

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

Bennett on Biden Meeting: 'We Accomplished All Our Goals'

Olivier Douliery, *Algemeiner*, August 25th 2021

Recap:

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett declared his first diplomatic victory in Washington following a successful meeting with US President Joe Biden.

The Context:

- ✧ The meeting was delayed 24 hours due to the deadly bombing at the Kabul airport, which killed at least 169 Afghans and 13 US military personnel. As a result, the Israeli delegation was forced to remain in DC over Shabbat [1].
- ✧ Bennett the two meetings as "warm and productive." Biden reiterated his "commitment to ensure Iran never develops a nuclear weapon" but stressed the need for diplomacy first [2]. The leaders also discussed a waiver program to allow Israelis into the United States for business and tourism without a visa.
- ✧ Biden expressed his support for Israel's "deeper ties" with its Arab and Muslim neighbors and refrained from criticizing Israel's West Bank settlements even though Biden has previously prodded Bennet's government to take steps toward reconciliation with the Palestinians.
- ✧ Bennett concluded by inviting Biden to Israel and, upon landing, gave a heartfelt thanks to his staff for organizing "an extraordinary trip that met all its goals [3]."

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Why was a successful trip vital for Bennett?
- ✧ How will the Afghanistan situation color Biden's view on the Israeli-American relationship?
- ✧ Why didn't Biden criticize Israel's West Bank settlements?
- ✧ Can Bennett trust America to act in Israel's best interests?

Gantz Announces New Measures to Strengthen PA Following Abbas Meeting

i24NEWS, August 30th 2021

Recap:

Israel announced gestures to strengthen the Palestinian Authority (PA). The announcement came a day after Defense Minister Benny Gantz met with PA President Mahmoud Abbas [4].

The Context:

- ✧ The high-level meeting marks a shift from the breakdown of communication between Abbas and Israeli leaders in recent years [5]. It is the first such meeting since peace negotiations collapsed in 2014 [6].
- ✧ Israel will lend the PA \$155 million to be repaid in 2022 from tax money Israel collects on behalf of the PA. Building permits will also be issued to Palestinians in Area C of the West Bank. Israel's new government hopes bolstering Abbas will quell Hamas' influence on the Palestinian street [7].” Hamas and Islamic Jihad condemned Abbas' "betrayal of the blood of the martyrs."
- ✧ Bennett's government does not currently seek a two-state solution but intends to shrink the conflict by improving the everyday lives of Palestinians. The strategy stands in stark contrast to his predecessor Benjamin Netanyahu, who made little substantive efforts towards achieving lasting peace [8].

Conversation Points:

- ✧ Can the PA be trusted?
 - ✧ In what ways does Israel benefit with a strengthened PA?
 - ✧ How must the PA handle its citizens to siphon support away from Hamas?
 - ✧ What are the pros and cons of shrinking the conflict?
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Israel 'Quietly' Allows Jews to Pray in Al-Aqsa Compound: Report

Al Jazeera, August 24th 2021

Recap:

The Israeli government is quietly allowing more Jews to pray atop the Temple Mount, angering Palestinians and the Jordanian Waqf that oversees the sensitive site [9].

The Context:

- ✧ The Temple Mount is the holiest site in Judaism, once housing the two Jewish temples. It also is home to the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam [10]. Israel captured the Temple Mount in 1967 and annexed the territory in 1980 - a step never recognized by the international community.
 - ✧ Since 1967, Jordan's Waqf, or Islamic trust, has controlled matters inside the compound, while Israel controlled external security. Non-Muslims are allowed onto the site during visiting hours but cannot pray there. The status quo shifted under Netanyahu, whose government largely turned a blind eye to inconspicuous worship.
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- ☆ The Temple Mount serves as a flashpoint of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In 2000, Israeli politician Ariel Sharon entered the holy site which unleashed the second Intifada, killing thousands. Palestinians fear Israeli encroachment will ultimately change the status quo whereas Jewish activists clamor for the right to worship freely [11].

Conversation Points:

- ☆ If freedom of religion is a right afforded to all Israeli citizens, shouldn't Jews have the right to pray on the Temple Mount?
- ☆ What are the risks and rewards of changing the status quo? Are there ways to mitigate the side effects?

Notes:

1. [Heading home, Bennett says all goals 'achieved and surpassed' during US trip](#), LAZAR BERMAN, Times of Israel, August 29th 2021
2. Ibid.
3. [PM Bennett lands in Israel after meeting with US President Biden](#), JERUSALEM POST AUGUST 29, 2021
4. [Palestinian president, Israeli defense minister hold rare talks](#), Al Jazeera, August 30th 2021
5. Ibid.
6. [Bennett plays down Gantz's talks with Palestinian leader](#), Ynetnews, August 30th 2021
7. [Palestinian president, Israeli defense minister hold rare talks](#), Al Jazeera, August 30th 2021
8. Ibid.
9. [New York Times, August 24th 2021](#)
10. [Waqf official decries 'dangerous' Jewish prayers held discreetly on Temple Mount](#), Times of Israel, August 25th 2021
11. Ibid.

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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