

“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Series Report #77



SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR



13 JULY 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 ASHLEY PERRY’S WEEKLY COMMENTS

- Perry began his weekly comments by pointing to the planned visit of President Biden to Israel that was starting on that day.
- Perry said that in an atmosphere where contrary to the visit of Donald Trump when huge statements such as the re-positioning of US Embassy to Jerusalem had made a serious impact, this time no great proclamations were expected to come out. A
- As a result, the fact that due to security reasons, traffic especially between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem had come to a standstill, most Israeli were perhaps more disturbed because of this issue than anything else.
- Perry said that most Israeli leaders were also cognizant of the fact that the most important part of Biden’s trip to the Middle East centred more around his impending visit to Saudi Arabia and his discussion over such issues as oil because of the ongoing war between Russia and the Ukraine which had resulted in huge energy price increases at a global level.
- Perry noted that Biden’s visit to Israel was more than anything representative of “symbolism than content”, especially as Biden’s 180 degree turn on Saudi Arabia and his previous comments about MBD had not been lost on anyone.
- Based on all these factors, Iran and the construction of a regional defence system was thus the most important points of discussion between Israel and the US in the bilateral talks. Here, it was expected that a joint warning to Iran over its nuclear program was likely to come out in the strongest of terms from both sides.
- Prior to leaving Israel, Biden was expected to meet Mahmoud Abbas in Bethlehem and not Ramallah to avoid further complications. Perry said

that while Biden was giving a great deal of lip service to the Palestinians in stark contrast to Trump, nonetheless, he was not coming out with any major breakthroughs as the Palestinian issue was simply not a priority at this time for any of the regional parties.

- Turning his attention to the domestic front, Perry said that the prospects of a new election was forcing smaller parties to reassess their own situations, fearful of not being able to obtain the 3.25% of all the votes cast in order to make the required threshold for representation in the next Knesset.
- As a result, a left of centre party 'Blue and White' of Benny Gantz was talking of coming together with Gidon Saar's New Hope Party so that both parties could remain afloat.
- According to Perry, this was considered as a major development, given that Benny Gantz had previously held high profile talks with Mahmoud Abbas, an act that had at the time been reviled by Gidon Saar and his friends in the ultra-right wing New Hope Party.
- There were at the same time negotiations going on between New Hope and the Yamina Party of former PM Naftali Bennet (itself struggling to make the 3.23% threshold). At the same, Yamina under its new leader (contrary to Bennet) has not overruled going into some kind of a coalition with Netanyahu.
- Perry concluded his talk by saying that while there was a great deal of time ahead, it was his feeling that as matters unfold, Netanyahu was likely to get the 61 votes he needed for regaining the premiership.

