

Newsletter Friday November 16, 2018

Newsletters from:

Send to a Friend

| Print

[US to oppose UN resolution urging Israel to pull out of Golan Heights](#)

U.S. envoy Nikki Haley says U.N.'s annual "Occupied Syrian Golan" resolution declaring Israel's jurisdiction in the Golan "null and void" is "plainly biased against Israel" • Haley: U.S. will no longer abstain when U.N. engages in its useless annual vote.

Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff

U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley | Photo: AP

The United States said it would oppose on Friday for the first time an annual resolution at the United Nations calling on Israel to rescind its authority in the Golan Heights, drawing praise from Israeli officials.

The Golan Heights form a buffer between Israel and Syria of about 1,200 square kilometers (460 square miles). [Israel seized most of the Golan in the 1967 Six-Day War and annexed the territory in 1981, a move that has not recognized internationally.](#)

The United States has abstained in previous years on the annual "Occupied Syrian Golan" resolution, which declares Israel's decision to impose its jurisdiction in the area "null and void", but Washington's U.N. envoy Nikki Haley said it would vote against the resolution in Friday's vote.

"The United States will no longer abstain when the United Nations engages in its useless annual vote on the Golan Heights," she said in a statement on Thursday.

"The resolution is plainly biased against Israel. Further, the atrocities the Syrian regime continues to commit prove its lack of fitness to govern anyone."

Her comments came after U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman said in September that he expected Israel to keep the Golan Heights in perpetuity, in an apparent nod towards its claim of sovereignty over the territory.

Since early in Donald Trump's presidency, Israel has lobbied for formal U.S. endorsement of its control of the Golan. Trump has recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, breaking with other world powers, though U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton said in August a similar Golan move was not under discussion.

Israeli officials praised the U.S. move.

Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan called it was "extremely important," Tweeting, "No sane person can believe that it [the Golan] should be given to Assad and Iran."

Tehran has supported Assad during the civil war and Israel has been warning against Iranian military entrenchment in Syria.

Israel has closely monitored the fighting in Syria, where just across the Golan frontier battles have raged in clear view.

Newsletter Friday November 16, 2018

Newsletters from:

Send to a Friend

Print

Israel warns Gazans: Approach the border fence at your own peril

Palestinians are planning to protest on the Gaza border Friday, in key test of days-old truce • Organizers urge demonstrators to avoid border fence • Israel to Gazans: Wake up and realize Hamas is leading you toward destruction, before it is too late.

Lilach Shoval, Associated Press and Israel Hayom Staff

Palestinian protesters hurl stones at Israeli troops during a riot on the Gaza border | Photo: AFP

Israel warned the residents of Gaza not to participate in a planned border protest Friday, days after a burst of cross border violence between Israel and Gaza ended in a fragile cease-fire.

The Israel Defense Force's Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Kamil Abu Rokon warned Gazans in a video posted on Facebook that "Hamas is the mastermind of the violent marches on the border and anyone who comes 100 meters [yards] from the fence will put themselves in danger. Consider yourself warned."

Palestinian organizers of the weekly riots in the Gaza Strip along the Israeli border said they would hold another protest on Friday – in a key test of this week's cease-fire between Israel and Gaza terrorist groups.

Tuesday's cease-fire ended the heaviest fighting between Israel and Gaza's Hamas rulers since 2014's Operation Protective Edge.

The fighting was fueled in part by the demonstrations. Since late March, thousands of Gazans have joined the Hamas-led demonstrations.

Protesters frequently lob grenades, flaming tires and firebombs toward Israeli troops, who respond with tear gas and live fire. Some 170 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire. Israel says it is defending its border against terrorist attackers.

Hamas had lowered the intensity of the protests in recent weeks as U.N. and Egyptian mediators made progress toward an unofficial agreement with Israel.

But then, a burst of fighting erupted after a botched Israeli undercover military operation in Gaza on Sunday.

