

“ISRAEL INSIDER”

REPORT # **70**

SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR

25 MAY 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 COMMENTS BY ASHLEY PERRY

- Perry began his weekly address by saying that the past week had been a busy one in Israel following the resignation on 19 May of ‘Ghaida Rinawie Zoabi’ of the left-wing Meretz party, in protest over the treatment of Palestinians in events related to the shooting and burial of Shireen Abu Aqla.
- Perry said that while there had been speculation regarding who next from the Yamina Party of Naftali Bennet might next desert the Coalition, Zoabi’s resignation coming from the ‘Left’ had taken everyone by surprise.
- Although initial reactions had been one of much pessimism regarding the survival of the Coalition with its previous voting majority of 61 being reduced to 59, a great deal of lobbying on the part of Ya’er Lapid and many Arab mayors of small towns, forced a situation that Zoabi announced a change of heart.
- Thus, after the weekend, a new conference was called and sitting next to Zoabi was Ya’er Lapid (and not the leader of her Meretz Party) in which she said that she would not vote in a way to force either the ‘dispersal of the Knesset’ nor the fall of the government in favour of the opposition.
- As a result, the Coalition will for the time being continue with its tenuous hold on power .
- In the aftermath of these events, the Knesset did manage to vote on an issue considered to be Benny Gantz’s ‘pet project’ of providing Israeli Defense Force personnel with $\frac{3}{4}$ of the fees required for advancing their education (as a result of compromise reached when the government had originally asked for $\frac{2}{3}$ while the Likud had asked for a 100% payment).

- However, shortly after securing this important vote, the Coalition was once again placed under new pressures as a result of the resignation of the 'Head of the Economic Affairs Committee', Michael Biton who announced that he would not be voting with the Coalition (except on votes of no confidence) because of unfair reforms in public transport and Agriculture.
- So, the emergency situation will continue as the government will remain engaged in putting out new fires.
- Perry next alluded to the successful visit to Israel of the Turkish Foreign Minister - the first in some 13 years, during which he also met with Palestinian leaders and visited Temple Mount.
- In this high-profile meeting between the Turkish Foreign Minister and Ya'ir Lapid, a wide number of topics including the future of gas projects in the Mediterranean involving Cyprus and Greece along with other regional issues (e.g., Syria) were discussed.
- In the Q&A portion of his address, Perry expressed the satisfaction of the Israeli government and supported the decision by President Biden for not removing the IRGC from the FTO list.

