

# “ISRAEL INSIDER”

REPORT # **67**

## SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR

4 MAY 2022



*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 COMMENTS BY ASHLEY PERRY

- Ashley Perry started his weekly comment by first making reference to the fact that this week Israel has been celebrating the 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its founding back in 1948.
- Perry said that despite the dysfunctional electoral system that is currently in place, it is important to note that despite the fact that so many Jews came from different backgrounds and cultures and from so many different areas in the world with no experience with democracy, that they have all the same been able to construct a robust and functioning democratic society in a region that is largely governed by autocracies and dictatorships.
- Perry said that another major achievement of the past 12 months for the governing coalition has been the visit to Israel of four Arab Foreign Ministers along with the US Secretary of State for purposes of advancing regional peace and security.
- Perry added that another major change that has taken place over the past months is the ‘re-set with Turkey’ after some 10 years of acrimonious relations. He acknowledged that while relations with Turkey were not expected to reach the levels that had existed in the pre-Erdogan period, nonetheless, significant improvements in comparison with recent years was expected.
- On the negative side, rising tensions with Palestinians and greater level of agitation from Hamas have exacerbated matters in Jerusalem as well as other areas where Arabs and Jews have been living in proximity of one another. As a result, tensions have reached new peaks in the past several weeks and while they have been generally contained, they are not expected to die down any time soon.
- On the domestic political front, Perry said that an unprecedented level of abuse had been hurled at Naftali Bennet when he had tried to deliver his speech in the course of 74<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration by families and

loved ones of people that had recently lost their lives at the hands of radical Palestinians. He said that the abuse and chants had lasted for 6 minutes while the PM had sat quietly and listened. He said that the media in Israel had commended Naftali Bennet for his patience and the heartfelt understanding he had subsequently indicated to the bereaved families.

- On other matters, with the Summer session of the Israeli Knesset expected to start next week and with the defection of Idit Saliman that robbed the governing coalition of its majority, the future lifetime of the current coalition remains bleak.
- Perry said that in his view, Israelis will once again go to vote in another election before the end of the year. Meanwhile, the government has instructed every member of its coalition in the Knesset to be present at all time for the next 3 weeks (i.e., no excuses for absences under any circumstances) in order to ensure its survival (if Idit Saliman should abstain in any vote the coalition could still have a majority).
- Another key problem area for the government is the position that the Raam Party is likely to adopt in the next several weeks. The party of Mansour Abbas is already demanded and unless some of the demands that are being made by Abbas's critics within Raam are met by the government, the end for the coalition could come more sooner than expected.
- In a brief 'Q&A' session that followed, Perry made reference to the provocative comments made by the Russian Foreign Minister who had in the course of an interview said that Hitler might have had some Jewish blood. Perry said the Israeli foreign Minister had called in the Russian Ambassador and given him a rebuke.
- Perry said that Israel nonetheless was anxious to close this chapter, though it appeared that there had been a swing away from neutrality in the ongoing war away from Russia and towards Ukraine.
- Finally, on the nuclear talks and the JCPOA, Perry was of the view that US position had come close to that of the Israelis on a number of important factors and especially on the issue that the IRGC should not be removed from the list of foreign terrorist organizations.
- Perry ended by saying that it had been revealed that the Israelis had thwarted a number of assassinations of Jewish Americans that had been planned by the IRGC and its surrogates in the recent past.

