contact with foreign agents without a reasonable explanation, was a member of a terrorist organization, took part in the organization's activities and carried out activities for the organization.

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

07.04.21

Israel aircraft & teams help Greece & Italy battle Cyprus forest fire

07.04.21

Israel sending help as Cyprus battles 'worst forest fire in history'

Bennett says country **dispatching two firefighting aircraft**, joining teams from **Greece and Italy to help contain blaze**, which fanned by strong winds has affected communities in densely vegetated foothills of Troodos mountain range; smoke visible in capital Nicosia, some 75 km away

Ynet, Reuters | Published: **07.04.21**, 10:00

Israel was **sending firefighting aircraft to Cyprus** on Sunday as the country battled a huge forest **fire raging north of the cities** of Limassol and Larnaca, a blaze one official called the **worst on record**.

"With **fires raging in Cyprus**, I agreed to send two firefighting planes from the National Fire and Rescue Authority tomorrow [Sunday] morning and assist the Cypriot and international forces in their firefighting efforts, in coordination with the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs," Prime Minister Naftali Bennett wrote in Hebrew on Twitter late Saturday.

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid also told his Cypriot counterpart Nikos Christodoulides that Israel would do everything in its power to **help bring the fires under control**. Attempts were being made to prevent the blaze from crossing the mountains and stop it **before reaching Machairas, a pine forestland** and one of the highest peaks in Cyprus.

"It is the **worst forest fire in the history of Cyprus**," Forestries Department Director Charalambos Alexandrou told Cyprus's Omega TV. Alexandrou said the **perimeter** of the fire was "**at least 40 kilometers**". Cyprus has previously sent assistance to Israel when it has battled similar massive brushfires.

The European Union on Saturday **deployed aerial assistance** to help Cyprus contain the blaze, which fanned by **strong winds** had affected at least **six communities** in the foothills of the Troodos mountain range, an area of pine forest and densely vegetated shrubland.

The EU's executive, the European Commission, said fire-fighting planes had departed from Greece to battle the fire and Italy was also planning to deploy aerial fire-fighters.

The EU's emergency Copernicus satellite was also activated to provide damage assessment maps of the affected areas, the Commission said in a statement.

Dozens of properties were damaged, but no injuries were reported. There were widespread power cuts in the area. Plumes of smoke were visible in the capital Nicosia, some 75 km (45 miles) away.

"This is a very difficult day for Cyprus. All of the state's mechanisms are in gear, and the priority is for no loss of life," Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades tweeted.

Cyprus has experienced a heatwave this week, with temperatures exceeding 40 Celsius (104 Fahrenheit). Police said they were questioning a 67 year old person in connection with the blaze.

"It passed through like a whirlwind, it destroyed everything," said Vassos Vassiliou, the community leader of Arakapas, one of the communities affected.

07.04.21

Hundreds of Palestinians demonstrate calling for end of Abbas regime

07.04.21

Hundreds of Palestinians demonstrate against Abbas

Protests over violent death of outspoken PA critic Nizar Banat in custody continue, with demonstrators in Ramallah calling for 'fall of the regime'; security forces refrain from dispersing crowd, unlike previous rallies

Associated Press | Published: 07.04.21 , 09:06

Hundreds of Palestinians gathered in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Saturday to demonstrate against President Mahmoud Abbas, hoping to inject new momentum into a protest movement sparked by the death of an outspoken critic in the custody of security forces.

Palestinian security forces and groups of men in plainclothes violently dispersed a similar protest a week ago, drawing expressions of concern from the United States and the UN human rights chief. There were no immediate reports of violence on Saturday.

The Palestinian Authority (PA) was established as part of an interim peace deal with Israel in the 1990s, dubbed the Oslo Accords, and governs parts of the West Bank. It has grown increasingly autocratic and unpopular, and Abbas canceled the first elections in 15 years in April when it looked like his fractured Fatah party would suffer a crushing defeat at the polls. He was largely sidelined during the Gaza war with Israel in May amid an outpouring of support for his rivals, the territory's militant Hamas rulers.

Saturday's demonstration began with a few hundred protesters gathering in al-Manara Square in central Ramallah, where the Palestinian Authority is headquartered. The mother of Nizar Banat, the activist whose death last month sparked the protests, and other family members were welcomed with applause and gave brief speeches.

