

Ynet-News, Feb 11, 2022 – Friday

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Former AG had no permission to tap PM phones, so he tapped Netanyahu's family

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02.10.22
Former AG had no permission to tap PM phones, so he tapped Netanyahu's family

02.10.22
AG blocks attempts to tap the Netanyahus' phones - source
Police source says former Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit blocked all attempts to monitor Benjamin Netanyahu's family; 'We felt we were being neutered, that our hands were tied'

Attila Somfalvi | Published: 02.10.22, 22:42

Former Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit blocked intentions of police investigators to monitor the phones of former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's wife and son, as part of their investigations of suspected wrong doings by Netanyahu and his family.

Netanyahu, is on trial for bribery, fraud and breach of trust and his attorneys have been requesting a suspension of proceedings following press reports that the police illegally used spyware to snoop on Netanyahu's own son and members of his inner circle, and a state witness to gather information

"We had zero access to the electronic media, neither in their office nor at their home, Mandelblit did not allow it," the source - a former high ranking police investigator, said.

"In their case there was no question that we could not confiscate any of their equipment. We kept saying that Sara (Netanyahu's wife) is pulling the wool over our eyes and we can't even check her phone to verify her claims," he said.

"We could not even get permission to request a court order to tap their phones. We felt we were being neutered, that our hands were tied," the police source added.

In a private conversations, the content of which reached Ynet this week, Mandelblit said among other things, that he insisted on being exceedingly stingy with permits when it came to Netanyahu's investigation.

"I took fire from all directions for that decision. I was criticized all the time... I was told I was tying [the investigators'] hands. But I am very careful when it comes to trampling individual's rights, even that of of suspects," Mandelblit said.

"I did not approve tapping the phone of either Yair or Sara (Netanyahu's son and wife respectively) and I was criticized for it. I told them 'I will not snoop inside the prime minister's phone because there are things there that could pertain to [Netanyahu's Likud party]'... I insisted on being a stickler and I got a lot of flak for it."

"[Suspects] have rights too. Before I trampled on their rights I wanted to be sure that they were indeed suspected of very grave offenses," the former attorney general added.

02.10.22

State inquiry into Who authorized the purchase & use of NSO spyware for police

02.10.22

Bennett stalling state inquiry into police use of NSO spyware, Labor MK says
Head of Constitution, Law and Justice Committee Gilad Kariv says NSO scandal demands an external committee that would examine the issue, since the probe cannot be conducted by those who were supposed to supervise police's actions in the first place
Attila Somfalvi, Alexandra Lukash | Published: 02.10.22, 17:59

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is stalling the proceedings aimed at establishing a state commission of inquiry into the use of NSO's Pegasus spyware by Israel's police, a Labor Party lawmaker said on Thursday.

Head of Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee MK Gilad Kariv told Ynet the **government is hindering the investigation** into the scandal, revealed last month by Ynet's sister outlet Calcalist.

"It is **impossible** to wrap up this matter **without** a governmental committee or a state commission of **inquiry to review** it," Kariv said.

He added that there is an "unfortunate delay" in the establishment of a state inquiry, saying that the attorney general won't be able to rely the government's review of the scandal because they are the ones who were supposed to monitor police's actions in the first place.

"I can trust some parts of their review," said Kariv. "I'm sure that they will look into how things were done inside the police, but the one **question is who supervised the use of spying technologies**, and **who authorized the purchase of the spying software** and made sure that they were used according to very strict procedures? Those matters need a comprehensive inquiry.

"I also understand Prime Minister Naftali **Bennett** and his **will to figure out as quickly as possible whether politicians and public figures' phones have been hacked**," he said.

"Even **without the list of the people who were monitored** by police, from the things we already know, it's clear there is a justification for an establishment of an external inquiry team."

He added that the commission of **inquiry will eventually be established**, so any **delay is only postponing the inevitable**.

"There is no reason to dwell on this matter, you just have to take action to move things forward," he said.

02.08.22

Turkey charges 16 of Israel with espionage; whom they monitored for a year

02.08.22

Turkey charges 16 members of 'Mossad ring' with espionage, report says
Turkish intelligence services claim suspects spied on Palestinian and Turkish students on behalf of Israel, with some **meeting with Israeli officials in Switzerland, Croatia, Romania and Kenya**

Associated Press | Published: **02.08.22**, 18:23

Turkish media reported that **sixteen people went on trial in Istanbul** on Tuesday over charges of "political and military" **espionage on behalf of Israel**.

The defendants, including Palestinians and Syrians, were **arrested in October** in an operation by Turkey's national intelligence agency, MIT, according to the pro-government Sabah newspaper and other Turkish media.

Sabah said the initial hearings in the trial would last four days, with each of the defendants facing up to 20 years in prison if convicted.

