

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

Attorney General Says Hidden Cameras in Polling Stations Could Be Illegal

Jacob Magid, Times of Israel, August 8th 2019

Recap:

Israel's Attorney General warned that the placement of hidden cameras at Arab polling stations could be a criminal offense. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party deems the measures necessary to prevent widespread voter fraud.

The Context:

- On April 9th, Likud equipped over 1,200 party representatives with hidden cameras and dispatched them to polling stations in Arab communities across the country. Interior Minister Aryeh Deri called for cameras to be placed in every voting booth to prevent fraud in September's elections [1] and Likud has since doubled its surveillance budget to \$570,000. Since Netanyahu was unable to form a coalition following the April elections, new elections are set for September 17th [2].
- Critics called Likud's efforts a form of voter intimidation designed to keep non-Jews from the polls. The Israel Democracy Institute calculated the Arab turnout in April to be 49.2%, compared to the national rate of 68.5%. Arab Lawmaker Aida Touma-Sliman said the cameras "undermine the principle of equality between all citizens and all the parties that are running." Altercations involving the cameras delayed the voting process by 45 minutes on average [3].
- In 2015, Netanyahu angered Israeli Arabs by trying to galvanize his right-wing base saying Arabs were flocking "in droves" to cast ballots [4]. Arabs comprise 21% of the Israeli population.

Conversation Points:

- Would Israeli Arabs feel differently about the cameras if an Arab party were in power?
- Would Jews feel violated if they were surveilled by Likud?
- Might the fear of being filmed serve as a deterrent to vote?
- Is there a better way to prevent voter fraud?
- Do Netanyahu's actions deepen the longstanding mistrust amongst Israeli Arab's?

Erdan Says Record 1,729 Jews Entered Temple Mount in One Day on Sunday

Times of Israel, August 13th 2019

Recap:

A record 1,729 Jews entered the Temple Mount compound to mark the Tisha B' Av fast. Jews entering the Temple Mount, known by Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif, has quadrupled in the last four years. Security forces closed the mosque after clashes on Sunday morning left 14 Muslims and 4 Israelis injured [5].

The Context:

- Initially, police announced that non-Muslims would be barred from entering the Temple Mount, where 80,000 Muslim worshipers had arrived to pray. The order was reversed following sharp criticism from conservative Israeli lawmakers [6].
- Sunday marked both the start of Eid al-Adha [7], and Tisha B' Av, the Jewish fast that mourns the destruction of the temples that once stood on the Temple Mount.
- Jews are barred from praying on the Temple Mount under a long-standing arrangement between Israel and Muslim authorities [8] and most Orthodox rabbis prohibit Jews from going up to the Temple Mount out of concern that they will stray into areas deemed by Jewish law to be off limits [9].

Conversation Points:

- Should a spot holy to both Jews and Muslims be off limits to one or the other?
- Does Israel seek to change the status quo of the Temple Mount?
- What are the pros and cons to changing the status quo of the Temple Mount?

Next-Generation Israeli Satellite to Seek out Cosmic Explosions & Black Holes

The Jewish Voice, August 13th 2019

Recap:

The Weizmann Institute of Science (WIS) and the Israel Space Agency (ISA) will launch a satellite to probe the secrets of deep Space. The satellite will be constructed entirely by Israeli scientists and engineers [10].

The Context:

- Weighing just 320lbs, the satellite has a projected launch date of 2023. Known as ULTRASAT, the satellite will carry a telescope that operates in an ultraviolet range of light not normally visible to humans. The project has a cost of \$70 million.

- ULTRASAT seeks to determine the formation process of dense neutron stars that merge and emit gravitational waves, how supermassive black holes rule their neighborhoods, how stars explode, where the heavy elements in the Universe come from and the properties of stars that could have habitable planets.
- Israel is part of a small group of countries including the US, Russia, the European Union, China, India and Japan, that have launched satellites into space. Israel's Beresheet spacecraft crashed in April during an attempt to land the first privately funded craft on the moon's surface. Earlier this month, the Amos-17 satellite successfully launched into space [11].

Recap:

- Why does Israel choose to focus on innovative space tech rather than human missions?

Notes:

1. Labor party pushes to remove cameras from voting booths, Arutz Sheva, July 8th 2019
2. Likud to spend \$0.5m spying on Arab-Israeli polling stations, Middle East Monitor, July 30th 2019
3. Netanyahu Loyalist Calls for Cameras at All Polling Stations in Heated Knesset Discussion, Jonathan Lis and Yasmine Bakria, Haaretz, August 10th 2019
4. Minority Arabs in Israel object to cameras at polling centers, Reuters, August 11th 2019.
5. Jews allowed to visit Temple Mount on Tisha b'Av after initial ban, JTA, August 11th 2019
6. ISLAMIC JIHAD, HAMAS THREATEN ISRAEL AFTER JEWS ASCEND TEMPLE MOUNT, JEREMY SHARON, ALON EINHORN, HERB KEINON, Jerusalem Post, AUGUST 12th 2019
7. Jews allowed to visit Temple Mount on Tisha b'Av after initial ban, JTA, August 11th 2019
8. Tension at Al-Aqsa compound as Muslim, Jewish festivals overlap, Al Jazeera, August 11th 2019
9. ISLAMIC JIHAD, HAMAS THREATEN ISRAEL AFTER JEWS ASCEND TEMPLE MOUNT, JEREMY SHARON, ALON EINHORN, HERB KEINON, Jerusalem Post, AUGUST 12th 2019
10. NEW ISRAELI SATELLITE AIMS TO DEEPEN UNDERSTANDING OF THE UNIVERSE, EYTAN HALON, Jerusalem Post, AUGUST 12th 2019
11. Israel eyes next-gen satellite launch to scrutinize universe under new light, SHOSHANNA SOLOMON, Times of Israel, August 12th 2019

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.

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