

Newsletter Monday March 25, 2019

Opinions

Posted:

US expected to rescind sanctions on Judea, Samaria & Golan Heights imposed in 1972

Dror Eydar | From apologies to a battle cry

This year's AIPAC policy conference is taking place under tremendous pressure from the liberal left-wing elite, which objects to Israel's very existence as a Jewish state.

Doron Nehemia | Ruling gives racism a boost

Anti-Zionism and racism against Arabs are two sides of the same coin, which is why the Supreme Court contradicted itself when it allowed extremist left-wing candidates run but disqualified former MK Michael Ben-Ari.

Sam Westrop, JNS | Using anti-Semites to fight anti-Semitism

Along with CAIR Minnesota's parent organization's history of ties to terror and the overt anti-Semitism of its officials, it also regularly invites anti-Jewish speakers.

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Israel Hayom Monday Mar 25, 2019

Trump expected to make Golan recognition official

In meeting with Netanyahu at White House, U.S. President Trump to officially recognize Israeli Golan Heights • Leaders expected to discuss Iranian aggression, security and intelligence issues • PM to meet with congressional leaders on both sides of aisle.

Ariel Kahana // published on 25/03/2019

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and U.S. President Donald Trump at a White House press conference in 2017 | Archives: AFP

U.S. President Donald Trump was expected to officially sign off on U.S. recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights during a meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the White House on Monday.

Netanyahu's advisers as well as Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Ron Dermer, in addition to senior Trump adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner, Special Representative for International Negotiations Jason Greenblatt and U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman were also set to attend the meeting.

On Thursday, Trump tweeted, "After 52 years, it is time for the United States to fully recognize Israel's Sovereignty over the Golan Heights, which is of critical strategic and security importance to the State of Israel and regional stability!"

The two leaders are also set to discuss Iranian aggression in the Middle East, including Tehran's attempts to establish a military foothold in Syria as well as ways of preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons. The two are also slated to discuss other security and intelligence matters.

Before his meeting with Trump, Netanyahu is expected to meet with congressional leaders from both the Republican and Democratic parties.

Meanwhile, Science and Technology Minister Ofir Akunis will meet with Trump science adviser Kelvin Droegemeier. During their meeting, Akunis is expected to ask Droegemeier to rescind the ban on U.S. investments in science initiatives based in Judea, Samaria and the Golan Heights.

The restriction on investment in Israel was imposed in 1972, five years after the Six-Day War, as part of a bilateral agreement on scientific cooperation. Akunis' request was coordinated with the Prime Minister's Office.

Newsletter Monday March 25, 2019

Romania, Honduras to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital

Honduran President Hernandez stops short of announcing relocation of embassy • Romanian President Iohannis accuses country's PM Viorica Dancila of "total ignorance" over move • King Abdullah II of Jordan cancels planned visit to Romania in protest.

News Agencies and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 25/03/2019

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez speaks at the AIPAC policy conference in Washington, Sunday | Photo: Reuters

Jordan's King Abdullah II has canceled a visit to Romania to protest its prime minister's support for recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital.

The Royal Hashemite Court said Monday that the decision came "in solidarity with Jerusalem." Abdullah was scheduled to visit Romania later in the day.

The leaders of Romania and Honduras announced on Sunday that they would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, following the lead of U.S. President Donald Trump.

Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dancila and Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernandez delivered their announcements at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's annual conference in Washington, Sunday.

Hernandez said the Central American country would open a trade office there but stopped short of announcing plans to relocate the country's embassy from Tel Aviv.

"Today I have announced the first step, which is to open a trade office in Jerusalem, the capital of the state of Israel, and this will be an extension of our embassy in Tel Aviv," Hernandez said in a statement issued by his government. He said the office would open immediately.

"I've said that a second step will draw a lot of attacks from the enemies of Israel and the United States, but we will continue along this path," Hernandez added.

His foreign ministry said in a statement that Israel would in a reciprocal gesture open an office for cooperation in Tegucigalpa, giving it diplomatic status.