IDF Spokesperson's Unit

Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories Kamil Abu Rokon

Gaza terrorists fired 460 rockets into Israel, while the Israeli Air Force struck 160 targets in Gaza. The fighting left a total of 14 Palestinians, including 12 terrorists, dead. An Israeli officer was killed during the Gaza raid and a Palestinian laborer who worked in Israel was killed in a rocket attack in Ashkelon Monday.

In their announcement, protest organizers in Gaza urged people to demonstrate Friday "to thank the resistance" for battling Israel.

But in statements on Facebook, organizers also urged demonstrators to keep their distance from the border fence, a sign that Friday's protest would likely be restrained.

In another sign of emerging calm, Hamas announced Thursday that Egyptian mediators had arrived in Gaza to work on deepening the cease-fire arrangement with Israel.

Hamas and its supporters have celebrated the cease-fire as a victory against the powerful Israeli military.

According to Rokon, "In recent days, we were subjected to a very serious incident with rockets fired toward Israel. The IDF responded powerfully, with a strong hand. I want to send a clear message to the rioters on the security fence and to anyone who takes part in what is known as the 'March of Return' [border demonstrations], which have turned into marches of violence and terrorist activity. If you are planning on carrying out a terrorist act at the security fence on Friday, we know very well that these acts are not spontaneous. We know that the terrorist organization Hamas is masterminding, pulling the strings and spearheading these acts."

Rokon issued a warning to protesters, saying, "Our patience has worn thin, and we will respond harshly. Anyone who destroys the fence or tries to damage it or tries to cross into Israel will be doing it at their own peril. Anyone who launches explosives, grenades or Molotov cocktails will be putting themselves in danger. Anyone who launches firebomb balloons will be putting themselves in danger."

He concluded by suggesting that Gaza's residents "wake up and realize that Hamas and the other terrorist organizations are leading you toward your destruction. Realize this before it is too late. Consider yourselves warned."

Newsletter Thursday November 15, 2018

Newsletters from:

Send to a Friend

| Print

| Eyeing elections, Lieberman took the easy way out

ANALYSIS: Avigdor Lieberman's assertion that as defense minister he was the only one who demanded harsh action against Hamas isn't true • His resignation destabilized the coalition and PM Benjamin Netanyahu may now have to team up with his biggest rival.

Mati Tuchfeld

Lieberman resigns as defense minister, Netanyahu considers Construction and Housing Minister Yoav Gallant

Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman announces his resignation, Wednesday | Photo: AFP

Yisrael Beytenu leader Avigdor Lieberman pinned his decision Wednesday to resign as defense minister on what he called the government's anemic policy on Palestinian terrorism in the Gaza Strip. He was not entirely wrong. Israel's latest moves in Gaza were weak and dangerous, and the prime minister and his cabinet are as responsible for that as the heads of the defense establishment, who, for some reason championed capitulating to Hamas.

But Lieberman's assertions that, from day one, his was the only dissenting voice opposing this policy of capitulation, or that he was the only one pushing to deliver a painful blow to Hamas, is far from true.

Overall, the real reason for his resignation has less to do with the residents of Israel's Gaza-vicinity communities or the parents of the soldiers whose bodies are being held in Gaza, and more to do with his chances of successfully weathering the 2019 elections.

The government's decision to opt for yet another cease-fire with Hamas in the wake of this week's flare-up in Gaza, the fiercest since 2014, has been widely criticized by the public.

Lieberman sensed this, leading him to conclude that staying in office would subject him to scathing criticism from other right-wing lawmakers, undoubtedly led by Habayit Hayehudi Chairman Naftali Bennett. Had he stayed in office, he would have spent

months being raked over the coals. The last thing he planned to do was to take it lying down, especially in an election year.

Lieberman's decision to pre-emptively resign was to be expected, if only because this is his usual modus operandi. Lieberman is a serial quitter and going into elections from the benches of the opposition is a familiar strategic move on his part.

