

ISRAEL REPORT

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AFTER TRUMP MEETING, NETANYAHU SAYS WILLING TO EXAMINE REINING IN SETTLEMENT CONSTRUCTION (Ha'aretz 2/16/17)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told reporters following his meeting with U.S. President Donald Trump that he was willing to examine with the Trump administration reining West Bank settlement construction, as the U.S. president had requested.

Nevertheless, Netanyahu stressed that Israel would not be willing to once again impose diplomatic restrictions on construction in East Jerusalem, as it did during the Obama administration.

Netanyahu noted that during their meeting, Trump voiced willingness to "dramatically upgrade" U.S.-Israel ties and said professional teams would be set up for that end. On the other hand, Trump asked Netanyahu both publically and privately to reign in settlement construction.

"Trump is willing to upgrade our ties in every field," Netanyahu said. "So if there's a request from the president to examine this issue of construction in the settlement then I think our national interest to reach an understanding.

"It is worth making an effort... we agreed to continue to discuss this issue to try to reach understandings that fit our desire for reaching peace and security," Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu noted that during the meeting with Trump, the two sides didn't reach understanding regarding settlement construction and that more talks will be held on the issue. He stressed that a recent decision to build 6,000 new homes in the West Bank would not be rescinded or put on hold.

"On the issue of construction in Jerusalem our policy changed [and restrictions imposed during Obama's term were lifted] and it won't go back," Netanyahu said.

Netanyahu was asked several times during the press briefing whether he was going back on his 2009 Bar Ilan speech in which he voiced his support for the two-state solution, but Netanyahu avoided giving a clear answer. The prime minister also evaded voicing his opinion of Trump's statement that he does not rule out a one-state solution. "Our definition and [Palestinian President Abbas'] definition of a Palestinian state are not the same," Netanyahu said.

"The state he talks about is unacceptable to us. I didn't change my positions. The essence is the same... I've said it before and I repeat – I don't want to annex two million Palestinians to Israel and I've no interest in them being our subjects. But we must make sure we're not under threat of a Palestinian terror state in our heartland."

Another topic raised in Netanyahu's meeting with Trump was the possibility of relocating the U.S. embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Trump avoided giving a clear answer to a question on the matter during the press conference held before the meeting. "Concerning the embassy, I said I support moving it to Jerusalem," Netanyahu said. "He's examining the issue thoroughly but he heard our unequivocal opinion on the matter. He wants time to look into the issue."

ABBAS TO NETANYAHU: HEED TRUMP AND FREEZE SETTLEMENTS (Times of Israel, 2/15/17)

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas on Wednesday said he would continue to work with the US administration to advance the two-state solution, while urging Israel to heed US President Donald Trump's call to freeze settlement construction.

Trump bucked America's longstanding commitment to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict Thursday, standing alongside Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu at a press conference in the White House.

"I'm looking at two states and one state, and I like the one that both parties like," he said, showing receptiveness to Netanyahu's call for a regional initiative that relied on Israel's improving relationships with Arab countries.

"The United States will encourage a peace, and really a great peace deal," said Trump, and added that the matter was "important to me personally."

At another point in the press conference, Trump also issued a gently worded warning to Netanyahu over his government's continued West Bank settlement construction, turning to the Israeli premier and saying, "I'd like you to hold off on settlements for a little bit."

In response, Abbas said Netanyahu must "respond to the request of US President Donald Trump and the international community to halt all settlement activities, including in occupied East Jerusalem," according to a statement from his office.

The Palestinian leader reaffirmed his commitment to two states, "living in peace and security alongside the State of Israel on the June 1967 borders" while expressing "willingness to deal positively with... Trump to create peace.

"The insistence of the Israeli government to destroy the two-state option through the continuation of settlement building and imposing facts on the ground will lead to more extremism and instability," he warned.

Abbas maintained that Netanyahu's demand to retain security control over the Jordan Valley and insistence that Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state are "a continuation of the attempt to impose facts on the ground and destroy the two-state option and replace it with the principle of one state with two systems, meaning apartheid."

Wasel Abu Yousef, a member of the PLO Executive Committee, told The Times of Israel: "I think it is clear President Trump is trying to adopt the stance of Netanyahu, regarding the erasure of the existence of the two-state

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solution. This destroys the entire strategy of the former US administration.

"We as Palestinians believe there is no other solution that is practical or realistic," he said.

Earlier in the day, Palestine Liberation Organization Secretary-General Saeb Erekat said the only alternative to the creation of a Palestinian state is a one-state solution in which all Palestinians will get the right to vote.

