

Newsletter Tuesday November 27, 2018

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Report: Hamas says it is willing to let PA back into Gaza

More than a decade after Hamas violently seized control over the Gaza Strip, leading to a Palestinian Authority split, Lebanese report suggests Hamas is softening its stance • Hamas demand for elections within six months, however, may scupper the deal.

Israel Hayom Staff

The heads of rival Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas sign a reconciliation agreement in 2017 | Photo: Reuters

After years of overt rivalry between Hamas, the rulers of Gaza, and the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, Hamas has voiced willingness to allow the PA back into Gaza, the Hezbollah-linked Lebanese media outlet Al Mayadeen reported Tuesday.

According to the report, Hamas representatives expressed this sentiment during the latest round of reconciliation talks in Cairo.

The two main Palestinian factions, Hamas and Fatah, have been at odds since Hamas violently routed the Fatah leadership from Gaza in 2007, resulting in a split of the Palestinian Authority. Currently, the PA reigns over the West Bank, and Hamas is the exclusive ruler of the Gaza Strip.

According to the Lebanese news outlet, Hamas has now agreed to implement a 2017 reconciliation agreement, which replaced a previous agreement struck in 2011, under which the Palestinian Authority's rule would be restored in Gaza. However, Hamas conditioned the move on the establishment of a unity government including both Fatah and Hamas within 45 days.

A similar effort was made in 2014, but the unity government quickly collapsed leading to a renewed impasse between the two rival factions.

This time, Hamas' key stipulation, which could scupper the entire deal, is that the PA agree to hold general elections within six months in Gaza and the West Bank. The PA may reject this condition for fear that Hamas will win the election and essentially take over the West Bank, in addition to remaining in power in Gaza.

Last October, the two sides arrived at a compromise agreement, six years after signing the previous deal. Ultimately, however, the agreement was never implemented because Hamas refused to disarm.

Tensions between Fatah and Hamas have mounted in recent months, with the PA imposing painful sanctions on Gaza in an effort to pressure Hamas to reconcile. The intra-Palestinian tensions have also impacted Hamas' clashes with Israel.

In addition to withholding salaries from Gaza officials, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has also undermined Hamas efforts to reach a cease-fire agreement with Israel, claiming that Hamas does not have the authority to do so on behalf of the Palestinian people.

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Newsletter Monday November 26, 2018

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[EU condemns Iranian president for labeling Israel a 'cancerous tumor'](#)

Reiterating its "fundamental commitment to the security of Israel," European Union says Hassan Rouhani's remarks questioning Israel's legitimacy are "totally unacceptable" and incompatible with the need to address disputes through dialogue and law.

Israel Hayom Staff

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani | Photo: AP

The European Union has condemned recent remarks by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in which he called Israel "a cancerous tumor."

In an official statement released on Sunday, the EU said Rouhani's "remarks bringing into question Israel's legitimacy are totally unacceptable. They are also incompatible with the need to address international disputes through dialogue and international law.

"The European Union reiterates its fundamental commitment to the security of Israel, including with regard to current and emerging threats in the region."

In a speech to the annual International Islamic Unity Conference in Tehran earlier that day, Rouhani called Israel "a cancerous tumor created in the Middle East by the West after World War II in order to serve its own interests."

Rouhani also called on the leaders of Muslim countries to stand with Iran as it contends with reimposed U.S. economic sanctions following the U.S. withdrawal from the 2015 nuclear deal.

"Surrender to the West, led by America, is a betrayal of our religion and future generations in the region," Rouhani said. "We have a choice: Roll out the red carpet for criminals, or stand against the injustice and remain loyal to our prophet, the Quran and Islam."

Rouhani also attacked U.S. Persian Gulf ally Saudi Arabia, which Iran is engaged in fighting in Yemen, saying, "We are prepared to protect our interests from the Saudis, and we will not ask \$450 million to do it."

In response to Rouhani's comments, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "Israel knows very well how to protect itself from the murderous regime in Iran."

"Rouhani's **slander**, which calls for the destruction of Israel, proves yet again why the nations of the world need to join in the sanctions against the Iranian terrorist regime which threatens them."

Newsletter Sunday November 25, 2018

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Ministers debate bill allowing Israel to deport terrorists' families

According to bill, drafted by Habayit Hayehudi MK Moti Yogev, "Immediate deportation of a murderer's family has deterrence value that can save lives" • Under current law, deportation contingent on proving terrorists' immediate family presents a threat.

