

“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Series Report #85

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 ASHLEY PERRY’S WEEKLY COMMENTS

Shireen Al Aqla

- Perry began his weekly briefing by making reference to a recent statement by the US State Department which had suggested that in all probability, the bullet that had killed the CNN Palestinian journalist, Shireen Al Aqla had been fired by a member of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF).
- According to Perry the response to this statement had been quite intense amongst Israelis who are unanimous in viewing the IDF as a sacred entity.
- Perry said that given that most Israelis (apart from people amongst Arab and the ultra-orthodox Jewish communities) all have someone in the army, there is great consensus that nothing should happen to in any way alter the ‘rules of engagement’ for the IDF for the sake of diplomatic posturing.
- It was no surprise therefore that the statement had been rebuked by Lapid, even though the IDF had previously signalled that the bullet may have accidentally been fired by the IDF.

THE ELECTION

- According to Perry, the campaign for the upcoming election what has so far “not got going” was finally becoming more pronounced in the aftermath of a week of activities that had been quite intensive.
- Perry said that most political parties had finally completed their list of candidates for the November 1 election while there had also been a great deal of efforts amongst smaller/more marginal parties - both Left (Meretz and Labour) and Right (Chas and other orthodox elements) to try and come together and possibly unify in order to have a more potent presence in the next Knesset.
- However, Perry adamantly said that not all these efforts have been successful, pointing out especially that the Labour Party was reluctant to compromise on its socialistic ideals especially as the people of Israel were being confronted with new hardships and difficulties as a result of the cost of living going up.
- The current PM, Yair Lapid, for his part as ‘the Leader of the Leftist coalition’ in the country is anxious for the smaller parties on the left to come together so that they can meet the electoral threshold and thus prevent Netanyahu and his coalition from gaining the 61 seats they need for forming the next government.

- To achieve this aim, Lapid has been involved in offering “goodies” to these forces and accepting to include some members of the Labour Party amongst his own Party’s list of candidates.
- There have been similar kind of activities amongst other key leaders such as Benny Gantz and Gidon Saar who have now joined forces as well as Chas, Yisrael Beiteinu of Avigdor Lieberman and the Religious Zionist Party.
- Perry ended this section of his comments by saying that as matters stood at this time, it was his feeling that Netanyahu was likely to get the number of seats he needed for forming the next government.

The JCPOA Talks

- Asked about the status of the JCPOA talks and speculations that Biden might wish to help Lapid in delaying any deal so as to keep Netanyahu out, Perry was of the view that such speculation was generally out of place for the Biden Administration was unlikely to give any consideration to such calculations.
- As for the status of the Iranian nuclear program at this stage, Perry was of the view that the more positive assessments of the JCPOA talks in Israel was being made by ‘Aman’ - the intelligence arms of the IDF which was somewhat different to the more pessimistic outlook expressed by Mossad that suggested everything was in any event temporary.
- Perry ended his talk by saying that the campaign to contain Iran in Syria would continue - as witnessed by the recent bombing of Aleppo International Airport, especially for the purpose of preventing Iran supplying game changing weapons to its proxies like Hezbollah and others

