

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

Trump Releases Long-Awaited Middle-East Peace Plan

BBC, January 28th 2020

Recap:

President Donald Trump presented his long-awaited Middle East peace plan. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and opposition leader Benny Gantz embraced the plan's framework while Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas dismissed the plans as a "conspiracy."

The Context:

- ★ Trump's "Deal of the Century" seeks to create a demilitarized Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, which will be connected by an underground tunnel. The plan is contingent on Palestinian renunciation of violence and the disbandment of militant groups [1]. The plan offers Palestinians a capital on the outskirts of east Jerusalem [2] and \$50 billion from Arab states to create one million new jobs, double the size of its economy and reduce unemployment to less than 10% [3]. Israel will retain an undivided Jerusalem as its capital as well as its existing settlements. Netanyahu has already made plans to annex 30% of the West Bank with a cabinet vote scheduled for Sunday.
- ★ The PA, who refuses American intervention following a series of confrontations with the Trump administration, flatly rejected the plan, saying the omission of Jerusalem as its capital and the right of return for Palestinian refugees to Israel as a non-starter. Protesters burned pictures of Trump and Netanyahu while Abbas held an emergency meeting with other Palestinian factions, including Hamas, to discuss a unified response to the plan [4].
- ★ Saudi Arabia encouraged the resumption of direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians while Egypt urged Israelis and Palestinians to "carefully study" the plan [5]. The UN reinforced its commitment to helping Israelis and Palestinians broker peace [6] and England urged the Palestinians to give the plans "genuine and fair consideration."

Conversation:

- ★ Is peace possible?
- ★ Why didn't the Trump administration confer with Israelis or Palestinians while constructing the deal?
- ★ Why have Arab states supported the plan?

Israel's Netanyahu Indicted in Corruption Cases, Hours Before Mideast Peace Plan Announced

Oren Liebermann and Amir Tal, CNN January 28th 2020

Recap:

Benjamin Netanyahu was formally indicted on corruption charges shortly after retracting his immunity request. Netanyahu is charged with bribery, fraud and breach of trust in three separate corruption cases.

The Context:

- ☆ Prosecutors say that in the most serious case, known as Case 4000, Netanyahu advanced regulatory benefits worth more than \$280 million in exchange for favorable news coverage.
- ☆ Netanyahu will be the first sitting prime minister to face trial in the country's history. A date has not been set, but the legal process will likely take years. Netanyahu could face up to 10 years in prison if convicted of bribery and a maximum three-year term for fraud and breach of trust [7].
- ☆ Netanyahu denied wrongdoing in all three cases and has alleged that the investigations against him are a “witch hunt” involving the left, media and police relentlessly pressuring a “weak” attorney general [8].

Conversation Points:

- ☆ Can a sitting prime minister run a country properly while held up in court?
 - ☆ Is Israel capable of engaging in peace talks with a dysfunctional government?
 - ☆ What effect will the “deal of the century” have on Netanyahu’s reelection campaign and indictment?
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Israel Innovation Authority Halts Startup Grant Approvals Due to Lack of Budget

Shoshanna Solomon, Times of Israel, January 29th 2020

Recap:

Israel’s Innovation Authority (IIA) cannot administer new grants to Israeli tech companies without an approved 2020 budget, which has been held up as a result of two inconclusive elections in 2019. Israel’s third election in a year will take place in March.

The Context:

- ☆ IIA sets the nation’s innovation policies and supports early stage startups and technologies. Its annual budget of \$461 million enables young companies to focus on development instead of fundraising [9].
 - ☆ The government has yet to pass a 2020 budget as a result of the political deadlock plaguing the country. Finance Ministry officials warned that the lack of a 2020 budget is likely to have a negative impact on economic growth since ministries cannot commission new projects or pay contractors. IIA has already delayed grant payments to 250 Israeli tech companies [10].
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Conversation Points:

- ☆ What effect will this situation have on Israel's booming tech industry?

Notes:

1. [Netanyahu, Right bloc asks Edelstein to stymie immunity rejection](#), GIL HOFFMAN, Jerusalem Post, JANUARY 14th 2020
2. [Israel's Netanyahu Asks Parliament for Immunity from Corruption Charges](#), CHRISTOPHER DEAN HOPKINS, NPR, January 1, 2020
3. [Netanyahu Seeks Immunity from Israeli Corruption Charges](#), Isabel Kershner, Times of Israel, January 1st 2020
4. Ibid.
5. [Israel's Netanyahu Asks Parliament for Immunity from Corruption Charges](#), CHRISTOPHER DEAN HOPKINS, NPR, January 1, 2020
6. Ibid.
7. [Netanyahu Seeks Immunity from Israeli Corruption Charges](#), Isabel Kershner, Times of Israel, January 1st 2020
8. [Israel to start pumping gas from Leviathan, making country an energy powerhouse](#). SHOSHANNA SOLOMON, Times of Israel, December 16th 2019
9. [Israel gets first gas from Leviathan with exports to follow](#), Ari Rabinovitch & Tova Cohen, Reuters, December 2019
10. [Israel to start pumping gas from Leviathan, making country an energy powerhouse](#). SHOSHANNA SOLOMON, Times of Israel, December 16th 2019
11. [Decade after 1st interception, new Iron Dome boasts 100% success rate in trials](#), JUDAH ARI GROSS, Times of Israel, January 12th 2020
12. [Israel reveals major upgrade to Iron Dome Defense](#), Yoav Zitun, Ynetnews, January 12th 2020
13. [Next Generation Version of Iron Dome Missile Defense System Successfully Completes Series of Tests](#), Benjamin Kerstein, Algemeiner, January 15th 2020

The Sabra Report is a newsletter intended to stimulate conversation about Israel by recapping major events & providing context. Our conversation points are meant to encourage discussion amongst friends and family.

The Sabra Report is written by Irving Safdieh.

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