

# Newsbytes

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

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## Report: US Peace Plan Divides Jerusalem, Keeps Israeli Settlement Blocs

BY HERB KEINON

2.28.18

[jpost.co.il](http://jpost.co.il)

Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki said that the plan tilts toward Israel and is unacceptable to the Palestinians.

Two days after EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini warned the US against taking “false steps” on the peace process, the pan-Arab Asharq al-Awsat newspaper reported Wednesday that the Trump administration’s plan to jump-start peace talks calls for east Jerusalem as the capital of a demilitarized Palestinian state whose borders do not match the pre-1967 lines.

According to the Saudi paper published in London, Arab states are unhappy with the framework and are trying to change it before it is presented.

Under the plan, according to the report, the United States would recognize a Palestinian state and its capital in east Jerusalem, on condition that the Old City would come under international protection. The plan calls for the Jordan Valley and major settlement blocs to remain under Israeli sovereignty, and for small, isolated settlements to be relocated.

The Trump administration swiftly dismissed the report.

“It is unfortunate that some parties are seeking to prejudice people against our unfinished plan, which these sources have not seen,” said Josh Raffel, a White House spokesman.

“Nobody should be basing their reaction, public or private, on these reports.”

Raffel said the peace team would continue working on its “real plan” and encouraged regional leaders to dismiss rumors in their press.

US allies – including France, Britain and Saudi Arabia, where the sourcing for this report allegedly originated – have not been briefed on details of the plan, and thus are not in a position to confirm or deny its contents with authority. However, some educated guesses on specific proposals may ultimately land closer to truth than to fiction, given that the contours of the conflict are so well known.

“This is a mix of possibilities and ideas, some of which have existed for decades,” a senior White House official said. “We are going to continue working on the plan that is designed to benefit both Israelis and Palestinians and will release it when it is done and the time is right.”

The report's claim that the White House peace team will support international protection for Jerusalem also contradicts an earlier assertion from a senior administration official that the Western Wall will likely be under Israeli control in any agreement with the Palestinians.

"We cannot envision any situation under which the Western Wall would not be part of Israel," the senior US official said in December. "But as the president said, the specific boundaries of sovereignty of Israel are going to be part of the final-status agreement."

"We note that we cannot imagine Israel would sign a peace agreement that didn't include the Western Wall," the official added.

Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki and foreign ministers from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates and Morocco met earlier this week in Brussels with Mogherini and the 28 European Union foreign ministers and said that the plan tilts toward Israel and is unacceptable to the Palestinians.

The report stated that the Arab foreign ministers asked the EU to immediately engage with the US and get them to change the parameters of the plan before it is presented, because it will be much more difficult to do so afterward.

Mogherini's comments after that meeting seemed to give credence to this. She said that the EU and Arab League foreign ministers "have dealt with the conflict long enough around our common table to know what can fly and what cannot fly, and we believe it is wise to consider what can fly and cannot fly in terms of peace plans before putting any plans on the table and avoiding any false steps. Because, given the region, any false step can be very dangerous."

The Asharq al-Awsat report, based on Arab diplomatic sources in Paris, said the US intends to present the plan at an international conference to be held in an Arab capital, likely Cairo. The plan, according to the paper, calls for the PA to get more security and administrative authority in Areas A and B of the West Bank, and for the US to raise \$40 billion to develop the Palestinian state and its institutions.

Regarding the contentious refugee issue, the plan calls for the refugees and their descendants to be absorbed in the countries where they now reside – and not to be granted a "right of return" – and for compensation to be paid.

The Prime Minister's office would not respond to the report.

US Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said last week at the University of Chicago that the American plan is nearing completion.

"They're coming up with a plan," she said of US negotiators Jared Kushner and Jason Greenblatt. All three diplomats briefed members of the UN Security Council on the progress of their plan last week, while omitting key details even in that closed-door session.

Haley said at the university, "It won't be loved by either side, and it won't be hated by either side."

## Satellite image said to show new Iranian military base in Syria

A picture of the reported base, in an area known as Jabal al-Sharqi some eight kilometers (5 miles) northwest of the Syrian capital, shows two recently constructed buildings which are similar to those seen at another base in Syria thought to have been used as a base for Iranian Revolutionary Guards Corps troops, according to Fox News, citing information from Israel-based geospatial analysis outfit ImageSat.

