

Ynet-News – Sept 26- 2019

09.26.19 Thursday - Placed with combined Sept 26
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09.26.19 Thursday – combined - News Placed in Sept 26 spot - Thursday
All Israeli embassies closed for **Rosh Hashanah Year 5780** with population 9 million

09.26.19 Thursday -
Israel & US urge EU to take action against fascist and anti-Semitic movement

09.25.19 Wednesday -
House Speaker Nancy Pelosi accused Trump of betrayal of his oath of office

09.25.19 Wednesday -
Pelosi leads impeachment inquiry as Trump scouts Democrat corruption in Ukraine

09.25.19 Wednesday -
Iran's Rouhani warns 'a single blunder can fuel a big fire' in region

09.25.19 Wednesday - News Placed in Sept 25 spot - Wednesday
Netanyahu tapped to attempt to form Israel's next government within 6-weeks

09.24.19 Tuesday -
Trump calls for all nations to tighten the economic noose around Iran's economy

09.24.19 Tuesday -
UK, France and Germany blame Iran for oil attack & US will send defense to Saudi

09.23.19 Tuesday -
At UN, Trump faces world issues of Ukraine, Brexit, & China trade, with Iran at top

No Date – missed on copy
Pretrial hearing Oct. 2 will formally decide charges on prime minister by end of year.

09.26.19

Statistics of Year 5780, Israel has 9 million; 74.2% Jews, 21% Arabs & 4.8% other.

On eve of Jewish New Year, Israel's population tops 9 million

On cusp of Jewish year 5780, vast majority of Israelis say they are satisfied with their lives, the Central Bureau of Statistics finds, but more than one third say their financial situation could be better

Yaron Drukman and Amir Alon | Published: 09.26.19 , 16:44

Israel's population stands at 9,092,000 people on the eve of the Jewish New Year of 5780, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics annual report.

The population count has grown by 2.1% since last year, and is expected to reach 10 million by 2024 and 20 million by 2065.

Today's Israeli society is made up of 74.2% Jews, 21% Arabs and 4% who are classed as others.

Forty-three percent of Jews living in Israel describe themselves as non-religious or secular while 22.1% claim to be traditional or slightly religious.

Of those describing themselves as religious, 12.8% say they are traditional, 11.3% call themselves religious and only 10.1% say they are ultra-Orthodox.

Health and wealth

Israelis are generally satisfied with life, with 88.9% reporting they are pleased with their situation.

However, 36.1% claim they are unhappy with their economic circumstances: 29.9% said they were unable to pay their bills last year, while almost 25% said they had given up medicine or medical treatment and even hot meals due to a lack of funds.

Life expectancy for men in Israel is 80.9 years, while Israeli woman on average live to the age of 84.9 - among the highest life expectancies in the world.

Cancer is the leading cause of death for around one quarter of Israelis (25.2%), followed by cardiac disease (14.8%).

Statistics also show that one in seven Israelis (14.1%) suffer from severe disability.

When it comes to assets and property, 66.5% of Israelis own their own homes - and of that number, more than half are paying a mortgage.

Israeli households spend 24.2% of their total income on housing expenses, 20.2% on public and private transportation, including car insurance and gas, and 16.9% on food.

Almost every Israeli - 97.3% - owns at least one mobile phone and 78% of households own a computer and 83.7% of Israelis use the internet.

There are 14.8 million Jews in the world. Eight million do not live in Israel, including 5.7 million who live in the United States.

09.26.19

All Israeli embassies strike over canceled allowances for overseas delegates

Surprise strike shuts Israel's embassies abroad

The industrial action - taken in response to Finance Ministry renegeing on their promise not to cancel customary allowances for overseas delegates – was suspended after a short-term solution was found to the dispute

Itamar Eichner |Published: 09.26.19 , 12:59

Advertisement

The employees of foreign and defense ministries on Thursday declared a strike across all Israeli embassies around the world, halting all consular services abroad and domestically, just days before the Jewish high holiday of Rosh Hashanah. The industrial action, however, was suspended some hours later after an interim solution to a dispute with the Ministry of Finance, which led to the strike, was found.

In addition, all Gaza and the West Bank border crossings will be closed. The Kirya IDF headquarters base in Tel Aviv will also be shut for visitors starting Thursday afternoon.

The reason for the sudden strike appears to be the decision by the Ministry of Finance to cancel the customary allowances for overseas delegates. The treasury decided not to cancel the allowances in the meantime in order to avoid a strike on the eve of a major holiday, which when many Israelis choose to spend abroad.

