

# The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

## Middle East Leaders Congratulate Biden On Win

AI Monitor, November 9<sup>th</sup> 2020

### Recap:

Leaders across the Middle East sent their congratulations to President-Elect Joe Biden as Israelis and Palestinians brace for a policy shift.

### The Context:

- ✧ Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former President Barack Obama, under whom Biden served, had a cool relationship due to their disagreements on the Iran nuclear deal and Israeli settlements. Under President Donald Trump Israel enjoyed unencumbered support as the administration moved the US embassy to Jerusalem and brokered peace deals with 3 Arab countries, allowing the Palestinian issue to fall by the wayside.
- ✧ A former aide to Biden said rejoining the Iran nuclear deal was “high on his agenda.” US Special Representative for Iran Elliot Abrams plans to announce fresh sanctions on Iran every week from now until the inauguration to stall the process [1]. Iranian officials already mentioned they have no interest in reviving the nuclear accord.
- ✧ The Biden administration also plans to “bring the Palestinian issue back to the heart of the discourse.” Kamala Harris, Biden’s Vice President, indicated that the US will renew its ties with the Palestinians and restore economic and humanitarian assistance [2], likely in the form of the \$500 million that the current administration has withheld [3]. The Palestinian Authority (PA) rejected President Donald Trump’s peace plan that envisioned a Palestinian state in 70% of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and neighborhoods of Jerusalem. The PA has boycotted the Trump administration since its 2017 recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital [4].

### Conversation Points:

- ✧ Will a Biden administration continue to push for normalization between Arab states and Israel?
- ✧ Will Biden capitalize on Trump’s Middle East momentum or undo it?

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## Saeb Erekat, Who Led Palestinian Negotiations for Statehood, Dies At 65

Aaron Boxerman, Times of Israel, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2020

**Recap:**

Saeb Erekat, a Palestinian diplomat who spent decades leading negotiations with Israel, died at the age of 65. A controversial figure emblematic of Palestinian rejectionism, Erekat was a senior member of the Fatah party and close confidant to Yasser Arafat [5].

**The Context:**

- ✧ Erekat, a US educated Palestinian diplomat, led decades of Palestinian negotiations with Israel including talks that led to the signing of the 1993 and 1995 Oslo Accords, the first major peace deals between Israel and the Palestinians. He became secretary-general of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in 2015.
- ✧ Erekat was often accused of making controversial public statements without hard evidence, asserting that Israel had massacred hundreds of Palestinians in Jenin refugee camp in 2002. Additionally, Erekat was an adamant advocate of the PA's ongoing policy of making payments to the families of Palestinian terrorists. "There was an enormous gap between the things that Erekat said in front of television cameras and things he said around the negotiating table," Israeli negotiator Gilad Sher said.
- ✧ Erekat was a harsh critic of the Trump administration's policies on the peace process and categorically refused to negotiate on the basis of the Trump peace plan. He accused the UAE and Bahrain for signing treaties with Israel "at the expense of the inalienable rights of the people of Palestine [6]."

**Conversation Points:**

- ✧ Will Palestinians ever see progress if their leaders say one thing but mean another?
  - ✧ Could Erekat have used his influence far beyond the bureaucratic position he held?
  - ✧ What will the Palestinian leadership of the future look like once the Old Guard passes on?
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## Israel Throws Away A Third of Its Food, And the Environmental Damage Is Enormous

Zafir Rinat, Haaretz, November 9<sup>th</sup> 2020

**Recap:**

Israel wasted a third of all food it produced last year. Fruit, vegetables and grain-based items account for half of the wastage [7] and the cost could have financed one-fifth of the state's COVID-19 budget [8].

**The Context:**

- ✧ In 2019, 1.87 million people suffered from food insecurity in Israel. COVID-19 only exacerbated the issue, adding another 145,000 people to the grim list.
  - ✧ The report includes recommendations on how to curb food loss, including charging a fee for refuse generated by businesses. The report also recommends a reconsideration of expiration dates as well as providing government support for enterprises that work to reduce food waste.
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- ☆ Food waste cost Israel's economy \$6 billion in 2019, on top of an environmental cost of \$938 million [9]. If Israel is able to recoup even a portion of the 5 million tons of greenhouse gas emitted when producing the wasted food, it would get much closer to the reduction target to which it committed in the Paris Agreement [10].

**Conversation Points:**

- ☆ What would encourage Israelis to donate their excess food rather than throwing it away?
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**Notes:**

1. [Biden will seek to reenter Iran nuclear deal within months, former aide says](#), Times of Israel, November 8<sup>th</sup> 2020
  2. [Kamala Harris: We will restore aid to Palestinians, renew ties](#), CODY LEVINE, Jerusalem Post, November 3<sup>rd</sup> 2020
  3. [The Israelis and Palestinians prepare for Biden to enter the White House](#), Middle East Monitors, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2020
  4. [Biden will seek to reenter Iran nuclear deal within months, former aide says](#), Times of Israel, November 8<sup>th</sup> 2020
  5. [Saeb Erekat, top Palestinian negotiator, dies age 65](#), Oren Liebermann, CNN, November 10, 2020
  6. Ibid.
  7. [Food waste 'could have funded a fifth of Israel's COVID-19 aid budget' - expert](#), SUE SURKES, Times of Israel, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2020
  8. [What are the economic and environmental impacts of food waste in Israel?](#), CELIA JEAN, Jerusalem Post, NOVEMBER 10<sup>th</sup> 2020
  9. [Food waste 'could have funded a fifth of Israel's COVID-19 aid budget' - expert](#), SUE SURKES, Times of Israel, November 10<sup>th</sup> 2020
  10. [What are the economic and environmental impacts of food waste in Israel?](#), CELIA JEAN, Jerusalem Post, NOVEMBER 10<sup>th</sup> 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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