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Bennett appeal; he saved Israel from Netanyahu & needs support before US visit

06.03.22

A year in office, Bennett appeals to Israel's 'silent majority'

PM says chaos and the prospect of never ending elections are behind decision to head current coalition despite the knowledge that a poisonous machine would operate against him; claims he saved Israel from Netanyahu, serving his own interests  
Reuters, Moran Azulay, Itamar Eichner | Published: 06.03.22, 10:20

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett appealed for more open support from what he described as Israel's silent majority on Friday as he marked a year in office with his governing coalition tenuously controlling half the seats in parliament.

In a 27-page pamphlet circulated over social media, Bennett sought to play up his achievements and fend off his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu, a conservative who as opposition leader has accused the government of being soft on national security.

Bennett, a nationalist, ended Netanyahu's record 12-year reign in June 2021 at the head of a rare cross-partisan alliance that includes an Islamist party representing members of Israel's 21% Arab minority, many of whom identify with the Palestinians.

Casting attacks on him as offset by the "silent Zionist majority", Bennett urged his supporters: "Raise your voice. Spread our message that decent people with different views who love the country can sit together and work for its betterment."

"About a year ago, the State of Israel reached one of the most difficult moments the country had ever known," Bennett wrote.

"Chaos, endless rounds of elections, government paralysis, the cities of Lod and Acre ablaze in riots," Bennett said referring to Last May's riots in mixed Jewish-Arab cities. "Israel was led by one man who enslaved the country in the service of his legal problems, while in the face of murderous enemies, the country displayed a terrible weakness," the prime minister said in reference to his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu.

"We were just a few days away from a fifth election campaign that would have torn this country apart, and then I made the hardest and most important decision of my life: To form a government that will save Israel from this exact chaos and will restore it to proper function, and to join in with people with different opinions of my own in order to save the country," Bennett wrote.

Bennett stated that he knew the move would turn a "mighty poisonous machine" against him, and so he took it upon himself to be the one who will shield the State of Israel, and together with his political partners he reestablished a functioning country.

Bennett went on to say that despite accusations against him for cooperating with Islamist Ra'am's leader Mansour Abbas, Netanyahu had been in negotiations with the Arab Knesset list to join his own government and was prevented from doing so by his far-right partners in the Religious Zionist party.

A lawmaker from Bennett's own party, former coalition whip quit in April, citing sectarian disputes and ending his 61-59 seat majority in the Knesset. That left him vulnerable to no-confidence motions and banking on disarray among the opposition to survive.

An opinion poll broadcast by Channel 12 TV last week found that, were an election held now, Netanyahu would come out ahead, set to wield 59 parliament seats while parties in the current coalition would end up with 55. Among Netanyahu's allies are ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties that sometimes distance themselves from Zionism.

Forty-six percent of Israelis deemed Netanyahu best-suited for top office, whereas 21% favoured Bennett, the Channel 12 poll found.

The incumbent's political jeopardy comes at an important diplomatic juncture. He is due to host U.S. President Joe Biden soon - perhaps later this month - to strategize on Iran and discuss the possible warming of Israel's ties with Saudi Arabia.

06.02.22

IAEA chief convenes with Bennett files; report Iran is over 18 times the limit

06.02.22

IAEA chief arrives for meeting with Bennett

Rafael Grossi also expected to also meet head of Israel's atomic energy commission days before IAEA board of governors mull if to rebuke for failing to answer questions on uranium traces at undeclared sites

Itamar Eichner | Published: 06.02.22, 21:21

International Atomic Energy Agency Director General Rafael Grossi has arrived in Israel and will meet with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, according to a statement from Bennett's office on Thursday.

The visit comes soon after the release of the UN watchdog's report estimating that Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium had grown to more than 18 times the limit laid down in Tehran's 2015 deal with world powers.

On Tuesday, said that Iran continues to lie about its nuclear program.

Bennett read aloud from a selection of the files, allegedly stolen by Mossad, some of them translated into English.

