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11.24.22

Israel rescinds 200 PA permits of workers from militant families, citing bomb worries

11.24.22

Israel rescinds 200 Gaza work permits, citing bomb worries

Defense Minister Benny Gantz says Israel will not tolerate attempts by terror groups to exploit the jobs of workers to carry out attacks after Shin Bet apprehends Gazan planning to plant a bomb on a bus in southern Israel

Reuters|04:30

Israel has cancelled 200 out of some 15,500 permits issued to Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to work in its territory after a laborer was accused of planning to carry out a bombing, the Shin Bet security agency said on Thursday.

The suspect, arrested on Oct. 30, told interrogators he had been recruited by relatives in the militant group Islamic Jihad to plant a bomb on a bus in southern Israel, the Shin Bet said.

It said the suspect had been indicted in an Israeli court. It was not immediately clear if he had been assigned a lawyer or how he might plead to the charges.

The Shin Bet said that among Israel's responses was the voiding of around 200 permits of workers who have militant family members.

"The attempt by terror groups to exploit the jobs of workers in Israel in order to carry out attacks endangers the livelihood of hundreds of thousands of residents of the Gaza Strip," Defense Minister Benny Gantz tweeted.

Islamic Jihad had no immediate comment.

Gantz, part of the Israel's centrist outgoing government, had championed expanding the allotment of entry permits in order ease Gaza's grinding poverty and stave off conflict.

A double bombing in Jerusalem on Wednesday, for which there was no immediate claim of responsibility, killed a teenaged Israeli-Canadian and wounded at least 14 other people.

Netanyahu's Likud cancels coalition talks with religious parties, says report

The move comes amid speculations that no breakthrough was made in negotiations on ministerial positions; 'Netanyahu's return to power this time seems to be off to a rather rocky start,' says political expert

11.24.22

Top court upholds ban on screening of documentary 'Jenin Jenin' in Israel

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Top court upholds ban on screening of documentary 'Jenin Jenin' in Israel
Justices reject film director's appeal, say controversial movie riddled with false and misleading accounts regarding 2002 Battle of Jenin
Gilad Morag|03:02

The Supreme Court on Wednesday upheld a ban on the screening of the 2002 documentary film "Jenin Jenin" in Israel.

The judges rejected an appeal by the film's director Mohammad Bakri who filed the motion after the Central District Court in Lod last year banned the screening of the controversial film centered around the 2002 Battle of Jenin.

The court also ordered to confiscate all copies of the film. However, the ban does not extend to Youtube.

Bakri decried the decision, claiming it constitutes an abridgment of Palestinians' free speech.

In 2002, five Israeli reservists who served in Jenin filed a defamation lawsuit against Bakri, claiming the film damaged their reputation. The judges rejected the soldiers' claims since they were not specifically mentioned in the film.

In late 2016, Lt. Col. Nissim Magnagi, who took part in the fighting in Jenin, filed a second defamation suit against the director, claiming his portrayal in the film was false and misleading.

Bakri claimed the film is a documentary in nature, as he simply took a camera crew into Jenin following the battle to film its toll on locals and record evidence of alleged war crimes.

The district judge instructed Bakri to pay Magnagi NIS 175,000 (\$50,000) in compensation and another NIS 50,000 (\$14,500) in legal fees.

Bakri claimed the decision was moot since the battle itself took place two decades ago and its prescriptive period has expired.

However, Supreme Court justices maintained that Bakri's responsibility subsists since the film was publicly screened four times between 2010 and 2012, well within the statute of limitations.

Justices added the film is riddled with misrepresentations and false accounts, and that Bakri sought to concoct a specific narrative. In one scene of the movie, a photo of Magnagi was inserted right as an Israeli soldier was supposedly looting Palestinian citizens at gunpoint.

The court failed to establish a connection between Bakri and an upload of the film to video sharing site YouTube and it remains available online.

Adv. Navot Tel-Tzur, who co-represented Magnagi in court, said: "We're satisfied with the court's verdict. It does justice to the soldiers who participated in Operation Defensive Shield and their families."

