

Newsletter Tuesday January 22, 2019

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| **Israel, Ukraine sign bilateral free trade agreement**

In meeting with Ukrainian President Poroshenko as Israeli, Ukrainian trade ministers sign landmark deal, PM Netanyahu thanks his counterpart for Ukrainian efforts to counter anti-Semitism, warns of threat posed by militant Islam, particularly Iran.

Yori Yalon and Israel Hayom Staff

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko shakes hands with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem, Monday | Photo: AP

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in Jerusalem on Monday, as Economy and Industry Minister Eli Cohen and Ukrainian Economic Development and Trade Minister Stepan Kubiv signed a bilateral free trade agreement expected to increase annual trade between the two countries from \$800,000 to \$1 billion a year.

Netanyahu said Poroshenko's visit - his third to Israel since entering office in 2014 - was a testament to the strong ties between Ukraine and Israel, which Netanyahu said "have deep historical and cultural roots."

"Ukrainian Jews make up a significant portion of the population of Israel. And Ukraine is home to a large Jewish community. I think it's the fourth largest Jewish community in Europe. I appreciate your continued efforts to eliminate hate speech and combat antisemitism in Ukraine," the prime minister said.

Netanyahu thanked Cohen, First Vice Prime Minister of Ukraine Stepan Kubiv, and Jerusalem Affairs and Heritage Minister Zeev Elkin, who chairs the Israel side of the Joint Ukrainian-Israeli Intergovernmental Commission on Trade and Economic Cooperation, for their efforts in finalizing the free trade deal.

The prime minister said that during Poroshenko's visit, the leaders would also discuss other ways of increasing cooperation in a variety of fields, including technology, health, aerospace and science.

Netanyahu said he and Poroshenko were "building a more prosperous future for our people. Each of us is doing it on our own, but I think that together, we can do even better.

"And as we seize the future, we must also work together to advance first innovation, technology, industry – that's the future – but also to work against the forces that wish to drag us into the past, because we're a part of the same civilization. And this civilization values freedom, liberty, and it values peace. And it's under attack today, most notably by

the forces of militant Islam. The most potent force of militant Islam is the Iranian regime," Netanyahu said.

Iran, he said, was "devouring one nation after the other – Syria, Yemen, Lebanon, Iraq – and it's killing civilians around the world."

Netanyahu also touched on the Iranian missile strike on northern Israel on Sunday.

"Yesterday, the Iranian regime launched a missile from Syria targeting civilians in Israel. We responded to this unacceptable act of aggression by striking Iranian targets in Syria. Israel will continue to block Iran's efforts to use Syria, Lebanon and [the] Gaza [Strip] as forward bases for attacking Israel for the express purpose which they openly declare: destroying Israel. No country should stand aside while its destruction is being planned or advanced. And Israel exercises its basic right of self-defense and pre-emptive self-defense, a right that exists for every nation. We will continue to take all the necessary actions to protect our people and defend our borders, and we will continue to respond with force to anyone that tries to harm us. "

He concluded by saying, "President Poroshenko, in your speech to the Knesset, you also said that you dreamed of a future where there is no place for violence and terrorism, and where peace, tolerance and prosperity rule. Well I share your vision for the future, and I look forward to our discussions today. I look forward to continuing to work together to build a future that both our people cherish and both our people deserve. Welcome, friend."

In a meeting with President Reuven Rivlin earlier on Monday, Poroshenko said he could not imagine better relations than those Kiev has with Jerusalem.

Rivlin hailed the signing of the free trade deal, which he said would deepen bilateral ties.

Commenting on Israel's retaliatory airstrikes on Iranian and Syrian targets inside Syria, he said, "The international community must understand that the build-up of Iran[ian] forces in the Middle East could lead the region into escalation. We will not tolerate any violation of Israeli citizens' personal security."

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| Politicians sign pact to maintain common decency in campaigns

Lawmakers, including some party leaders, sign pact drafted by rabbinical group to run on "implementable" promises, avoid attacking rivals' relatives • Signatories vow to "avoid humiliating and distorting attacks," keep clear of "baseless accusations."