The crowd then made a loop through downtown, gathering force as it marched until thousands could be heard chanting “The people want the fall of the regime,” and “Abbas, leave,” slogans used during the so-called Arab Spring protests that swept the Middle East in 2011.

There was initially no visible security presence, but when the protesters marched down a main street leading to the headquarters of the PA they approached a line of riot police manning barricades. The protesters halted and sat in the street several meters away. Fatah, meanwhile, held a rally in the southern West Bank city of Hebron in which supporters waved the party’s trademark yellow flags. The PA’s official Palestine TV covered the Hebron rally and ignored the demonstration in Ramallah.

State Department spokesman Ned Price said this week that the U.S. was “deeply disturbed by reports that non-uniformed members of the Palestinian Authority security forces harassed and used force against protesters and journalists” during last weekend’s demonstrations.

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet said Thursday that Palestinian security forces had beaten protesters with batons and attacked them with tear gas and stun grenades. She said they appeared to have singled out female demonstrators, reporters and bystanders, many of whom said they were sexually harassed. She called on the PA “to ensure freedom of opinion, expression and peaceful assembly.”

07.04.21

UN will oversee transfer of Qatari aid to Gaza & kept away from Hamas

07.04.21

Report: UN to oversee transfer of Qatari aid to Gaza

Palestinian newspaper says plan agreed to by Israel will see financial assistance for some 100,000 Gazan families transferred to Ramallah-based Palestinian Monetary Authority banks and not institutions in Gaza, preventing it from being diverted into Hamas coffers  
Elior Levy | Published: 07.04.21 , 10:46

The United Nations will oversee the transfer of Qatari money to the Gaza Strip, a Palestinian paper reported Sunday, resolving one of the sticking points in negotiations after the 11-day war fought in May between Israel and the Hamas terror group that rules the Strip.

Israel had insisted that Hamas could not be allowed unfettered access to the funds on the grounds that it had previously used international assistance earmarked as humanitarian aid to replenish its weapons stores and build more of the attack tunnels that crisscross the coastal enclave.

The report by the Palestinian daily Al-Quds stated that Jerusalem agreed to the new mechanism following talks between UN special envoy to the region Tor Wennesland and Israeli and Qatari officials.

According to the plan, the **money will be transferred** to banks belonging to the Ramallah-based Palestinian Monetary Authority **and not local banks in Gaza**.

The Qatari money is officially intended to distribute \$100 monthly payments to some 100,000 families in Gaza, all picked by Hamas and classified as "in need." The rest of the money is intended for the salaries of Hamas officials in the enclave.

**Qatar** has long been a **primary source of financial aid to the Strip**, which is blockaded by both Egypt and Israel, **distributing hundreds of millions of dollars** in recent years.

Israel is said to have agreed to this arrangement over the understanding that the **money will** directly reach the families in need and **be kept away from Hamas**.

Hamas sources told Al-Quds that they have no objection to the mechanism. Hamas leaders Khaled Mashaal and Ismail Haniyeh both live in the Qatari capital Doha. Indirect talks between Israel and the terror group on a more comprehensive ceasefire were set to continue in Cairo in the coming days.

**Israeli aircraft** on Saturday evening **struck several Hamas targets in** the **Gaza** Strip in **response to incendiary** balloons launched into Israel earlier.

The IDF Spokesperson's Unit said that fighter jets attacked a weapons manufacturing facility and a rocket launching site in the Hamas-controlled enclave.

Local authorities in the Eshkol Regional Council, which borders Gaza, said at least one fire broke out on Saturday afternoon in the area. An investigator from the Fire and Rescue Services determined the fire was caused by an incendiary balloon.

Since a May 21, 2021 ceasefire ended the 11 days of Gaza fighting, Palestinians in Gaza have sporadically launched balloons laden with incendiary material across the border, causing **fires that have burned fields in Israel**.

**07.03.21**

**IDF strikes Gaza after Palestinians resumed incendiary balloon attacks**

**07.03.21**

**IDF strikes Gaza after Palestinians resumed incendiary balloon attacks**

Military spokesperson says **warplanes struck** a weapons **manufacturing facility** and a **rocket launching site** after Eshkol Regional Council's officials confirmed at least one fire broke out Saturday afternoon as a result of incendiary balloons

Ynet, Reuters | Updated: **07.03.21** , 23:17

Israeli aircrafts on Saturday evening struck several Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip in response to incendiary balloons launched into Israel earlier.