The Foreign Ministry also claims the Treasury renegeed on recent agreements on representation fees, and now demands retroactive refunds worth thousands of shekels from ambassadors who cannot provide receipts for their expenses

In addition, the Foreign Ministry apparently also intends to close the special operations room in the Ukrainian city of Uman, where tens of thousands of Israelis are expected to arrive ahead of Rosh HaShanah to visit the grave of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.

In the meantime, the workers committee of the Foreign Ministry will meet sometime on Thursday in order to decide on the steps to intensify the strike.

The decision to declare a strike was taken in coordination with the workers committee of The Ministry of Defense.

09.26.19

Israel & US urge EU to take action against fascist and anti-Semitic movement

Israel, U.S. urge EU to take action against boycott movement

The report included a large number of examples the ministry of strategic affairs said were gathered from activists' social media, such as a cartoon of Netanyahu holding a butcher's axe flanked by Orthodox Jews and confronting Palestinian stone throwers

Associated Press|Published: 09.26.19, 13:28

Israeli and U.S. officials warned Wednesday of a rise in attacks on Jews in western Europe and urged European Union leaders to stop funding organizations that support an international boycott of Israel over its treatment of the Palestinians.

Gilad Erdan, Israel's minister of strategic affairs, said before meeting with a group of European lawmakers that the EU should make sure its money does not go to groups that support the Palestinian-led boycott movement.

In Brussels, Erdan also released a report cataloguing alleged examples of BDS branches or activists using anti-Semitic content in their campaigns.

He accused movement activists of hiding their true agenda behind liberal values such as protecting human rights and freedom of expression.

The grassroots BDS campaign, founded in 2005, calls for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israeli businesses, cultural institutions and universities.

The campaign compares itself to the anti-apartheid movement targeting South Africa in the second half of the 20th century and its nonviolent message has resonated with audiences around the world.

But Israel says the movement, which has among its goals the return of millions of Palestinian refugees and their descendants to former homes in Israel, masks a deeper aim of delegitimizing or even destroying the country.

"We have proven beyond a doubt that BDS is an anti-Semitic campaign led by supporters of terror with one purpose: the elimination of the Jewish state," Erdan said.

The report included a large number of examples the ministry of strategic affairs said were gathered from BDS activists' social media, for instance a cartoon of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu holding a butcher's axe flanked by Orthodox Jews and confronting Palestinian stone throwers.

BDS leaders deny allegations of anti-Semitism, saying their campaign is against Israeli policies.

“With its alliances with fascist and anti-Semitic forces around the world, Israel’s far-right regime is in no position to preach about fighting anti-Jewish bigotry,” Omar Barghouti, a BDS founder, said.

“Its propaganda claims against the anti-racist BDS movement for Palestinian rights are as credible as Trump’s climate protection credentials.”

Erdan spoke alongside U.S. Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Anti-Semitism Elan Carr at a news conference to launch the report, titled “Behind the Mask: The Anti-Semitic Nature of BDS Exposed,” that urges world leaders to stop funding groups linked to the movement.

“I am here to express the United States’ position that this is anti-Semitism, and we stand unequivocally with the State of Israel in combatting this scourge,” Carr said.

Israel called on the EU last year to stop funding more than a dozen European and Palestinian non-governmental organizations, alleging some of the NGOs had links to militant groups.

The European Union opposes the BDS movement and denies funding boycott activities but has defended the movement’s activities as falling under the right to free speech.

Erdan said he hopes the EU’s departing foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, will cut ties with BDS-linked organizations before leaving her post. In July, she said the bloc was not funding work related to boycott activities.

In a statement released Wednesday, the EU said it has not changed its position regarding the BDS.

“While it upholds its policy of clearly distinguishing between the territory of the State of Israel and the territories occupied by it since 1967, the EU rejects any attempts to isolate Israel and does not support calls for a boycott,” it said.

According to numbers compiled by Tel Aviv University, anti-Semitic attacks worldwide rose 13% from 2017 to in 2018. The United States, France, Britain and Germany had the most attacks.

In a survey last year for the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency, nearly 85 percent of the Jewish respondents said they considered hate crimes to be a serious problem.

Carr said anti-Semitism has become a major enough issue in Europe that many Jews are thinking about emigrating.

"These numbers should be disturbing to absolutely everybody," Carr said.

"Not just to Jews. This isn't Right or Left, it's not Jews or non-Jews. Nobody, no normal person should think this is acceptable."