Hanan Greenwood and Danielle Roth-Avneri

MK David Amsalem (Likud) signs the pact | Photo: Tzohar

Lawmakers from both sides of the political divide signed a pact on Monday to avoid nasty campaign tactics.

The Election Integrity Pact was drafted by Tzohar, an organization of Israeli national-religious rabbis who want to modernize Jewish traditions and find common ground between secular and religious Israelis.

The pact stipulates that the election campaign will be "run in a fair and nonviolent manner in pursuit of the general good, in accordance with the political outlook of each party."

The agreement stresses that "the other side's viewpoints, however wrong they may be, shall not be distorted."

The signatories also pledged to "avoid humiliating and distorting statements against parties and political figures, as well as avoid baseless accusations."

The pact also makes candidates' relatives off-limits, unless the candidates themselves feature relatives in their campaigns. The signatories also pledged to make promises that "they assess to be implementable."

Lawmakers who have promised to uphold campaign decency include coalition chairman MK David Amsalem (Likud), Yesh Atid chairman Yair Lapid, Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked (the New Right), MK Orly Levy-Abekasis (Gesher), Labor Party Chairman Avi Gabbay and Israel Resilience Party Chairman Benny Gantz.

"Engaging in a respectful discourse is paramount," Tzohar said in a statement.

"Making libelous statements is always wrong, but during election campaigns the dam often bursts, and we must be extra careful. After the election we should build a robust Israeli society rather than divide it. We are glad that many prominent lawmakers have heeded our call and signed the pact," Tzohar said.

Newsletter Monday January 21, 2019

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Israel and Chad renew diplomatic ties during PM's historic visit

"Israel is making inroads into the Islamic world... We are making history and we are turning Israel into a rising global power," Netanyahu says in N'Djamena with Chadian President Idriss Déby • Both leaders cite need to confront Islamic terror together.

Ariel Kahana, News Agencies and Israel Hayom Staff

PM Benjamin Netanyahu is greeted by Chad's President Idriss Deby in N'Djamena, Chad, Sunday | Photo: Reuters

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday described his historic visit to Chad and renewal of diplomatic ties with the country after 47 years as "a breakthrough into the heart of the Muslim world in Africa."

"We renew the diplomatic relations between the countries!" Netanyahu posted on Twitter on Sunday during his trip.

Video: Government Press Office

"Israel is making inroads into the Islamic world. This is the result of considerable effort in recent years. We are making history and we are turning Israel into a rising global power," the prime minister said Sunday at a joint press conference with Chadian President Idriss Déby.

"We are continuing on, up the mountain, to new heights," he said from the capital city of N'Djamena, adding that recent attacks by the Islamist Boko Haram insurgency and a terrorist attack on a hotel in Nairobi, Kenya, last week showed the need to cooperate on security.

"The game is far from lost if we pull together," Netanyahu said. "We are happy to know that a Muslim-majority country is connected through diplomatic ties to Israel.

"We believe in the future of Chad and the future of Africa. This is my fourth visit to Africa. Many more Israeli companies will come to Africa, and in March a business delegation will come to Chad to examine opportunities – and I think there are many," he said.

Déby, who visited Jerusalem in November to discuss cooperation in agriculture, counter-terrorism, border protection and technology, echoed Netanyahu's call for closer cooperation.

"I note with satisfaction our shared view on the need to combine forces to tackle terrorism, which spares no country," Déby said on Sunday.

The two leaders said security had been a key topic of discussion during an earlier meeting, but gave no details. Last year a source told Reuters Israel had supplied Chad's army with weapons and equipment to help fight rebels.

Netanyahu has previously cited Chad's renewed relationship with his country as an example of how Israel could make diplomatic inroads in Africa and the Middle East despite its ongoing conflict with the Palestinians.