Ynet News

11.24.22

Iran hackers publish videos & complete list of IDF names, ranks, addresses & email

11.24.22

Iranian hackers publish alleged security camera footage from Jerusalem blast
Police and Jerusalem Municipality deny footage taken using their cameras; group leaks
personal documents apparently taken from Israeli companies, say gained access to high-
quality satellite images of Israel

Daniel Salami, Haim Goldich 01:55

Iranian hackers on Thursday posted videos allegedly taken from street security cameras
across Israel, including footage from Wednesday's bomb attack at the bus station in
Jerusalem that killed an Israeli teenager.

Israel Police and Jerusalem Municipality both denied the footage, leaked on instant
messaging app Telegram by a hacker group named Moses Staff, was taken using their
cameras.

The hacker group also published personal documents that were apparently taken from
Israeli companies. According to the hackers, they also gained access to high-quality
satellite images of Israel.

One of the videos was published with a caption in Hebrew, saying, "for a long time we
have control over all your activities, step by step and moment by moment."

Last year, Moses Staff leaked a tranche of documents it claimed contained deployment
details of an IDF combat brigade, including job descriptions, a full list of names, e-mail
addresses, phone numbers, and residential addresses of servicemembers.

Some files had details of reserve IDF soldiers and military units, including names, ranks,
military roles, and their correspondence with their units, explaining why they were unable
to show up for duty.

Other files consist of information on thousands of teenagers set to enlist in the IDF,
including those in pre-service programs.

The group also posted photos of Defense Minister Benny Gantz, along with a threat that
he is being surveilled by the hackers.

"We know every decision you make and will hit you where you least expect it. We have
secret Defense Ministry documents, operational military maps and troop deployment
information and will publish your crimes to the world," the hackers then said in their post.

Iran claims Israel killed its colonel in Syrian capital

Revolutionary Guard identifies the officer killed as Col. Davoud Jafari and warned that
Israel will pay for its 'crime'

Ynet News

11.23.22

Netanyahu makes significant portfolio headway as Smotrich urges right-wing

11.23.22

Likud and Shas make significant government headway as Smotrich balks

Deri offered interior and health portfolios, as well as Finance Ministry rotation deal, but Religious Zionist party continues throwing up roadblocks

Moran Azulay|Yesterday | 14:28

Likud and Shas reached understandings in talks toward a new government Wednesday as coalition negotiations with Bezael Smotrich and his Religious Zionist party have hit a snag.

Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu met with Shas Chairman Aryeh Deri and the two agreed that Deri would take the interior and health portfolios and go first in a rotation deal in the Finance Ministry. Shas is also poised to take control of the Religious Services Ministry.

In addition, Deri is also likely to be named deputy prime minister, but will not assume the premiership in case Netanyahu steps down or is incapacitated.

Potential issues could arise with the far-right Otzma Yehudit party as it locks horns with Shas over the Negev and Galilee Ministry.

United Torah Judaism is primed to take the Jerusalem, social equality, and construction and housing portfolios.

Smotrich's party is still eyeing the finance, settlement, and Aliyah portfolios.

After the conclusion of talks with other parties, Netanyahu will then have to face inwards to solve power struggles within his own Likud party and the discontent of fellow party members about relinquishing senior portfolios to their right-wing bloc allies.

As things stand, Likud's MKs Eli Cohen and Miri Regev are poised to become education and transportation ministers, respectively.

Meanwhile, both Likud and the Religious Zionist party evoked Wednesday morning's deadly terror bombings in Jerusalem in order to inject a sense of urgency into coalition talks, but the ultranationalist party is signaling it is growing tired of Likud's horse-trading.

"We're compromising and giving up a lot. But there are red lines we're not willing to cross, nor would the public want us to," Smotrich's party said in a statement.

"Please have some faith and we will get through these negotiations. We will not be talked down to and we won't be maligned. We will stand up for what's important.

It's hard to keep up with Likud's spins and lies. They schedule meetings once every three days and spread misinformation in between. There's no escape from responding to it. This is just an attempt to belittle the values we care about and on which we were elected."

The statement then detailed the party's requirements from Netanyahu and signed off with: "It's time to form a right-wing government to secure the State of Israel."

Likud replied by saying: "Smotrich, forget talking about jobs and appointments and let's sign off on a right-wing government tonight."