On Wednesday morning, Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman downplayed the report, telling Israel Radio there was “nothing new here.”

“Don’t take every report in the media, even from a respected outlet like Fox, as an absolute thing,” the defense minister said.

“We have the full picture of what’s going,” he added.

The buildings were identified in the report as possible hangars housing short- and medium-range missiles.

Their shape and size, 30 meters by 20 meters, is identical to a building at a site also identified as an Iranian base, reportedly targeted by an Israeli strike in December.

However, an ImageSat report on that site, at al-Kiswah some 13 kilometers (8 miles) south of the Syrian capital of Damascus, identified that building in November, before it was struck, not as a missile silo but rather as a probable mosque or dining room.

A BBC report on the same base also indicated analysts did not believe it was designed for storing missiles or other large arms, but rather for housing soldiers and vehicles.

On Wednesday, though, ImageSat revised its understanding of the al-Kiswah building targeted in December, identifying it too as a possible missile silo. No reason was provided for the altered assessment.

An earthen berm is also visible around the Jabal al-Sharqi site, indicating a likely military use.

Israel has been warning for years that Iran is seeking to entrench itself militarily in Syria, including establishing missile bases. According to Israeli political and military assessments, Tehran, which has shored up Syrian President Bashar Assad in the Syrian civil war, has been working to create air and naval bases in Syria, from which it can arm the Lebanon-based terror organization Hezbollah and other Shiite groups, as well as carry out attacks of its own against the Jewish state.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned on February 18 that Israel could strike the Islamic Republic directly and cautioned Tehran not to “test Israel’s resolve.”

“Israel will not allow Iran’s regime to put a noose of terror around our neck,” he added. “We will act without hesitation to defend ourselves. And we will act if necessary not just against Iran’s proxies that are attacking us, but against Iran itself.”

A report earlier this month alleged that Iran is operating 10 military bases in Syria and is training

militias loyal to Assad's regime for a possible battle with Israel, with two key facilities located near the Golan Heights border.

On Tuesday, the head of US Central Command Joseph Votel warned Iran was increasing the quality and quantity of missiles it was supplying to groups in Syria and Lebanon.

"Iran is generating instability across the region, and the Iranian Threat Network continues to increase in strength, enhancing its capacity to threaten US and partner nation interests," he said.

Returning from a trip to Israel Tuesday, South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham told reporters that Iran was "testing" US President Donald Trump in Syria and in Lebanon, where Israeli officials fear Iran is helping the terror group Hezbollah build precision-guided rockets for use against the Jewish State.

"They are testing Trump," Graham said, according to Bloomberg News. "They are testing the international community."

Graham also predicted there would soon be war in southern Lebanon, over the missiles.

"They've told us in no uncertain terms that if this threat continues — they keep making rockets that can hit the airport and do a lot of damage to the state of Israel — they are going to have to go in," Graham said.

## Increasing Readiness, IDF Extends Training Period for Combat Soldiers

"Wherever the war will catch us, we will be unequivocally ready."

BY ANNA AHRONHEIM MARCH 6, 2018

For the first time since the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, the IDF will be increasing the length of training for combat soldiers from 13 to 17 consecutive weeks.

"We need to look ahead and be ready," said Brig.- Gen. Oded Basiok, the commander of the 162nd Division whose Givati and Nahal Brigade troops have been the first to start training under the new program implemented last week.

According to Basiok, the increase of time will allow troops to "strengthen the basic abilities of the fighters and commanders on an individual level."

"Wherever the war will catch us, we will be unequivocally ready," he said.

As part of the program, soldiers will practice at night as well as train to fight in urban areas with highrise buildings as well as underground in tunnels and against threats such as antitank missiles.

According to Basiok, the IDF is currently in the process of replacing all armored vehicles in both the Nahal and Givati Brigades, which will also increase the capabilities of the troops.

"The Givati Brigade will move to the Namer armored personnel carrier and the Nahal Brigade will move to the new wheeled armored personnel carrier, the Eitan, which is no less than a revolution in my eyes," he said.

