

“AN EXPERT VIEW FROM ISRAEL”

Perspective 55



SUMMARY OF A ‘MIDDLE EAST FORUM’ WEBINAR



26 JANUARY 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

- For the second week running, Perry’s comments on developments in Israeli politics were focussed mainly on Netanyahu's acknowledged interest in a plea bargain deal to end his legal problems - commonly referred to as ‘the Big Bang of Israeli Politics’..
- However, in the course of the past week, developments on the case had been such that, contrary to earlier expectations, they may not end in an agreement.
- This has been due to the fact that there had been huge outrage on the part of the opponents of the deal (i.e., political enemies of Netanyahu), charging that Avichai Mandelblit, the Attorney General of Israel, was being soft on Netanyahu and providing him with a much leaner sentence than he would have received otherwise.
- Given that Avichai Mandelblit is set to retire on 31 January, according to Perry, there is simply not enough time left for a deal to be consummated at this stage.
- For his part, Netanyahu has reacted quite vehemently expressing a determination (especially in social media) to fight his cases to the end while pledging not to withdraw in any way from frontline politics in his country - something that has been accompanied with the vocal support of most leading figures in the Likud with the exception of former Knesset member, Yuli Edelsteine whose is challenging him for the leadership but whose campaign is not taken too seriously at this stage.
- While issues around Netanyahu’s imminent departure from the Israeli political scene have somewhat dampened, there has been a feeling that this is not the end of the story with both the Government and Opposition acting as as though the post-Bibi era has already begun.
- Perry said that while leaders of all parties in the coalition are trying to project a unified front, they are all at the same time extremely worried

about the end game in the current situation, were Netanyahu to vacate the political scene, thereby opening the way for the formation of a new right-wing government to replace the current government and put pay to the agreement reached by Bennet and Lapid which would have secured the premiership for Lapid in 2023.

- On other issues, a law allowing for certain illegal Palestinian settlements (in the Negev) to be electrified is seen as a success for the 'Raam Party' of Mansour Abbas for which the whole issue had been a huge priority.
- Perry said that in the aftermath of drone attacks carried out by the Houthis (believed to be acting as Iranian proxies) against the UAE, there is concern that similar drone attacks may also be conducted against Israeli targets from Yemen as well.