Sources involved with the negotiations said that even some within Smotrich's own party think he is overplaying his hand and stalling negotiations too long.

11.23.22

Army Radio host suspended after on air encouraging terrorists against Ben-Gvir

11.23.22

Israeli radio host axed after claiming Jerusalem blast related to coalition negotiations
After insinuating that terror attack might have had something to do with negotiations to form new government, Army Radio suspends Hadas Shtiaif from covering the attack on air

Ran Boker|Yesterday | 07:13

An Army Radio news anchor was suspended Wednesday from covering the terror attack in Jerusalem after alleging the twin blasts were connected to the ongoing negotiations to form a coalition government.

"Police also said that due to fruitful negotiations with a certain character who is about to receive a certain position in the new government – emotions are tense and these emotions also have to do with the situation," Hadas Shtiaif told the audience while on air covering the blast that killed one person and wounded dozens more.

A short time later, Shtiaif posted on her Twitter account that she was suspended from continuing to cover the attack. "I was suspended from covering the terror attack until further notice," she wrote.

"All those wishing me ill, have a party. Don't forget to invite me too."

Shtiaif later posted another tweet aimed against far-right lawmaker Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is seeking the public security portfolio, but officials in the Army Radio clarified that her suspension was due to what she said on air and not what was posted on Twitter.

Ben-Gvir later also turned to Twitter, writing, "Hadas Shtiaif abused the Army Radio microphone this morning in order to back terror, incite against me and tell lies. I hope her suspension won't be temporary!"

He added: "I'm the first to fight for journalists' freedom of speech, but whoever is encouraging terrorists to carry out attacks while being legitimized shouldn't work on Army Radio."

The Army Radio said in a statement: "Hadas Shtiaif's report this morning is under investigation. The anchor has been asked to not cover the terror attack further until the investigation is complete."

11.23.22

Two blasts at Jerusalem bus stops, 1 dead, 26 wounded; Hamas welcomed attacks

11.23.22

Two blasts rock Jerusalem, leaving teen dead, dozen wounded

Police say explosions, 30 minutes apart, were caused by explosive devices planted at the scene by Palestinian terrorists; at least 26 people were wounded in attacks, several in critical and serious condition

Ynet|00:17

Jerusalem was hit by two explosions on Wednesday morning, one at the western entrance of the city and one at a junction in northern Jerusalem, leaving a teenager dead.

At least 26 people were wounded in the attacks, including several in critical and serious condition.

The Israel Police statement said the explosions occurred 30 minutes apart at separate Jerusalem bus stops and are a suspected Palestinian attack. The explosive devices said to have been likely placed in bags near the bus stops and detonated remotely using cellphones.

Shortly after the attack, the Jerusalem District Police began extensive searches at bus and light rail stops as well as other locations with large concentrations of people. Sniffer dogs, patrol officers and police cavalry are participating in the searches, while at the same time the security forces are trying to track down the terrorists who planted the explosives.

"The goal is to prevent the next explosion," said Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai.

"This means bringing all the forces out, not only here, but also to other areas. It could be one terrorist that placed the two explosives, or it could be two. All intelligence services will focus on this issue."

Magen David Adom emergency services said they received a report about the first blast at 7:06am. Six people were treated at the scene, two in critical condition, two in serious condition and two in mild to moderate condition. They were evacuated to the Hadassah Ein Kerem, Hadassah Mount Scopus and Shaare Zedek hospitals in the city.

"It was a crazy explosion. There is damage everywhere here," Yosef Haim Gabay, a medic who was at the scene when blast occurred, told Israeli Army Radio. "I saw people with wounds bleeding all over the place."

Shortly after the first blast was reported, a second was reported at Ramot Junction in northern part of the capital. Three were reported slightly wounded from shrapnel as a result of the explosion. The medical teams of the Ihud Hatzala provided first aid at the scene.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, a far-right Otzma Yehudit lawmaker who has called for the death penalty for Palestinian attackers and who is set to become the minister in charge of police

under Prime Minister-elect Benjamin Netanyahu, said the attack gave him impetus to take a tougher stance on Palestinian attackers. "It's time to take a hard line against terrorists, it's time to make order," he tweeted.