"Iran stole classified (IAEA) documents ... and used that information to systematically evade nuclear probes," he said. "How do we know? Because we got our hands on Iran's deception plan a few years back."

"It is right here in my hands, in the Persian language, hundreds of pages marked with a stamp of Iran's Intelligence Ministry. There are even some handwritten notes on the documents by senior Iranian officials, like this one, written by then-Defense Minister Mohsen Fakhrizadeh."

Fakhrizadeh was assassinated on November 2020 in an operation Iran has attributed to Israel.

In addition to meeting the prime minister, Grossi is expected to meet with the Director General of Israel's atomic energy commission, Zeev Snir.

Days after the visit, the IAEA board of governors will convene to decide whether to rebuke Iran for failing to answer longstanding questions on uranium traces at undeclared sites. Israel has been working behind the scenes to urge the organization to take the step which may anger Iran and damage prospects for rescuing the 2015 Iran nuclear deal.

06.02.22

Gantz meets Indian PM Modi, on drone production capabilities and joint R&D

06.02.22

Gantz meets Indian PM in visit marking 30 years of diplomatic relations

Defense Minister says visit is an opportunity to deepen security for increased world stability, strengthen partnerships and expand technological cooperation between countries  
i24NEWS, Ynet | Published: 06.02.22, 19:57

Defense Minister Benny Gantz on Thursday met in India with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on a visit marking 30 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries.

"This is an opportunity to deepen our security cooperation and increase stability around the world," Gantz said.

Earlier the defense minister met high ranking Indian officials including his Indian counterpart Shri Rajnath Singh. Gantz also visited the National War Memorial in New Delhi, paying tribute to fallen soldiers.

The ministers discussed global strategic challenges, military cooperation, defense industrial cooperation, and joint R&D.

They also discussed a cooperation agreement signed between the Indian DRDO (Defense Research and Development Organization) and Israel's Defense R&D Directorate, which will allow the expansion of technological collaboration between the countries by putting the focus on drones and defensive capabilities.

During the bilateral discussion, the ministers declared their intention to exploit Israel's technological advancement and operational experience, as well as India's extraordinary development and production capabilities.

Finally, the ministers discussed government-to-government partnerships as well as military training.

06.02.22

Biden visit for Abbas relief, stirs calm tactic to nix PLO from US terror list

06.02.22

Ahead of Biden visit, Palestinians consider revoking recognition of Israel  
Ramallah plans to gradually up the ante against Jerusalem in a bid to stir international pressure and turn the screws on the White House in order to score lucrative overtures from the Americans

Elior Levy | Published: 06.02.22, 10:29

The Palestinian Authority (PA) is considering suspending its recognition of Israel ahead of U.S. President Joe Biden's upcoming visit to Israel, Palestinian sources told Ynet on Thursday.

The Palestinian leadership has agreed on a tactic of gradually upping the ante against Jerusalem in a bid to stir international pressure and turn the screws on the White House in order to score lucrative overtures from the Americans.

As part of the measures, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is considering adopting the Palestinian Central Council's decision to suspend its 1994 recognition of Israel until the latter withdraws from territories it seized in the 1967 Six-Day War and recognizes a Palestinian state within their border. Ramallah is also considering suspending security ties with Jerusalem.

The PA publicly presents these measures as a response to the events of Jerusalem Day in which some Jewish visitors were seen waving Israeli flags and praying on the Temple Mount, breaking a decades-old understanding between Israel and Muslim authorities banning the practice.

Abbas also drew a direct link between simmering tensions on the West Bank and the long-defunct diplomatic talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

Ramallah believes the Biden administration has failed to fulfill its promises to the Palestinians, including the reopening of the U.S. Consulate in East Jerusalem which served as Washington's de-facto diplomatic mission in the PA.

Israel has lobbied the White House behind the scenes to prevent the reopening of the consulate that closed in the days of the Trump administration.