AP

Romanian Prime Minister Viorica Dancila with President Reuven Rivlin in Jerusalem in April

Romanian President Klaus Iohannis, a government rival who's in charge of the Eastern European nation's foreign policy, blasted his country's prime minister over the move, saying he had not been consulted on the matter. He further accused Dancila of "total ignorance" of foreign policy.

The move is considered controversial as it goes against the rest of the European Union. Romania currently holds the bloc's rotating presidency.

In 2017, Guatemala and neighboring Honduras were two of only a handful of countries to join Israel and the United States in voting against a U.N. resolution calling on Washington to drop its recognition of Jerusalem as the Israeli capital.

Honduras and Guatemala are two of the most violent and impoverished countries in the Americas. Both depend economically to a significant degree on U.S. aid and investment, and the leaders of the two have generated significant controversy

Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moved the U.S. Embassy to the city in May. Guatemala followed suit soon after.

Newsletter Monday March 25, 2019

Iran to cement ties with Lebanon, Hezbollah despite US pressure

Accusing U.S. of using threats and intimidation to impose "imperious policies" on other countries, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman says, "Iran will use all its capacities to strengthen unity inside Lebanon and also to expand its ties with Lebanon."

Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 25/03/2019

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi | Photo: Reuters

Iran said on Sunday it would expand its ties with Lebanon in spite of the "provocative and interventionist" call by U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for Beirut to choose sides, Iranian state television reported.

On a regional tour to drum up support for Washington's harder line against Tehran, Pompeo said on Friday that Lebanon faced a choice - "Bravely move forward as an independent and proud nation, or allow the dark ambitions of Iran and Hezbollah to dictate your future."

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi dismissed Pompeo's remarks.

"Because of the failure of its policies in the Middle East, America has turned to the outdated and disgraced weapon of threats and intimidation to impose its imperious policies on other countries," Qasemi said, state television reported.

"While respecting the independence of Lebanon and the free will of its government and nation, Iran will use all its capacities to strengthen unity inside Lebanon and also to expand its ties with Lebanon."

Hezbollah, whose influence has expanded at home and in the region, controls three of 30 ministries in the government led by Western-backed Prime Minister Saad Hariri, the largest number in its history.

The dominant Shiite Muslim power Iran and Hezbollah, founded in 1982 by Iran's Revolutionary Guards, are major players in the war in Syria and the fight against groups opposed to Syrian President Bashar Assad, which include Islamic State.

Qasemi said that Lebanon's Hezbollah was a legal and popular party.

"How can Pompeo make such impudent and irrational remarks [about Hezbollah] while visiting Lebanon," he asked.

Tensions between Tehran and Washington have increased since U.S. President Donald Trump pulled out of a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers last May and reimposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic.

The restoration of sanctions is part of a wider effort by Trump to force Iran to further curb its nuclear program and to end its ballistic missile work as well as its support for proxy forces in Yemen, Syria, Lebanon and other parts of the Middle East.

Newsletter Sunday March 24, 2019

Posted:

US sanctions Iran while Pompeo visits Lebanon, stockpiling missiles against Israel

Opinions

Doron Matza | The figures belie claims of a racist government

While claims of racism have taken over political discourse, this past decade has seen unprecedented efforts by the Israeli government to help the Arab minority integrate economically and socially.

Gideon Allon | The man who captured Eichmann

Rafi Eitan's contributions to the Israeli intelligence community were immense but his career was not devoid of controversy.

Rachel Avraham | Kurds: Golan 'must remain Israeli'

U.S. President Trump is not alone in viewing Israel's presence on the Golan positively. A Kurdish delegation that recently visited Israel said they too support Israel's permanent control of the territory.

Newsletter Sunday March 24, 2019

UN human rights body asks for larger presence in PA territories

Move comes after U.N. Human Rights Council report alleges IDF soldiers intentionally fired on civilians and possibly committed war crimes, crimes against humanity • Foreign Ministry: Israel will continue to protect its citizens against terror, aggression.

