



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*

Commentary...

A Summit to Weaken Iran and the EU By Ariel Kahana

Dozens of foreign ministers and other leaders from all over the world were making their way to Warsaw, Poland, on Wednesday evening to take part in a summit organized by the energetic U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo.

The summit is officially dedicated to promoting peace and stability in the Middle East. In actuality, it has been convened to put together an anti-Iran bloc in the Middle East and its environs. The direct result will be a picture of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu standing alongside several Arab foreign ministers. The indirect result will mean that the EU is now weaker.

In a classic divide-and-conquer move, Pompeo is holding the summit in Warsaw. Poland is the biggest of the European nations that are battling the decrees from Brussels. As such, Poland is – or at least wants to be – a counter-balance to well-known Western powers, including the two main actors in the EU these days, Germany and France. Pompeo is intentionally backing Poland, the rebel.

It's no coincidence, therefore, that the German and French foreign ministers are skipping the summit. As is EU Foreign Policy Chief Federica Mogherini, the architect of Europe's plan to skirt American sanctions on Iran. Pompeo is putting Mogherini at a disadvantage mainly because of that plan. However, the foreign secretary of Britain – which will soon be leaving the EU – is attending. He knows that a small spat with Brussels is preferable to a major fall-out with Washington.

Mogherini isn't sitting idly by. Two weeks from now, she plans to convene an international summit in Sharm e-Sheikh, Egypt that is designed to present a European show of force in the Middle East. Unlike the Warsaw summit, Israel will not be participating.

But it's clear even to Mogherini that the EU is in trouble. Britain is about to leave. Italy and France are close to cutting off ties with one another. The migrant crisis continues to engulf the continent, and all eyes are on the May elections, which are expected to bolster extremist forces on both the Left and the Right and shake up the EU, which isn't very unified anymore. (Israel Hayom Feb 14)

Bibi or Tibi By Ariel Bolstein

While associates of Israel Resilience Party leader Benny Gantz were doing everything they could to maintain tight-lipped discipline and minimize the ramifications of an interview in which he praised the evacuations of Jewish settlements (those that have already taken place and those that he thinks should happen in the future, even as unilateral steps), MK Ahmad Tibi (Ta'al) showed up and boldly rolled out a work plan for his party and Gantz's.

We can cooperate after the election, Tibi winked, to the regret of everyone who is working to build up the former IDF chief's "neither Right nor Left" image.

As if that weren't enough, Tibi even outlined how things would go – a left-wing phalanx would be established that would comprise Gantz's party, the left-wing parties, and the Arab parties, just like in the 1992 election, which led to the disaster of the Oslo Accords.

Tibi is one of the most hostile, clever opponents of the Zionist enterprise, but in this case, he deserves a prize for telling the truth. Not that we wouldn't have understood the arithmetic without him – even in the best-case scenario, Gantz wouldn't be able to assemble a government without the Arab parties. But Israeli voters listen to words more than to electoral numbers and now Tibi is saying those words out loud. Everyone in the "anyone but Bibi" camp – from Gantz to the communists and Islamists of the Joint Arab List – have one hope: that they can put together a bloc that will topple the right-wing camp.

It's no coincidence that this goal has been wrapped in the nostalgia of a return to the 1992 precedent. "A successful trial," Tibi called it. Indeed, for the person who at the time served as an adviser to Palestine Liberation Organization leader Yasser Arafat, it was a great success. The Arab parties let Yitzhak Rabin become prime minister and he paid them back. Enormous amounts of money were poured into iffy budget items that were pet projects

of anti-Zionist Arab MKs.

Make no mistake:

The goal was not to integrate the Arab minority into the country so none of the very real problems in the Arab sector (from violence and illegal weapons to a lack of planning and construction) were addressed. But money rained down on the heads of

people who dreamed of cutting off the Zionist enterprise and it whetted the appetite of their successors.

The "trial" of 1992, of course, had ramifications that went far beyond the budget. Rabin's dependence on the Arab parties paved the way for him to give away parts of the country to Arafat's terrorists and to the creation of the problem that Israel has yet to solve 25 years later. Tibi would be happy to build on that precedent this time, too. It's utterly clear that in exchange for his support, he and his partners will demand that Gantz follow the tragic, suicidal path laid out in the Oslo Accords. The Arab parties are the only ones who can hand Gantz a victory and they are already signaling what the price would be: Israeli withdrawals and even greater sums of money for Tibi's cronies and the Islamist movement.