Palestinian sources told Ynet that "if President Biden intends to come to the meeting with [Abbas] offering only a modest economic relief package, then it is better that he not come at all".

According to the sources, a summit between the two leaders without any significant achievements for the Palestinians would only serve to further weaken the already frail PA and push it to the wayside.

The Palestinians will be pleased if the U.S.'s gestures include an announcement on the reopening of the consulate in Jerusalem, removing the ruling Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from the U.S. list of Foreign Terrorist Organizations, and the reopening of the PLO mission in Washington which was also closed during the Trump administration.

Biden and Abbas last met in Ramallah in 2010 when the former served as vice president under Barack Obama.

As part of the Palestinian pressure campaign, Abbas scolded U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken in a phone call for what he considered "the international community's lack of action against Israel and its actions" and Washington's silence on "Israeli provocations that breach international law."

Israeli sources are concerned this policy shift may further increase tensions with the Palestinians.

06.01.22

Bill to ban Palestinian flag in state-funded institutions passes in first reading

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Bill to ban Palestinian flag in state-funded institutions passes in first reading

Legislation's sponsor MK Eli Cohen calls on protesting Arab lawmakers to 'go to Gaza or Jordan'; 63 members of parliament, including PM Bennett and Speaker Levy, vote in favor to 16 against

Moran Azulay | Published: 06.01.22, 23:57

A controversial bill that seeks to ban the Palestinian flag in state-funded institutions passed in a first reading in the Knesset plenum Wednesday night.

The legislation passed with 63 members of parliament voting in favor to 16 who voted against.

All members of Yesh Atid, apart from Knesset Speaker Mickey Levy who voted in favor, were absent from the vote. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and other members of the coalition voted in favor while the Islamist Ra'am party voted against the bill.

On Sunday, lawmakers were given permission to vote their conscience on the bill, which came after hundreds of Arab students held two pro-Palestinian rallies at Tel Aviv University and Ben Gurion University and stirred public furor.

The bill stipulates that the hoisting of flags of enemy states, or hostile entities like the Palestinian Authority, will be banned in state-funded institutions, including universities.

Several Arab lawmakers voiced their protest of the bill during deliberations, to which the sponsor of the legislation, Likud MK Eli Cohen, responded by telling them to "go to Gaza or Jordan."

"Friends, imagine someone flying the al-Qaeda flag in the United States, imagine UK hospitals flying the IRA flag, imagine Saudi schools flying the Houthi flag," Cohen said in the chamber. "Nowhere else in the world is it conceivable."

"Had they not lived in Israel, they'd be living in fear in Lebanon, living in abject poverty or getting slaughtered in Gaza," he continued as furious Arab legislators were ejected from the plenum one by one.

"Rallying around with the [Palestinian Liberation Organization] flag in universities represents the aspirations of those who wish to exterminate the Jewish state, that's their message. Even now, the Palestinian Authority is paying stipends to those who murder Jews. Even now, your education system continues to incite against and malign the Jews and Israel."

Earlier on Wednesday, a large Palestinian flag that was hung alongside the Israeli flag on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange building in Ramat Gan was removed after several hours following public outcry. Progressive left movement Mehazkim claimed responsibility for the sign, saying it came in protest of the proposed legislation.

06.01.22

Massive PA flag on Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, removed after public outcry

06.01.22

Massive Palestinian flag hung in central Israel removed after public outcry  
Activist group hangs banner in protest of proposed bill to ban Palestinian flags in educational institutions; group leader says will continue to 'fight for common future'  
Korin Elbaz Alush | Published: 06.01.22, 20:03

A large Palestinian flag that was hung alongside the Israeli flag on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange building in Ramat Gan Wednesday morning was removed several hours later after stirring public furor.

Progressive left movement Mehazkim claimed responsibility for the sign, saying it came in protest of a proposed bill to ban the waving of Palestinian flags in educational institutions spurred by two pro-Palestinian rallies in Tel Aviv University and Ben Gurion University.  
Mehazkim director and founder Ori Kol said that he was not disheartened by the decision to remove the flag and that his group will press on.

