

# “AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Series Report #104



## SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR



1<sup>ST</sup> FEBRUARY 2023



*In a brief ‘Webinar’ session organized by the Washington based MEF, Ashley Perry, an adviser to Israel's minister of foreign affairs and deputy prime minister in 2009-15, provides weekly updates on Israeli politics.*

### SUMMARY OF ASHLEY PERRY’S WEEKLY COMMENTS

- Ashley Perry began his weekly briefing by saying that the past week had been a very challenging one for Israel and its new government.
- The terrorist attack on a synagogue in Jerusalem last Friday in which 7 worshipers were killed had been followed up the very next day by a shooting in the ‘Old City’ by a 13-year-old Palestinian boy who had critically wounded two people, including an off-duty soldier before being shot and wounded himself.
- Perry said that in face of charges that Israel is indiscriminate in killing young protesters, it was ironic that the last serious attack should have been conducted by a trained and indoctrinated 13-year-old.
- In reaction to these attacks, senior Israeli political personalities such as Itamar Ben-Gvir had been quick turning up at the scene and urging the judicial forces to place an application for sealing the residence of the attackers, which is one step before demanding the demolishing of their houses as punishment for involvement in terrorist activities against civilians.
- Ben-Gvir had also been critical of judicial officials for not acting quickly in response to initiating actions against Palestinian perpetrators of such terrorist actions.
- Perry said that there had also been an emergency Cabinet meeting on this matter on Sunday where the Cabinet had approved of certain emergency measures that included facilitating the procedure for Israeli citizens to obtain licences for arms for purposes of defending themselves against random attacks.

- These events had almost immediately been followed up with the visit to Israel of the US Secretary of State Blinken, which was the first high level visit by a US figure to Israel since the advent of the new coalition government.
- It thus followed that the last thing Netanyahu was hoping for was some new diplomatic incident to tarnish his image with the Americans at this critical stage, especially as he is so 'laser focused' on the Iranian issue.
- However, Blinken had other matters on his mind which had to do with the Palestinians, although no new talks between the parties is expected any time soon.
- Prior to Blinken's trip to Ramallah, Abu Mazen had called off all existing security related areas of cooperation with Israel following the most recent of Israeli anti-terrorist operations in Jenin. However, during the visit, Blinken was informed that this had not actually happened.
- During his visit, Blinken had also wanted to talk on the issue of the planned judicial reforms in Israel' that were proceeding with a fast pace in the Israeli Knesset buoyed by PM Netanyahu, Justice Minister Levin and Chair of the Knesset's Constitution Committee, Simcha Rothman ( a very hardliner on this issue), although that issue was regarded as an Israeli domestic matter.
- Perry ended his focus on Israeli domestic policy by saying that Netanyahu was also facing 2 rebels from his own Likud group who had said that they would not vote on any new legislation that might permit Aryeh Deri from being able to resume the cabinet posts from which he had been fired the previous weeks as a consequence of a ruling by Israel's Supreme Court.
- Finally, Perry said that on 2<sup>nd</sup> February, Netanyahu would be travelling to France for talks with French President Macron, in what would be his first foreign trip since returning to office.
- Naturally, Netanyahu is concerned that recent events should not have an adverse effect on his talks with Macron, which will once again centre on dealing with Iran.
- In the 'Q&A' that followed, in reference to someone asking about the drone attack against an Iranian military facility in Isfahan, Perry said that while Israel had not officially accepted responsibility for carrying out such an attack, it did look at the event as another important factor

for pushing back the Islamic regime – something he said the people in Ukraine had also loudly cheered and supported.