"Contrary to [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu's plan of one state and two systems, apartheid, the only alternative to two sovereign and democratic states on the 1967 border is one single secular and democratic state with equal rights for everyone, Christians, Muslims, and Jews, on all of historic Palestine," Erekat said during a meeting with the speaker of the UK House of Commons, John Bercow, in Ramallah.

Asked what compromises he had in mind for the two sides, Trump said the Israelis would "have to show some flexibility" and demonstrate their genuine commitment to an agreement. Meanwhile, Palestinians would have to address incitement.

"I think the Palestinians have to get rid of some of that hate they're taught from a very young age," Trump said. "They have to acknowledge Israel. They have to do that."

Speaking after Trump, Netanyahu repeated his long-held demands of the Palestinians, including recognition of Israel as a Jewish state and demilitarization, and accused Ramallah of paying lip service to negotiations.

"Not only have I not abandoned these prerequisites of peace, but they have gotten stronger," he said, asserting the Jewish historical right to the West Bank while accusing the Palestinians of glorifying terrorism.

"We have to look at new ways" to reach peace, he said, and called for a "regional" approach that included Arab states. Netanyahu noted that he would discuss such an initiative with Trump.

REGULATION LAW PUT INTO ACTION TO PREVENT EVICTION (Israel Hayom 2/16/17)

For the first time since the Judea and Samaria Settlement Regulation Law was passed last week, the State Attorney's Office has requested that the High Court of Justice take the legislation into account and prevent the eviction of residents from the Adei Ad outpost, built partially on private Palestinian land.

The law grants retroactive legalization to Judea and Samaria outposts built on private Palestinian land if the settlers can prove they built the outpost in good faith or received government assistance in its establishment.

In a response to the court on behalf of the state, State Attorney representatives wrote on Tuesday: "regarding the illegal structures located outside declared state land ... given the [passing] of the Judea and Samaria Settlement Regulation Law, the state demands that the implications this law may have on the structures be considered."

Adei Ad was established in 1998 near the settlement of Shiloh. Petitioners in the case have argued that the outpost was built in part on the privately owned land of Palestinian residents of Turmus Ayya, Al-Muayar, Karyut and Jalud. In 2014, the local leaders of these villages petitioned the High Court, with the assistance of the Yesh Din human rights organization, to evict Adei Ad residents from 11 buildings in the outpost.

In September, the state announced its intention to retroactively regulate the outpost, which is home to 60 families. The State Attorney's Office also noted that only five buildings had been built on private land.

The State Attorney's Office is now asking that the court reject sections of the petition seeking the eviction of structures built on state land, thus attempting to ensure that the outpost is not evicted in its entirety. A similar arrangement was ordered by the High Court last week with regards to the Samaria outpost of Tapuach Maarav. However in the case of Adei Ad, the State Attorney's Office has further asked to court not to order the eviction of homes built on private land.

Yesh Din issued a response to the state's request: "All of the State of Israel's

unacceptable practices regarding illegal construction in the West Bank have been concentrated into a single message."

The statement went on to say, "The outpost of Adei Ad was entirely established in an illegal manner. ... Instead of enforcing the law and evicting the outpost, [the state] is declaring more and more land as state land, designated exclusively for settlers, and it is additionally looking for any way to avoid returning private land to its Palestinian owners."

ISRAELI SCOUTS TRAIN TO PROTECT WILDLIFE (YNet 2/11/17)

An IDF project is providing training for military scouts in identifying animals and behavior patterns in the wild as part of their efforts towards environmental preservation.

The project is a joint initiative of the IDF and the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI) with the collaboration of the Nature and Parks Authority, and it began three years ago. Today, 25 IDF units participate across the country. According to the chief of staff, its purpose is to change the way the army operates and relates with nature and the environment. In the project, the scouts operate nearly the same way as rangers.

As of now, around 30 scouts have completed the program, including senior officers, at the course held at the Scouts' Training School at the Lachish Training Base.

Eldad Peled of the Nature and Parks Authority explained, "Scouts are out in the field and pass on information about wildlife. That information has great value, because there are many places that we can't visit. So the information about the types of animals and hours of operation is far more important to get a snapshot of the future of nature in the country."

"I love nature, and protecting it is important to me, especially for rare animals and plants," said Master Sgt. Shovel Shibli, a scout for 15 years who has gone through the program. Sgt. 1st Class Taysir Okla explained that there is no way that a scout can make mistakes in animal tracks, and when terrorists try to camouflage their own tracks as those of wildlife, the scouts identify them without problems.