"There are still two nations here, and within them Jews and Arabs that will continue to fight for a common future. The sign was just the beginning," he said.  
"There is no law in the world that will erase the fact that two nations live here and there is not a single democracy that prohibits waving flags of a national minority that makes up more than 20 percent of the country's citizens."

Despite public protest, similar banners were also hung in Nazareth and Tira.

Throughout the day, passersby near the banner were heard exclaiming "shame", "I'm embarrassed to be a resident of this city", and "it's a sad day for Ramat Gan". Some people even traveled from outside the city to see it for themselves.

"I see this and tears fill my eyes," said Uzi, a Ramat Gan resident. "Who signed off on this filth? Where is the mayor? In the heart of our country, a country whose finest sons sacrificed their lives, the flag of the enemy is proudly waved."

Ramat Gan Mayor Carmel Shama-Hacohen said he did not approve despite the activist group claiming otherwise.

"The advertising firm decided to hang the controversial sign," he wrote on Facebook.

"A legal examination had ruled that the sign is totally legal and protected by the right to free speech, but it still hurts the feelings of a sizeable part of residents and paves the way for extremist elements to simmer tensions despite the positive message that calls for coexistence."

On Monday, Shama-Hacohen posted a survey on Facebook that asked the city's residents to vote for or against hanging the Palestinian flag. Although the majority voted against it, the flag was put up nonetheless.

An outraged Opposition Leader Benjamin Netanyahu also protested the banner and took the opportunity to slam the government, which features the Islamist Ra'am party, for "capitulating to terror."

06.01.22

Litzman is second ultra-Orthodox member of Knesset to resign over crimes

06.01.22

Israeli legislator leaves Knesset after assisting accused Australian pedophile  
Ultra-Orthodox former minister indicted for breach of trust and obstruction of justice in Leifer affair when he offered promotions to psychiatrists in exchange for their evaluation that she is unfit to stand trial

Moran Azulay | Published: 06.01.22, 15:52

Ultra-Orthodox legislator and former minister Yaakov Litzman on Wednesday resigned from the Knesset after 23 years at the head of his United Torah Judaism party.

Litzman's resignation was part of a plea agreement reached four months ago with the prosecution, after he was charged with aiding accused Australian pedophile Malka Leifer's attempts to avoid facing trial in Australia.

The former educator was charged with sexually abusing several former students when she was principle of a Jewish girl's school in Melbourne and had fought extradition through the Israeli courts, for six years, causing strain to Israeli Australian relations. She was finally extradited in 2020 after a Supreme Court ruling.



Litzman was charged with obstruction of justice and breach of trust, while he was Health Minister in a government led by Benjamin Netanyahu, when he tried to influence a psychiatric evaluation of Leifer and determine that she was mentally unfit to stand trial. The prosecution claimed he had offered lucrative promotions, in exchange for the desired professional opinion.

In a plea deal with then attorney general Avichai Mandelblit, the former minister pled guilty to breach of trust in the Malka Leifer affair and received a suspended sentence and a fine in exchange for his immediate resignation from the Knesset.

The ultra-Orthodox lawmaker was also suspected of trying to influence Health Ministry officials to prevent the closure of a restaurant owned by a close associate, whose poor sanitation conditions led several customers to fall ill. Litzman handed in his resignation letter to Knesset Speaker Mickey Levy.

"I am ending with satisfaction, many years of service in the Knesset, out of gratitude to the all mighty who allowed me to serve the public with dedication and loyalty," Litzman said in a statement.

Litzman is the second ultra-Orthodox member of Knesset to resign over crimes committed. Last week Shas leader Arye Deri resigned his Knesset seat after he was pled guilty to tax evasions.