Associated Press and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 24/03/2019

Medics and relatives move a wounded man who was shot by Israeli troops during a riot at the Gaza Strip's border with Israel to a Gaza City hospital, Friday | Photo: AP

The top U.N. human rights body on Friday requested a larger presence in Palestinian areas following a report alleging Israeli soldiers may have committed war crimes in a deadly response to Gaza protests last year.

The U.N. Human Rights Council made the request to U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet in a resolution that passed 23-8 with 15 abstentions, a vote loaded with political implications that quickly drew accusations of bias from the Israeli government.

Five central and eastern European countries joined Australia, Fiji and Brazil in opposing the measure. Britain and many EU countries abstained. Several Persian Gulf states, with which Israel has claimed warming ties, voted in favor.

The resolution was the strongest among five considered by the council focusing on Israel and "occupied Palestinian territory," the only such "country situation" discussed at every council meeting. The issue made up more than one-sixth of the 29 resolutions considered as the four-week session ended Friday.

Last summer, U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the United States, long one of Israel's strongest backers at the 47-member Geneva body, from the council, in part due to its anti-Israel bias.

The resolution comes after a three-person team of investigators commissioned by the council late last month issued an extensive report on violence during a string of Palestinian riots along Israel's border with the Gaza Strip that started nearly a year ago.

In it, the Independent Commission of Inquiry said Israeli soldiers intentionally fired on civilians and could have committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. The panel said over 6,000 people had been shot by military snipers using live ammunition to repel protesters.

Jerusalem officials did not cooperate with the investigation.

On Friday, the Foreign Ministry said, "The Human Rights Council repeated today its absurd and hypocritical ritual of creating a Commission of Inquiry singling out Israel, whose findings against Israel are predetermined, and then adopting them, all the while ignoring the reality on the ground," Israel's Foreign Ministry said Friday.

"Israel will continue to exercise its right of self-defense and will protect its citizens against terror and aggression," it said.

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US hits Iran with new sanctions while Pompeo visits Lebanon

Sanctions target Iranian experts U.S. State Dept. says could be tasked with restarting nuclear program • In Beirut, U.S. secretary of state says Lebanese face choice: Bravely move forward or allow Iran's, Hezbollah's dark ambitions to dictate your future.

News Agencies and Israel Hayom Staff // published on 24/03/2019

Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri, right, shakes hands with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo in Beirut, Friday | Photo: AP

Washington hit Iran with new sanctions on Friday while U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was denouncing Iran's growing influence on a visit to Lebanon.

The Treasury Department said the sanctions target 31 Iranian scientists, technicians and companies affiliated with Iran's Organization for Defense Innovation and Research, which had been at the forefront of the country's former nuclear weapons program.

Officials said those targeted continue to work in Iran's defense sector and form a core of experts who could reconstitute that program. Fourteen people, including the head of the organization, and 17 subsidiary operations are covered by the sanctions.

The sanctions freeze any assets that those targeted may have in U.S. jurisdictions and bar Americans from any transactions with them. But officials say the move will also make those targeted "radioactive internationally" by making people of any nationality who do business with them subject to U.S. penalties under so-called secondary sanctions.

U.S. secondary sanctions apply to foreign businesses and individuals and can include fines, loss of presence in the American economy, asset freezes and travel bans. Officials said the threat of such sanctions will significantly limit the ability of those designated to travel outside of Iran, participate in research conferences or be hired for other jobs.

"Individuals working for Iran's proliferation-related programs – including scientists, procurement agents, and technical experts – should be aware of the reputational and financial risk they expose themselves to by working for Iran's nuclear program," the State Department said in a statement.

The move is unusual because the sanctions are not being imposed based on what those targeted are currently doing.

Instead, they were imposed because of their past work on nuclear weapons development and the potential that they would be at the forefront of any Iranian attempt to restart that program. Iran pledged not to resume atomic weapons work under the 2015 nuclear deal and the U.N.'s atomic watchdog says Iran continues to comply with the agreement.

The U.S., however, pulled out of the agreement last year, saying it was fatally flawed and allowed Iran to gradually begin advanced atomic work over time. The Trump administration has re-imposed U.S. sanctions that were eased under the terms of the deal and is continuing to impose new ones as part a pressure campaign to force Iran to renegotiate the agreement.