The spokesman for Hamas, Abd Latif al-Kanou, welcomed the attacks: "The Zionist occupation is paying the price today for its crimes and aggression against our people and the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and we have warned about this repeatedly. Our people will not remain silent in the face of this, and the outrage Al-Aqsa will explode and spread in all regions"

Highway 1 from the Cedar Tunnel to the west was closed to traffic following the attacks. i24NEWS and news agencies contributed to this story

11.22.22

Lapid announces first step towards increase of free trade pact with Japan

11.22.22

Israel announces first step towards free trade pact with Japan

Foreign and economy ministry officials to meet with Japanese counterparts in pursuit of deal that could lift bilateral trade valued at more than \$3.5 billion

Israel has agreed to open contacts with Japan aimed at reaching a free trade agreement that could lift bilateral trade valued at more than \$3.5 billion, the Foreign Ministry said on Tuesday.

The first phase will be a meeting between representatives from the Israeli foreign and economy ministries with relevant Japanese officials, according to the statement.

Israeli exports to Japan were valued at \$1.241 billion in 2021, the ministry said, an 8% increase from 2020. The statement noted a 10% increase in imports from Japan to Israel since last year, valued at \$2.333 billion in 2021.

Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid hailed the move as a diplomatic achievement.

"A year ago, my Japanese counterpart and I began discussing ways of deepening our economic ties. Today, Israel and Japan took the first step towards turning that vision into a reality," Lapid tweeted.

"Looking forward to working together to shape an economic partnership agreement between our nations," he added.

"This is a meaningful process that could lead to lower customs, cheaper sales of Japanese cars imported to Israel and an expansion of the Israeli goods exported to Japan," Israel's ambassador to Japan Gilad Cohen said in a statement.

11.22.22

Hesder Rabbis oppose women in IDF combat, where some want to serve

11.22.22

'IDF's integration of women into combat roles puts off religious soldiers'

Religious authorities claim the growing trend of mixed-gendered combat units breaches trust between the military and yeshiva students who choose to enlist; some even call on yeshiva students to refuse draft to Armored Corps

Kobi Nachshoni|Yesterday| 04:26

Officials of a yeshiva program that combines Talmudic studies with IDF service on Tuesday issued a stern warning to the military about the continued integration of female soldiers into combat units, arguing the trend is pushing away religious men from joining the army.

The Council of the Yeshivot Hesder Association called on the emerging coalition government to push for agreements and legislations that would protect "the right and duty of religious law-observant soldier to serve in accordance with Halacha."

The council held an urgent nightly meeting dedicated to discussing the trend of mixing male and female soldiers in the Armored Corps' officers training course. A long list of influential rabbis signed the petition, aimed to pressure the emerging coalition into including this matter on its agenda. The Armored Corps is known to enlist a large percentage of the Hesder Yeshiva students who draft to the IDF.

"The Council of the Yeshivot Hesder Association opposes the growing trend of gender mixing in the IDF and the exclusion of the halacha-observant soldiers," the Hesder council wrote.

The inclusion of female soldiers in the IDF's Armored Corps has been a controversial matter for years. Recently, more and more steps have been taken to integrate women into these forces, one of them being the ability to partake in the corps' officers course.

The religious critics claim that mixing genders in the course, rather than establishing separate troops, contradicts earlier agreements with the IDF. Head rabbis have said this move breaches the trust between the religious public and the IDF, and some are even calling on their students to refuse to draft to the Armored Corps altogether.

"Let us hope for better days, for days in which Torah-learning soldiers will not be urged to be excluded from combat units, for days in which the IDF will honor its promises," wrote Rabbi Yaaqov Medan.

Israel Women's Network, a feminist non-organization which aims to advance the status of women in Israel, rejected the rabbis' claims. "You are all confused. The IDF is not excluding the religious soldiers, the Hesder Council is excluding us, the women.

"The Council is looking to create a space that's 'sterile' from women, and prevent us from serving the country the way we want to. Whoever protects the 'right' of a certain public

sector by hiding away women, is actively contributing to the spreading of separation and normalization of the perception that sees us as a sexual objects, and not equal human beings."