The IDF's Spokesperson's Unit said that fighter jets attacked a weapons manufacturing facility and a rocket launching site in the Hamas-controlled enclave.

Local authorities in the Eshkol Regional Council, which borders Gaza, said at least one fire broke out on Saturday afternoon in the area. An investigator from the Fire and Rescue Services determined the fire was caused by an incendiary balloon. Since a May 21 ceasefire ended 11 days of Israel-Hamas fighting, Palestinians in Gaza have sporadically launched balloons laden with incendiary material across the border, causing fires that have burned fields in Israel.

On Thursday and Friday, several fires broke out in Israeli communities that border Gaza due to renewed incendiary balloon attacks.

In response, Israeli aircraft bombed a Hamas site in Gaza Strip overnight Friday as well. Hamas confirmed one of its sites had been struck. In this strike, Israel's military said it had hit a Hamas weapons manufacturing site. There were no reports of casualties.

Palestinians say the balloons aim to pressure Israel to ease restrictions on the coastal enclave that were tightened during the May fighting.

Balloon launches had ebbed after Israel eased some restrictions on Gaza last week. But on Thursday, balloons were again launched from Gaza, causing at least four brush fires near Israeli cities along the border.

"In response to the arson balloon fire towards Israeli territory today IDF (Israeli military) fighter jets struck (a) weapons manufacturing site belonging (to) Hamas," the military said in a statement on Friday evening.

Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum called the Israeli strikes a "showy reaction" and said Palestinians were "putting pressure on (Israel), forcing it to respect the rights of our people and to walk back its unjust positions."

Egypt and the United Nations have stepped up mediation efforts over the Israeli strikes and Gaza balloon launches, though the incidents have not led to a broader escalation.

06.30.21

Criticism of PA security forces Abbas to prosecute those who assaulted reporters

06.30.21

Criticism of PA security forces piles pressure on Abbas

As accusations of corruption mount against him, U.S. and UN condemn Palestinian president for dispatching security forces to violently disperse civilian rallies protesting the death of Palestinian Authority critic Nizar Banat in custody

Reuters| Published: 06.30.21 , 22:03

Pressure is mounting on Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas over his security forces' handling of protesters demanding his resignation since one of his biggest critics died in custody.

The U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem said on Tuesday it was "deeply disturbed" by reports that protesters had been intimidated and beaten by plain-clothes officers, and the United Nations condemned what it called "totally unacceptable" attacks.

Palestinian security officers in plainclothes detain a demonstrator during clashes that erupted following a rally protesting the death of Palestinian Authority outspoken critic Nizar Banat, in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Saturday, June 26, 2021

Undercover Palestinian security officers detain a demonstrator at a protest over the death of Nizar Banat in Ramallah (Photo: Associated Press)

The security forces have denied deploying officers in civilian clothing against protesters. But the criticism of the Palestinian Authority (PA) by such important international backers extends the already long list of problems facing Abbas, 85, after 16 years in power.

The family of Nizar Banat, a prominent critic of the PA who died in detention on June 24, said security forces broke into his house in the West Bank city of Hebron and hit him repeatedly with a metal rod before arresting him.

A Palestinian rights group said after conducting an autopsy that Banat had suffered blows to his head.

The PA has declined direct comment on the circumstances of Banat's death but, offering his condolences, Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said on Tuesday the judiciary would "ensure application of the law against all those found guilty".

The death has led to days of protests in the West Bank and clashes between demonstrators and security forces.

"We are deeply disturbed by reports that non-uniformed members of the Palestinian Authority Security Forces (PASF) harassed and used force against protesters and journalists over the weekend," a spokesperson for the U.S. Embassy said.

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in the Palestinian territory said one of its rights monitors covering protests in the West Bank city of Ramallah on Sunday was among dozens of people who had been attacked in a "totally unacceptable way".

"The attack, by persons in civilian clothes, included punching, the use of pepper spray, and attempts to steal a phone being used to document events," it said on Facebook. Talal Dweikat, spokesperson for the Palestinian security forces, said such reports were "not true".

"This is dishonorable talk. There were no security personnel in civilian clothes. Why would (they) wear civilian clothes?," he told the Ramallah Mix broadcaster.

His office declined requests by Reuters for comment.

The PA says it has investigated Banat's death, and Shtayyeh has urged Palestinians not to politicize the case.