09.25.19

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi accused Trump of betrayal of his oath of office

How the ground shifted on Trump impeachment

Wavering Democrats, many of them freshmen from districts where Trump has enjoyed broad support, dropped their reluctance to proceed with the impeachment inquiry
Associated Press|Published: 09.25.19, 08:20

After more than two years of jousting over President Donald Trump's conduct, the ground suddenly shifted in Congress and a move toward impeachment broke free of constraints.

That does not mean the path ahead is all set.

On Tuesday, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi -- who for months had been a powerful brake on restive Democrats wanting to impeach Trump -- launched a formal inquiry toward that end, accusing the president of "betrayal of his oath of office," betrayal of national security and betrayal of the integrity of American elections.

Here's a look at the matter and what's known about what happens next:

The House Judiciary Committee will be the panel responsible for recommending articles of impeachment against Trump if the inquiry leads it to do so.

Already, six House committees have been investigating various aspects of alleged impropriety by the president. They will continue to investigate, but on an expedited basis, though with no specific deadline.

If the Judiciary panel backs impeachment articles, the matter goes to the full House for a vote. Democrats control the House and its committees.

If a majority of the full House votes for impeachment, the matter goes to the Senate, which is responsible for holding a trial, overseen by the U.S. Supreme Court chief justice.

It takes a **two-thirds vote in the Senate to force a president from office** -- a daunting challenge for Democrats if the effort goes that far, given Republican control of that chamber.

Impeaching a president is often misunderstood to mean his removal. It actually means the House has voted to bring one or more articles of impeachment and send the process forward.

No president has been ousted by impeachment.

Some Democrats in Congress have long wanted to kick-start the constitutional process to remove Trump, despite the slim odds of success. But they lacked a critical mass and Pelosi's support.

Trump's machinations to avoid culpability from the Russia investigation fed into their push, but that inquiry came to an indistinct conclusion, with troubling episodes of presidential behavior uncovered by special counsel Robert Mueller but no charges recommended for obstructing justice or conspiring with Moscow in its audacious efforts to tip the 2016 U.S. election to Trump.

Trump's pre-election payment to a porn actress to maintain her silence and apparent Trump Organization profiteering from his presidency also fueled impeachment sentiment from a segment of the party.

But it took a whistleblower's still-secret complaint about Trump's dealings with Ukraine to change the landscape.

In a nutshell: There's little doubt Trump pressed Ukraine to conduct a corruption investigation of Democratic presidential contender Joe Biden and his son -- the president has defiantly stated that he did.

He also acknowledged that days before a phone conversation with Ukraine's leader in July, he ordered military aid to Ukraine to be frozen.

The episode raises the possibility that a president used the power of his office to get a foreign government to help him win reelection. Trump denies doing or saying anything improper.

But wavering Democrats, many of them freshmen from districts where Trump has enjoyed broad support, dropped their reluctance to proceed.

Pelosi's buy-in on impeachment proceedings is a huge advance for advocates of that approach after the proceedings in the Judiciary Committee were mostly seen as going nowhere. As well, Democrats believe the focus on Trump's dealings with the Ukrainian leader could resonate more than the Mueller report did.

In terms of congressional process, not much changes, at least at first.

The judiciary panel had already begun impeachment hearings and had asked other committees for input. And it's not clear that Pelosi's "expedited" timeline will move things along any more quickly.

The committee chairman, Rep. Jerrold Nadler of New York, has said he wants to make a decision on whether to recommend articles of impeachment by the end of the year.

You can find partisans during almost every administration who think the president of the opposing party should be thrown out of office between elections. But there hasn't been a serious effort to do that since the impeachment of Bill Clinton.

In 1998 and 1999, the House under Republican control pursued the impeachment of the Democratic president, primarily based on matters arising from his relationships with women outside his marriage.

The House approved an allegation that Clinton "willfully provided perjurious, false and misleading testimony" before independent counsel Kenneth Starr's grand jury investigation. And it voted to bring forward the accusation that he "prevented, obstructed and impeded the administration of justice." The Republican-controlled Senate acquitted him.

Only two presidents have been impeached: Andrew Johnson in 1868 and Clinton. Both won acquittal in the Senate.

Richard Nixon, who was the subject of impeachment proceedings, resigned from office in 1974 when it looked certain that the House would impeach him and his prospects in the Senate appeared dire.

The Constitution gives the House "the sole power of impeachment" and the Senate "the sole power to try all impeachments."

And it dictates the removal from office of an impeached president who is convicted by the Senate of "treason, bribery, or other high crimes and misdemeanors." It is left to Congress to define such terms.