The people of Israel are facing a clearer and more fateful choice than in previous elections. "Neither Right nor Left," Gantz is promising, unable to hide his future partners' satisfied smiles. Indeed, there are only two options: Bibi or Tibi. (Israel Hayom Feb 12)

A New Sort of Terror By Vivian Bercovici

At some point on Thursday morning, 19-year-old Ori Ansbacher left the center for high-risk youth in Jerusalem, where she was volunteering for a year of national service.

She was reportedly in distress, telling colleagues that she wanted solitude and tranquility in nature. She then wandered off into the nearby forest.

Later that night, the evening newscast reported heavily on her disappearance and the intensive search underway to find her. It ended horribly. Ori had been sexually assaulted and murdered in what is reported to have been a particularly brutal crime. Further details have been sealed by court order.

Forensic evidence gathered at the crime scene, and a tip led authorities to a mosque in Ramallah, which the IDF raided late Friday night with the Shin Bet (domestic security) and Yamam, an elite counter-terrorism unit of the Border Police. They first searched the Jamal Abd Al-Nasser Mosque in El Bireh on the outskirts of Ramallah. The suspected murderer, 29-year-old Arafat Erfaiyeh slipped away to a nearby abandoned building where he was apprehended without resisting.

News reports indicate that Erfaiyeh is co-operating with law enforcement and helped investigators on Sunday re-enact the crime.

We now know that Erfaiyeh left his Hebron-area home on Thursday morning and headed for Jerusalem, carrying a knife. His chance encounter with Ori was opportunistic.

As with any such crime, speculation was intense and immediate that it was motivated by "nationalist" sentiments, a euphemistic way of referring to Palestinian terror. On Sunday night, this likelihood was confirmed by police, on the eve of Erfaiyeh's initial court appearance on Monday.

Waiting for his hearing to begin, Erfaiyeh sat in court flanked by guards, smirking for photographers. The court heard that Erfaiyeh had told investigators that he went to Jerusalem on Thursday with the intention to kill and become a "martyr" for the Palestinian resistance or, if he survived, to do time in an Israeli prison.

Erfaiyeh knew that he would likely encounter young kids playing in the forest, or teens playing hooky, making for easy prey. Ori just happened to be the one who came along.

Members of Erfaiyeh's family are known to support Hamas, and he has had several relatively minor brushes with Israeli authorities in the past. What is unusual, however, in the context of a terrorist incident is the sexual assault. This additional chilling aspect of the crime may well explain why authorities waited several days to determine conclusively that it was a terrorist incident.

In the hours following Erfaiyeh's arrest, there has not been a peep of condemnation (or any comment) from the Palestinian Authority other than the reaction of the PA Minister of Religious Affairs, Yusuf Ida'is. He leveled blistering and baseless attacks against Israeli authorities for "attacking" a sacred place of worship. Of course, his comments, which received significant coverage in the state-controlled PA media, omitted any mention of the fact that a suspected murderer sought refuge in the Mosque. To Palestinians, this just becomes another incident of senseless

Israeli “brutality.”

It is a foregone certainty that the PA will honor Erfaiyeh’s family for his bravery, and they will receive a monthly allowance throughout his imprisonment. Almost half the PA annual budget is allocated to provide financial support to “martyrs” and imprisoned terrorists, with most funds originating in Western countries.

If this cycle of violence has any chance of ending, or even diminishing, Western countries must present the PA with a unified position: that funding incitement and rewarding terrorism financially and with social status is not a path to peace. And if they do not stop, then the funding will cease.

If only. (CommentaryMagazine.com Feb 12)

Gaza’s Self-Inflicted Health Crisis Shows Why Peace Remains a Fantasy By Evelyn Gordon

Gaza’s health system is on the verge of collapse, Israeli defense officials warned last week. Their report echoed an international aid agency’s findings that Gaza hospitals are severely short of doctors, especially specialists, and lack 60 percent of necessary medications, including basics like painkillers and antibiotics. Entire hospital departments have closed due to the inability to offer treatment, and patients with cancer, diabetes or renal failure are simply being sent home.

You might think this situation would prompt at least one of the Palestinians’ two rival governments to take action. But you’d be wrong.

The Palestinian Authority, which repeatedly proclaims itself the sole legitimate government of both the West Bank and Gaza and is recognized as such internationally, receives billions in international aid to provide for humanitarian needs in both places. It ostensibly budgets 150 million shekels a year (\$41.3 million) for medical supplies for Gaza. But it hasn’t paid this money in months.