06.01.22

300 of Ethiopia to leave for Israel this week, ultimately leaving none behind

06.01.22

300 of Ethiopia's Falash Mura to leave for Israel this week

Operation Zur Israel will allow up to 3,000 Ethiopians who identify as Falash Mura, descendants of Ethiopian Jews, to make Aliyah to Israel, where they will undergo conversions to Judaism; 'I am Jewish and Zion is my country' says one of the immigrants; Israeli immigration minister calls this 'a historic event'; JTA/Cnaan Lipshitz| Published: 06.01.22, 13:45

The atmosphere was festive at the Ethiopian city's only synagogue as the congregations prepared to send off 300 Falash Mura community members who are moving to Israel.

"Everyone is happy because today's a day of hope," said Abraham Zemen, a 49-year-old regular, at the service Tuesday at the Hatikvah synagogue, a corrugated-metal structure with a Torah ark and seats for about 600 people.

Hatikvah means hope in Hebrew and it is also the name of the Israeli national anthem. It also describes the emotion harbored by thousands of people in Ethiopia who identify themselves as Falash Mura, descendants of Ethiopian Jews who converted to Christianity about 200 years ago, sometimes under duress.

Over the past 40 years, Israel has haltingly allowed thousands of Falash Mura to immigrate, with the aim of reuniting families of Ethiopian Jews in Israel and ultimately leaving none behind in Ethiopia, a poor African nation where the average life expectancy is 67 years. Wednesday's flight is one of the first since Israel reopened immigration for a small number of Falash Mura last year.

Abraham Zemenu did not make the list drawn up by the Jewish Agency and Israel's immigration authorities. He'll remain in Gondar this week as 300 people leave on two flights.

Kefale Tayachew Damtie, a father of six from Gondar, Ethiopia's sixth-largest city, will be on the Wednesday flight. (Another flight with 120 Falash Mura is scheduled to fly out later this week.)

Damtie has not seen his mother in years but has not told her that he's coming.

"I'll do it right before I board the plane to Israel. I don't want to disappoint her," said Damtie, 56, who lives with his wife and children in a rented 300-square-foot room with no running water.

Damtie, who has been waiting to immigrate to Israel for 23 years, has good reason to be cautious. Geopolitical complications, COVID-19, political instability in Israel and disagreements there about the country's Falash Mura policy have delayed and otherwise complicated immigration for the Ethiopians.

Israel considers as eligible for immigration only Falash Mura who have a child or parent in Israel. Their children can come only if those children are single and childless.

Damtie was married when his parents left for Israel, so he stayed behind. He has waited through multiple rounds of Falash Mura emigration, when Israel would let in small groups of people at irregular intervals, each according to the same stipulations. Damtie's children are unmarried so he is able to leave with his whole nuclear family.

"I have been waiting to leave because this is not my home. These are not my people. I am Jewish and Zion is my country," said Damtie. On Tuesday, he and his whole family wore their best clothes as they loaded their only possessions — a serving dish and some clothing — onto a pickup truck bound for Gondar Airport, en route to Addis Ababa ahead of the final flight to Israel Wednesday.

In total, about 95,000 Ethiopians have left from Ethiopia to Israel, beginning with the Beta Israel, a group whose members are widely recognized as Jewish. Almost all members of that group left Ethiopia by 1993 for Israel under its law of return for Jews, which allows the children or grandchildren of Jews or recognized converts to gain citizenship automatically.

Falash Mura are not eligible under the law of return. But Israel admitted some that year anyway in response to lobbying by Beta Israel Jews who wanted the state to let in their Falash Mura relatives.

Over time, about 25,000 Falash Mura have come to Israel, according to Jewish Agency records.

The immigration of Falash Mura is a divisive issue among Israelis with Ethiopian roots.

Some, especially from the Beta Israel community, believe some newcomers identifying as Falash Mura are Christians seeking a ticket to a Western country. Last year, one group of Ethiopian Israelis filed a petition with the Israeli Supreme Court to halt that immigration. The court threw out the petition, citing jurisdiction issues.