11.21.22

Ben-Gvir demanding to manage police & reduce public view of Security procedures

11.21.22

Ben-Gvir wants full control over police as public security minister, sources say
Sources say Ben-Gvir wants commissioner to become his 'assistant' and be in charge of all policies implemented by Israel Police; 'Only in Israel the police manage the minister,' says source within Ben-Gvir's party
Meir Turgeman, Moran Azulay|05:05

Sources involved with coalition negotiations have said that Itamar Ben-Gvir, who is demanding to be given the public security portfolio, wants to be in charge of the policies implemented by the police, potentially compromising its independence.

While coalition negotiations between Likud and Ben-Gvir's Otzma Yehudit party are hitting a few snags along the way, such as Netanyahu's refusal to give them the Negev and Galilee portfolio, there's one area in which they appear to have come to an agreement.

If the agreement between Ben-Gvir and Likud is eventually materialized, Public Security Ministry will have full control over the policies of the Israel Police, whereas now that responsibility lies with the commissioner.

Decisions such as force deployment procedures have so far been dependent on the commissioner alone, but according to the agreement, will be transferred to the public security minister's jurisdiction. Additionally, the Defense Ministry budget will be distributed within the police according to the public security minister's considerations. "The meaning of Ben-Gvir's demands is that the commissioner will become the assistant to the minister," a senior police official said. "The powers of the commissioner should be preserved alongside the powers of the minister, in order to maintain the democracy that exists today."

"Police Commissioner Kobi Shabtai thought he would get a fourth term and never imagined he would have to answer to Ben-Gvir," a senior police official said. "He's wary of Ben-Gvir perhaps wanting to appoint a new commissioner. He'll have to work hard to appease him."

On the other hand, a senior member of Otzma Yehudit said that "in any normal country the minister decides the policy. Only in Israel the police manage the minister, and do not have to obey his decisions."

Commissioner Shabtai himself denied the reports, insisting he would welcome whoever is appointed for the post.

The two recently met each other in person after senior officers around Shabtai approached a few officials close to Ben-Gvir - in order to initiate a reconciliation process between him and the commissioner.

The bad blood between Ben-Gvir and Shabtai is stretching back years. Last year, Shabtai accused Ben-Gvir of wanting to incite violence in mixed cities. Ben-Gvir, meanwhile, threatened to sue Shabtai and tweeted that he is not a film producer and should resign.

11.21.22

Israel pressured by Red Cross to open Syria crossing for Golan Heights students

11.21.22

Israel pressured to reopen Syria crossing for Golan Heights students

Sources tell i24NEWS that International Committee of the Red Cross is one of the parties putting pressure on the Israeli side, along with religious leadership of the Syrian citizens in the Golan and others

Razi Tatour|01:15

International parties are pressuring Israeli authorities to reopen the Quneitra border crossing with Syria for students from villages in the Golan Heights, allowing them to study in Syrian universities, media reports said Sunday.

The crossing was closed after the outbreak of the Syrian civil crisis, with the number of students coming to Syria from the Golan Heights estimated to be dozens annually.

According to i24NEWS correspondent Razi Tatour, private sources in the Golan Heights said the International Committee of the Red Cross is one of the parties that supervises the matter and puts pressure on the Israeli side - along with religious leadership of the Syrian citizens in the Golan, the leadership of the Druze community in Israel and its spiritual head, Sheikh Mowafaq Tarif.

The sources said that registration lists for studying in Syria were opened to students in the Golan Heights, following the calls to reopen the Quneitra crossing.

Sources close to Tarif confirmed that there have been talks in this regard with both Russian and Israeli sides, noting that the matter is followed up by Sheikh with the official authorities all the time.

However, in a response to an inquiry, the Public Security Ministry denied it received any official directives in this regard in recent months.

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11.20.22

Lapid offered to mediate between Netanyahu and Biden Democrats

11.20.22

Lapid says offered to mediate between Netanyahu and U.S. Democrats

Outgoing PM says he has a better relationship with the Democratic Party than his predecessor, and can offer advice to new government; adds he urged Biden to prepare a military option in order to reach an agreement with Iran

Itamar Eichner|Yesterday | 14:56

Outgoing Prime Minister Yair Lapid said Sunday that he offered to mediate between Benjamin Netanyahu and the Democratic Party in the United States.

