

“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Series Report #106



SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR 15 FEBRUARY 2023



In a brief ‘Webinar’ session organized by the US based MEF, Alex Selsky is a senior adviser to MEF and formerly, an advisor to Prime Minister Netanyahu provided MEF’s weekly updates on Israeli politics (in place of Ashley Perry).

SUMMARY OF SELSKY’S COMMENTS

- Selsky began his briefing by saying that last week – like every week in the past month – had been a very intensive period in Israel.
- This was due to three important matters:
 - 1. The continuing wave of terrorist attacks carried out by Palestinians, the last of which had been a dramatic attack carried out in a suburb of Tel Aviv in which a Palestinian youth of around 13-14 had killed a young man (only recently married) as well as young child of around 6. In addition, there had been another stabbing attack carried out on 13 February - both executed by kids of around 14-15 years of age. He noted that these were not organized attacks as they had been carried out by lone indoctrinated wolves – something that was presenting the Israeli authorities with a new host of problems that required configuring.
 - 2. The massive continuation of protests against ‘judicial reforms’, something that have become more aggravated in the aftermath of the Israeli President asking all parties to meet and compromise. According to Selsky, while the coalition had welcomed the President Hercog’s suggestion, the opposition and especially figures like Yair Lapid had refuse to make any compromises on this issue. As a result, on 13 February, some 60,000 people had participated in an unprecedented protest against government plans for the suggested reforms.
 - 3. Selsky noted that some leaders such as former PM Ehud Barak as well as the mayor of Tel Aviv and a former Head of the IDF had not ruled out resort to violence in carrying on with these

protests. Selsky was of the view that these inferences had also contributed to public anger and further exacerbated matters.

- Nonetheless, Selsky was hopeful that the President's continued intervention should ultimately lead to some kind of a compromise that will cool matters down.
- Selsky ended his comments by saying that as a consequence of the recent terrorist attacks, new demands for additional authority for dealing with issues in Palestinian areas had been advanced by hard-line cabinet figures such as Smotrich and Ben Gvir, which might develop into a new and unwanted crisis for the new coalition government.

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