Yair Altman

Habayit Hayehudi MK Moti Yogev | Photo: Oren Ben Hakoon

The government is pursuing a bill that would allow it to deport terrorists' families within one week of a terrorist attack in which a family member is implicated.

The Ministerial Committee on Legislation was set to debate the bill, presented by Habayit Hayehudi, on Sunday.

The legislative proposal, sponsored by Habayit Hayehudi MK Moti Yogev, aims to give the IDF's GOC Central Command the authority to expel the immediate family of any terrorist implicated in carrying out or attempting to carry out a terrorist attack in Judea and Samaria. Under the legislation, the family can be relocated from their residence simply to another area within Judea and Samaria.

"The immediate deportation of a murderer's family has deterrence value that can save lives, but when the legal process drags on for weeks and months, it undermines deterrence," the bill explains.

Under the current law, a deportation of this nature is possible only if it is proven that a terrorist's immediate family itself presents a threat to public safety. The latest bill describes the current legislation as "hollow," asserting that the existing hurdles prevent deportations from being executed.

Yogev presented the bill to the committee earlier this month, but a vote on it was delayed when political turmoil threatened to destabilize the government in the wake of Yisrael Beytenu leader Avigdor Lieberman's decision to resign as defense minister.

At the time, Habayit Hayehudi leader Naftali Bennett said the bill "aims to stop Palestinian terrorism in Judea and Samaria."

"In the current reality, terrorism against Jews is very lucrative for Palestinians and their families," Bennett said. "They murder Jews and then receive financial benefits. Palestinian terrorists must be made to understand that violence doesn't pay and that Israel will settle the score."

"Expelling a terrorist's family to another area will help generate deterrence and convey a message to the Palestinian public: Israel will show zero tolerance for terrorism," Bennett said.

Newsletter Friday November 23, 2018

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PM taps former military secretary Eyal Zamir as IDF deputy chief

In one of his first decisions as defense minister, PM Benjamin Netanyahu appoints "accomplished and well-respected" former GOC Southern Command to coveted post • Zamir, 52, joined military 34 years ago, and is in good position to become future IDF chief.

Lilach Shoval

Maj. Gen. Eyal Zamir | Photo: IDF Spokesperson's Unit

Former GOC Southern Command Maj. Gen. Eyal Zamir will be the next Israel Defense Forces deputy chief of general staff, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced on Thursday. It was one of Netanyahu's first decisions since also taking on the defense minister's portfolio following the resignation of Avigdor Lieberman a week ago.

Zamir's appointment was expected, as he was Netanyahu's preferred choice for the job after having served under him as military secretary. Zamir was also the preferred candidate of incoming IDF Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Aviv Kochavi.

"Zamir is an accomplished and well-respected officer who will help the next chief of general staff lead the IDF to new heights," Netanyahu said in his announcement.

Outgoing IDF chief, Lt. Gen. Gadi Eizenkot, also welcomed Zamir's appointment and made a congratulatory call.

"Zamir is an officer who has many accomplishments, who served in combat service as a fighter and as a commander in important positions. He has the skills needed for success in doing this important job and in contributing to the IDF," the IDF Spokesperson's Unit said in a statement.

Several months ago, when Netanyahu and then-Defense Minister Lieberman began deliberating on their choice for the next IDF chief of staff, Netanyahu reportedly favored Zamir, but Lieberman wanted another officer. This resulted in the decision being delayed until they settled on Kochavi.

Lieberman then chose to announce their decision when Netanyahu was on a secret visit to Oman, and when Netanyahu arrived back, he congratulated Kochavi but stressed that Zamir would likely be his deputy. Lieberman reacted angrily to this statement, saying the identity of the next deputy chief of general staff would be decided jointly.

However, ultimately, it was Netanyahu who made the decision on his own. Netanyahu became defense minister last week after Lieberman resigned in protest of the way the prime minister handled the latest hostilities in Gaza.

Zamir, 52, began his military service in 1984, when he was drafted into the Armored Corps. He later became division commander and GOC Southern Command, military

secretary to Netanyahu during part of his premiership, as well as chief of staff to GOC Army Headquarters, which oversees the logistical and strategic aspects of the ground forces.