In 2008, he resigned as of strategic affairs minister in Ehud Olmert's government to do just that. In the run-up to the 2015 elections, he dissolved his partnership with Likud – over Gaza – and launched an adversarial election campaign. Now that the smell of elections is in the air, Lieberman is doing what he always does: exiting the coalition to run from the position of the preacher at the gate, on a hawkish platform that out-rights the Right.

At the press conference he convened Wednesday, Lieberman presented a series of substantive disagreements between him and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on security issues. In fact, he listed almost every bitter pill that right-wing voters have been struggling to swallow in relation to the government's policy in Gaza and declared that he had tried to prevent every one at all cost.

But this is not an entirely accurate description. At most, Lieberman disapproved of government moves for the record, but he certainly didn't vehemently oppose anything. If anything, for months he has been explaining the shift in his position, going from pledging to eliminate Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and toppling Hamas rule in Gaza to supporting a vague plan meant to bring about an even more ambiguous change in the coastal enclave.

The big question now is whether Lieberman remains a part of the nationalist camp or not. Netanyahu is counting on a majority of MKs to support him as prime minister after the elections, but whether or not he can count Lieberman among them has come under question. Forging an alliance with Bennett seems like the safest option for Netanyahu, despite the overt personal animosity between the two.

Officials in the Prime Minister's Office stressed Wednesday that Netanyahu would rather avoid elections at this time. Still, he needs Bennett and Kulanu leader Moshe Kahlon's support to stall and fend off Lieberman at the polls.

Bennett is not keen on early elections either. The price he is seeking from Netanyahu – to be named defense minister in Lieberman's place – is high, but not impossible. He may agree to compromise and accept the foreign affairs portfolio, which Netanyahu also holds.

Kahlon's position is more of an enigma. He has no over-the-top expectations and has made no outrageous demands in exchange for his coalition support, as the only thing guiding his decision whether or not to remain in the coalition is his own interests.

Kulanu is likely to face serious challenges in the next elections, but if Kahlon decides that's what is best for him politically, there is nothing Netanyahu could offer him as an alternative.

Still, it is not elections that have Netanyahu worried – it is the makeup of the next coalition. At this time, the coalition remains standing even without Yisrael Beytenu, as it still numbers 61 MKs, but there is no way of knowing how strong a future Likud-led coalition will be.

A coalition without Yisrael Beytenu, numbering 60 or even 59 MKs, could collapse before it is even established, as Lieberman would not hesitate to support anyone else – including Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid or Zionist Union leader Avi Gabbay – to block Netanyahu and head the next government instead. The result may cost the Right its hold on power.

This means Netanyahu needs Bennett, as this type of alliance could push Lieberman toward the Left during the election campaign, thus minimizing any electoral damage he could do to Netanyahu.

As far as the political base of both Habayit Hayehudi and Likud is concerned, joining forces is a natural move, one that should have been pursued from the get-go and has been sidelined so far only because of the personal difference between Netanyahu and Bennett. Such a move has its risks for both sides, but the potential benefits far outweigh them.

Netanyahu will not find it easy to entrust the defense portfolio to his biggest political rival (after Lieberman). Such a move might see voters migrate from Likud to Habayit Hayehudi, crushing Netanyahu's dream of winning 40 Knesset seats. Then again, doing so would ensure that, barring extreme cases like the eviction of Judea and Samaria settlements, Habayit Hayehudi will never have an interest in toppling the government.

And then there is the second option – naming Construction and Housing Minister Yoav Gallant, a former GOC Southern Command and a Kulanu lawmaker, as defense minister.

This seems politically far-fetched, but if there is any minister who Netanyahu wants to promote, it is Gallant. The latter has been a steadfast supporter of Netanyahu's policy in Gaza and it remains to be seen if the prime minister is grateful enough to reward him with such a senior appointment.

by TaboolaPromoted Links
You May Also Like