Others from the same community are vocal supporters of the Falash Mura immigration, which they say is a moral duty of the State of Israel and Ethiopian Jews. Israel's immigrant absorption minister, Pnina Tamano-Shata, who was born in Ethiopia, told Ynet about the flight: "It's a historic event and I'm glad that after unremitting efforts we are continuing Aliyah from Ethiopia."

The flight Wednesday is organized by the Jewish Agency for Israel and the Israeli government and it's part of an operation called "Zur Israel," launched by the government last year and funded partly by the Jewish Federations of North America, Keren Hayesod and the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

The Jewish Agency estimates that there are 10,000 Falash Mura who meet Israel's immigration criteria, though many of them have married children who would be ineligible to join their parents.

Operation Zur Israel will allow up to 3,000 of them to move to Israel, where they will undergo Orthodox conversions to Judaism in accordance with a promise they must make to be allowed to immigrate.

But even though the Falash Mura are not considered Jewish by the State of Israel and Orthodox rabbis, many of them have formed Jewish communities in Gondar, where they pray and study Hebrew. Rabbi Menachem Waldman, the Israeli Chief Rabbinate's point person for Jewish issues in Ethiopia, has trained a group of young Falash Mura men in leading services at Hatikvah Synagogue.

In honor of the departure of the 180 passengers on Wednesday, those men led a special service that ended with the singing of "Hatikvah."

Operation Zur Israel means that "thousands of new immigrants from Ethiopia will be able to fulfill their dream and unite with their relatives in Israel after many years of waiting,"

Yaakov Hagoel, the acting chairman of the Jewish Agency, said during his visit to Ethiopia to oversee preparations for the flights this week.

Damtie knows just what he'll do when he gets to Israel. His first order of business is to hug his mother, whom he last saw when she visited Gondar.

"Then I want to see Jerusalem, the city I have been dreaming so much about," he said.

Content distributed by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency news service.

06.01.22

PA premier may resign as scapegoat, for US & EU concerns blocking financial aid

06.01.22

Palestinian premier could be forced to resign, sources say

Sources say Mohammad Shtayyeh will be removed from his post amid internal fighting to replace PA President Mahmoud Abbas and in wake of inadequate pandemic management, lack of a political horizon, absence of U.S. & European financial support  
TheMediaLine| Published: 06.01.22, 12:36

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas is seriously considering relieving Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh of his post, a senior Palestinian source said.

This news comes as conflicting reports have circulated about Shtayyeh's political future.

Shtayyeh was appointed prime minister in April 2019. His tenure in office has been marred by several crises, both internal and external, which have made it difficult for him to achieve many of his stated goals.

Ramallah-based political analyst Faris Sarafandi said that a discussion about Shtayyeh's possible resignation can be divided into two parts.

"The first part is related to Shtayyeh, which is the state of failure that affected all aspects of government work, starting with the corona crisis, passing through the crisis of prisoners' families whose salaries were cut off, and the current teacher crisis," he explained.

Sarafandi says this is one of the reasons that the idea of dismissing Shtayyeh has moved to the forefront.

"But the other matter is related to internal conflict within Fatah, which resurfaced largely after the appointment of Hussein al-Sheikh as secretary of the Executive Committee of the Palestine Liberation Organization," he said.

Al-Sheikh, who had been serving as Palestinian Authority minister of civil affairs, last week was appointed to the top PLO position, making him the frontrunner to succeed Abbas.

"It is quite clear that there are conflicts within the central committee of the Fatah movement that will affect Shtayyeh, and he will pay the price in an attempt to turn things around," according to Sarafandi.

He says that the issue will not be limited to Shtayyeh's dismissal but may mean the end of his "active" affiliation with Fatah, the political movement led by Abbas.

"The result of his failure as prime minister led to severe criticism of the movement which has paid the price for his policy," Sarafandi said.

Fatah's recent humiliating loss in student council elections at Birzeit University, where the Fatah candidate list lost to a Hamas landslide, led to public criticism of the PA by senior Fatah leaders who are demanding to separate the movement from the PA.