"Israel will help Chad in a number of areas," the prime minister said. "The most central of which is the fight against Islamist terror, and shared efforts between the countries to clear a million landmines from the Chad-Libya border. The landmines were laid along the border by the Libyans, and today serve the terrorist organization Boko Haram, which is turning them into bombs and using them in terrorist attacks.

During his visit in November, Déby also said his country, an Arab League member, could help Israel renew diplomatic ties with Sudan.

Déby noted that "the world is changing before our eyes. Crises and wars we knew are changing as well. We don't wish them on today's generation or future generations. There's a time for war and a time for peace. Our message is global to all leaders. Chad doesn't presume to speak for black Africa. Chad comes to renew bilateral diplomatic relations."

He said that "if Chad can be a facilitator, Chad will not hesitate."

Newsletter Sunday January 20, 2019

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Palestinians: Qatari envoy to bring bags of money into Gaza

Palestinians say Qatari representative to arrive this week, bearing \$15M in cash to pay Gaza government workers' salaries • Israeli approval for money transfer pending • Israel asked Qatar to freeze payments early in January following rocket attacks.

Daniel Siryoti and Israel Hayom Staff

A government worker in Gaza holds up the money he was paid in December | Photo: AFP

A Qatari payment of \$15 million earmarked to pay the salaries of government workers in the Gaza Strip will be transferred to Gaza this week – in cash – Palestinian officials reported.

According to the Palestinians, a Qatari envoy was due to arrive in Israel either Sunday or Monday, carrying the money in suitcases. Once Israel approves the transfer of funds, the money will be taken to Gaza.

Qatar began making the monthly money transfers to Gaza last year as a way of mitigating the ongoing humanitarian crisis the residents of Gaza are enduring.

According to understandings reached with Egypt and Israel, Doha will transfer a total of \$90 million in aid funds to Gaza.

Israeli officials stressed that the funds were earmarked solely for civilian functionaries' wages.

The first cash infusion was made in November. At the time, Qatar's official news agency said the funds would benefit over 60,000 public servants hired by Hamas since 2007.

After Hamas chose to escalate the situation on its border with Israel, firing several rockets at Israeli communities adjacent to the border fence, Israel asked Qatar on Jan. 7 to delay its monthly disbursement of \$15 million to Gaza.

"Israel sent a message to Qatar that it would not allow the money transfer to Gaza, because Hamas was not honoring the cease-fire understandings and permitting incendiary balloons and rocket fire," a Palestinian official told Israel Hayom earlier this month.

Newsletter Friday January 18, 2019

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Deciding not to decide

The pro-Brexit and anti-Brexit camps in Britain joined forces, if not motives, to ensure that Prime Minister Theresa May's exit proposal failed • Will she overcome internecine battles and successfully lead Britain out of an EU intent on an ugly divorce?

Erez Linn

British Prime Minister Theresa May in Parliament this week | Photo: EPA

The humiliation of British Prime Minister Theresa May in Parliament has exposed British indecisiveness: the desire for independence outside of the European Union versus continued benefits from trade relations. May, who wants to leave a historical legacy, will do whatever it takes to make sure the agreement passes. The next two months will be the most critical.

"Brexit means Brexit and we are going to make a success of it," May said in 2016 after realizing that she would be in charge of leading the United Kingdom out of the EU despite opposition to the move, and despite the fact that such a move was unprecedented in the history of the EU. She said this after the dramatic national referendum in June of 2016, which led to the resignation of incumbent Prime Minister David Cameron and her appointment in his place. While the referendum was a fairly accurate reflection of the British mindset regarding everything having to do with the position of the EU as a drab, elitist organization, the referendum still failed to answer the question: "What do the British want?" Decisions regarding the EU have always been purely tactical.

When Britain joined the EU in the 1970s, it did so only after all other key countries had already committed. It was afraid of being left behind. Even in the 1980s, when then-Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher spearheaded efforts to create a shared European market to remove all trade barriers, making the EU the second-largest economy in the world, she did so because it served her own economic agenda which sought to defeat trade unions at home – not because of any utopian position of unity and harmony with the French and Germans.