Officials said the decision to move ahead with the sanctions was in part based on Israel's recovery of what it and the U.S. call a "secret archive" of documents from Iran that they say shows Iran deliberately preserved and stored its early nuclear weapons work, known as the "Amad plan," with the intent to someday resume development of a bomb.

"As the world has learned from the recently-discovered secret Iranian nuclear archive, which revealed the names of some of the individuals sanctioned today, unanswered questions remain regarding Iran's undisclosed past nuclear-related activities under the Amad plan, including activities related to the development of a nuclear payload for a missile," the State Department said in a statement.

The announcement came as Pompeo was in Beirut warning Lebanese officials to curb the influence of the Iran-backed Hezbollah movement. He said Hezbollah should not be

allowed to set policies or wield power despite its presence in Lebanon's parliament and government.

He called on the Lebanese people to stand up to Hezbollah's "criminality, terror and threats."

His comments in Beirut were in strong contrast to those of his host, Lebanese Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil who minutes earlier, while standing next to Pompeo, insisted that Hezbollah is "a Lebanese group that is not a terrorist organization and was elected by the people."

Pompeo, however, warned that "the Lebanese people face a choice: Bravely move forward or allow the dark ambitions of Iran and Hezbollah to dictate your future."

He added that the U.S. would continue using "all peaceful means" to curb Hezbollah and Iran's influence.

"Lebanon faces a choice: bravely move forward as an independent and proud nation, or allow the dark ambitions of Iran and Hezbollah to dictate your future," he said.

Pompeo highlighted U.S. concerns about Hezbollah's "destabilizing activities" in Lebanon and the region in talks his with Lebanese leaders.

The visit is the last leg of a Middle East tour that took Pompeo to Kuwait and Israel, where he lauded warm ties with Israel, met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on at least three separate occasions and promised to step up pressure on Iran.

In Beirut, Pompeo also met with Lebanon's powerful Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, before heading for a working lunch with Prime Minister Saad Hariri followed by a meeting with President Michel Aoun. The State Department's deputy spokesman, Robert Palladino, said Pompeo highlighted in the meetings U.S. concerns about Hezbollah's "destabilizing activities in Lebanon and the region" as well as the need to maintain calm along the border between Lebanon and Israel.

In his Lebanon visit, Pompeo had hoped to step up pressure on the Shiite Hezbollah group, but he faces resistance even from America's local allies, who fear that pushing too hard could trigger a backlash and endanger the tiny country's fragile peace. Hezbollah wields more power than ever in parliament and the government.

Bassil, Aoun and Berri are close Hezbollah allies, while Hariri is a close Western ally who has been reluctant to confront Hezbollah.

Bassil said Lebanon was committed to calm in the south, which borders Israel, adding that the country had the natural right to defend itself and "to resist any occupation of its land. ... This is a holy right."

"How does stockpiling tens of thousands of missiles in Lebanon territory for use against Israel make this country stronger?" asked Pompeo, referring to Hezbollah's arsenal that the group boasts can strike any part of Israel.

"Hezbollah and its illegitimate militia put the entire country on the front lines of Iran's misguided proxy campaign," Pompeo added.

Pompeo cited a speech by Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah this month asking the group's supporters for funds as evidence U.S. pressure was working.

"Our pressure on Iran is simple. It's aimed at cutting off the funding for terrorists and it's working," Pompeo said. "We believe that our work is already constraining Hezbollah's activities."

Pompeo said Iran gave Hezbollah as much as \$700 million a year.

He said Washington would continue to use "all peaceful means possible" to pressure Hezbollah, an apparent reference to the sanctions that the U.S. has imposed over the years and are drying up the terrorist group's finances. Pompeo referred to comments made by Nasrallah earlier this month in which he urged supporters to donate money to the group.

The terrorist group's influence over Lebanese state institutions has expanded in the last year. Together with allies that view its arsenal as an asset to Lebanon, it won more than 70 of parliament's 128 seats in an election last year.