They argue that Abbas' policies are the reason behind the demise of the once most popular Palestinian faction.

Ahmed Rafiq Awad, president of the Jerusalem Center for Future Studies at Al-Quds University, said that **leaks about the possible forced resignation of Shtayyeh** are “not surprising,” and that this **reflects the state of conflict within the PA and the Fatah movement.**

In light of the massive **political and economic crises** facing Shtayyeh, **replacing him “will not change the situation,”** Rafiq Awad asserted.

“Shtayyeh’s government has been exposed to many crises, bumps, and tests. He came to carry out economic reforms and put in place an economic plan to get out of the stifling financial crisis that the authority is going through due to the scarcity of financial resources. But the coronavirus pandemic and the **lack of a political settlement with Israel** put his government in a dilemma, and it became **unable to perform** its duties and **meet the demands of the street,**” he explained.

The **PA is experiencing the worst financial difficulties since its establishment** more than a quarter-century ago. The treasury is facing a **severe cash crunch,** and this could soon **affect its ability to pay government salaries** and conduct daily business.

Twice this year, Shtayyeh attended **meetings with European Union** officials in the hopes of persuading them **to resume financial aid to the PA.**

He **urged donor countries** to increase their aid so that the government can fulfill its obligations.

The **European Union delayed** transferring 214 million euros in **annual aid to the PA,** amid its contentious bid to **condition** the aid on **removing** what the **EU calls incitement material from Palestinian schoolbooks,** something the **PA denies is contained** in the books.

Most of the aid – some 150 million euros – is earmarked for the PA’s budget, including salaries, while the rest of the **aid is for projects and support** for various civil society organizations and infrastructure renovations.

“The **cessation of American and European financial support** also played a major role in the **failure of the Shtayyeh government.** All the major crises that **occurred during his term;** therefore, this government was not able to provide effective and satisfactory answers to the street,” according to Rafiq Awad.

The muscle behind attempts to force Shtayyeh out is the powerful al-Sheikh.

**Abbas made the appointment of al-Sheikh** as secretary-general of the PLO’s Executive Committee, succeeding the late Saeb Erekat, in a move many interpreted as bringing him one step **closer to succeeding** the 86-year-old **Abbas.**

Yoni Ben-Menachem, a senior researcher at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, said that **al-Sheikh is working with Abbas** to prepare the atmosphere for **replacing the prime minister.**

Ben-Menachem insists that there will be a change because Shtayyeh has lost the trust of al-Sheikh and Palestinian Authority General Intelligence Service chief Maj. Gen. Majid Faraj, who are lobbying Abbas to have Shtayyeh replaced.

Ben-Menachem added that **Shtayyeh has political ambitions to succeed Abbas** and that this has **“angered” al-Sheikh** and others **within Fatah.**

Al-Sheikh enjoys a strong relationship with Abbas and is part of the president's inner circle.

“The presence of Shtayyeh in the government poses a threat to al-Sheikh’s ambitions to succeed Abbas,” Ben-Menachem said.

The race to replace Abbas is fierce and an attempt to replace Shtayyeh won't be easy, since there is major resistance from within Fatah, the largest and ruling Palestinian party, which is going through internal conflicts.

"Al-Sheikh convinced Abu Mazen of his position and that Shtayyeh should be dismissed from the prime minister's office," Ben-Menachem said, using Abbas' nom de guerre. He says Shtayyeh met with Abbas recently to discuss his political future.

"Shtayyeh has a feeling and knows that a conspiracy is being hatched around him, so he met with Abu Mazen, but he does not want to support him and did not give him a clear answer about his position," Ben-Menachem said.

Sources said that Abbas will offer Shtayyeh up as a scapegoat to US President Joe Biden and blame him for many things that concern the Americans, when Biden reportedly will make a visit to the region in a few weeks' time.