In a closed meeting with JNF UK, Lapid said that he "has a better relationship with the Democrats than Netanyahu, and I offered the new government my help."

Lapid also spoke to members of the philanthropist organization on his plans after he leaves office, and said that he had had long conversations with U.S. President Joe Biden on Iran.

"What I'm trying to do is to achieve a longer and stronger nuclear agreement," he said. "I've talked about this with President Biden, who said that a deal with Iran would not be reached any time soon," Lapid said.

"In 2015, before signing the nuclear agreement, President Barack Obama revealed that the U.S. had bunker-penetrating bombs, which convinced the Iranians to sign the deal," the prime minister said.

"If the Americans can present such a military option again, I'm sure it will help to come up with a longer, stronger agreement. I told Biden that a real military option should be put on the table, but unfortunately, it still has not happened," he said.

11.20.22

Netanyahu to Republican Jews: his 2015 speech in Congress led to Abraham Accords

11.20.22

Netanyahu to Republican Jews: My controversial 2015 speech in Congress led to Abraham Accords

Netanyahu says speech helped cement secret ties with Arab countries that led five years later to the Abraham Accords; perception among Democrats at the time were that he was playing partisan politics, a major factor in Democratic disaffection with him

JTA/Ron Kampeas|Yesterday | 13:23

Benjamin Netanyahu's acceptance of a Republican invitation to speak to Congress in 2015 to decry the Obama administration's Iran policy notoriously helped bring about a rupture between the once and future Israeli prime minister and Democrats.

Now Netanyahu says the decision helped cement secret ties with Arab countries that led five years later to the Abraham Accords, the 2020 agreements brokered by the Trump administration that normalized ties between Israel and four Arab countries

“We got phone calls in real time from Gulf States, who were saying we cannot believe what your prime minister is doing, and he’s facing, admittedly, a great leader, the most powerful man in the world, the American president, but if he’s willing to do that, we’d like to cement the ties a lot further, and that led to the secret meetings. between myself in 2015 and Gulf leaders,” Netanyahu said Saturday. “That led to the laying the foundations for the Abraham Accords.”

Netanyahu was speaking about the benefits of one speech seemed designed to inflame partisan tensions in the United States during another talk to a partisan U.S. audience, addressing the annual Republican Jewish Coalition conference. His speech, delivered via video from Israel, made him the first Israeli prime minister, elected or otherwise, to address a partisan Jewish group in the United States.

Netanyahu said he could not describe the contacts from the Gulf States further. Jared Kushner, Donald Trump’s son-in-law and special advisor, wrote in his book that Netanyahu came close to derailing the deals multiple times.

Netanyahu relayed his story to the RJC conference after the group’s chairman, Norm Coleman, asked him why he agreed to accept the invitation to speak in Congress knowing that the decision was not coordinated with the White House.

The Republican speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives in 2015, John Boehner, who invited Netanyahu, broke protocol by keeping the invitation secret until the last minute from the White House and from Democrats in Congress. Netanyahu and his ambassador to Washington, Ron Dermer, agreed to keep the secret until Boehner issued the formal invitation.

Keeping Boehner’s secret led to a perception among Democrats that Netanyahu was playing partisan politics and was a major factor in Democratic disaffection with Netanyahu, from which he has never fully recovered. The Israeli government that ended Netanyahu’s 12-year stint in office last year, led by Naftali Bennet and Yair Lapid, had as a central platform repairing ties with Democrats. Netanyahu was reelected in Nov. 1 elections and will soon form a government.

Netanyahu told the RJC it was a difficult decision. “I can assure you that wasn’t a simple decision to go to the joint session of Congress and challenge the the policy of a sitting president, whom I respected but I disagree with,” he said. He said the Iran nuclear deal President Barack Obama was negotiating endangered Israel. The deal cleared Congress despite Netanyahu’s speech.

“I made that decision because I believe that ... this agreement endangered the very existence of the State of Israel,” he said.