09.24.19

Trump calls for all nations to tighten the economic noose around Iran's economy

Trump: Mideast understands need for normalizing ties with Israel

Speaking at United Nations General Assembly, U.S. president urges all nations not to 'subsidize Iran's blood lust'; calls on the 'free world' to reject globalism, embrace national foundations and tells North Korea to denuclearize

Reuters|Published: 09.24.19 , 17:49

U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday said there is a growing recognition in Middle East that countries must battle extremism, must have normalized relations between Israel and its neighbors.

Speaking at the the United Nations General Assembly, the president also called on nations around the world to tighten the economic noose around Iran's economy, saying no country should support Iran's "blood lust."

"All nations have a duty to act," Trump told the United Nations General Assembly. "No responsible government should subsidize Iran's blood lust. As long as Iran's menacing behavior continues, sanctions will not be lifted. They will be tightened."

"We want partners, not adversaries," he said.

Trump went on to urge nations around the globe to reject globalism, saying wise leaders put their own people and countries first.

"The free world must embrace its national foundations. It must not attempt to erase them or replace them," he said. "The future does not belong to globalists, the future belongs to patriots."

The 73-year-old also said the policies pushed by what he termed as "open border activists" were hurting the very people they supposedly aim to help, as he called illegal immigration one of the world's most crucial challenges.

"Today I have a message for those open border activists who cloak themselves in the rhetoric of social justice: your policies are not just. Your policies are cruel and evil," Trump told UNGA.

"You are empowering criminal organizations that prey on innocent men, women and children. You put your own false sense of virtue before the lives, wellbeing and countless innocent people," he said. "When you undermine border security, you are undermining human rights and human dignity."

Trump also had a stern message for China and its president, Xi Jinping, in what was his third annual appearance at the U.N. saying the world is watching how Beijing handles mass demonstrations in Hong Kong that has raised concerns about a potential Chinese crackdown.

"How China chooses to handle the situation will say a great deal about its role in the world in the future. We are all counting on President Xi as a great leader," he said.

The president then addressed **North Korea**, saying the country **must denuclearize** to realize its full potential.

09.25.19

Pelosi leads impeachment inquiry as Trump scouts Democrat corruption in Ukraine

Pelosi announces impeachment inquiry into Trump: 'No one is above the law'

House Speaker's brief statement comes after classified whistleblower complaint revealed **allegations that president withheld aid to Ukraine in bid to force probe into Biden's son;** Trump lashes out over 'PRESIDENTIAL HARASSMENT!' on Twitter

Associated Press|Published: **09.25.19**, 01:42

WASHINGTON - House Speaker Nancy Pelosi launched a formal impeachment inquiry against U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday, acquiescing to mounting pressure from fellow Democrats and plunging a deeply divided nation into an election year clash between Congress and the commander in chief.

The probe centres on whether Trump abused his presidential powers and **sought help from a foreign government for his reelection.** Pelosi said such actions would mark a "betrayal of his oath of office" and declared: "No one is above the law."

Pelosi's brief statement capped a frenetic stretch on Capitol Hill, as details of a classified whistleblower complaint about Trump burst into the open and momentum shifted swiftly toward an impeachment probe.

Nancy **Pelosi announces impeachment proceedings**

The charge was led by several moderate Democratic lawmakers from political swing districts, many of them with national security backgrounds and serving in Congress for the first time.

After more than two and one-half years of sharp Democratic criticism of Trump, the formal impeachment quest sets up the party's most urgent and consequential confrontation with a president who thrives on combat - and injects deep uncertainty in the 2020 White House race.

Trump has all but dared Democrats to take this step, confident that the spectre of impeachment led by the opposition party would bolster his political support.

Trump, who was meeting with world leaders at the United Nations, previewed his defense in an all-caps tweet: “PRESIDENTIAL HARRASSMENT!”

Donald J. Trump @realDonaldTrump
PRESIDENTIAL HARASSMENT!

Pelosi had barely finished speaking as he began a mini-blizzard of tweets assailing her announcement.

At issue are Trump's actions with Ukraine. In a summer phone call with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy, he is said to have asked for help investigating Democrat Joe Biden and his son Hunter.

In the days before the call, Trump ordered advisers to freeze \$400 million in military aid for Ukraine - prompting speculation that he was holding out the money as leverage for information on the Bidens. Trump has denied that charge, but acknowledged he blocked the funds.

