

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

In Harris, Biden Chooses A Traditionally Pro-Israel Dem As His Veep Candidate

Times of Israel, August 1st 2020

Recap:

Democratic presidential candidate Joe Biden chose California Senator Kamala Harris as his running mate. Harris supports a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and believes in a robust US-Israel relationship, including the continuation of American military aid. She is also a vocal supporter of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC).

The Context:

- ★ Harris, a former candidate in the 2020 Democratic presidential primaries, is the first woman of color, the first daughter of immigrants and the first Indian American on a major party's presidential ticket.
- ★ During her presidential run, Harris opposed the idea of condemnatory United Nations votes or strong public criticism aimed at swaying Israeli policy. J Street, a liberal Jewish group, has endorsed over half of Senate Democrats but not Harris [1]. In November 2017, she visited Israel and met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.
- ★ Two issues in which Harris diverges from the pro-Israel camp is her opposition to the Israel Anti-Boycott Act, legislation that would criminalize boycotting the Jewish state. Harris does not support movements that boycott Israel, but she did vote against the bill on the grounds that it would infringe on speech rights. She would also support a return to the nuclear deal with Iran despite acknowledging the agreement brokered by President Barack Obama was not perfect [2].
- ★ Upon Biden's announcement, the Republican Jewish Committee (RJC) attacked Harris saying her nomination "sealed the Democrat Party's move to the extreme left."

Conversation Points:

- ★ Do Vice President's positions carry much weight?
- ★ Must Harris agree with all RJC positions to gain their support?
- ★ What did Harris stand to gain by not calling for fundamental changes to the nature of the Israeli-American alliance during her campaign for the presidency?

Lebanon's Government Steps Down in Wake of Beirut Blast

Tamara Qiblawi, Ali Younes, Mostafa Salem And Ghazi Balkiz, CNN, August 12th 2020

Recap:

Lebanon's government stepped down a week after a massive explosion in Beirut killed over 170 people and wounded more than 6000.

The Context:

- ✧ Lebanon is suffering through its worst economic crisis in decades, coupled with rising coronavirus rates, and a government plagued by accusations of corruption and gross mismanagement. Lebanon's currency lost 70% of its value since last October and more than half of the country's population will be impoverished by the end of 2020.
- ✧ The blast, which damaged or destroyed much of the Lebanese capital, was linked to a long-neglected stash of explosive chemicals. Now the country will be tasked with finding its third prime minister in less than a year.
- ✧ Last week, Israel thwarted an infiltration attempt from Lebanon by Hezbollah operatives, setting off one of the heaviest exchanges of fire along the volatile Israel-Lebanon border since a 2006 war. Israeli officials stated that "while [Hezbollah leader Hasan] Nasrallah is our biggest enemy in the north, he is Lebanon's biggest problem [3]." The Beirut blasts were not caused by Israeli activity [4].
- ✧ At the end of the month, UNIFIL, a military cohort created to oversee the peace following the withdrawal of Israeli troops after the first Lebanon war, will see its mandate expire. As of June 15th, UNIFIL comprised of 10,275 military personnel from 45 troop-contributing countries stationed at the border [5]. The US and Israel are pushing for a 12 month extension of UNIFIL's mandate.

Conversation Points:

- ✧ What does a further destabilized Lebanon mean for Israel?
 - ✧ Why is a UN presence at the Israeli-Lebanon border important?
 - ✧ What are some potential outcomes as result of the power vacuum created by the government's resignation?
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Government Unemployment Agency Reports 2,961 New Job Seekers

Yuval Bagno, Jerusalem Post, August 4th 2020

Recap:

Israel's unemployment rate stands at 21.6%.

The Context:

- ✧ The food and beverage industry laid off the most workers during the first two weeks of July, constituting 13.5% of the total number of unemployed, while construction industry layoffs comprised 10.8% of the newly jobless [6].
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- ☆ 20% of businesses believe they will sustain a loss of 50% of their income in the coming months, down from over 22% among those polled in June. Of businesses polled, 38.6% attribute their dire predictions to a reduction in local demand, while 17.6% blame government policies and health directives [7].
- ☆ The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region currently has the highest youth unemployment rate in the world. Libya suffers from the worst rate in the region, with 50% youth unemployment followed by Palestinians which stands at 42%. Israel's youth unemployment is 7% [8].

Conversation Points:

- ☆ Why is youth unemployment an important metric? Why does the Middle East seem to be faring worse than other regions when it comes to youth unemployment?
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Notes:

1. [What do Jewish voters need to know about Kamala Harris?](#), GABE FRIEDMAN, Jerusalem Post, August 12th 2020
 2. [Anti-BDS and pro-Iran deal, Kamala Harris' record on Israel](#), Ynet, August 12th 2020
 3. [Israel says ready for war with Lebanon: Gantz](#), Abdelraouf Arna'out, aa.com, August 10th 2020
 4. [Israeli involvement in massive Beirut port blast ruled out by both sides](#), AARON BOXERMAN, Times of Israel, August 4th 2020
 5. [U.S. backs Israel demand for UN to bolster UNIFIL powers](#), Ynet, August 12th 2020
 6. [Israel's unemployment rate almost doubles in month as virus decimates economy](#), Billie Frenkel, Ynetnews, July 14th 2020
 7. [Israel's unemployment rate almost doubles in month as virus decimates economy](#), Billie Frenkel, Ynetnews, July 14th 2020
 8. [The MENA region records highest youth unemployment rate in the world](#), Middle East Monitor, August 12th 2020
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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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