



## ISRAEL NEWS

*A collection of the week's news from Israel  
From the Bet El Twinning / Israel Action Committee of  
Beth Avraham Yoseph of Toronto Congregation*

### Why Israel Threatened Military Action to Save an Enemy

By Noah Rothman

For many, it is assumed that Israel is a racist state that considers its Arab minority second-class citizens. I wonder, then, how they explain what

## Commentary...

### Do not Compromise Over our Sons By Dr. Leah Goldin

When we petitioned the High Court of Justice against the government, we did so with heavy hearts.

Our petition, which aims to force the government to implement the Diplomatic-Security Cabinet decisions on the soldiers killed and missing in 2014's Operation Protective Edge, was the result of our disappointment in the prime minister and his cabinet ministers, who know how to send troops out to battle, but struggle to follow through on their own decisions.

For more than three years, we have had to endure shattered hopes and repeated letdowns. But throughout this ordeal, we have also been privileged to meet good Israelis and a supportive Jewish world that knows how to stand in solidarity to help our cause.

For us, the operation has not ended. The prime minister and the Diplomatic-Security Cabinet did not bring back my son, Lt. Hadar Goldin, when the fighting stopped or when the truce was announced.

Our petition is very simple. It does not seek to set any precedent, nor does it seek to have the judiciary meddle in the executive branch's affairs. A special team comprising Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon, Interior Minister Aryeh Deri and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu – all of whom sit in the Diplomatic-Security Cabinet – has been studying the issue of Israel's POWs and MIAs for the past 18 months.

Following consultations with security officials and other experts, the ministers adopted several decisions that were meant to apply effective pressure on Hamas so that our son and Staff Sgt. Oron Shaul [both of whose bodies are being held by Hamas] can be buried in Israel.

The ministers decided that this pressure would be three-pronged: holding on to the bodies of terrorists linked to Hamas; imposing more restrictions on Hamas terrorists incarcerated in Israel (for example, suspending visits by relatives); and limiting the number of permits for Gazans wishing to enter Israel for humanitarian reasons.

The government has not implemented those decisions. It has been returning terrorists' bodies; it has continued to let terrorists' families enter, not from Gaza, but from Judea and Samaria; and the humanitarian relief to the Gaza Strip has continued.

Had the government followed through on its decision to keep terrorists' bodies 10 months ago, the embarrassing saga surrounding the recently discovered cross-border tunnel would have been avoided. Any incident where terrorists manage to breach our borders via an attack tunnel must end in a clear-cut result, especially when there are two Israelis being held in Gaza.

That is why Israel is correct in holding on to the bodies of the five terrorists that were found there. These five people spat on international norms, their action was akin launching a war. It could have resulted in a regional conflagration.

You cannot accuse Israel of using bodies as pawns because it simply conditioned the handing over of the bodies on having Israel's soldiers returned. Any other Israeli posture would have been tantamount to capitulating to terrorism.

Returning our sons is a national imperative, not just a matter for the families. The government of Israel must clarify to our enemies that our security cannot be undermined right beneath our feet and that our values cannot be altered. The Diplomatic-Security Cabinet's decisions are very simple, and those who say that the simple things are actually complicated are simply shirking their duty. (Israel Hayom Nov 7)

*The writer is the mother of Givati Brigade Lt. Hadar Goldin, killed during Operation Protective Edge in Gaza 2014 and whose remains are being held by Hamas.*

happened last Friday?

For the third time in the last two years, Israel threatened military action to stop an attack by extremist Syrian rebels on the Syrian Druze village of Khader. It did so despite the fact that Syrian Druze have sided with the Assad regime in that war, meaning they're aligned with Israel's arch-enemies, Iran and Hezbollah; despite the fact that Khader itself has been the source of several anti-Israel terror attacks; and despite the fact that such intervention risks entangling Israel in Syria's civil war, something it has hitherto tried hard to avoid—and all just because it was asked to do so by its own Druze minority, which was worried about its coreligionists across the border.