The phone call is part of the whistleblower's complaint, though the administration has blocked Congress from getting details of the report, citing presidential privilege. Trump has authorized the release of a transcript of the call, which is to be made public on Wednesday.

“You will see it was a very friendly and totally appropriate call,” Trump said.

While the spectre of impeachment has hung over Trump for many months, the likelihood of a probe had faded after special counsel Robert Mueller's investigation ended without a clear directive for lawmakers.

Democratic House committees launched new inquiries into Trump's businesses and a variety of administration scandals, but all seemed likely to drag on for months.

But details of Trump's dealings with Ukraine prompted Democrats to quickly shift course. By the time Pelosi addressed the nation on Tuesday, about two-thirds of House Democrats had announced moving toward impeachment probes.

The president has all but dared Democrats to take this step, repeatedly stonewalling requests for documents and witness interviews in the variety of ongoing investigations.

Trump advisers say they are confident that an impeachment process led by the opposition party will bolster his political support heading into his reelection campaign.

After Pelosi's Tuesday announcement, the president and his campaign team quickly released a series of tweets attacking Democrats, including a video of presidential critics like the speaker and Rep. Ilhan Omar discussing impeachment.

It concluded with a message for the Trump faithful: “While Democrats 'Sole Focus' is fighting Trump, President Trump is fighting for you.”

09.23.19

At General Assembly, Trump to face world issues with Iran at top

At UN, Trump faces world issues of Ukraine, Brexit, & China trade, with Iran at top

At General Assembly, Trump to face world issues with Iran at top

Iran may be the most immediate challenge for Trump who will try to convince skeptical global capitals to help build a coalition to confront Tehran after the United States blamed it for last week’s strike at a Saudi Arabia oil field

Associated Press|Published: 09.23.19 , 12:32

Faced with growing tumult at home and abroad, President Donald Trump heads into his three-day visit to the United Nations this week hoping to lean on strained alliances while fending off questions about whether he sought foreign help to damage a political rival.

Trump’s latest U.N. trip comes after nearly three years of an “America First” foreign policy that has unsettled allies and shredded multinational pacts.

A centerpiece of this year’s U.N. schedule will be a Monday session on climate change that Trump plans to skip.

Instead, he will address a meeting about the persecution of religious minorities, particularly Christians, an issue that resonates with Trump’s evangelical supporters.

The president arrived in New York on Sunday against a backdrop of swirling international tensions, including questions about his relationship with Ukraine , the uncertain future of Brexit, the U.S. trade war with China, stalled nuclear negotiations with North Korea and a weakening global economy.

The most immediate challenge may be Iran.

Trump will try to convince skeptical global capitals to help build a coalition to confront Tehran after the United States blamed it for last week’s strike at a Saudi Arabia oil field.

“Well, I always like a coalition,” Trump said Friday, before going on to complain that under the old Iran nuclear deal, “everyone else is making money and we’re not.”

Trump’s fulfillment of a campaign promise, to exit the Iran nuclear deal has had wide ripple effects, leading Tehran to bolster its nuclear capabilities and dismaying European capitals who worked to establish the original agreement.

French President Emmanuel Macron, in particular, has been trying to lead Trump back to a deal and has suggested that the U.S. president meet with Iranian leader Hassan Rouhani on the sidelines of the U.N. meetings.

Trump said Sunday that while “nothing is ever off the table completely” he had no intention of meeting with Rouhani.

Tensions between Washington and Tehran spiked after a Saudi Arabia oil field was partially destroyed in an attack that Secretary of State Mike Pompeo blamed on Iran and deemed “an act of war.”

Now Trump will try to enlist wary world leaders in a collective effort to contain Iran.

“He needs to win over traditional allies to do what traditional allies do, to band together against common threats,” said Jon Alterman of the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

“The attacks last weekend in Saudi Arabia are precisely the kind of thing that the U.N. was intended to address, to create rules for international behavior and opportunities for collective action.”

Ukraine also looms large on Trump’s schedule. Even one week ago, a one-on-one meeting with Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelenskiy would have been seen largely as an afterthought.

But Trump’s meeting on Wednesday with Zelenskiy will come just days after revelations that the president urged his Ukrainian counterpart in a July phone call to investigate the activities of the son of former Vice President Joe Biden.

Trump said he was concerned about corruption; Democrats frame his actions as an effort to pressure Zelenskiy to dig up damaging material on a potential 2020 rival.

That pressure is the subject of a whistleblower’s complaint that the administration has refused to turn over to members of Congress, setting up a showdown with Democrats.