Serving as deputy chief of staff makes Zamir an automatic candidate for succeeding Kochavi in several years. Zamir is expected to take a leave of absence after serving about half of his term so that he can pursue an advanced degree.

GOC Southern Command Maj. Gen. Herzl Halevi is expected to take his place during his absence. This puts Halevi in a better position to become chief of staff too, because he would be on active duty when the decision is made.

Former GOC Central Command Maj. Gen. Nitzan Alon was also considered for the post of chief of staff and deputy chief of staff. Having been passed over, he is now likely to quit the IDF. On Thursday, Netanyahu issued a statement thanking him for "the many years he contributed to the IDF and Israel's security."

Newsletter Friday November 23, 2018

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Israel reveals: Hamas exploits sick Palestinians for terrorism

In new tactic, Hamas leaders in Gaza take advantage of Israeli gesture of allowing Palestinians into Israel for medical treatment to stage attacks in Israel, Shin Bet security agency says • Hamas activity has increased in scope and threat, Shin Bet says.

Lilach Shoval

Hamas operative Ayus Rajoub during his interrogation in Israel | Photo: Shin Bet

Hamas' military wing has grown more sophisticated in recruiting personnel for its terrorist networks in Judea and Samaria, Israel's Shin Bet security agency revealed Thursday.

In an unusually detailed statement, the agency said that Hamas has increasingly taken advantage of Israel's humanitarian gestures to facilitate attacks.

"Activists from Hamas' military wing in the Gaza Strip have been recruiting in **Judea and Samaria**, training recruits with explosives and instructing them to find targets inside Israel," the agency said.

"This is a departure from the activities undertaken by Hamas in recent years, both in scope and in potential threat."

The agency said this activity is "designed to create a new reality [in Judea and Samaria] in light of the ongoing events in the Gaza Strip."

According to the Shin Bet, the effort is being overseen by the senior Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip. A substantial part of the mechanism includes exploiting the special permits Israel grants Gazans for emergency medical care in Israel.

"To establish contact with operatives in Judea and Samaria, Hamas exploits residents of Gaza who have permits to receive life-saving care in Israeli hospitals," the Shin Bet said.

One example provided was of Nueima Mukdad, a 53-year-old Palestinian mother of nine who accompanied her 47-year-old sister to Israel in August when the latter was undergoing cancer treatment.

After entering Israel, the two sisters met in Ramallah with Hamas activist Fouad Dar Halil from Sinjil, a small village nearby, who had served 14 years in an Israeli prison for his role in major terrorist attacks.

They handed him a suitcase with a secret letter, in which the Hamas military wing in Gaza asked him to carry out Hamas attacks in Israel and recruit others to join him.

In the letter, the military wing promised that it would help Halil obtain weapons and funding for carrying out the attacks, as well as provide him with instructional videos on how to make bombs using new techniques that have never been used before in Judea and Samaria. Halil complied with their request.

According to Israeli officials, the terrorist networks that Hamas established in Judea and Samaria in this manner were directed to carry out terrorist attacks against Israeli targets as quickly as possible, to force Israel to confront escalation on two fronts rather than just in the Gaza Strip.

Hamas' efforts in Judea and Samaria were discovered after the arrest of Ayus Rajoub, a 25-year-old Hamas operative who lives near Hebron.

Rajoub was arrested on Sept. 23, and in an unusual step, the Shin Bet released a tape of his interrogation. In it, Rajoub reveals that he was promised financial help by Hamas' military wing, because it wanted Judea and Samaria residents to stage major attacks inside Israel, in shopping malls, hotels, buses and trains.

Rajoub was hoping to carry out the attacks in early October. He had recruited operatives from a nearby village and told them to find targets for attacks inside Israel, as well as prepare explosives for a bomb while he was building the detonator, as per instructions from the Gaza Strip.

"This adds to a long list of attempts by Hamas' military wing to stage attacks by means of recruiting activists in Judea and Samaria," a senior Shin Bet official said.

"This has led to the arrest of hundreds of young activists in Judea and Samaria, including female students and young women.

"This is how Hamas' military wing sabotages the lives of Palestinians in Judea and Samaria, taking them down the dark path of terrorism."