It's fair to say that Britain has never wholeheartedly been part of the EU, and therefore has always been treated as a sort of second-class member. But it's worked out for the country, which has received preferential treatment, both budgetary and in terms of trade, regulation, and immigration exemptions. This VIP treatment was a price the EU was willing to pay to keep Great Britain inside.

Knowing whom to divorce

In hindsight, May's statement – "Brexit means Brexit, and we are going to make a success of it" – sowed the seeds of tribulation that have taken her government from bad to worse over the past two years, the peak of which (thus far) was this week's unprecedented humiliation in the British Parliament. Beyond the rampant display of British vacillation, the decision illustrated the dissonance between May's intentions and the intentions of the EU leadership. While May wanted an exit agreement that would show the world you can stay friends with your ex, the EU did everything in its power to make it clear the breakup would be anything but smooth and easy; and set an example for anyone else who ever considers leaving.

If it were to give Britain special terms affording it the best of both worlds, a mass exit from the EU in favor of the U.K. would be unstoppable. So what went wrong, and why – after two years – did they fail to reach an agreement?

Article 50 in the EU treaty states: "Any Member State may decide to withdraw from the Union in accordance with its own constitutional requirements." Until 2009, no such article existed, and, ironically, was drafted by a British diplomat to allay any confusion among EU members. The article was formulated almost at the same time the EU began expanding eastward, during the heyday of European integration when officials in Brussels sought to ensure an orderly separation mechanism from countries engaged in impropriety (e.g. those that violate trade laws, human rights and the like).

EU officials were so confident in their cause that they even began drafting a European constitution. At the time, no one thought Britain would actually want to blow it all up. At most, they thought Britain would once again seek benefits and a special status – just as it had from the moment it entered the EU.

The EU forgives, but it doesn't forget

But plans are one thing and reality is something else entirely. That same British diplomat who added Article 50 to the Union Treaty seemed to have ignited the imaginations of EU opponents in Britain – particularly the conservative Right in the country, which was looking to "reclaim" control of Britain's fate (though, in many cases, they have perhaps exaggerated the involvement of Brussels in British life).

May received an impossible task: Leave the EU in a manner that, on the one hand, would satisfy anyone seeking full independence, and on the other, allow Britain to keep enjoying trade benefits as members of the EU. What's more, from the EU's perspective Britain's full exit was impossible to comprehend because it meant the Good Friday Agreement, which ended the bloodshed in Northern Ireland, could not be maintained. The central condition that led to peace – double citizenship (Irish and British) for citizens of Northern Ireland – isn't possible if one of those countries isn't an EU member.

May, the daughter of an Anglican priest, approaches every issue with zealous and thorough preparation, leaving no comma out of place. She was the most suitable figure to conduct such complex, unprecedented negotiations. Indeed, she managed to reach a 600-page agreement with the EU that would not shame even the most distinguished law firm.

May decided to play it safe. She presented an agreement to her parliament that would remove Britain from EU but leave it subject to trade laws and freedom of movement laws until a comprehensive agreement could be reached on all issues. She thought it was the lesser of two evils, but seriously misjudged the parliamentary mood.

In politics, if you aren't passionate about what you're selling, you'll have a tough time making the sale. May's cold and cautious approach, which likely achieved the most reasonable agreement possible given the current climate in the EU, proved to be her

handicap. Those who wanted a "soft" Brexit got an agreement that kept Britain from accessing the EU's free market; those who wanted a "hard" Brexit believe the agreement would turn Britain into a European colony, since it stipulates that Britain would remain subject to the laws of the EU until the matter of Britain's border with Ireland was resolved. While the members of the British Parliament were wrangling over May's Brexit agreement this week, across the street supporters of both Brexit camps protested. In a surreal display, May managed to get both camps, who have opposed each other with a passion, to ply for the same thing: toppling the agreement.

On March 29, the legal window provided by Article 50 for reaching an agreement will expire. Essentially, if May fails to get her agreement passed in parliament, Britain and the EU will be back to the status quo of the 1970s, meaning the laws that applied to Britain prior to joining the EU will be reinstated, including those pertaining to duties, visas, air travel and regulations.