The military is still considered one of the worst polluters in the country. About half of the country's territory is under its control. This project opens a long path for change in the way that the IDF interacts with the environment. Today, training exercises are planned with environmental concerns taken into consideration. If, for example, a rare bird's nest is discovered next to a shooting range, the IDF prefers to train elsewhere.

Peled explained, "It's not obvious that the Israel Defense Forces will stop and tell its soldiers, 'Look out for wildlife, protect the environment.' I don't know of other armies in the world in which something like this takes place, and it's admirable."

WILL ISRAEL'S NEXT BIG EXPORT ITEM BE MARIJUANA? (Arutz-7 INN.com 2/5/17)

The Ministerial Committee on Legislation moved on Sunday to endorse legislation to legalize the export of marijuana for approved medical use, Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked's (Jewish Home) office said.

Adoption by the committee, which meets outside the full cabinet every Sunday, means that the draft will now move forward as a government bill with full coalition backing, though no date was set for a first reading of the bill.

Shaked's office said that a scheduled debate on decriminalizing marijuana use in favor of fines and treatment was put back until next Sunday.

Although the recreational use of cannabis is currently illegal in Israel, for the past 10 years its therapeutic use has not only been permitted but encouraged. In 2015, doctors prescribed it to about 25,000 patients suffering from cancer, epilepsy, post-traumatic stress and degenerative diseases.

The purpose is palliative, that is, not to cure them but to alleviate their symptoms.

In January, the Agriculture Ministry said it planned to invest eight million shekels (\$2 million, 1.98 million euros) in medical cannabis research projects.

In January last year, US tobacco giant Philip Morris ploughed \$20 million into Israeli company Syke, which produces precision inhalers for medical cannabis.

Last month, Internal Security Minister Gilad Erdan (Likud) announced his support for decriminalizing recreational use. He said that he had adopted the conclusions of a commission created to study the issue and which recommended the move.

Shaked has reportedly indicated she will support it.

ASHKENAZI JEWS ARE 4 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO HAVE CANCER (YNet 2/7/17)

To the growing causes of cancer, which include smoking, sun exposure and radiation, it seems likely that ethnicity is going to have to be added to the list as the Ministry of Health data showing that Ashkenazi Jews are 4 times more likely to have cancer than Sephardic Jews.

The large gap persists even when examining the morbidity rate for different types of cancer. For example, breast cancer cases among Ashkenazi Jews stands on 18 cases per 100,000 individuals, versus 4 cases among Sephardic Jews.

Ashkenazi Jews may be more likely to fall sick than Sephardic Jews, but the Ministry of Health data also reveals that the highest rate of cancer cases in the past few years is actually among Israeli Arabs and Israeli-born Jews.

For both populations, the number of cancer cases has doubled in the last 20 years. In comparison, the cancer rate among Ashkenazi Jews has dropped by 30 percent during the same period.

The impact of ethnicity on cancer incidence is consistent with the data released by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US, which uncovered significant gaps in the number of cancer cases within the different ethnicities and races in the US.

In recent years, following the development of technology and whole genome mapping, researchers now understand that even though cancer is usually not hereditary, its source is genetic. In other words, unlike hereditary genomic alterations, there are changes in the genetic material occurring in the tumor cells only as part of the malignant process, such as different mutations and changes in the genetic sequence.

The implication would be that Israeli-born children, who are the descendants of Ashkenazi Jews, are more prone to cancer than Israeli-born children who are descendants of Sephardic Jews.

Mapping out cancer's genetic variety serves as the new front in the war against cancer as part of Personalized Medicine. Genetic testing can already be conducted once the disease is diagnosed, followed by genomic mapping of the patient's specific type of cancer.

The first biotechnology company that made whole genome mapping available to cancer patients and their treating oncologists was the Foundation Medicine company that utilizes the extensive experience accumulated to identify new and rare mutations, which would then enable personalized care.

The genetic tests help physicians choose the most efficient treatment out of all available options against the specific type of cancer identified by the test, and adjust it to the patient, or reinforce the need for the standard of care.

"If what is known today were applied," stated Miri Ziv, Director General of the Israel Cancer Association, "we could reduce the cancer incidence and morbidity rates by 50 percent. Behind the encouraging numbers lies the concentrated effort of the Israel Cancer Association that initiated and pushed forward prevention programs, early diagnosis, as well as improvement of care and rehabilitation."