To most Israelis, it seems both obvious and unremarkable that Israel should accede to this request. But in fact, though Israel has always considered itself obligated as a Jewish state to try to protect Jews anywhere, it's not at all obvious that it would consider itself equally obligated to try to protect Druze beyond its borders. Threatening cross-border military action on behalf of foreign nationals aligned with your worst enemies, simply because they're the coreligionists of one of your own ethnic minorities, isn't an obvious step for any country. And it's especially not obvious for a country accused of considering said minorities to be second-class citizens.

Thus, the fact that Israel has repeatedly taken action to protect the Syrian Druze says a lot about the true state of anti-Arab "racism" in the country. But to understand exactly what it says, it's first necessary to understand the difference between Israeli Druze and other Arab Israelis.

The Druze are ethnically Arab, and their religion is considered an offshoot of Islam. But in their attitude toward the Jewish state, Israeli Druze differ markedly from most Muslim and Christian Arabs. All Druze men serve in the army, whereas Muslim and Christian Arabs generally do not. Druze politicians can be found in every major political party (except the explicitly religious ones), and Druze voting patterns aren't markedly different from their Jewish counterparts. In contrast, other Arabs generally support ethnic Arab parties that are openly hostile to the Jewish state. Druze overwhelmingly identify as Israeli rather than Palestinian, whereas among other Arabs, the reverse has been true until very recently. Finally, given their superior integration, Druze unsurprisingly feel much less discriminated against than other Arabs.

The Druze consider themselves to be and act as loyal Israelis in every respect, so Jewish Israelis consider themselves bound to show equal loyalty to the Druze. Therefore, when Israeli Druze (some of whom even have relatives in Khader) were concerned about what might happen to their Syrian brethren if the extremist militias succeeded in capturing the town, Israeli Jews—who can readily understand concern for the fate of one's coreligionists in another country—fully agreed that something had to be done. Hence the army, as it has twice before, warned the extremists that if they didn't retreat, they would be attacked by Israeli planes and artillery. And the extremists, as they have twice before, got the message and abandoned their attack.

In contrast, Israeli Jews feel far less commitment to other Israeli Arabs because other Israeli Arabs demonstrate far less commitment to Israel. This is obvious in their refusal not only to do military service—something most Israeli Jews could reluctantly accept—but even to do civilian national service in their own communities, because they consider it unacceptable to do anything that might be construed as identification with the hated Zionist state. It is equally obvious in their repeated reelection of Arab Knesset members who, in marked contrast to Druze MKs, routinely refuse to condemn Palestinian terror and sometimes even actively defend it, hurl calumnies like "apartheid" and "genocide" at their own government, and side with the Palestinians against Israel on virtually every issue.

While prejudice and discrimination definitely exist in Israel, as they do in every society, they do not, for the most part, stem from "racism." Rather, they are a response to the objective fact that many Israeli Arabs

demonstrate their contempt for and opposition to the Jewish state on a daily basis. While Israel can and does ensure equality before the law for its Arab citizens, it can't change human nature. And it is human nature to be less generous and more suspicious toward people who openly side with your enemies than toward those who side with you, because loyalty is a two-way street. Indeed, what's truly remarkable is that Israel has made such great efforts to integrate its Arab minority despite the barrier posed by Arab behavior.

As I've noted many times before, Israeli Arab attitudes toward Israel are slowly changing. As they do, anti-Arab prejudice and discrimination will lessen in the same way that prejudice and discrimination against the Druze already have. And nothing demonstrates this better than last Friday's incident in Khader, when Israel put its army at the service of non-Jewish enemy nationals across the border just because their Israeli coreligionists asked it to do so. (CommentaryMagazine.com Nov 7)

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### **Don't Return Bodies for Nothing** By Maj. Gen. (ret.) Yaakov Amidror

The Israel Defense Forces has racked up three recent achievements on the southern front: locating an attack tunnel leading into Israel and blowing it up; striking over a dozen terrorists, including senior Islamic Jihad operatives; and according to an IDF report on Sunday, holding on to bodies of the terrorists who were in the tunnel at the time of the strike. The last coup indicates that the IDF is managing to develop access to tunnels and subterranean activity, which will be a major challenge in future confrontations, both in the south and against Hezbollah in the North.