The suspects allegedly spied on Palestinian and Turkish students and other people on behalf of Israel, operating in five separate groups, Sabah newspaper reported. Some of the suspects allegedly met with Israeli officials in Switzerland, Croatia, Romania and Kenya.

Turkish intelligence officers reportedly monitored the group for a year before they were arrested.

The trial comes less than two weeks after Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced that he would be hosting President Isaac Herzog for an official visit to Turkey as early as late February — the first such visit by an Israeli leader in years.

Herzog's expected diplomatic visit is part of Ankara's attempts to kickstart ties with Israel after the two neighbors had a major political fallout in 2018, expelling each other's ambassadors.

Earlier Tuesday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu gave another nod to kickstarting ties with Jerusalem, saying such a move could help promote a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but reserved that it would not diminish Ankara's support for the Palestinian cause.

02.08.22

Cruz & 33 Republicans warned Biden, 2015 law requires 2/3 Senate to Iran deal

02.08.22

U.S. Republican senators vow to thwart any Iran deal if Biden skips congressional review
Senator Ted Cruz, a long-time opponent of the 2015 nuclear deal, leads move along with 33 Republicans, who say any new agreement would be severely, if not terminally, hampered if statutory obligations aimed at ensuring congressional oversight are not met
Reuters| Published: 02.08.22, 08:20

A group of 33 Republican senators warned U.S. President Joe Biden on Monday that they would work to thwart the implementation of any new Iran nuclear agreement if his government did not allow Congress to review and vote on its terms.

Led by Senator Ted Cruz, a long-time opponent of the 2015 nuclear deal, the senators told Biden in a letter dated Monday that they would use "the full range of options and leverage available" to ensure that his government adhered to U.S. laws governing any new accord with Iran.

Indirect talks in Vienna between Iran and the United States on reviving the 2015 agreement are due to resume on Tuesday. Talk of a possible agreement has driven oil

prices lower, with markets anticipating that the possible **removal of sanctions** on Iranian **oil sales** could **boost global supplies**.

The **Biden** administration has been **trying to revive the deal**, which lifted sanctions against Tehran in exchange for restrictions on its nuclear activities, a deal from which former President Donald Trump withdrew the United States in 2018. Iran later breached many of the deal's nuclear restrictions and kept pushing well beyond them.

Cruz and other senior Republican senators told Biden that implementation of any new deal would be "severely, if not terminally hampered" if he did not meet statutory obligations aimed at ensuring congressional oversight over revisions or changes to the 2015 Iran nuclear accord.

They provided no details about their plans, but Republicans have used various tactics to slow down other legislation or put holds on Biden's nominees, including many for ambassador posts.

Democrats control the 50-50 Senate only by virtue of a tie-breaking vote that can be cast by Vice President Kamala Harris, but they could lose control of the Senate and the House of Representatives in mid-term elections later this year.

The senators said **any nuclear agreement with Iran** was of "such gravity for U.S. national security" that it would by definition be a **treaty requiring** the advice and **consent of two-thirds of the Senate**, they argued.

Any deal that fell short of the Senate-ratified treaty would "likely be torn up in the early days of the next presidential administration," they added, anticipating a Republican victory in the 2024 presidential race.

In addition, they noted that a **2015 law passed** before the completion of the initial nuclear deal **requires** that **any new "agreement"** related to **Iran's nuclear program to be transmitted to Congress for a 60-day review** period during which Congress could pass a joint resolution of disapproval that would essentially prevent the deal from going into effect. It said those **mandates** would be triggered by **Iran's progress** toward developing a nuclear weapon over the past year, which would require new oversight measures.

02.07.22

Two electoral successors to Abbas named, for ballot he cancelled on Jan 27

02.07.22

Two potential successors to Palestinian president named to top posts

Palestinians preparing for day after aging leader **Abbas**, with key Israel liaison and presidential aide seen as **future replacements**; Hamas, **Islamic Jihad demand power-sharing** reforms

Reuters| Published: **02.07.22**, 23:14

Two potential successors to 86-year-old Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas were named on Monday to top posts in the Palestine Liberation Organization at a meeting boycotted by his Islamist rivals.

Official Palestinian news agency Wafa said the PLO's 141-member Central Council appointed Hussein Al-Sheikh, 61, an Abbas confidant who serves as key liaison with Israel and the United States, to the PLO's Executive Committee.

He is likely to replace the late Saeb Erekat as the committee's secretary-general.

The council, meeting for the first time in nearly four years, picked Rawhi Fattouh, 73, another Abbas aide, to head the PLO's highest decision-making body, the National Council.

Both men were nominated by the Western-backed Abbas and his Fatah party and are widely seen in the Palestinian territories as possible successors.

They are not expected to promote any shift in policies over the handling of the conflict with Israel.