The group has taken three of the 30 portfolios in the government formed in January by Hariri, including the Health Ministry – the first time it has held a ministry with a significant budget.

Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV reported that Pompeo was in Beirut to "incite Lebanese against each other."

Energy dispute

Appearing to give an upbeat assessment of U.S. mediation efforts to resolve a maritime border dispute between Lebanon and Israel, Bassil said Beirut had an opportunity to recover its rights with a "political and diplomatic victory."

He said, "We will make the necessary efforts with all parties internally to reach an honorable agreement for Lebanon that preserves its rights."

Beirut has an unresolved maritime border dispute with Israel over a sea area extending along the edge of three of Lebanon's southern energy blocks.

Lebanon has also previously warned its Mediterranean neighbors that a planned EastMed gas pipeline from Israel to the European Union must not be allowed to violate its maritime borders.

During his meeting with Berri, Pompeo "expressed hope that Lebanon would be able to join the other states of the Eastern Mediterranean in developing offshore resources in a manner of benefit to all the people of Lebanon", a state department spokesman said.

Bassil called on American companies to take part in forthcoming energy tenders in Lebanon.

President Aoun, speaking to Russian journalists ahead of a visit to Moscow later this month, said sanctions imposed on Hezbollah, Iran and Syria were negatively impacting the already fragile Lebanese economy.

"The negative effect of the sanctions on Hezbollah is hitting all Lebanese people as well as Lebanese banks," he said in remarks released later on Friday.

Earlier this week, Pompeo had said, "We'll spend a lot of time talking with the Lebanese government about how we can help them disconnect from the threat that Iran and Hezbollah present."

"Hezbollah is a terrorist organization. You ask how tough I am going to be. It is a terrorist organization. Period. Full stop," Pompeo said in Jerusalem on Thursday.

Newsletter Sunday March 24, 2019

Belgian carnival may lose UN recognition over anti-Semitism

UNESCO says it could remove Belgium's famed Aalst carnival from cultural heritage list over anti-Semitic parade float • European Commission: It should be obvious that such portrayals in Europe 74 years after the Holocaust "absolutely unthinkable."

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The logo of the U.N. Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization | Photo: AP

The U.N.'s cultural agency said Friday **it could remove** Belgium's famed Aalst **carnival from its cultural heritage list** following accusations of anti-Semitism during a parade.

UNESCO, Jewish organizations and European authorities have condemned the anti-Semitic and racist nature of a parade float at the Aalst Carnival that featured stereotypical puppets of Jews earlier this month.

The reaction in Aalst was swift enough, with Mayor Christoph D'Haese saying, "UNESCO simply doesn't get it" and that the festival's uncensored iconoclast nature was its essence.

The agency's director general Audrey Azoulay said, "It's not the first time that these racist and anti-Semitic floats parade in this festival," adding that UNESCO's duty is "to be vigilant and uncompromising regarding such occurrences."

A few days after the March 3 parade, European Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas said, "It should be obvious to all that portraying such representations in the streets of Europe is absolutely unthinkable, 74 years after the Holocaust."

UNESCO representatives have decided to put the issue on the agenda of the next meeting of the committee that makes decisions on the cultural heritage list in December in Colombia. A removal decision would be a first since the 2003 convention that created the label.

The Carnival of Aalst has been on the UNESCO cultural heritage list since 2010, an inclusion that doesn't entail financial support.

UNESCO said the move also aims to send the message there would be "tolerance zero" of racism and anti-Semitism.

Aalst is one of Belgium's most famous carnivals and it is a celebration of unbridled, no-holds-barred humor and satire. Politicians, religious leaders and the rich and famous are relentlessly ridiculed during the three-day festival and imposing limits on that would take away the essence of its carnival, according to D'haese, who has seen puppets of his N-VA party leadership go around in Nazi uniforms.

"Others should not tell what we can laugh at," D'haese told VRT network Friday.

"I will always defend the people of Aalst and Flanders when they claim a right to humor, ridicule and satire," he said.

D'haese said that despite the jarring floats "in Aalst, we never had any racist or anti-Semitic intentions."