

“ISRAEL INSIDER”

REPORT # 68

SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR

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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 began his weekly update by making reference to the continuing confrontations between Arabs and Jews in Israel’s urban areas, the latest incident of which had been the death by hacking of 3 Israelis by a Palestinian which was then been followed up with the death of an Al Jazeera journalist in the West Bank town of Jenin.
- Although, the Palestinian responsible for the hackings had been caught and subsequently killed by security forces, the Israeli authorities have been ambivalent with regards to accepting responsibility for the shooting of Shireen Abu Aqila, whose death by a bullet from an M-16 rifle could have been fired by Palestinians targeting Israelis.
- The Israeli Defense Chief has called for an investigation on this matter.
- While countries like Qatar along with Hezbollah and Hamas have blamed and chastised Israel for the death of the Al Jazeera journalist, the reaction from the US, Europe and the UN Secretary General has been to call for an investigation – something that can be translated in Israeli circles as a small diplomatic victory for Israel.
- Perry next turned his attention to the goings on in the Israeli Knesset which has now started its summer session: He said that steps had already been taken to try and unseat the government. However, they had failed in two separate votes of no confidence (in one vote with Netanyahu as the replacement leader for the coalition only mustering 53 votes) well short of the 61 that is needed.
- Also, a vote to ‘disperse the Knesset’ at the behest of disenchanted ultra-religious elements (not Likud) had also failed. As a result, the Likud Party withdrew its own demand for such a vote, given that if it failed, they could not initiate a similar motion for the next 6 months.

- Perry summarized these events by saying that the Coalition has been able to survive for the time being, though its future seems at best very bleak – i.e., as he put it “anything can happen”.
- For its part, the Finance Minister, Victor Liberman has taken the offensive by saying that he has started working on the next Budget, knowing full well that the Coalition no longer has the 61 votes it needs for its passage. According to Perry, he is trying to portray an image that the Coalition can muddle through and survive despite the obvious obstacles.
- Finally, Perry turned his attention to the Raam Party (the first Arab Party to be represented in the Knesset) that had not been present at the Knesset for any of the recent votes.
- Perry said that the Raam was in effect giving another and maybe final opportunity for the Coalition to remain intact. However, as they have been suffering in the polls, the task of negotiation with the government has been assigned to a different person than Party leader Mansour Abbas. Instead, Walid Saha (a critic of Mansour), as the new man in charge is expected to be much more critical and aggressive in his dealing with the Coalition leaders Naftali Bennet and Lapid.
- Perry ended his weekly comments by saying that while the government was unlikely to voice its unhappiness or opposition, they were concerned about a possibility that Biden may wish to visit East Jerusalem during his forthcoming planned official visit to Israel.