Newsletter Thursday November 22, 2018

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Report: US postpones unveiling Mideast peace plan amid Israeli political crisis

U.S. President Donald Trump has decided to postpone the long-awaited unveiling of his Middle East peace plan, Palestinian newspaper Al-Quds reports • Israeli Ambassador to Washington Ron Dermer reportedly recommended the delay to Trump.

Israel Hayom Staff

U.S. President Donald Trump | Photo: AP

U.S. President Donald Trump has decided to postpone the long-awaited unveiling of his Middle East peace plan at least until February, the Palestinian newspaper Al-Quds reported Wednesday, citing the recent political crisis in Israel as the reason.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "prefers no announcement of the plan whatsoever, especially now, amid the recent developments in the region and the political crisis in Israel," an unnamed source told the newspaper, adding that Trump's advisers have recommended he postpone unveiling the plan.

The political crisis, which followed a flare-up in violence along the Israel-Gaza border, was sparked by the surprise resignation of Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman over the subsequent truce agreement between Israel and Hamas. His resignation nearly forced an early election, which was narrowly avoided at the last minute. The Israeli government is now operating with a precarious coalition of 61 MKs and could still potentially collapse.

The east Jerusalem-based newspaper reported that it was the Israeli Ambassador to Washington, Ron Dermer, who recommended that Trump shelve the plan for the time being, given the political pressures Netanyahu's government now faces.

Dermer is one of the officials privy to all the details of the plan, which Trump has dubbed the "deal of the century," the report said. As such, he has been working closely with senior White House adviser Jared Kushner and U.S. Special Representative for International Negotiations Jason Greenblatt, as well as with U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman.

Trump has previously stated that he would support any plan that would resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and in September he came out in support of the two-state solution.

Newsletter Wednesday November 21, 2018

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Joining US, Israel officially pulls out of UN migrant rights pact

Although Israel took part in drafting global immigration treaty, PM Netanyahu says Israel will not sign pact that grants labor migrants the same legal status as refugees • "We're committed to protecting our borders from illegal infiltrators," he says.

Akiva Bigman

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu | Photo: AP

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday announced that Israel will not join a global immigration pact that grants labor migrants the same legal status as refugees.

"I have instructed the Foreign Ministry to announce that Israel will not join and will not sign the immigration treaty," Netanyahu said. "We are committed to protecting our borders from illegal infiltrators. That is what we have done and what we will continue to do."

Netanyahu made the decision after Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely brought the issue to his attention.

Under the recently negotiated Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, U.N. member states tentatively agreed to cement the rights of refugees under the U.N. Charter. The document is set to be officially adopted in December at an intergovernmental conference in Morocco.

According to the Foreign Ministry website, Israeli officials took part in the formulation of the draft, participated in meetings of the forum that compiled it and presented the forum with relevant materials.

Unlike other agreements and conventions, the agreement will grant labor migrants as well as "climate migrants" the same legal status under international law as asylum seekers and refugees who flee tyrannical regimes. This would essentially make all migrants, legal or not, eligible for economic benefits.

The pact strives to "develop national short-, medium- and long-term policy goals regarding the inclusion of migrants in societies, including on labor market integration, family reunification, education, non-discrimination and health, including by fostering partnerships with relevant stakeholders" and to "provide newly arrived migrants with targeted, gender-responsive, child-sensitive, accessible and comprehensive information and legal guidance on their rights and obligations, including on compliance with national and local laws, obtaining of work and resident permits, status adjustments, registration with authorities, access to justice to file complaints about rights violations, as well as access to basic services."

If adopted, the compact would not be legally binding, but its ambiguous wording could result in some parts of it being incorporated into international law, particularly if it is adopted by an overwhelming majority of member states.

It also uses phrases such as "we commit" and "collective commitment."

For this reason, the United States, Australia, Austria and Hungary have refused to be parties to the compact. The Czech Republic, Poland and Croatia have also indicated they will not join it, while in Canada and Germany there have been campaigns against its adoption.

Newsletter Tuesday November 20, 2018

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Latest political turmoil paints clear picture of winners, losers

Netanyahu emerged from the coalition crisis a determined leader who doesn't yield to political pressure • Habayit Hayehudi head Bennett narrowly escaped being the one who toppled a rightist government, while Yisrael Beytenu's Lieberman gambled – and lost.