Many analysts agree that Abbas and those around him in the PA, including al-Sheikh, are convinced that Shtayyeh must pay the price for the failures of the Fatah-led PA.

There has not been any real outside opposition to a forced resignation of Shtayyeh, including from Israel.

"There is no Israeli opposition to the dismissal of Shtayyeh," said Ben-Menachem. "On the contrary, Israel does not like Shtayyeh because he constantly incites against it."

Two names floated to replace Shtayyeh are former PA Prime Minister Salam Fayyad, and the former head of the Palestine Investment Fund, Mohammad Mustafa, who is close to Abbas.

The story is written by Mohammad Al-Kassim and reprinted with permission from the Media Line.

06.01.22

Saar faction failing four seat minimum, may join Likud under Netanyahu

06.01.22

Israel's New Hope party leader in talks to join Netanyahu-led government

Sources say Saar offered foreign minister portfolio as polling shows faction may not pass Knesset threshold in elections; New Hope denies reports and claim repeated overtures from Netanyahu's allies

Yuval Karni | Published: 06.01.22, 08:35

New Hope leader Gideon Saar is in discussions to join a Netanyahu led government, Ynet has learned.

Saar who is justice minister in the government of Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is considering a renewed partnership with his former political home after resigning from it before the 2021 elections and following his failure to challenge Netanyahu's leadership.

Saar then vowed he would not serve under Netanyahu who is on trial for corruption.

His right-wing faction is considered at risk of failing to pass the minimum four seat Knesset threshold should elections take place.

On Tuesday, Saar made an explicit threat to the survival of the coalition, when he said all members must support an extension to the bill regulating Israeli law over West Bank settlers.

The Islamist Ra'am party, also in the coalition was expected to oppose the extension.

Should the coalition fail to extend the regulations, Israeli law for the most part, will not apply to the West Bank which has not been officially annexed by Israel and remains under military rule.

"Without this law, Israelis would be tried through the military courts, which is something we certainly would not want," Saar said.

"Were it not for this law, security prisoners in the Israeli prison would have to be held in military prisons in Judea and Samaria. The police would not be authorized to investigate crimes committed by residents of Judea and Samaria, even if they took place in Israel.

According to sources, in discussions with the Likud, Saar will be appointed foreign minister and his members of his faction will be given senior positions in Netanyahu's government but insist that the justice ministry, currently led by Saar, be under a minister from the Likud.

Sources inside the Likud said Netanyahu had instructed party members to refrain from attacks on Saar or his faction.

New Hope officials deny they are considering a partnership with Netanyahu and say the Likud has made numerous overtures attempting to lure the faction to their side.

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Ynet-News, May 31, 2022 – Tuesday

05.31.22 – Tu- - - News   Placed in May 31 spot – Tuesday  
PM reads Iran's nuclear activity & lies to UN watchdog from stack of secret files

05.31.22 – Tu- - - News  
US suspends assistance to Sudan, calls international community to condemn coup

05.30.22 – Mo- - - News  
Gantz says Israel should outlaw far-right extremists that rioted in Jerusalem

05.30.22 – Mo- - - News   Placed in May 30 spot – Monday  
Liberman – Gantz want to cut budget for Ultra-Orthodox, instead of Arab schools

05.30.22 – Mo- - - News

Ex-security adviser says attacks on Iran deviate from former rules, to exact a toll

05.30.22 – Mo- - - News

FM offers Suriname, South America, foreign aid to help with severe flooding

05.31.22 – Tu- - - News

UAE lifts tariffs; becoming a major business hub to Israel, Asia & Far East

05.30.22 – Mo- - - News

Bennett shunned from Jerusalem Day event for his appeasement to PA

05.30.22 – Mo- - - News

Travel to Turkey & countries near Iran; refrain identifying as Israeli in public

05.29.22 – Su- - - News

Likud MK Cohen tabled bill to prohibit flags of enemy states in state institutions

05.29.22 – Su- - - News

Bennett seeks unified & united Jerusalem for all times; Rabbi called him traitor