Yet this same P.A. has no trouble finding \$330 million a year to pay salaries to jailed terrorists. Evidently, paying terrorists is more important to it than its people’s health.

Nevertheless, the P.A.’s behavior pales beside that of Gaza’s real governing authority, Hamas. Two weeks ago, Hamas discussed the humanitarian problem with foreign officials, who then presented its ideas to Israeli officials. The organization proposed three possible scenarios, Haaretz reported. But none of them involved Hamas lifting a finger to help the people it governs.

Indeed, Hamas leader in Gaza Yahya Sinwar “made clear that under any of these scenarios, Hamas would not disarm,” wrote reporter Yaniv Kubovich. In other words, it won’t divert any of the hundreds of millions of dollars a year it spends on its own military to ease Gazans’ humanitarian plight.

And it’s not as if the organization couldn’t afford to do so. As Haaretz reported this week, aside from about 130 million shekels a year that Hamas raises through taxes in Gaza, Qatar alone has given Gaza \$1 billion over the last seven years, including \$200 million last year. And unlike the billions Gaza receives from other international donors, part of the Qatari money—16 percent, or \$160 million—has gone directly to Hamas for its own use and that of other terrorist groups in Gaza.

That’s almost four times what the P.A. spent annually on medical supplies for Gaza back when it was still financing Gaza’s health system. Thus the Qatari money alone could have solved the entire medical crisis had Hamas so chosen.

So what did Hamas propose instead? That someone else solve the problem. Responsibility for Gaza could be handed over to the P.A., the United Nations or Egypt, it suggested. And if none of them is willing, Hamas’s backup plan is to launch a war against Israel “that would end with an international force occupying the Strip,” Kubovich wrote—that is, another way of trying to shift responsibility to someone else.

Of course, all these plans are nonstarters as long as Hamas refuses to disarm because nobody wants responsibility for Gaza while an armed group inside it is repeatedly attacking Israel. That’s why neither Egypt or the United Nations, nor any other international player offered to take responsibility for Gaza after its three previous wars with Israel, and they wouldn’t do so after another war either. As for the P.A., it has said explicitly that it won’t assume responsibility for Gaza unless Hamas disarms.

Hamas knows all this. But being able to continue attacking Israel is more important to it than enabling a solution to its people’s medical crisis.

Yet not content with merely refusing to solve the crisis, Hamas is actively making it worse. Indeed, a major factor in the crisis has been the overload of patients caused by Hamas’s insistence on holding violent mass protests near the Israeli border every week for almost a year now. During these protests, many Palestinians have been shot while trying to break through the border fence or clashing with Israeli soldiers.

According to Haaretz, a whopping 6,000 people with gunshot wounds still await operations, and about one-quarter of them have developed infections that will lead to amputations if not treated soon. Gazan hospitals have closed other departments to focus on treating the weekly influx of new wounded. Yet rather than stop the demonstrations to ease the pressure on its overloaded medical system, Hamas insists on staging new ones every week.

You might think the fact that both Palestinian governments prioritize anti-Israel terror over their own people’s urgent health needs would make

them unpopular. But while some Palestinians are indeed fed up, many share their governments’ priorities.

In a 2015 poll, a plurality of Palestinians—more than 40 percent in both the West Bank and Gaza—said the “main Palestinian national goal” over the next five years should be “reclaiming all of historic Palestine from the river to the sea,” aka eradicating Israel. And the number soared when pollsters asked about longer time frames. Establishing an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel ranked a distant second.

Nor is this just empty verbiage. Many Palestinians genuinely live by those priorities, as a recent Associated Press feature about two men whose sons were wounded at the weekly protests shows. One father tried to keep his son from attending and was devastated that the boy disobeyed and got hurt. But the other intentionally brought his son to the protest and claims to have no regrets, even though the boy now has a permanent limp.

“This is the tax you have to pay to achieve the right of return,” that father said, referring to the Palestinian goal of turning Israel into a Palestinian-majority state by flooding it with millions of descendants of refugees. In other words, he was willing to have his son lamed for the sake of destroying Israel.