Trump is defending himself against the intelligence official’s complaint, asserting that it comes from a “partisan whistleblower,” though the president also said he doesn’t know the whistleblower’s identity.

He insisted Sunday his conversation with Zelenskiy was “absolutely perfect.” But Democrats believe it shows that Trump is emboldened to seek foreign help for his reelection effort.

There are plenty of other concerns in the mix during Trump’s U.N. visit, including the U.S. trade war with China.

But China's Xi Jinping is not expected to attend, nor are several other prominent world leaders, including Russian President Vladimir Putin and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Among the nations whose leaders Trump plans to meet in New York: Iraq, Poland, Egypt, Pakistan, South Korea and Japan.

He will also meet with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, clinging to power after failed attempts to steer his nation out of the European Union.

Trump's annual address to the General Assembly is scheduled for Tuesday.

Two years ago, he used the moment to deride North Korea's Kim Jong Un as "Little Rocket Man" and threaten to destroy North Korea.

A year ago, he drew laughter when he used his speech to recite his administration's accomplishments.

His theme this year, according to aides, will be to reassert America's determination to uphold its sovereignty and independence, especially on issues of national security.

But others may push a different path.

"There's an attempt to push back against the unilateralism, against the isolationism, against the populism that has affected not only the United States but other countries as well," said Jeffrey Feltman of the Brookings Institution.

"I don't know how effective this will be, but it's an example of how some of our traditional allies are organizing themselves in response to the feeling that the United States, the U.K., that other sort of major engines in the U.N. system no longer are pressing the accelerator."

09.24.19

UK, France and Germany blame Iran for oil attack & US will send defense to Saudi

UK, France and Germany blame Iran for Saudi oil facility attack

Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, denied any part in the attacks. He said Monday that Yemen's Houthi rebels, who claimed responsibility, 'have every reason to retaliate' for the Saudi-led coalition's aerial attacks on their country

Associated Press|Published: 09.24.19, 08:32

Britain, France and Germany joined the United States on Monday in blaming Iran for attacks on key oil facilities in Saudi Arabia, but the Iranian foreign minister pointed to

claims of responsibility by Yemeni rebels and said: “If Iran were behind this attack, nothing would have been left of this refinery.”

Fallout from the Sept. 14 attacks is still reverberating as world leaders gather for their annual meeting at the U.N. General Assembly and international experts investigate, at Saudi Arabia’s request, what happened and who was responsible.

The leaders of the United Kingdom, France and Germany released a statement reaffirming their support for the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which the U.S. exited, but telling Iran to stop breaching it and saying “there is no other plausible explanation” than that “Iran bears responsibility for this attack.”

They pledged to try to ease tensions in the Middle East and urged Iran to “refrain from choosing provocation and escalation.”

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said late Sunday while flying to New York that the U.K. would consider taking part in a U.S.-led military effort to bolster Saudi Arabia’s defenses after the drone and cruise missile attacks on the world’s largest oil processor and an oil field.

Iran’s foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, denied any part in the attacks. He said Monday that Yemen’s Houthi rebels, who claimed responsibility, “have every reason to retaliate” for the Saudi-led coalition’s aerial attacks on their country.

He also stressed that on the eve of President Hassan Rouhani’s visit to the United Nations in New York City “it would be stupid for Iran to engage in such activity.”

Zarif called it an attack “with high precision, low impact” and no casualties. In the refinery, there were facilities that would have taken the Saudis a year to repair, he said. “Why did they hit the lowest impact places?” Zarif asked, saying if Iran was responsible, the refinery would have been destroyed.

France has been trying to find a diplomatic solution to U.S.-Iranian tensions, which soared after the Saudi attacks, and has carefully avoided assigning blame.

Earlier on his way to New York, French President Emmanuel Macron said he remained “cautious” about attributing responsibility for the attacks. There was no immediate explanation of why he later shifted positions and blamed Iran.

Macron said at a U.N. news conference not long before the statement was issued that he planned to meet separately with both Trump and Rouhani over the next day and would work to foster “the conditions for discussion” and not escalation.

Macron called the Sept. 14 strikes “a game-changer, clearly” but reiterated France’s willingness to mediate.

Zarif, however, ruled out any Iran-U.S. meeting. He said Iran had received no request from the U.S., “and we have made clear that a request alone will not do the job.”

He said Trump “closed the door to negotiations” with the latest U.S. sanctions, which labeled the country’s central bank a “global terrorist” institution — a designation the Iranian minister said the U.S. president and his successors may not be able to change.

“I know that President Trump did not want to do that. I know he must have been misinformed,” Zarif said in a meeting with U.N. correspondents.