NOBLE ENERGY TO INVEST \$550 MILLION IN LEVIATHAN GAS FIELD (Israel Hayom 2/15/17)

U.S. producer Noble Energy is expected to announce in the coming days an investment of \$550 million in the development of Israel's Leviathan gas field, according to a company outlook and guidance report for 2017, published

Monday.

News of the impending investment provided a boost for the local energy sector at the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange.

The \$550 million represents one-fifth of the company's global investments of \$2.3 to \$2.6 billion for 2017.

Noble Energy President and CEO David Stover said in the guidance report: "We have a tremendous opportunity with the Leviathan project offshore Israel. In 2017, our teams will begin project development, with first gas targeted for the end of 2019. I have no doubt that our outstanding track record of major project execution will again deliver substantial value to the company."

The report also said, "Capital expenditures in the Eastern Mediterranean for the initial development of the Leviathan project include drilling one production well, long-lead investment items, and ramp up of construction activities. The company will also complete an additional production well at Tamar [gas field], which was drilled in the fourth quarter of 2016."

Israel is presently engaged in discussions with Turkey, Cyprus, Greece and Italy over the possibility of exporting its natural gas via underwater pipelines.

TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY AMONG WORLD'S TOP START-UP SCHOOLS (Arutz-7 INN.com 2/7/17)

A new study ranked Tel Aviv University among the top schools producing billion-dollar startups.

According to the British marketing firm Verve Search, Tel Aviv ranks eighth in the world for training the founders of so-called unicorns, startup firms worth more than \$1 billion.

Stanford University topped the list with 51 alumni responsible for founding unicorns, followed by Harvard with 37. Tel Aviv University had seven, according to the study, ahead of Cornell and the University of Southern California, which had six apiece.

The companies founded by Tel Aviv alumni include ForeScout, a computer security firm whose co-founders attended the school, and ironSource, which builds tools for app developers.

STRENGTHENING THE ANGLO-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP (Mike Freer, JPost 2/15/17)

Speeding into Downing Street with an armored convoy that would make even US President Donald Trump blush, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is a man that knows how to make an entrance.

Across the street, the prime minister was welcomed by several hundred Israel supporters, who did their best to chant louder than those so-called peace activists calling for the destruction of Israel "from the river to the sea."

Notable in its absence was the offensive display of a Hezbollah or Hamas flag, which has sadly happened in the past – a testament to the British government's efforts to stamp out public displays of support for vile terrorist groups.

This was nothing more than a sideshow though. Inside Number 10, the two prime ministers were meeting for the first time and holding a photo call with the assembled press. Over the loud clicks of dozens of cameras, the leaders appeared to be developing a genuine rapport and were praising the strength of the UK-Israel relationship in the most glowing terms.

During a working lunch the two leaders discussed a range of issues, centering upon ways to further strengthen the Anglo-Israeli bilateral relationship.

From defense and intelligence cooperation to academic exchanges and record bilateral trade, the relationship runs deep. Collectively, it makes our people safer and more prosperous.

The establishment of a new UK-Israel Trade Working Group – a centerpiece of the visit – is a hugely significant step in laying the ground work for a future free trade deal between our two great countries. With our shared values, existing bilateral trade valued at £5 billion and as the Middle East's only true

democracy, Israel should be one of the first countries that we sign a trade deal with in this new post-Brexit world.

Crucially, this visit afforded an opportunity to reset the relationship after the now infamous UNSC Resolution 2334.

In the aftermath, Israel reacted strongly to reports that UK Foreign Office officials had played an active role in helping draft the controversial resolution. In the days and weeks after that vote it emerged that UK Prime Minister Theresa May had been blindsided by Foreign Office officials into signing the resolution.

The UK's direction of travel has been markedly different since that day. Indeed, the UK issued an unprecedented rebuke to then US secretary of state John Kerry for a speech he gave, and was then alone among 74 countries in refusing to send a formal representative to the Paris Peace Conference and even refusing to sign the communique at the conclusion of the conference. Prime Minister May's position has been clear – the two parties must return to direct peace talks to resolve the final-status issues, only one of which is that of settlements.

It was telling that there were no public references to the UN vote by either leader. There is a clear commitment to put that behind them and work together to build an ever stronger relationship.

Iran was another issue that featured heavily.

Iran's nuclear program and support for terrorism has seemingly fallen from the international agenda since the signing of a nuclear deal with the P5+1 nations. This has been dangerously misguided, coming at a time when the international community should have been maintaining pressure and scrutiny on Iran's actions and commitment to such a deal.

Tehran's latest test firing of an intercontinental ballistic missile capable of carrying a nuclear warhead was not only a flagrant breach of a UN resolution, but also a direct challenge to the Trump administration and the West.