These achievements have both tactical and strategic significance. From the strategy perspective, Israel is shutting down terrorists' operative options in the south, which rested on firing rockets and missiles and on the tunnel threat, which they expected to tip the scales in their favor. Terrorist elements in the south have invested their best people as well as endless money and effort in developing two kinds of tunnels: the first one crosses beneath borders, allowing them to smuggle goods in and out of Sinai and move operatives to Israel by surprise.

The second type of tunnel is a complex system that stretches under the Gaza Strip, which was supposed to be the heart of its defenses against an IDF incursion into Gaza. If in fact the IDF has developed the ability to neutralize the tunnels that lead into Israel. It can cut down on a major part of the threat looming from Gaza, and in conjunction with the Iron Dome missile defense system, which has already proven itself, the capabilities of Hamas and the rest of the terrorist organization in Gaza to attack Israel is reduced amazingly. This is of the greatest importance, because when Israel increases its abilities to execute precision strikes and destroy terrorist infrastructure while the other side loses its ability to cause harm, the balance between the two sides changes, and those in Gaza will think twice, at least, whether it is worth their while to renew the fighting.

Tactically, Israel is holding a trump card for negotiations on returning the bodies of the fallen IDF soldiers killed in Operation Protective Edge that Hamas is still holding. Obviously, it makes no sense to return the bodies of the terrorists killed in the tunnel strike without Hamas giving us something in exchange. Any other decision goes against common sense, and should not be made. The government must take a clear, uncompromising line on this issue, but we should calm things down. We shouldn't wonder if Hamas is willing to forgo the bodies Israel is holding to keep the bereaved families in Israel who are battling uncertainty from receiving any information, let alone what the terrorist group is holding, if it is holding anything. So the tunnel strike is an important tactical advance, but it's not certain that it can be used against an enemy who doesn't even care about its own bereaved families. (Israel Hayom Nov 6)

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### **Another Strike Against the New Israel Fund**

By Ronn Torossian, Hank Sheinkopf, and George Birnbaum

Adalah — the Legal Center for Arab Minority Rights in Israel recently filed a petition — on behalf of the father of a dead terrorist — against a senior Israeli military officer.

The petition, filed in the Israeli Supreme Court, demands that the court order the Israeli military to allow Palestinian search and rescue teams from Gaza to enter the “buffer zone.” The “buffer zone” is a security zone that helps protect against Palestinian attack tunnels that cross into Israeli territory.

Israel blew up the tunnel in question killing 12 terrorists — including the Palestinian man's son. The Jewish state has said that it would not return the bodies of those killed without “progress on the issue of missing and captive Israelis.” Hamas is believed to be holding the bodies of at least five Israelis, including two soldiers.

Adalah's petition is proof again of New Israel Fund organizations

bucking the IDF. From 2008 to 2016, the New Israel Fund gave grants worth \$2,043,697 to Adalah. According to NGO Monitor, Adalah publishes an online “Discriminatory Laws Database,” that claims to collect “text, analyses, and legal action for present and proposed discriminatory laws in Israel and the OPT [Occupied Palestinian Territories].” This deceptive list does not distinguish between laws and legislative proposals, and also refers to Zionism pejoratively.