Zarif said he plans to meet Wednesday with ministers of all five countries remaining in the 2015 nuclear deal from which Trump withdrew, including Russia and China.

Johnson, the U.K. prime minister, said Britain still backs the existing nuclear agreement and wants Iran to stick to its terms but urged Trump to strike a new deal with Iran.

“Whatever your objections with the old nuclear deal with Iran, it’s time now to move forward and do a new deal,” he said.

Asked about Johnson’s suggestion, Trump said he respects the British leader and believes the current agreement expires too soon.

The joint U.K., France, Germany statement urges Iran to reverse its rollback on key provisions in the 2015 nuclear deal and calls for a new agreement.

“The time has come for Iran to accept negotiation on a long-term framework for its nuclear program as well as on issues related to regional security, including its missiles program and other means of delivery,” the three countries said.

Shortly before leaving for the U.N. meetings Monday, Iran’s president Rouhani said on state television that his country will invite Persian Gulf nations to join an Iranian-led coalition “to guarantee the region’s security.”

Rouhani said the plan also encompasses economic cooperation and an initiative for “long term” peace. He planned on presenting details while at the United Nations.

Zarif said the new Hormuz Peace Initiative — with the acronym HOPE — would be formed under a U.N. umbrella with two underlying principles: nonaggression and noninterference. He said it would require a major shift from countries “buying” security from other nations or mercenaries and instead promote the notion that “you can gain security relying on your own people and working with your neighbors.”

Johnson said he would meet Rouhani at this week’s U.N. gathering. He said he wanted Britain to be “a bridge between our European friends and the Americans when it comes to the crisis in the Gulf.”

Johnson stressed the need for a diplomatic response to the Gulf tensions but said Britain would consider any request for military help.

The **Trump** administration **announced Friday** that it would **send additional U.S. troops** and missile defense equipment **to Saudi Arabia** and the United Arab Emirates as part of a “defensive” deployment. Officials said the **number of troops** was likely to be in the **hundreds**.

“We will be following that very closely,” Johnson said. “And clearly if we are asked, either by the Saudis or by the Americans, to have a role, then we will consider in what way we could be useful.”

A U.K. official told The Associated Press that a claim of responsibility for the attacks by Iran-allied Houthi rebels in Yemen was “implausible.” He said remnants of **Iran-made cruise missiles were found at the attack site**, and “the sophistication points very, very firmly to Iranian involvement.”

The official, who spoke on the condition of anonymity to discuss intelligence findings, did not say whether Britain believed the attack was launched from Iranian soil. Iran denies responsibility and has warned any retaliatory attack targeting it will result in an “all-out war.”

Meanwhile Monday, Iranian government spokesman Ali Rabiei suggested the release of a British-flagged oil tanker held by Tehran since July would be imminent, though he doesn’t know when it will leave.

The Stena Impero has not turned on its satellite-tracking beacon in 58 days and there has not been any sign that it has left its position near Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas.

Iran’s Revolutionary Guard seized the vessel after authorities in Gibraltar seized an Iranian crude oil tanker. That ship has since left Gibraltar, leading to hopes the Stena Impero would be released.

09.25.19

Iran's Rouhani warns 'a single blunder can fuel a big fire' in region

Iran's Rouhani warns 'a single blunder can fuel a big fire' in region

Amid U.S. tensions, **Iranian** president tells UN General Assembly that his country 'shall not tolerate the provocative intervention of foreigners,' **rules out nuclear talks until recently imposed American sanctions are lifted**

Reuters|Published: **09.25.19** , 19:56

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UNITED NATIONS - Iran's President Hassan Rouhani warned world leaders on Wednesday - amid rising tensions between Tehran and Washington - that the Gulf region is "on the edge of collapse, as a single blunder can fuel a big fire."

"We shall not tolerate the provocative intervention of foreigners. We shall respond decisively and strongly to any sort of transgression to and violation of our security and territorial integrity," Rouhani told the annual gathering of world leaders for the UN General Assembly in New York.

Rouhani also pledged that Iran will never hold talks with the United States under pressure, but added that lifting all the sanctions Washington imposed on Tehran under President Donald Trump and respecting a UN Security Council resolution could pave the way for negotiations.

Hassan Rouhani addresses the UN General Assembly

"Our response to talks under pressure is NO," said Rouhani, and warned that Iran might exit a 2015 nuclear deal if the European powers failed to salvage the deal.