Yehuda Shlezinger

Yisrael Beytenu leader Avigdor Lieberman and Habayit Hayehudi head Naftali Bennett | Photo: AP, Reuters

As the dust settles on the political battlefield, it is becoming clear that some of those involved in the political turmoil that threatened to bring down the government over the past week, gambled – and lost.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu emerged from the latest coalition crisis as a determined leader who does not yield to political pressure. He weathered the threat of early elections, triggered by Yisrael Beytenu leader Avigdor Lieberman's surprise resignation as defense minister, and withstood the ultimatum presented by Habayit Hayehudi leader Naftali Bennett, who demanded to succeed Lieberman in exchange for remaining in the coalition.

Netanyahu rejected Bennett's demand and appointed himself defense minister, thereby nearly guaranteeing Likud a bump in the polls in the next elections, scheduled for November 2019.

Habayit Hayehudi's leader, for his part, did the math and opted to withdraw all demands and remain in the coalition, citing the "good of the country."

Bennett's decision to remain in the government still means the coalition numbers only 61 out of a total of 120 MKs, giving it a very narrow majority with which to function until the next election. The coalition may not be stable, but Netanyahu has regained control over when to call early elections, if at all.

Bennett, for his part, narrowly avoided being labeled as the one who brought down a right-wing government. For the most part, he was able to do some damage control before being seen exclusively as someone who makes empty threats.

Yes, he will be the butt of many jokes and jabs in the next few days, but in terms of the public's collective memory, he will probably be perceived as a responsible adult who was willing to "take a hit" rather than destabilize the entire country.

Kulanu leader Moshe Kahlon emerged from the coalition crisis unscathed. While it may have appeared for a moment as though he held the coalition's fate in his hands, Kahlon made neither threats nor promises, preserving his Teflon image. Still, it remains to be seen what the future holds for his party, especially in the polls.

The big loser to emerge from all this is undoubtedly Lieberman. Yisrael Beytenu's chairman had hoped to see the election year through as a hawkish defense minister that out-rights the right-wing government at every turn, but given that his resignation failed to trigger snap elections, all he is looking at now is months of boredom on the benches of the opposition.

Moreover, his failed gambit has made him an easy target for other right-wing parties in the coming election campaign, as his rivals will constantly remind him how, as defense minister, not only did he fail to defeat Hamas, but also bolted when the going got tough and nearly brought down a right-wing government.

Newsletter Monday November 19, 2018

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Bennett walks back ultimatum, coalition remains intact

The threat of early elections is seemingly lifted as Habayit Hayehudi leader Naftali Bennett pulls his demand to be named defense minister, says will stand by PM

Netanyahu as he navigates sensitive security climate • Skeptic, Bennett foresees "uphill battle."

Mati Tuchfeld, Yehuda Shlezinger, Ariel Kahana and Israel Hayom Staff

Habayit Hayehudi Chairman Naftali Bennett delivers a statement to the media in Jerusalem, Monday | Photo: Reuters

Habayit Hayehudi leader Naftali Bennett and fellow party member Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked announced Monday that they were standing by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in his effort to stabilize the coalition and avert early elections.

Netanyahu has been sparing no effort to prevent snap elections in the wake of Yisrael Beytenu leader Avigdor Lieberman's surprise resignation as defense minister last week.

Bennett had initially demanded to be named defense minister in Lieberman's place, threatening to bolt the coalition if his demand was not met, but Netanyahu refused, saying he plans to keep the defense portfolio at this time.

Had Bennett withdrawn his party from the coalition, it would have lost its majority in the Knesset and mandated immediate elections.

In a special televised statement from the IDF's headquarters in Tel Aviv on Sunday, Netanyahu urged his coalition partners to "act responsibly" and refrain from destabilizing the government further, saying, "We are facing one of our most complex security situations and at a time like this, you don't bring down a government. At a time like this you don't call an election."

Bennett and Shaked, however, were not convinced, and Habayit Hayehudi reiterated its demand to name Bennett the defense minister, saying that the government was not viable otherwise.

Still, in a press conference in Jerusalem on Monday, they backtracked the demand and announced that they were putting the good of the state ahead of their own political considerations and remaining in the coalition, withdrawing all demands.

"The State of Israel is experiencing a crisis of confidence with respect to security," Bennett said. "The problem is not our enemies – ruthless enemies are nothing new to us. Now, like in the past, it's not right to mix politics and security. There is no apocalypse on the horizon. We have enemies, but it is not the enemy that worries me. Something bad is happening to us from within."

