

“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”
PERSPECTIVE 59
SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR
23 FEBRUARY 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 comments by first focussing on the increased level of attacks in the international sphere and in multi-lateral forum that was being directed against Israel, or as he put it, “tainting Israel with the Apartheid paint brush”.
- These attacks were given a major impetus as far back as 2001 in what was to become known as the ‘Durban Strategy’ mounted primarily by countries like Iran with the aim of promoting both a boycott and sanctions policy against Israel.
- On the economic front, these pressures have had virtually no effect as Israel’s economy as a whole (i.e., GDP, Imports and Exports) has thrived.
- But on ‘Hearts and Mind’ issues, the pressures on Israel have increased with organizations such as the UN Human Rights Council, Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International increasing pressures tremendously, tarnishing Israel as a ‘pariah state’.
- In the past year, apart from Myanmar, Israel was the primary target of these organizations, despite the fact that members of the Human Rights Council condemning Israel are countries like Cuba, China, Iraq and the like with their own horrendous human rights credentials.
- Perry noted that dealing with Israel has been made a fixed item on the agenda of the Human Rights Council. Now, in the aftermath of last year’s war with Hamas, they are intending to add another fixed item regarding Israel on the pretext of ‘investigating the roots of the conflict’ (oblivious of other issues such as Palestinian and terrorist attacks carried against Israel).

NEW TROUBLE FOR THE GOVERNING COALITION

- Perry said that in the course of the current week, the coalition had faced two important developments that have seriously placed its survival in jeopardy, although according to him, it did not signal its dissolution just yet. They were:
 - 1. Yisrael Beytenu’s (the political party of Finance Minister Avigdor Lieberman) Eli Avidar resigned from his ministerial position in the cabinet on 22 February, criticizing Prime Minister Naftali Bennett for a “hysterical” approach to virus regulations, and saying that the premier is imitating his predecessor (Benjamin Netanyahu) and does not plan to honour the rotation deal with Foreign Minister

Lapid. Avidar will now return to the Knesset where, since the coalition numbers just 61 of the 120 Knesset members, he could now hold the crucial vote on any legislation, complicating the day-to-day business of the government. According to Perry, Avidar is likely to exact a huge price for his crucial vote that ensures the survival of the government.

- 2. While problems with Abbas Mansour's Raam Party have continued, new problems have emerged with Benny Gantz's 8-member party who have for the time being pledged not to vote with the government. Their action has already provided a great opportunity for the opposition to win a number of votes in the Knesset. Unless issues with Gantz are neutralized, the survival of the coalition will remain an issue.

Perry also commented in the Q&A session that in a carefully worded statement, Israel had publicly expressed support for the sovereignty of Ukraine. He said that somehow the carefully worded statement had satisfied the US without being provocative against Russia.