We should expect to see more of these provocations in the coming months as the Islamic Republic susses out the new lay of the land.

Netanyahu came to London calling for a "common stand" against Iranian aggression. Through her time as home secretary and now as prime minister, May will be well versed in the threat that Iran poses to the UK and our national interests abroad. Netanyahu will have returned to Jerusalem reassured, with May stating that the UK "recognizes concerns about Iran's pattern of destabilizing activity in the region."

Netanyahu's whistlestop tour concluded with a meeting with the UK's Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson in the beautiful surroundings of the Foreign Office. Symbolically, the two men posed beside the table at which the Balfour Declaration was penned a century ago by then Conservative foreign secretary Arthur James Balfour.

Prime Minister May had just extended an invitation to Netanyahu to return to the UK in November when we will be proudly marking the centenary of this most important of letters – a birth certificate for the Jewish State of Israel.

In this centenary year of the Balfour Declaration, I can't help but reflect how far Israel has come from the original dreams of the Zionist leaders.

The UK and Israel are countries with a shared history. More importantly, perhaps, we can look forward to a prosperous shared future.

THE CARROT, THE STICK AND THE NARRATIVE (Giora Eiland, YNet 2/15/17)

A new Hamas leader was elected Monday—Yahya Sanwar, a murderer with blood on his hands. The man, who takes pride in the fact that he murdered 12 collaborators with Israel, plans to lead a tough line and to make soldier abductions a top priority, as he sees that as the essential tactic for releasing his friends who remained in prison after he himself was released in the Shalit deal.

In the past decade, Hamas' policy has been a sort of compromise between the relatively cautious civilian wing, led by Ismail Haniyeh, and the military wing. From now on, there is only a military leadership, and it is very militant.

Ministers Naftali Bennett and Yoav Galant's statements about an expected conflict with Hamas in the spring allegedly reflect an inevitable development, but that is not the case. Yahya Sanwar will also realize very fast that "things you see from here you don't see from there." Hamas' supreme interest—to keep controlling Gaza—requires both minimum international legitimacy and an immediate improvement of the economic situation in the strip. Hamas is neither al-Qaeda nor the Islamic State. It is a political movement which needs the support of its street.

Israel can work to increase both the stick and the carrot, without using military force. On the stick side, with the help of the new administration in Washington, it can make a sharp change in the way we used to act in the past and clarify to Hamas—through Turkey, for example—that if it fails to maintain the calm, the state of Gaza and its residents will be prevented from receiving any economic aid, including the United Nations' massive support for the educational, health and food institutions operating in the strip. In other words, the state of Gaza will not be able to have the best of both worlds—attack Israel with rockets while knowing that there is someone else feeding its residents.

When the rocket fire begins, Israel will immediately close the Kerem Shalom crossing. No fuel, no food and no medications will enter Gaza. A normal state does not keep providing supplies to a state it is in war with. If the Hamas government wants to end its civilians' suffering it must stop the rocket fire.

On the carrot side, Israel can and should encourage an infrastructure reconstruction project in Gaza, including the creation of a seaport. Gaza's reconstruction should be carried out in cooperation with the Gaza government, just like anywhere else in the world. Hundreds of millions will be invested in the construction of power stations and desalination facilities, which will provide Gaza's residents with 24 hours of electricity a day compared to only six hours today, and drinking water. All this will happen if the calm is maintained. When everyone—the government in Gaza, the Strip's residents, the United Nations and the donor countries—know that as soon as Gaza opens fires these infrastructures will be destroyed, the Gaza government—even a government headed by Sanwar—will not rush into a decision to stop playing by the rules.

In order for such a policy to succeed and prevent a military conflict for a long time, two things should be done: First, the narrative must be changed. Gaza is a state for all intents and purposes, and if this state chooses a military conflict, it will pay the price along with its residents, as has always happened throughout history. By creating a distinction between "the bad guys" (Hamas) and "the good guys" (Gaza's poor residents), we are shooting ourselves in the foot.

The second thing that must be done is to explain our expected policy in case of a military conflict in advance. When Ehud Olmert first traveled to Washington as prime minister, in the spring of 2006, he avoided discussing the Lebanese issue. When the Second Lebanon War broke out, it was already too late to coordinate the policy with the United States.

The change of governments in Washington and in Gaza are an opportunity, on the one hand,

and a need, on the other hand, to create a change. The response to the new government in Gaza should therefore be a change in policy, rather than just preparing for an inevitable conflict the old way.

Dry Bones The Unspoken Truth