Time and time again, the New Israel Fund stands with terrorists against the State of Israel. Why would American Jewish donors and leaders — including David N. Myers of the Center for Jewish History — want to stand with the New Israel Fund? (Algemeiner Nov 7)

*George Birnbaum is an international political consultant, who formerly served as chief of staff for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Hank Sheinkopf, CEO of Sheinkopf Communications is a leading political strategist who has worked on campaigns in four continents. His clients have included former President Bill Clinton. Ronn Torossian is CEO of a top 20 US PR agency.*

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### **Is the JCPOA Working?** By Yigal Carmon and A. Savyon

All JCPOA supporters rely on the notion that “the agreement is working” and on the fact that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has confirmed that Iran is in compliance with the agreement eight times since it came into force in January 2016.

Reality, however, contradicts this, on four levels:

- Violations of the agreement in letter, not just in “spirit,” in issues that are critical, not marginal.
- Developments on the ground that contradict the aim of the agreement.
- The lack of real inspection, making the IAEA's confirmation invalid.
- The IAEA's role in this deliberate misrepresentation that there is real inspection and that Iran is upholding the agreement.

This paper will present evidence that the agreement is not working.

#### *I. Violations of the JCPOA*

a. Section T — Iran is refusing to allow IAEA inspectors to monitor Section T of the agreement, which prohibits Iran from carrying out “activities which could contribute to the development of a nuclear explosive device.”

Iran is refusing to allow International Atomic Energy Agency to carry out inspections in accordance with Section T of the JCPOA, which prohibits Iran from “designing, developing, fabricating, acquiring, or using multi-point explosive detonation systems suitable for a nuclear explosive device” and also from “designing, developing, fabricating, acquiring, or using explosive diagnostic systems (streak cameras, framing cameras and flash x-ray cameras)” — unless these activities are “approved by the Joint Commission for non-nuclear purposes” and “subject to monitoring.”

What this violation means is that in the most critical area of the nuclear agreement — developing options for a nuclear explosive device — Iran is refusing to allow monitoring of its activity, as the agreement requires.

- Building advanced centrifuges — Iran is building (IR-8) and operating (IE-6) larger numbers of advanced centrifuges than is allowed by the agreement.
- Heavy Water — Iran's actual heavy water quota exceeds the quantity permitted it by the agreement, since according to standard IAEA verification practices, changes in heavy water inventory are registered not when the heavy water is removed from the territory of the country exporting it, but only when it arrives at the destination country that purchased it. For Iran, however, the calculation of the quantity of heavy water that it is allowed to possess does not include the quantity that is being stored for it in Oman and not being sold — while at the same time Iran is continuing to produce more heavy water.
- The core of the plutonium reactor at Arak — According to Ali Akbar Salehi, head of the Atomic Energy Organization Of Iran (AEOI) and a member of Iran's nuclear negotiating team, Iran never dismantled the core of the plutonium reactor at Arak, but left it intact, saying that Iran needed it for research purposes. He also said that only the external pipelines of the reactor had been filled with cement, and that it would not take very long for Iran to reactivate it. According to the Institute for Science and International Security (IISS), Iran has also tried to make changes to the fuel design for the modified Arak reactor, that differ from what the JCPOA requires.
- Production of uranium enriched to 5% — Iran is continuing to produce uranium enriched to 5% beyond the quantity permitted it. Two such violations have been recorded by the IAEA. Iran has exported the surplus for storage in Oman, in a procedure that does not exist in the agreement and is not allowed.

#### *II. Developments on the ground that contradict the aim of the JCPOA*

a. The 8.5 tons of enriched uranium shipped out from Iran according to the JCPOA are not being monitored by the IAEA, and in fact the shipment disappeared in Russia, as attested to by the Obama administration's State Department lead coordinator on Iran, Stephen Mull, at a House Foreign Affairs Committee hearing in February 2016. (Theoretically, however, since the uranium's location is not known, the possibility that Russia, Iran's ally, has returned it to Iran should not be discounted.)

b. Oman, a political satellite of Iran that has no capability for confronting Iran, has become the warehouse for Iran's surplus heavy water and enriched uranium. The storage of this material in Oman is nothing more than a fiction covering up Iran's violations of the agreement.