May, however, should not be underestimated. She has already declared no intention of remaining in office after May 2022, hence she is willing to "fall on her sword" so to speak to get this agreement passed and leave behind a successful legacy. With the help of the Labour Party under Jeremy Corbyn, she just might be able to pull off the impossible and pass the agreement. Otherwise, anything is possible. Britain could be left without an agreement at all, resulting in economic and legal chaos; or Brexit could be off the table altogether.

May, who suffers from diabetes and injects herself with insulin several times a day, was asked about her battle with the illness. "I do what I need to do and move on," she said. It seems that with the Brexit agreement, too, she intends to apply the same approach.

Newsletter Thursday January 17, 2019

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| [40 UN ambassadors to visit Israel on Holocaust Remembrance Day](#)

A delegation of U.N. ambassadors from countries such as Panama, South Sudan, Ukraine to mark International Holocaust Day in Israel following a tour of Nazi death camps in Poland • Holocaust memorial monument found toppled in Ramat Gan.

Ariel Kahana, Danielle Roth-Avneri and Avi Cohen

U.N. Ambassador Danny Danon, second from right, with fellow ambassadors in Poland last April | Photo: Israel Mission to the U.N.

Memorial ceremonies will be held across the world to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day on January 27. As part of the United Nations' commemoration of the day, born of a U.N. resolution initiated by Israeli diplomat Roni Adam in 2005, Israel's Ambassador to the U.N. Danny Dannon will lead a delegation of 40 ambassadors from the U.N. on a trip to Israel.

Among those set to take part in the delegation are ambassadors from the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Hungary, Panama and South Sudan.

Prior to their five-day Israel visit, the ambassadors will visit Poland to learn about the Holocaust and hold a memorial ceremony at the death camps.

While in Israel, the diplomats are expected to meet with President Reuven Rivlin, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other senior government officials. The delegation will visit Jerusalem and Tel Aviv and take a helicopter tour of Israel's northern front and its borders with Syria and Lebanon. While in Israel's north, the envoys will view one of the cross-border terror tunnels dug under the Israel-Lebanon border by Hezbollah.

Danon, who as Israel's U.N. envoy has brought a number of diplomatic delegations to Israel, told Israel Hayom that "this type of delegation does a great deal to promote Israel in the international arena. The ambassadors see from up close the beauty and uniqueness of our country alongside the challenges and regional complexities and return to the U.N. with a positive perspective toward Israel."

He said the impact of the trip "is manifested in their votes in our favor at the General Assembly, in collaborations and in their joining our struggle against the lies spread by our enemies."

Ramat Gan Municipality

A Holocaust monument in Ramat Gan was found toppled to the ground, Wednesday morning

On Wednesday morning, meanwhile, just days ahead of the delegation's visit, a Holocaust monument was found toppled to the ground in Ramat Gan. Dedicated in 1998, the Power of Hope monument was created by sculptor and Auschwitz survivor Ruth Roger. The monument depicts a Jew blowing a shofar and six chimneys in memory of the six million Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

Ramat Gan Mayor Carmel Shama-Hacohen said he would allocate municipal funds toward the monument's repair.

Police have opened an investigation into the incident to ascertain whether this was an act of vandalism or merely the result of the strong winds that have blown through the city in recent days.

Newsletter Wednesday January 16, 2019

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[Iran says it will keep military forces in Syria despite Israeli threats](#)

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will keep its military advisers, revolutionary forces and its weapons in Syria," says Revolutionary Guards commander, who calls PM Netanyahu's threats "a joke" and warns Israel it is "playing with [a] lion's tail."

Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff

Revolutionary Guards Commander Maj. Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari | Photo: Reuters

Iran will keep military forces in Syria, the head of the country's Revolutionary Guards Corps said on Wednesday, defying Israeli threats that they might be targeted if they do not leave the country.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday that Israeli forces would continue to attack Iranians in Syria unless they quickly get out of there.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran will keep its military advisers, revolutionary forces and its weapons in Syria," Maj. Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari, the Revolutionary Guards top commander, was quoted as saying by the semi-official ISNA news agency.