Abbas's popularity has plummeted since he was elected in 2005, according to opinion polls. He has ruled by decree for over a decade and the PA faces widespread allegations of corruption, which it denies.

Peace talks have been stalled since 2014, and Abbas has faced criticism for continuing to coordinate with Israel on security issues. Opponents say this enables Israel's of West Bank territory that it captured in 1967.

Anger deepened **this year** when **Abbas cancelled planned elections**.

Criticism of the security forces' methods has mounted since Banat's death and Abbas's Fatah party has accused Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas and other rival political factions of being behind them.

Aseel AlBajeh, of the rights group Al-Haq, said she was confronted by men in civilian clothing who pushed her and took her phone when she was filming Sunday's protest in Ramallah.

"You feel completely unsafe because you don't know if the person next to you, dressed in completely normal clothing, is going to beat you up or not," AlBajeh, 26, said.

"It is painful. As Palestinians, we have two struggles: one against an occupying power in Israel, and the other against an authoritarian regime."

The Palestinian Journalists **Syndicate said reporters** had been "**prevented from covering events and threatened** by plain-clothes forces."

It **demande**d the PA "**prosecute those who assaulted journalists**, and bring them to justice."

**06.29.21**

**Leaders of Hezbollah and Hamas held talk in Beirut - no comments after meeting**

**06.29.21**

**Hezbollah leader, Hamas chief meet in Beirut**

Haniyeh touches ground in Lebanon as part of Arab world tour following last month's Gaza war, discusses with Nasrallah **how they can build on the experience of the latest round of violence**

Associated Press| Published: **06.29.21** , 17:35

The top **leaders** of the militant groups **Hezbollah and Hamas held talks in Beirut on Tuesday** about last month's 11-day war with Israel in the Gaza Strip.

Ismail Haniyeh, the leader of the Palestinian Hamas, arrived in Lebanon on Sunday and met several top officials, including President Michel Aoun and Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri — both of them seen as broadly aligned with the Iran-backed terror group.

On Tuesday, Haniyeh and Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah discussed how they can build on the experience of the latest round of violence.

The bruising war had caused widespread destruction in the Gaza Strip, brought life in much of Israel to a standstill.

There were **no comments after the meeting** that brought Nasrallah and Haniyeh together. It was the first between the two since September.

During the war, Hamas and other terror groups fired over 4,000 rockets into Israel with dozens of projectiles flying as far north as Tel Aviv, a bustling commercial and cultural hub. Israeli airstrikes and shelling caused wide destruction in Gaza.

After the end of the war in Gaza, Haniyeh visited Egypt for Palestinian reconciliation talks. He later visited Morocco and Mauritania before arriving in Lebanon as part of a blitz of meetings across the Arab world.

07.03.21

Iran's sole nuclear power plant up and running after technical overhaul

07.03.21

Iran's sole nuclear power plant up and running after 'technical overhaul'

Spokesperson for the country's energy ministry is quoted by state TV as saying the Bushehr power plant is back online after being unexpectedly shut down 2 weeks ago 'for repairs'; Iran earlier said it lacked tools for repairs due to U.S. sanctions

Associated Press, Reuters | Published: 07.03.21 , 13:47

Iran's sole nuclear power plant is back online following an emergency shutdown two weeks ago for a "technical overhaul," state TV reported Saturday.

The report quoted Mostafa Rajabi Mashahdi, spokesperson for the country's energy ministry and state-run power company TAVANIR, as saying the Bushehr plant "returned to production energy" after the completion of needed maintenance.

"After repairs ... the Bushehr power plant is back online, and 1000 MW of electricity is injected into the country's distribution network," Mashhadi said.

Mashahdi did not elaborate but last week, Iran's nuclear department said engineers were working to repair the plant's broken generator.

Authorities earlier this year had warned of Bushehr's possible closure because of American sanctions barring Iran from procuring equipment for repairs.

Bushehr is fueled by uranium produced in Russia, not Iran, and is monitored by the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency. The IAEA acknowledged being aware of reports about the plant, but declined to comment.

Construction on Bushehr, on the coast of the northern reaches of the Persian Gulf, began under Iran's shah in the mid-1970s. After the 1979 Islamic Revolution, the plant was repeatedly targeted in the Iran-Iraq war. Russia later completed construction of the facility.

The 1,000-megawatt plant feeds the grid with enough energy for a tiny part of Iran's nationwide 64,000-megawatt consumption.