The Hamas and Islamist Jihad movements turned down an invitation to attend the council's two-day session, which began on Sunday, saying Abbas had to institute power-sharing reforms first.

"These appointments are void, illegal and lack (national) consensus. It is nothing but a redeployment of (Abbas's) team," Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhoum said in Gaza. Palestinian analysts said the Central Council's appointments could improve Sheikh's and Fattouh's prospects of succeeding Abbas, but internal divisions and other potential challengers cloud the political picture.

02.07.22

Police used NSO spyware to hack phones of journalists, activists & bureaucrats

02.07.22

Netanyahu compares alleged police use of NSO spyware to IDF bombing Israeli civilians
Citing media reports, former PM assails cops for using military-grade hacking tool without authorization to snoop on civilians, including his own son and inner circle to gather evidence in his corruption trial

Amihai Attali, Yuval Karni | Published: 02.07.22, 22:18

Speaking before the Knesset plenum Monday evening, Opposition Leader Benjamin Netanyahu upbraided Israel Police over the spiraling NSO scandal, equating the alleged unauthorized use by cops of the military-grade spyware to the Israeli military bombing civilians.

The forum had convened to discuss recent reports alleging that law enforcement employed the malware to hack the phones of journalists, political activists, government bureaucrats. Ynet's sister publication Calcalist also revealed that the powerful hacking tool had also been used to snoop on Netanyahu's own son and members of his inner circle to gather evidence against the former premier in his lengthy corruption trial.

"This is a dark day for the State of Israel," said Netanyahu in reference to the reports. "Without speaking of my own matter, which has wide implications, this matter concerns every single one of our citizens without exception. Something unthinkable happened here."

"Spyware designed to prevent terrorism and fight our enemies has become an everyday tool by cops to spy on civilians, against any law and norm. This is similar to the IDF using planes used against Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas to blow up Israeli citizens," Netanyahu said, demanding an independent, extra-governmental commission of inquiry. Earlier on Monday, Public Security Minister Omer Barlev, who oversees law enforcement in the government, announced on Twitter he was setting up a cabinet-level commission of inquiry, saying he won't allow "such failings on my watch." However, that level of scrutiny did not satisfy at least three of Barlev's cabinet colleagues. Netanyahu, who lost power in June after 12 consecutive years as prime minister and now serves as leader of the opposition, is facing charges of bribery, breach of trust and fraud in three cases for which he was indicted in 2019. All are being tried together.

He has denied any wrongdoing and accused prosecutors of colluding with allies in media, law enforcement and the political system to carry out a politically motivated witch-hunt in order to oust him from power.

His successor and protégé-turned-foe Prime Minister Naftali Bennett took the rostrum afterward and slammed Netanyahu and other members of his Likud Party for claiming Bennett won the premiership only thanks to the police use of the sophisticated malware.

"It was democracy, not conspiracy, that sent you to the opposition. The reason you are not in government today is that you were unable to form a coalition," he said. The prime minister also spoke about the ongoing coronavirus wave, as well as the government's recent decision to roll back the Green Pass mandate and to drop compulsory isolation for students who came into contact with a confirmed coronavirus patient.

"I don't believe coronavirus is the end of humanity as some have said," Bennett said, alluding to Netanyahu's recent criticism of the government's COVID-19 measures. "The easiest thing for me to do is to call for lockdown. But I promised we would fight to keep the economy open." In direct criticism of the previous Netanyahu-led government's lockdown policies, Bennett mocked his political rivals, saying they were "disappointed we did not crash the economy."

02.07.22

Israeli, Palestinian representatives to propose 2-state confederation next week

02.07.22

Israeli, Palestinian representatives propose 2-state confederation

Nearly 3 decades after the Oslo Accords, talks of a feasible solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are taking place, with hints of optimism looming in light of a potential alternative - to be presented to U.S. and U.N. officials later this week

Associated Press| Published: 02.07.22, 09:29

Israeli and Palestinian public figures have drawn up a new proposal for a two-state confederation that they hope will offer a way forward after a decade-long stalemate in Mideast peace efforts.

The plan includes several controversial proposals, and it's unclear if it has any support among leaders on either side. However, it could help shape the debate over the conflict, and will be presented to a senior U.S. official and the U.N. secretary general this week.

The plan calls for an independent state of Palestine in most of the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem, territories Israel seized in the 1967 Six Day war. Israel and Palestine would have separate governments but coordinate at a very high level on security, infrastructure and other issues that affect both populations.

The plan would allow the nearly 500,000 Jewish settlers in the occupied West Bank to remain there, with large settlements near the border annexed to Israel in a one-to-one land swap.

Settlers living deep inside the West Bank would be given the option of relocating or becoming permanent residents in the state of Palestine. The same number of Palestinians — likely refugees from the 1948 war — would be allowed to relocate to Israel as citizens of Palestine with permanent residency in Israel.