"For quite a few years now, including over the last decade of the governments headed by Netanyahu, Israel has stopped winning. ... We restrain and restrain our troops and our soldiers are now more afraid of the military advocate general than of [Hamas military leader] Yahya Sinwar. We have gone from defeating the enemy to containing the enemy and things that were once clear are suddenly questioned," Bennett said.

Touching on last week's cross-border clash with Gaza, Bennett said, "After over 530 Hamas rockets were fired on Israeli communities, we still try to convince ourselves that everything is fine and that Hamas is more deterred than it has ever been."

"Common sense has given way to legal debates and our [defense] system has become cumbersome," he argued. "Terrorists are awarded monthly salaries, their homes remain standing, their families are revered and we stand idly by, doing nothing to stop it."

"Hamas and Hezbollah grow more emboldened by the day because they believe we're afraid to confront them," he continued. "What the prime minister calls 'prudence' is perceived by our enemies as hesitation and weakness – that's a very fine line."

"We have come to think that there is no solution for terrorism, terrorists and missiles; that there's nothing we can do; that we can't win. But there is something we can do and there is a solution: When Israel wants to win, we will win," he declared.

Habayit Hayehudi was established "to offer a political alternative, to replace hesitation with determination, fatigue with initiative and awkwardness with confidence and our actions have proven that we can change the course," Bennett said.

"To restore deterrence against our enemies and to instill creativity and innovation [in the military], I asked the prime minister to name me defense minister. After the previous defense minister proved to be an utter failure, I wanted to assume responsibility," Bennett went on to say. "When the prime minister and I met on Friday, I made it clear that I was not giving him any ultimatums and appreciated him saying he viewed me as a candidate

for the position. Still, for reasons that are his own, Netanyahu has decided to keep the defense portfolio for himself."

"He promised the public to change course, to revolutionize defense and security. If the prime minister is serious, and I want to believe he is, then I say – we are pulling all of our political demands and we will stand by you in the monumental task of ensuring that Israel is victorious again," Bennett added. "I'm sure I'll be made to pay a political price in the coming days, but that's okay. I'll get over it. I prefer to see the prime minister defeat me in politics than to see [Hamas leader Ismail] Haniyeh defeat the State of Israel."

Actions speak louder than words

Bennett's decision to remain in the government still means the coalition numbers only 61 out of a total of 120 MKs, giving it a very narrow majority with which to function until the next election, set for November 2019.

"I don't know how long this government can last with only 61 MKs and I haven't changed my mind – this will be an uphill battle. But we're willing to give it a try," Bennett said.

"If the government chooses the right path, and acts like a true right-wing government, then it's worth a try. The ball is in the prime minister's court. The coming weeks will put the security revolution he promised to the test. ... The public has had enough of declarations. They want actions. We will not be spectators on the sidelines and we will do our best to help," Bennett concluded.

Shaked echoed Bennett's sentiments, saying that Habayit Hayehudi viewed its spot in the coalition as a means of achieving a "national mission." She added that the party "will never run away from responsibility or risk public interest for political gain."

She reiterated that Bennett was "the best man for the job of defense minister," and criticized Lieberman, saying, "Israel's security policy, if there is one, has come to reflect hesitation. Striving for victory has been replaced by the defense minister's shameful resignation – a gift he gave to Hamas that will forever be a mark of Cain."

Habayit Hayehudi, she stated, "Will not augment the victory Lieberman gave to the terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip. They – and the entire Middle East – are watching us. ... Habayit Hayehudi has chosen to exercise national responsibility and we will continue being this government's national conscience."

Early rumors that Bennett was planning to withdraw Habayit Hayehudi out of the coalition infuriated senior officials in the religious Zionist camp, who accused him of preferring his own narrow political interests over those of his constituents.

Several religious Zionist rabbis have called an emergency meeting for later this week to discuss their options. One official told Israel Hayom that the rabbis were "seriously

considering" forming a new religious Zionist party to counter Habayit Hayehudi, as the rabbis disapprove of the political direction in which Bennett is leading the party.

Newsletter Monday November 19, 2018

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International migration pact threatens Israel, NGO warns

Ahead of U.N. conference to adopt global pact on immigration, NGO warns that Israel's sovereignty is at stake • Non-binding agreement, which grants labor migrants same legal status as refugees, could eventually be incorporated into international law.