In preparation for the new program, the IDF will be investing hundreds of millions of shekels into upgrading training facilities on the Golan Heights, in the Jordan Valley and in southern Israel, and adapting them to the challenges facing troops on various fronts.

“We are thinking about both the northern sector as well as the southern sector,” Basiok said, adding that while “the close training will focus on the southern sector, in the Gaza Strip, the training will be holistic in order to maintain the readiness of troops in all sectors.”

While the defense establishment does not foresee any conflict breaking out in the near future, tensions have risen on both the northern and southern fronts.

In the north, the growing threat posed by Iranian entrenchment in Syria and the building of missile factories in Lebanon for its proxy terrorist group, Hezbollah, has led to significant concerns for Israel.

Over the past year, several large scale drills were carried out by the IDF in the north of the country, including last month when it held a series of brigade exercises that saw troops from armored, engineering, infantry and artillery units taking part.

“This past week we practiced significant scenarios with challenging obstacles in which we improved our operational, physical and mental readiness,” said Col. Gal Shohami, the commander of the 188th Brigade.

Over the summer, tens of thousands of conscripts and reservists from all branches of the army were called up to take part in the largest IDF drill in close to 20 years, simulating a war with Hezbollah.

The two-week long drill focused on countering the increased capabilities of Hezbollah and also included simulations of evacuating communities that sit on the border with Lebanon.

In addition to having rebuilt their arsenal to have hundreds of thousands of missiles aimed at Israel, Hezbollah has changed from a terrorist group fighting guerrilla style targets to an army with battalions, brigades and over 40,000 fighters who have gained immeasurable battlefield experience.

According to Basiok, since “there have been significant changes in terms of our enemy,” the training of IDF soldiers must be tailored to face that threat.

Three years after the last conflict with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the Sunni terrorist group has once again grown close to Tehran, which froze its financial support to Hamas in the Gaza Strip after the group refused to support the Assad regime in 2012.

While the IDF does not believe that Hamas currently seeks another conflict, the situation is fragile, especially given the worsening conditions in the Strip.

Violent demonstrations along the border fence occur weekly and, according to the army, have been getting more violent in recent weeks, with Gazan protesters bringing firearms and grenades to use against soldiers on the other side of the fence.

In March, when 2,000 reservists were called up to simulate a war in the Gaza Strip, IDF Chief of Staff Lt.- Gen. Gadi Eisenkot said that “We have put preparedness at the top of the IDF’s list of priorities.”

# How biometrics is giving identities to 'invisible citizens'

By Ed Scott-Clarke and Bianca Britton

Mon February 19, 2018 (CNN)

Around the globe an estimated 1.1 billion people are unable to prove their identity. They have no official ID -- no passport, no birth certificate, no bank card -- and as a result they're unable to access basic services, such as healthcare.

Most of these "invisible citizens" live in Africa and Asia, and a third are children, according to the World Bank. But UK-based startup Simprints is trying to help them.

Simprints makes portable fingerprint readers for charities around the world. It's working with charities in Kenya to provide digital healthcare records for people in poorer communities, who don't have any official documents.

For each person who has their fingerprint scanned, an algorithm creates a unique ID, which can be linked to their health records. Health workers can access the information and update health records using an app on a cell phone or tablet.

"The biometric technology is enabling a lot of charities and organizations to leapfrog a computer-based system and go straight from a paper-based system to a mobile system," Simprints co-founder Alexandra Grigore told CNN.

## Scanners providing a new hope

Nicholas Mwaura is head of technology at the Kenyan community health charity COHESU. He is working with a team of doctors and volunteers, using Simprints' technology to scan prints and create one of the country's first biometric identification databases.

"Biometrics as a technology has completely changed our way of thinking," Mwaura told CNN. He says Simprints is giving citizens without identities hope and access to a better synced healthcare system. "Without it they'd probably stay at home and accept their fate."

Once someone is successfully enrolled they can easily visit a doctor -- who can then access their entire medical history digitally.

Although it's revolutionizing healthcare in developing countries, fingerprint scanning isn't the newest or most technologically advanced biometric tool.

Today, technology firms are racing to find a new, universal identifier that will replace the need for passwords and change our digital lives. Soon your face, iris, or even your heartbeat could be used to make payments, unlock your front door or to access your emails.