Netanyahu said he was relieved when Obama’s successor, Trump, pulled the United States out of the deal in 2018. “I was tremendously fortunate to have finally an American administration under President Trump who agreed with this policy,” Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu said in the talk that he was close to President Joe Biden, saying that they had “an easy relationship, a friendship” dating back to 1982 when Netanyahu was deputy chief of mission at the Israeli embassy in Washington and Biden was a senator from Delaware. He also praised Obama for setting U.S. defense assistance at \$3.8 billion a year.

Content distributed by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency news service.

11.18.22

US Ambassador Tom Nides relays Dem opposition to Smotrich & Gvir as ministers

11.18.22

U.S.- Israel relations to suffer if Smotrich becomes defense minister, officials

In depth: Although controversial far-right potential ministers' not named in conversations, administration's concerns made clear warning intimate cooperation will end while major issues loom; expert says Jewish Americans will boycott Smotrich as British Jews had done

Itamar Eichner|Yesterday | 14:26

American officials have expressed their concern over the possible appointment of far-right Religious Zionist leader Bezael Smotrich to head the Defense Ministry.

The possible naming of Itamar Ben Gvir to be the next Public Security Minister is also a cause for the American concerns expressed to Israel, in unambiguous terms.

Officials said they were relaying signals and hints to incoming prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, not to appoint the two to such sensitive positions, although no such request has been made officially.

In meetings held with Netanyahu, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides did not even mention the two controversial potential coalition members, by name. But there was never any doubt which "elephants in the room," were being referred to. Nides worded his message carefully. He did not name any preference the U.S. has for the jobs but reiterated the administration's hope to see someone trustworthy appointed, so that the ongoing intimate dialogue between the security establishments of both countries, could continue.

According to the officials, the revelation of the American concerns was not an attempt by Netanyahu to pressure Smotrich to abandon his demand to be appointed to the Defense ministry, claiming the messages from Washington reflect a real and deep concern that with the far-right legislator, cooperation would be difficult.

To the U.S. the Defense Minister is perhaps the most important person, after the prime minister. There is much at stake including the threats from Iran and the war on terror.

Dialogue between Israeli and American defense counterparts is on a daily basis and faith in the person at the head of Israel's Defense Ministry must be unquestionable. The minister is privy to the most sensitive American secrets, is in dialogue with the White House as well as the military and if Israel appoints someone that cannot be trusted, the intimate relations will end.

As for Ben Gvir, it is already clear that he will not be granted a visa to enter the U.S. after his conviction for supporting terror and inciting violence. Any visa request will be automatically denied when he will have to respond to questions regarding his past terror activity.

In order to overcome that, Ben Gvir will have to work hard to convince the Americans that he has changed. That is not an insurmountable obstacle for him and he will be judged by his actions.

Professor Eitan Gilboa, an expert on U.S.-Israel relations said this is not a case of American intervention in Israeli affairs.

"The Americans have a position and they are issuing advanced warning of the possible results of such appointments," he said.

In Gilboa's opinion, both Smotrich and Ben Gvir will be denied entry to the U.S.

"Washington may or may not accept such appointments," Gilboa said. "U.S. President Joe Biden is under pressure from the progressive wing of the Democrat party, that has nearly doubled in Congress, in the midterms, growing from 6 to 11 members," he said.

Although they are still small in number, with the narrow majority in the Senate and the minority in the house, they would cause problems for Biden. Ben Gvir is a gift to the progressives, who have been accusing Israel of being an apartheid state and when Jerusalem requested a billion dollars in special funding to renew the depleted stock of Iron Dome missiles, it took a while before the administration was about to pass the decision," he said.

Gilboa believes that the administration's problems with the incoming Netanyahu government will concentrate on the West Bank, more than on appointments. "Any policy action that interferes with the two-state solution, such as settlement expansion, legislative changes of the 2005 disengagement law and reviving the West Bank settlement of Homesh, or legalizing outposts – are a red rag to a bull," Gilboa said. "The Americans do not want to see the possibility of a two-state solution, destroyed," he said.

He points out the diplomatic wording from Ambassador Nides, who said the U.S. will cooperate with any elected Israeli government which shares American values.

"By values, Nides does not mean those of Ben Gvir or Smotrich," he said.