### III. Lack of real inspection, making IAEA confirmation invalid

The IAEA cannot conduct real inspections in Iran, and therefore its confirmation that Iran is complying with the JCPOA is invalid, for the following reasons:

a. The inspection that the IAEA is permitted to conduct, and through which Iran receives confirmation that it is meeting the terms of the agreement, is carried out solely in the limited areas where Iran allows inspection — that is, the sites that it itself has declared to be nuclear sites. No other site in Iran, including military sites, are included in the regulations for this inspection. Furthermore, with regard to the military sites, Iranian officials have stressed that the IAEA will never be allowed to enter them.

b. The agreement has created a unique inspection framework for Iran that is less stringent than that for the other Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) member countries. For example, Iran has been allowed to accept the Additional Protocol voluntarily — that is, it was not mandatory as it was for the others — meaning that it can drop out of the Additional Protocol at any time (for instance, when it is required to allow inspection of military sites inspections that the IAEA is allowed to carry out under the Additional Protocol) without this being considered a violation of the JCPOA. That is, Iran has the option of preventing inspection of its military sites, both under the JCPOA and because it is not bound by the Additional Protocol, because its acceptance of the Additional Protocol is voluntary.

c. The agreement has created a supreme political forum — the Joint Committee of the JCPOA — which is aimed at relieving the IAEA of its exclusive authority and transferring it to a political forum that supersedes it, and also aimed at ruling in matters that are under the statutory decision-making authority of the IAEA.

IV. The IAEA's role in the misrepresentation of reality — i.e. that Iran is complying with the JCPOA and that the IAEA is indeed carrying out real inspections there

a. The IAEA does not consider Iran's rejection of inspections, which constitutes "activities which could contribute to the development of a nuclear explosive device" as per Section T, to be a violation of the JCPOA, and calls for handing the issue over for discussion to the political body — the Joint Committee.

b. The IAEA carried out a scandalous inspection at the Parchin military site, that was aimed at closing Iran's Possible Nuclear Dimensions file in accordance with a predetermined political decision. IAEA inspectors did not themselves visit Parchin, and the samples from these sites were taken by the Iranians themselves and handed over to the IAEA inspectors without any way of ascertaining that the samples taken were the ones handed over to the IAEA. Furthermore, IAEA Secretary-General Yukiya Amano was allowed entrance to Parchin for only a few minutes, and he was not permitted to bring in any equipment, not even a cellphone. Through this process, the IAEA even agreed not to question nuclear scientists, as it had demanded to do over the years.

c. The IAEA is refusing to wield its authority by initiating inspections of military sites, as permitted by both the Additional Protocol and UN Security Council Resolution 2231, and despite statements by IAEA Secretary-General Amano that he has the authority to do this.

d. The IAEA acting vis-à-vis Iran is in violation of its own export control system, to which exporters of heavy water such as Canada and India are subject. (Algemeiner Nov 7)

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### Without the Balfour Declaration, the PA Would Have Had to Invent It

By Itamar Marcus

Every year, the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration passes by quietly in Israel with hardly any notice. Only this year it is being noted and celebrated — because it is the 100th anniversary.

However this is not true of the Palestinian Authority. Ever since Palestinian Media Watch has been monitoring the PA, the date of the Balfour Declaration was among the most important days on the PA calendar. Each year, PA schools would have special sessions discussing Balfour.

In 2011, for example, the PA organized a letter writing campaign from

schoolchildren to the Queen of England "to mark the 94th anniversary of the cursed Balfour promise."

Why is it that Israelis, who are the direct beneficiaries of the Balfour Declaration, have been ignoring it, while for Palestinians it is so important?

For Israelis, the Balfour Declaration was just one step in a series of significant events that had started decades before Balfour and continued after him, all contributing to the Jewish people's return to the Land of Israel.

