

“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

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Special election report

SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR ENTITLED ‘ISRAEL UPDATE’



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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 COMMENTS

- Perry began his weekly briefing by saying that the members of the new Israeli Knesset with many new faces had now been sworn in and on Sunday, as previously mentioned, the Israeli President Herzog had officially asked Benjamin Netanyahu to form a new government (for which he has period of 28 days and an extra 14 should he require it).
- Perry said that although Netanyahu had initially hoped to announce his new government within days, complications associated with the formation of a new cabinet and dispersal of Ministries between coalition members had been more taxing than originally expected.
- Perry said that the crux of the problem lay at appointing Ministers for the key Ministries of Finance, Defense and Foreign Affairs.
- The real issue was that apart from the position of Foreign Minister – something that was likely to go to former Israelis Ambassador to the US, Ron Dermer, it was the insistence of one of his two leading coalition partners, Bezalel Smotrich, leader of the Religious Zionist Party to be the next Defence Minister that was proving problematic, especially due to US government reservations about such an appointment.
- According to Perry, Netanyahu wanted to appoint Aryeh Deri of the Shas Party to be the next Defence Minister, despite the fact that he has no previous relevant experience in this field and members of his party do not usually serve in the Israeli Defence Forces.
- Perry was of the view that given the warnings Netanyahu had received from the US, it was likely that at the end of the day, Smotrich would go to Finance and Deri would take up his position at Defence under the close supervision of Netanyahu himself (despite the fact that Deri

himself is not happy about going to the Defence Ministry preferring Finance instead).

- Perry noted that within the outgoing government and the soon to be opposition, there was also some unexpected feuding between Benny and Yair Lapid on issues having to do with control of certain Knesset committees.
- This feuding had been compounded by the announcement that Ahmad Tibi of the Arab Ta'al Party might become the next Deputy-Speaker of the Israeli Knesset.
- Perry ended his comment by saying that the unprecedented announcement that the FBI wanted to conduct an independent investigation over the killing of the Palestinian journalist Shirin Al Aqla had caused a serious fury among all political forces in that such an action was seen as something that should never happen to a country with which the US was in such close alliance. As such, any Israeli cooperation with such an investigation is not expected to happen.