Gilboa said that the right-wing in Israel thinks the U.S. is dependent on Israel and not the other way around. "We receive 3.8 billion dollars from the U.S. and F-35 stealth fighter jets," he said. "Now the question of occupation has been referred to the International Criminal Court in the Hague. We rely on the U.S. much more than they rely on us, if we take actions that are opposed to their interests, why would they cooperate with us?" he asked.

He also warned of a crisis in Israel's relations with the Jewish American communities. "Somtrich will be boycotted in the U.S.," he said. "He was already boycotted by the Jews in Britain," he said.

Ben Gvir is considered a follower of the racist Meir Kahana who began his political activism in the U.S. and that memory lingers with Jews there," he said. "Ben Gvir's participation in the memorial to Kahana last week, did not go unnoticed, and reveal he shares the views of a man suspected of terrorism in the U.S.," he said.

Giloba pointed out the possibility that the U.S. will resume nuclear talks with Iran after the midterm elections are over and with a defense minister who has no relationship with the administration, Israel will have no influence on the direction of the talks and will be less able to influence their outcome.

"Should Ben Gvir assume the role of Public Defense Minister, much of the current cooperation will end or be reduced," he said.

11.17.22

Texas Gov Abbott declares Invasion for National Guard to build a border wall

11.17.22

Dems Press WH to Intervene in Texas Gov. Abbott Invoking Invasion Clauses

By Solange Reyner | Thursday, 17 November 2022 05:59 PM EST

Six House Democrats are pressing the Biden administration to intervene in Texas Gov. Greg Abbott's efforts to "usurp the federal government's power to manage international relations and immigration law" after Abbott invoked the U.S. and Texas' constitutions' invasion clauses to "defend our state against an invasion" to combat the record-setting wave of illegal immigration occurring along the border.

"As members of Congress representing the great state of Texas, we are deeply disturbed with recent comments made by the governor of Texas suggesting he has invoked invasion authorities under the U.S. Constitution to justify the use of state resources to further militarize our southern border," wrote the members in the letter organized by Rep. Sylvia Garcia.

"As such, we write to urge the U.S. Department of State and the Department of Homeland Security to intervene in the ongoing efforts of the Texas governor to usurp the federal government's power to manage international relations and immigration law," they added.

Abbott on Tuesday sent a letter to Texas county judges indicating that he would deploy the National Guard and the Texas Department of Public Safety to build a wall along the border.

He also sent a letter Wednesday to the White House explaining the need for more aggressive efforts to curb illegal immigration.

"Your inaction has led to catastrophic consequences. Under your watch, America is suffering the highest volume of illegal immigration in the history of our country. This past year, more than 2 million immigrants tried to enter the country illegally, coming from more than 100 countries across the globe," Abbott wrote in the letter. "Worse yet, your failed border policies recently prompted a United Nations agency to declare that the border between the United States and Mexico is the deadliest land crossing in the world."

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Ynet-News, November 18, 2022 – Friday

11.17.22 – Th- - - News – Thursday
Iran decries alleged French & British agents, attempt to incite a civil war

11.16.22 – We- - - News Placed in November 17 spot – Thursday
British investigating oil tanker hit by Iranian bomb-drone off Oman

11.16.22 – We- - - News Placed in November 16 spot – Wednesday
Israel robotic guns in West Bank for significant accuracy & soldier safety

11.14.22 – Mo- - - News Placed in November 15 spot – Tuesday
Ben-Gvir presents campaign promise; death penalty law for terrorists

11.14.22 – Mo- - - News Placed in November 14 spot – Monday
Abbas says PA must deal with Israel & UK despite they occupy my land

11.13.22 – Su- - - News Placed in November 13 spot – Sunday
Israeli missile attack on Syria weapons disguised as civilian convoy from Iran

11.13.22 – Su- - - News – Sunday
Istanbul terror attack & ongoing manhunt; prompts travel warning for Turkey

11.13.22 – Su- - - News Placed in November 12 spot – Saturday
Gvir seeks only-Orthodox Aliyah, to wedge out Reform and Conservative Judaism

11.13.22 – Su- - - News – Sunday
Israel set to hike funding for yeshivas by 100% to study Torah as full-time job