The first wave of immigration started in 1882, 35 years before Balfour's declaration, and the First Zionist Congress was in 1897. Israelis today see the return to their land as something so normal and inevitable that no single event except for the declaration of statehood itself is regularly celebrated.

But why does the PA focus on Balfour? They should be mourning the First Aliyah in 1882 or the First Zionist Congress in 1897, more than the Balfour Declaration, which was Britain's response to an already active Zionist movement.

For the PA, the Balfour Declaration is a necessary component of the Palestinian narrative. The two foundations of Palestinian ideology, both fictitious, are that a Palestinian nation existed for thousands of years and that there never had been a Jewish presence in the Land of Israel. But this left one problem: The PA needed to explain to its people why millions of Jews had immigrated from Europe and all over the world, if they had no connection to the land.

The PA's answer is colonialism, and Balfour is the "proof."

According to the PA's adjusted narrative, Balfour and Britain's support were not one step in the growing Zionist movement, but the beginning of all Jewish history in the land. And Jews were chosen by Britain only because the Jews were so "evil" that Europe was looking for a way to be rid of them.

A documentary that has been broadcast five times on PA and Fatah TV since 2013 explains: "Faced with the Jews' schemes, Europe could not bear their character traits, monopolies, corruption. ... The European nations felt that they had suffered a tragedy by providing refuge for the Jews. Later the Jews obtained the Balfour Declaration, and Europe saw it as an ideal solution to get rid of them."

PA Ambassador to France Salman Al-Harfi recently echoed this sentiment: "The [Balfour] Promise stemmed from the desire to solve what was called 'the Jewish problem' in Europe ... so that Europe would be rid of the problem of its Jews."

Defining Israel as a European colony is a fundamental and essential component of PA myth-building, and has been part of the PA narrative since the early years of the PA. Already in 1998, the official PA daily presented Hitler and Balfour as trying to achieve the same goals: "The difference between Hitler and Balfour was simple: the former [Hitler] did not have colonies to send the Jews so he destroyed them, whereas Balfour ... [turned] Palestine into his colony and sent the Jews. Balfour is Hitler with colonies, while Hitler is Balfour without colonies. They both wanted to get rid of the Jews. ... Zionism was crucial to the defense of the West's interests in the region, [by] ridding Europe of the burden of its Jews."

Already in schools, Palestinian children are taught to see Jews in Israel as a foreign colonial implant that Europeans wanted to be "rid of." In a lesson entitled "Colonialism and Zionism" in a PA schoolbook just published in August 2017, children learn: "Zionism is defined as a colonialist political movement. ... the Balfour Promise issued by Britain was a type of solution to get rid of the Jews by allocating to them the land of Palestine."

The PA goes even further in its scriptwriting. Not only did Balfour create Jewish nationalism in the land, but he even brought about the Jewish religious connection to the land: "There is no documentation that the Jews made the Western Wall a place of worship at any time, except after the Balfour Promise," claimed official PA TV, in March this year.

This message comes from the top: "Mahmoud Al-Habbash (Mahmoud Abbas' personal advisor on Religious Affairs) made clear ... that no person besides Muslims ever used it [Western Wall] as a place of worship, throughout all of history, until the ominous Balfour Declaration in 1917."

The PA needs the Balfour Declaration in 2017 as much as the Zionist movement needed it in 1917. For Zionism in 1917, Balfour meant international recognition of Jews' historic right as an indigenous people to return to their homeland. For the PA in 2017, it is used to deny the Jews' historic right as an indigenous people in their land.

An ancient Palestinian history is fabricated by the PA to fill the vacuum created by the erasure of actual Jewish history in the land. And the Balfour Declaration is the document that the Palestinians wave to their people to brandish this myth.

In honor of the 100th anniversary of this important document, the PA

decided to make the Balfour Declaration and denial of Israel's right to exist its primary messaging this year.