In sum, what motivates both Palestinian governments and many ordinary Palestinians isn’t the desire to have their own state, but the desire to eradicate the Jewish one. On that altar, they are willing to sacrifice even basic humanitarian necessities like lifesaving medical care. And as long as that’s true, peace with the Palestinians will remain a fantasy. (JNS Feb 13)

The Palestinian Incitement to Rape By Reuven Berko

In response to the horrifying rape and murder of Ori Ansbacher by a Palestinian terrorist, Knesset member Aida Touma-Sliman, chairwoman of the Knesset Committee on the Status of Women and Gender Equality, claimed that “the crime should be called what it is: The rape and murder of Ori Ansbacher is a gender-based crime. The criminal being Palestinian doesn’t make the crime less horrifying, and it cannot be part of the struggle for [Palestinian] national liberation.”

The Palestinians Knesset member and Israeli citizens, like her friends in the various Palestinian terrorist organizations, were prepared for a public-relations battle to characterize the rape and murder of Ori as another woman (one all of 19 years old) being murdered. In other words, some nameless killer with a knife just raped her for the heck of it on a chilly morning, just because she was a woman—not because she was Jewish. But why did the Palestinian criminal arm himself with a knife, cross the security barrier, rape and fatally stab Ori, rather than some random Palestinian woman?

Arafat Irfaiya, 29, was charged with the murder of 19-year-old Ori Ansbacher on Feb. 11, 2019. He was captured in Ramallah after Israeli security forces investigated the scene where the young woman was found raped and dead on Feb. 7 on the outskirts of Jerusalem. Photo Yonatan Sindel/Flash90.

The reason is simple: Every Palestinian who is exposed to incitement in some mosque, on social media or in speeches by Palestinian leaders knows that the enemy’s blood can be shed. But if he rapes a Palestinian woman (a gender crime) or even secretly has his way with her in private, he’ll be slaughtered and his immediate family members will follow him to hell.

After all, Muslims have honor, and they are permitted to commit murder to uphold it. So who are they allowed to rape and murder on the basis of their gender? Jews and Christians, who are defined as weak and out of bounds of the Arab code of vengeance.

Islamic tradition allows captive women to be used as sex slaves, as they are considered spoils of war. The acts of rape and murder the Muslims perpetrated against captive women (including Jews) are familiar to us in the form of the horrors committed by the Islamic State group and during the civil war in the former Yugoslavia, where these terrible crimes were carried out as a primitive expression of victory and the forcible impregnation of the enemy’s women.

That is the fate of the weak, who are not protected by “tribal law.” MK Aida Touma-Sliman knows that most of the Christian residents of Bethlehem and Beit Jala fled for their lives because their daughters were being raped by Muslims from Hebron and Bedouin of the Taamra tribe. That is what happens when Arabs and Muslims see you as weak.

There might be normative moral laws that mostly apply to regular citizens in functioning countries, but in the incitement-ridden Palestinian territories, the victims, like Ori, are never the Arab or Muslim neighbors’ daughters, but rather Jews or other minorities.

Generally, characteristic acts of Palestinian terrorism include murdering Jewish children in their schools and in their beds, slaughtering civilians in a hotel on the eve of a holiday, and killing bus passengers and innocent civilians who are just shopping or going about their business.

MK Touma-Sliman isn’t trying to condemn a despicable ethno-religious act, but rather downplay it merely because of the PR damage it might do to the “Palestinian struggle,” which the world is sick of anyway.

In her idiotic attempt to obscure the fact that the awful crime was prompted by Palestinian incitement and by allowing violence against Jews (and Christians), Touma-Sliman is betraying her role as a Knesset member who is leading the fight against violence perpetrated on women. She is

hurting all the “weak” women whom the inciters among her own people define as killable and expendable.

The rape of Ori Ansbacher is nothing new for the Palestinians. Back in pre-state Israel, Palestinian Arabs would rape Jewish women, including minors, in the name of “national liberation” and the legacy of Islam. Then Jewish activism sent the Arab community a clear, powerful message that got around, and it stopped.

But the rapist-murderer who was captured this week was photographed grinning from ear to ear. Perhaps he and his friends should have things “explained” to them using the old methods? (Israel Hayom Feb 14)

A Different Way of Dividing Jerusalem By Nadav Shragai

The Orient House, a grand estate built in the Bab a-Zahara neighborhood of east Jerusalem in the 19th century, has been empty for more than 17 years. Two days after the deadly suicide bombing at the Sbarro pizzeria in Jerusalem during the Second Intifada on Aug. 11, 2001, police special forces rappelled down from a helicopter and raided the building, which was being used as the PLO and Palestinian Authority’s headquarters in Jerusalem. The occupants were arrested and interrogated. Tens of thousands of documents were confiscated and the offices were padlocked.