"We are committed to the nuclear deal ... but Iran's patience has a limit," said the president, who was architect of the deal with six powers during the tenure of Barack Obama as president.

Iran has criticized the European parties to the deal for their failure to protect Iran's interests by shielding them from U.S. penalties which has been reimposed and tightened since last year when Washington exited the pact.

In retaliation, Iran has gradually reduced its commitments to the agreement.

The confrontation between arch enemies Iran and the United States has ratcheted up after attacks on Saudi oil facilities on Sept. 14 that Washington, the European Union and Riyadh blame on Tehran despite its denials.

Rouhani said the only way to secure peace and safety in the Gulf was strengthening "consolidation among all the nations with common interests in the Persian Gulf and the Hormuz region."

He said to those countries that "we are neighbors with you, not with America" and called for the United States to withdraw troops from the region.

Israel's president taps Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to form next government
Netanyahu, already Israel's longest serving prime minister, now has 42 days to try and cobble together a government.

09.25.19

Netanyahu tapped to attempt to form Israel's next government within 6-weeks

Netanyahu tapped to attempt to form Israel's next government

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By Saphora Smith and Paul Goldman

TEL AVIV — Israeli President Reuven Rivlin on Wednesday tapped Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu of the right-wing Likud party to form a new government after receiving the final results of last week's deadlocked election.

"The people of Israel don't want new elections," Rivlin said at the presidential residence in Jerusalem after handing the mandate to Netanyahu and passing over his primary challenger, former three-star general Benny Gantz from the centrist Blue and White party. "Parties will need to compromise."

Netanyahu, whose deal-making skills and alliances with right-wing and religious parties have helped make him Israel's longest-serving prime minister, now has six weeks to try to cobble together a government. If he fails to do so, the opportunity could pass to the next candidate who the president thinks has the greatest chance of forming a government.

Israel's Netanyahu appeals to rival to form a 'broad unity government'

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Israeli presidents are responsible for picking prime minister candidates after elections. The process is usually a formality but has recently become much more complicated since neither Netanyahu nor Gantz was able to build a stable parliamentary majority on their own.

Boris Johnson condemned as lawmakers receive death threats over Brexit

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No Date

Pretrial hearing Oct. 2 will formally decide charges on prime minister by end of year.

Netanyahu could be indicted on three separate charges of bribery, fraud and breach of trust.

The announcement followed negotiations over a proposed unity government, with Gantz and Netanyahu unable to come to an agreement. Gantz — who is a former army chief of

staff— has publicly resisted the idea of allying with the Likud, citing looming corruption charges against Netanyahu.

Rivlin also floated the option of Netanyahu forming a government with Gantz as second-in-command, with the agreement that if Netanyahu is indicted he will step down until he is cleared of any wrongdoing.

Later, Gantz repeated his pledge not to serve under Netanyahu while he faced possible charges.

"Blue and White, led by me, does not agree to sit in a government whose leader is facing a severe indictment," he said. "This issue, among a number of other critical factors, is more important to us than any delegation of ministerial posts or a rotation."

Speaking after Rivlin, Netanyahu said: "I know that the only way to form a government is a unity one. We need unity to unify everyone and reconcile the people."

For Netanyahu, there is more than simply his political career at stake. If he manages to form a government, it may be possible for him to pass legislation that would grant him immunity. **Israel's attorney general** is expected to decide whether to **formally charge the prime minister** by the end of the year, after a **pretrial hearing Oct. 2**.

Netanyahu, who failed to secure a clear election victory for the second time in five months, is running out of time to pass the legislation.

"Very shortly, these **proceedings will begin making it virtually impossible for him to form a coalition government** that would enable legislation to proceed that would stop those legal proceedings," David Halperin, executive director of the center-left Israel Policy Forum, said.

The final results saw the Likud party add an extra seat in Parliament, raising its total to 32 out of the 120 seats, one behind Blue and White's 33. But since the Likud's gain comes at the expense of an allied ultra-Orthodox party, it didn't change the total of **55** lawmakers who **support a Netanyahu** government, compared to the **54 who back Gantz**.

Former defense minister Avigdor Lieberman, who was tapped as the potential kingmaker after his nationalist Yisrael Beitenu party won eight seats, refused to endorse either candidate, meaning both Netanyahu's and Gantz's blocs were short of a 61 majority — the minimum needed to form a governing coalition in the 120-seat Israeli Parliament, or Knesset.

When Netanyahu failed to form a coalition government in May he dissolved Parliament, triggering last week's snap election, but as it stands it appears unlikely that he will have the numbers to usher in a third election.