Mahmoud Abbas is taking the lead with public statements such as: "It must be emphasized that the historical injustice that was caused to our people, and which continues to accumulate, began in fact with the ominous Balfour Promise. Therefore, we call on the government of Britain to bear its historical and moral responsibility and not mark and celebrate the 100th anniversary of this invalid promise. Instead, it must submit an apology to our Palestinian people..."

PA Foreign Minister Al-Malki said that Abbas "intends to submit a lawsuit ... if Britain insists on celebrating the 100th anniversary of the ominous Balfour Promise."

Fatah has called Balfour the "crime of the century," and "the most inhuman terrorist crime ... creating a Zionist illegal state." Fatah spokesman Osama Al-Qawasmi went so far as to declare that the Balfour Declaration was "the most horrible crime in the history of mankind."

The PA has transformed the Balfour Declaration from recognition of Jewish history in the land, into the starting point of Jewish history in the land. Without Balfour, the PA has no hook upon which to anchor its warped reality. Had there been no Balfour Declaration, the PA would have had to invent it. (Algemeiner Nov 7)

*The writer is the director of Palestinian Media Watch.*

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### **Saudi Purges and Duty to Act** By Caroline B. Glick

For 70 years, Saudi Arabia served as the largest and most significant incubator of Sunni jihad. Its Wahhabist Islamic establishment funded radical mosques throughout the world. Saudi princes have supported radical Islamic clerics who have indoctrinated their followers to pursue jihad against the non-Islamic world. Saudi money stands behind most of the radical Islamic groups in the non-Islamic world that have in turn financed terrorist groups like Hamas and al-Qaida and have insulated radical Islam from scrutiny by Western governments and academics. Indeed, Saudi money stands behind the silence of critics of jihadist Islam in universities throughout the Western world.

As Mitchell Bard documented in his 2011 book, *The Arab Lobby*, any power pro-Israel forces in Washington, DC, have developed pales in comparison to the power of Arab forces, led by the Saudi government. Saudi government spending on lobbyists in Washington far outstrips that of any other nation. According to Justice Department disclosures from earlier this year, since 2015, Saudi Arabia vastly increased its spending on influence peddling. According to a report by *The Intercept*, "Since 2015, the Kingdom has expanded the number of foreign agents on retainer to 145, up from 25 registered agents during the previous two-year period."

Saudi lobbyists shielded the kingdom from serious criticism after 15 of the 19 September 11 hijackers were shown to be Saudi nationals. They blocked a reconsideration of the US's strategic alliance with Saudi Arabia after the attacks and in subsequent years, even as it was revealed that Princess Haifa, wife of Prince Bandar, the Saudi ambassador to Washington at the time the September 11 attacks occurred, had financially supported two of the hijackers in the months that preceded the attacks.

The US position on Saudi Arabia cooled demonstrably during the Obama administration. This cooling was not due to a newfound concern over Saudi financial support for radical Islam in the US. To the contrary, the Obama administration was friendlier to Islamists than any previous administration. Consider the Obama administration's placement of Muslim Brotherhood supporters in key positions in the federal government. For instance, in 2010, then secretary for Homeland Security Janet Napolitano appointed Mohamed Elibiary to the department's Homeland Security Advisory Board. Elibiary had a long, open record of support both for the Muslim Brotherhood and for the Iranian regime. In his position he was instrumental in purging discussion of Islam and Jihad from instruction materials used by the US military, law enforcement and intelligence agencies. The Obama administration's cold relations with the Saudi regime owed to its pronounced desire to ditch the US's traditional alliance with the Saudis, the Egyptians and the US's other traditional Sunni allies in favor of an alliance with the Iranian regime.

During the same period, the Muslim Brotherhood's close ties to the Iranian regime became increasingly obvious. Among other indicators, Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood-affiliated president Mohamed Morsi hosted Iranian leaders in Cairo and was poised to renew Egypt's diplomatic ties with Iran before he was overthrown by the military in July 2013. Morsi permitted Iranian warships to traverse the Suez Canal for the first time in decades.