Jafari called Netanyahu's threats "a joke" and warned that the Israeli government "was playing with [a] lion's tail."

"You should be afraid of the day that our precision-guided missiles roar and fall on your head," he said.

Iran and Russia have both backed Syrian President Bashar Assad in a seven-year war against rebels and militants, and have sent thousands of soldiers to the country.

Israel, increasingly concerned that its enemy Iran may establish a long-term military presence in neighboring Syria, says it has carried out more than 200 attacks against Iranian targets in Syria in the last two years.

Netanyahu said on Sunday that Israeli warplanes carried out an attack over the weekend on what he called an Iranian arms cache in Syria.

Newsletter Wednesday January 16, 2019

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Malaysia says it won't host any more events involving Israel

Government will not budge over ban on Israeli athletes in a para swimming competition and has decided it "will not host any more events involving Israel or its representatives" • FM Saifuddin Abdullah: "It's about fighting on behalf of the oppressed."

Associated Press and Israel Hayom Staff

Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin, Wednesday | Photo: AP

Malaysia's foreign minister said Wednesday that the government will not budge over a ban on Israeli athletes in a para swimming competition and has decided that the country will not host any events in the future involving Israel.

Malaysia, a strong supporter of the Palestinian cause, is among the predominantly Muslim countries that do not have diplomatic relations with Israel. The government has said Israeli swimmers cannot join the competition in eastern Sarawak state in July, which serves as a qualifying event for the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics.

Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah said the Cabinet affirmed last week that no Israeli delegates can enter Malaysia for sporting or other events in solidarity with the Palestinians.

"The cabinet has also decided that Malaysia will not host any more events involving Israel or its representatives. This is to me, a decision to reflect the government's firm stance over the Israeli issue," Saifuddin said after meeting a coalition of Muslim groups. The groups submitted a memorandum urging the government to stick to the ban and not to repeat mistakes in the past of allowing Israeli delegates into the country.

Saifuddin said the Palestinian cause was not just a religious issue but also a human rights violation.

"It's about fighting on behalf of the oppressed," he said.

Israel's Paralympic Committee did not immediately reply to an email requesting comment on Malaysia's move.

This isn't the first time Malaysia has stopped Israeli athletes from competing in a sports event. In 2015, two Israeli windsurfers had to withdraw from a competition on the resort island of Langkawi after they were refused visas to enter. The following year, Malaysia decided not to host a 2017 conference of the world football governing body FIFA because an Israeli delegation was scheduled to participate.

But earlier this year, the government allowed a high-level Israeli delegation to attend a U.N. conference in Kuala Lumpur, sparking widespread anger among Muslim groups.

Some 60% of Malaysia's 32 million people are ethnic Malay Muslims. Many have taken to the streets in the past to support the Palestinian cause.

Newsletter Tuesday January 15, 2019

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UN chief: Two-state solution is the 'only path to peace'

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres meets with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas before the PA takes over the leadership of Group of 77 bloc of developing nations from Egypt • PA Ambassador to the U.N. says meeting was "good."

Associated Press and Israel Hayom Staff

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas | Photo: AFP

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has met with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and stressed again that a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the only path to peace, the U.N. reported Tuesday.

Guterres' strong backing for an independent Palestinian state came ahead of the release of a long-awaited U.S. plan for Israeli-Palestinian peace and the Israeli Knesset election on April 9.

U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric says Guterres also congratulated Abbas during Monday's meeting on the election of the Palestinians to preside over the Group of 77, a bloc of 134 mainly developing nations and China that promotes their collective interests at the United Nations. Abbas will take over the chairmanship from Egypt on Tuesday.

As Abbas and his entourage left U.N. headquarters, P.A. Ambassador Riyad Mansour told reporters: "It was a good meeting."