The initiative is largely based on the Geneva Accord, a detailed, comprehensive peace plan drawn up in 2003 by prominent Israelis and Palestinians, including former officials. The nearly 100-page confederation plan includes new, detailed recommendations for how to address core issues.

Yossi Beilin, a former senior Israeli official and peace negotiator who co-founded the Geneva Initiative, said that by taking the mass evacuation of settlers off the table, the plan could be more amenable to them.

Israel's political system is dominated by the settlers and their supporters, who view the West Bank as the biblical and historical heartland of the Jewish people and an integral part of Israel.

The Palestinians view the settlements as the main obstacle to peace, and most of the international community consider them illegal. The settlers living deep inside the West Bank — who would likely end up within the borders of a future Palestinian state — are radical and tend to oppose any territorial partition.

“We believe that if there is no threat of confrontations with the settlers it would be much easier for those who want to have a two-state solution,” Beilin said. The idea has been discussed before, but he said a confederation would make it more “feasible.”

Numerous disputes still remain, including security, freedom of movement and perhaps most critically, after years of violence and failed negotiations, lack of trust.

The Foreign Ministry and the Palestinian Authority declined to comment.

The main Palestinian figure behind the initiative is Hiba Husseini, a former legal adviser to the Palestinian negotiating team going back to 1994, who hails from a prominent Jerusalem family.

She acknowledged that the proposal regarding the settlers is “very controversial” but said the overall plan would fulfill the Palestinians’ core aspiration for a state of their own.

“It’s not going to be easy,” she added. “To achieve statehood and to achieve the desired right of self-determination that we have been working on — since 1948, really — we have to make some compromises.”

Thorny issues like the conflicting claims to Jerusalem, final borders and the fate of Palestinian refugees could be easier to address by two states in the context of a confederation, rather than the traditional approach of trying to work out all the details ahead of a final agreement.

“We’re reversing the process and starting with recognition,” Husseini said.

It’s been nearly three decades since Israeli and Palestinian leaders gathered on the White House lawn to sign the Oslo accords, launching the peace process.

Several rounds of talks over the years, punctuated by outbursts of violence, failed to yield a final agreement, and there have been no serious or substantive negotiations in more than a decade.

Israel’s current prime minister, Naftali Bennett, is a former settler leader opposed to Palestinian statehood. Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, who is set to take over as prime minister in 2023 under a rotation agreement, supports an eventual two-state solution. But neither is likely to be able to launch any major initiatives because they head a narrow coalition spanning the political spectrum from hardline nationalist factions to a small Arab party.

On the Palestinian side, President Mahmoud Abbas’ authority is confined to parts of the occupied West Bank, with the Islamic militant group Hamas — which doesn’t accept Israel’s existence — ruling Gaza. Abbas’ presidential term expired in 2009 and his popularity has plummeted in recent years, meaning he is unlikely to be able to make any historic compromises.

The idea of the two-state solution was to give the Palestinians an independent state, while allowing Israel to exist as a democracy with a strong Jewish majority. Israel’s continued

expansion of settlements, the absence of any peace process and repeated rounds of violence, however, have greatly complicated hopes of partitioning the land. The international community still views a two-state solution as the only realistic way to resolve the conflict.

But the ground is shifting, particularly among young Palestinians, who increasingly view the conflict as a struggle for equal rights under what they — and three prominent human rights groups — say is an apartheid regime.

Israel vehemently rejects those allegations, viewing them as an anti-Semitic attack on its right to exist. Lapid has suggested that reviving a political process with the Palestinians would help Israel resist any efforts to brand it an apartheid state in world bodies.

Next week, Beilin and Hussein will present their plan to U.S. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. Beilin says they have already shared drafts with Israeli and Palestinian officials.

Beilin said he sent it to people who he knew would not reject it out of hand. “Nobody rejected it. It doesn’t mean that they embrace it.”

“I didn’t send it to Hamas,” he added, joking. “I don’t know their address.”

Feb 7, 2022 headlines

02.06.22 – Su- - - News

NSO Pegasus used in conspiracy to topple Netanyahu; Hayom News calls for mistrial

02.06.22 – Su- - - News

Abbas, of PLO & 141-member Council, appoint two for Abbas succession vote

02.06.22 – Su- - - News Placed in Feb 06 spot – Sunday

Biden restored nuclear waiver to Iran with training services, to help the talks in Vienna

02.06.22 – Su- - - News Placed in Feb 07 spot – Monday

Lattice of 55 in African Union summit, urged by PA to dispute Israel's membership

02.05.22 – Sa- - - News Placed in Feb 05 spot – Saturday

83 Russian battalions on Ukraine border & 14 more in transit, prompt NATO forces

- - Message on Aug 6, 2018 - (Some element) can attain a Lattice of 55