Saudi Arabia joined Egypt and the United Arab Emirates in designating the Muslim Brotherhood a terrorist group in 2014.

It was also during this period that the Saudis began warming their

attitude toward Israel. Through Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, and due to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's leading role in opposing Iran's nuclear program and its rising power in the Middle East, the Saudis began changing their positions on Israel.

Netanyahu's long-time foreign policy adviser, Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs president Dr. Dore Gold, who authored the 2003 bestseller *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the New Global Terrorism* which exposed Saudi Arabia's role in promoting jihadist Islam, spearheaded a process of developing Israel's security and diplomatic ties with Riyadh. Those ties, which are based on shared opposition to Iran's regional empowerment, led to the surprising emergence of a working alliance between Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the UAE with Israel during Israel's 2014 war with Hamas – the Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood.

It is in the context of Saudi Arabia's reassessment of its interests and realignment of strategic posture in recent years that the dramatic events of the past few days in the kingdom must be seen.

Saturday's sudden announcement that a new anti-corruption panel headed by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and the near simultaneous announcement of the arrest of more than two dozen royal family members, cabinet ministers and prominent businessmen is predominantly being presented as a power seizure by the crown prince. Amid widespread rumors that King Salman will soon abdicate the throne to his son, it is reasonable for the 32-year-old crown prince to work to neutralize all power centers that could threaten his ascension to the throne.

But there is clearly also something strategically more significant going on. While many of the officials arrested over the weekend threaten Mohammed's power, they aren't the only ones that he has purged. In September Mohammed arrested some 30 senior Wahhabist clerics and intellectuals. And Saturday's arrest of the princes, cabinet ministers and business leaders was followed up by further arrests of senior Wahhabist clerics.

At the same time, Mohammed has been promoting clerics who espouse tolerance for other religions, including Judaism and Christianity. He has removed the Saudi religious police's power to conduct arrests and he has taken seemingly credible steps to finally lift the kingdom-wide prohibition on women driving.

At the same time, Mohammed has escalated the kingdom's operations against Iran's proxies in Yemen.

And of course, on Saturday, he staged the resignation of Lebanese Prime Minister Saad Hariri amid Hariri's allegations that Hezbollah and Iran were plotting his murder, much as they stood behind the 2005 assassination of his father, prime minister Rafiq Hariri.

There can be little doubt that there was coordination between the Saudi regime and the Trump administration regarding Saturday's actions. The timing of the administration's release last week of most of the files US special forces seized during their 2011 raid of al-Qaida leader Osama bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan was likely not a coincidence.

The files, which the Obama administration refused to release, make clear that Obama's two chief pretensions – that al-Qaida was a spent force by the time US forces killed bin Laden, and that Iran was interested in moderating its behavior were both untrue. The documents showed that al-Qaida's operations remained a significant worldwide threat to US interests.

And perhaps more significantly, they showed that Iran was al-Qaida's chief state sponsor. Much of al-Qaida's leadership, including bin Laden's sons, operated from Iran. The notion – touted by Obama and his administration – that Shi'ite Iranians and Sunni terrorists from al-Qaida and other groups were incapable of cooperating was demonstrated to be an utter fiction by the documents.

Their publication now, as Saudi Arabia takes more determined steps to slash its support for radical Islamists, and separate itself from Wahhabist Islam, draws a clear distinction between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

Given Saudi Arabia's record, and the kingdom's 70-year alliance with Wahhabist clerics, it is hard to know whether Mohammed's move signals an irrevocable breach between the House of Saud and the Wahhabists.

But the direction is clear. With Hariri's removal from Lebanon, the lines between the forces of jihad and terrorism led by Iran, and the forces that oppose them are clearer than ever before. And the necessity of acting against the former and helping the latter has similarly never been more obvious. (Jerusalem Post Nov 6)