

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

Biden Will Restore U.S. Relations with Palestinians,

Michael Crowley, New York Times, January 26th 2021

Recap:

The Biden administration will restore diplomatic relations with the Palestinian Authority (PA), more than two years after President Donald Trump effectively ended the relationship.

The Context:

- ☆ The prospects of an Israeli-Palestinian peace agreement are dimmer than they have been in decades. The parties have all but ceased communications and the issue is not among President Joe Biden's top foreign policy priorities.
- ☆ The Trump administration closed the PA's Washington office and halted contributions to the United Nations (UN) Palestinian refugee organization while also moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, recognizing the city as Israel's capital [1].
- ☆ Biden will seek to undo Trump's positions towards the Palestinians to bring the Palestinians back into the fold. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he backed the two-state solution [2] and "will continue [the] longstanding policy of opposing one-sided resolutions in international bodies that unfairly single out Israel."
- ☆ This month, PA President, Mahmoud Abbas, announced the first Palestinian elections in at least 15 years, in a move that was perceived as an attempt to curry favor with President Biden. Israel will also undergo its 4th election in 2 years this March.

Conversation Points

- ☆ How might Israeli and Palestinian elections complicate Biden's plans to revive the peace process?
- ☆ Will reverting to the traditional approach of handling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict bring Israelis and Palestinian's back to the bargaining table?

Israel's Vaccine Rollout Linked to Infection Fall

Rachel Schraer, BBC, February 1st 2021

Recap:

Israel's vaccination program is showing signs of success. The fall is most pronounced in older people who are furthest along in their immunization efforts.

The Context:

- ✧ Nearly one-third of Israel's 9.3 million people have received the first dose of the Covid vaccine, while about 1.7 million people have received both doses. The campaign includes Israel's Arab citizens and Palestinians living in east Jerusalem.
- ✧ Palestinians living in the West Bank under the PA and those living under Hamas in Gaza are not included in Israel's vaccine efforts [3]. The World Health Organization criticized the disparity while the UN said Israel is responsible for the well-being of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Israel pointed to interim peace agreements that state it is not responsible for Palestinians under PA jurisdiction, however, Israel has agreed to transfer 5,000 doses of the vaccine to Palestinian frontline medical workers [4]. Israel will also vaccinate Palestinians in its prison system [5].
- ✧ Israel has seen 638,789 cases of COVID-19, with over 5,000 deaths. Israel's 3rd national lockdown and a ban on international flights will remain in place until Sunday [6].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Should Israel be responsible for ensuring Palestinians living under the PA's control are given access to Covid vaccines?
 - ✧ Why did Israel deem Palestinian prisoners worthy of vaccinations and not ordinary Palestinians living under the PA's authority?
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Israel And Kosovo Establish Diplomatic Relations in Virtual Ceremony

Rami Ayyub, Reuters, February 1st 2021

Recap:

Israel and Kosovo established diplomatic relations under a U.S.-brokered deal that includes a pledge by the Muslim-majority country to open an embassy in Jerusalem.

The Context:

- ✧ The normalization follows a slew of deals brokered by the Trump administration between Israel and Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan.
 - ✧ Trump announced the two countries' ties in September as a side deal to an economic agreement between Kosovo and Serbia. As part of the deal, Serbia, which has ties with Israel, also agreed to open an embassy in Jerusalem.
 - ✧ In response to the newly minted deals, Mauritania issued a fatwa prohibiting normalization with Israel. "The relationship with the usurping entity of the occupied Palestinian territory and Jerusalem is prohibited," said the edict, signed by 200 scholars and imams. Mauritania froze its relations with Israel in 2009 [7].
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Conversation Points:

- ✧ Will Israel lose what remains of its willingness to negotiate with the Palestinians as it continues to add to its list of friends in the region?
- ✧ Does Mauritania's position underscore the taboo that still exists in the Muslim world regarding normalizing ties with Israel?

Notes:

1. [Biden Administration Restores Aid to Palestinians, Reversing Trump](#), Mark Katkov, NPR, January 26th, 2021
2. [US to keep embassy in Jerusalem: Biden's top diplomat](#), Al Jazeera, January 20th 2021
3. [Israel to give 5,000 coronavirus vaccines to Palestinian doctors](#), NBC News, February 1st 2021
4. Ibid.
5. [Israel To Start Vaccinating Palestinian Prisoners Next Week](#), NPR, January 14th 2021
6. [Israel extends coronavirus lockdown as Orthodox Jews breach regulations to attend rabbi funerals](#), ABC, February 1st 2021
7. [200 Mauritanian scholars ban normalization with Israel](#), AA, February 1st 2021

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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