Akiva Bigman

African migrants in Tel Aviv | Illustration: Gideon Markowicz

Israel should not join the new U.N.-drafted agreement aiming to protect the rights of migrants because it would hurt its own interests, the Israeli Immigration Policy Center warned on Sunday.

The center, known also as Eitan, has been actively calling on the government to take a more aggressive approach to illegal immigration.

Under the recently negotiated Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, U.N. member states tentatively agreed to cement the rights of refugees under the auspices of the U.N. Charter. The document is set to be officially adopted in December, during an intergovernmental conference in Morocco.

According to the Foreign Ministry website, Israeli officials have taken part in the formulation of the draft, having participated in meetings of the forum that compiled the pact and having presented the forum with relevant materials.

Unlike other agreements and conventions, the new compact will grant labor migrants the same legal status under international law as asylum seekers and refugees who flee tyrannical regimes. This would essentially make all migrants, legal or not, eligible for economic benefits.

The pact strives to "develop national short-, medium- and long-term policy goals regarding the inclusion of migrants in societies, including on labor market integration, family reunification, education, non-discrimination and health, including by fostering partnerships with relevant stakeholders" and to "provide newly arrived migrants with targeted, gender-responsive, child-sensitive, accessible and comprehensive information

and legal guidance on their rights and obligations, including on compliance with national and local laws, obtaining of work and resident permits, status adjustments, registration with authorities, access to justice to file complaints about rights violations, as well as access to basic services."

If adopted, the compact would not be legally binding, but its ambiguous wording could result in some parts of it being incorporated into international law, particularly if it is adopted by an overwhelming majority of member states. It also uses phrases such as "we commit" and "collective commitment."

For this reason, the U.S., Australia, Austria and Hungary have refused to be a party to this compact. The Czech Republic, Poland and Croatia have also indicated they would not join it, while Canada and Germany have seen campaigns against its adoption.

"The agreement runs against Israel's core sovereign interests," the Israeli Immigration Policy Center said in a statement. "There is no justification for joining an international pact that undermines our interests. We call on Prime Minister [Benjamin] Netanyahu to make it clear that he will not join this radical agreement."

Meanwhile, the Foreign Ministry issued a statement saying: "No decision has been made on this topic."

Newsletter Sunday November 18, 2018

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Kentucky governor signs order supporting Israel against BDS

Republican Governor Matt Bevin issues order that bans awarding state contracts to companies that participate in boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel • Kentucky condemns "repugnant" BDS movement and stands with "our friend, Israel," Bevin says.

Kentucky governor Matt Bevin signs order supporting Israel against boycott & sanctions

News Agencies and Israel Hayom Staff

Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin | Photo: Reuters

Republican Kentucky Governor Matt Bevin has signed an executive order to ban awarding state contracts to companies that participate in boycott, divestment and sanction practices against Israel.

Bevin signed the order during a ceremony at the state capital, Frankfort, with Israeli Ambassador Ron Dermer and Consul General of Israel to the Southeast United States Judith Varnai Shorer.

Kentucky joins a growing list of states that have enacted anti-BDS measures, including Alabama, Arizona, California, Colorado, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Maryland, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

Supporters of the BDS movement argue that it is a nonviolent way to support the Palestinian cause, but Bevin called the movement anti-Semitic and "repugnant." He referenced passages from the biblical book of Ezekiel about being a watchman, saying Kentucky was watching and sounding the alarm.

"The State of Israel is an important friend and trading partner to the Commonwealth," Bevin said.

"We will not allow state resources to benefit entities that intentionally engage in discriminatory practices to harm the sovereignty and economic prosperity of any ally nation.

"Today's executive order makes it clear that Kentucky condemns the BDS movement and that we stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our friend, Israel."

Jewish and pro-Israel groups lauded the move.

"Boycotting Israel is immoral, as it specifically targets a staunch ally of the United States. Everyone in the Commonwealth of Kentucky should be proud that we are now on record as officially opposing the demonization of Israel," said Matthew Goldberg, director of community relations for the Jewish Federation of Louisville.

Roz Rothstein, CEO of the StandWithUs NGO, said, "In this executive order, Kentucky follows other states in protecting its citizens from becoming de facto participants in discrimination and anti-Semitism. We commend his leadership at a time when we see anti-Semitism rising."

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