The villa, which would become a Palestinian national symbol in Jerusalem, is now locked and barricaded. For years, orders to keep the Orient House closed have been reissued every six months. The last such order was signed a few days ago and Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan extended it to include other Palestinian institutions that operate in Jerusalem. But the quiet at the Orient House is deceptive.

Only a few weeks ago, Israel arrested 32 members of the Palestinian Authority security services, including Adnan Ghaith, who is called “the governor of Jerusalem.” The reason for the arrests: activity of governance in east Jerusalem, which is illegal under a 1994 law which bars the PA from any governmental activity anywhere in the city.

The arrests came after Jerusalem resident Issam Akel was arrested by PA authorities. Akel, who is also an American citizen, was suspected of helping transfer property in the Old City to Jewish purchasers, an unforgivable sin in Palestinian society. He was tried in Ramallah and a P.A. court sentenced him to life in prison and hard labor. A few weeks ago, with U.S. intervention, Akel was released.

In Akel’s case, Israel did not make do with arrests. “Governor” Ghaith, a resident of Silwan, who Israel believes has taken part in the P.A.’s arrests of Palestinian residents of Israel, has had his movements restricted. He is not allowed to enter Judea and Samaria, including territory under PA control. Ghaith has also been prohibited from meeting with Majid Faraj, head of the Palestinian General Security Service, a darling of the Israeli security establishment and one of the architects of Israeli-Palestinian cooperation on security matters. The security establishment has also barred the P.A.’s Minister of Jerusalem Affairs Adnan al-Husseini from traveling abroad. Al-Husseini has also been fingered as a part of the P.A.’s “government activity” in the capital against Palestinians who sell land to Jews.

But the Ghaith affair and Akel’s arrest in Ramallah are turning out to be only the tip of the iceberg of the PA and other foreign organizations’ activity in Jerusalem. Israel is gradually lifting the lid on what is going on in the eastern part of the city and the pact of silence about that activity appears to be breaking down.

Dr. David Koren, a researcher with the Jerusalem Institute for Strategy and Security who served as an adviser to former Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat on east Jerusalem issues, has discovered that the P.A. invests 64 million shekels (\$18 million) in activity in eastern Jerusalem. Six million shekels (\$2 million) goes to activity by “Governor” Ghaith and another 58 million shekels (\$16 million) to al-Husseini’s work.

The budget for the office of the governor includes support for tsumud (“retaining land”) and “remaining steadfast in the face of the crimes of the Israeli occupation,” as well as “oversight of illegal weapons,” an actual act of governance in light of the fact that thousands of weapons are owned without licenses or permits by residents of the eastern Jerusalem neighborhoods.

Another item in the governor’s budget is “hosting foreign delegations,” another official diplomatic governmental act. The budget also covers aid to Palestinian refugees, families of security prisoners and terrorist martyrs, to the community and to women who want to enter the workforce.

In a paper for the JISS, Koren reveals some of the heaviest expenditures of the minister’s office, to whom the governor answers. These include support for institutions in Jerusalem that are linked to the P.A., many of which Israel has repeatedly tried to shut down; legal and financial aid to Palestinians who built homes illegally that are in danger of being demolished; financial aid for tradesmen; and funding for cultural, social and sports activities. But Israel frequently discovers that the P.A. starts investing in the community as a response to Israeli attempts to expand services to Arab neighborhoods.

The P.A., Koren explains, has made it a goal to control as many aspects of the lives of the residents of east Jerusalem as possible. It actively seeks out donations, both from international entities like the EU and from Arab countries. That activity, Israel Hayom is the first to report, is mainly

concentrated in the hands of the Jerusalem Unit in PA President Mahmoud Abbas’s office. The Jerusalem Unit works with the P.A.’s Jerusalem Affairs Ministry and the office of Governor Ghaith.

The P.A. budget might be small compared to the Israeli budget—over the past few years, Israel has invested hundreds of millions of shekels in roads, cleaning, education, welfare, leisure and sports in eastern Jerusalem—but while the Israeli money is focused on providing municipal services, the Palestinians are investing in political consciousness.

Fatah is busy in the east of the city and operates several sports clubs there. One of the most prominent is the Mount of Olives club, based in the A-Tur neighborhood, where it is vying with the city-run neighborhood administration for the hearts of the local youth. Fatah has integrated its people in PTAs and on community boards and is behind both rioting and the organization of marches to commemorate Palestinian events and holidays.

Koren’s report for the JISS reveals how the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement under Sheikh Raed Salah (who spent years stirring up trouble on the Temple Mount until his organization was outlawed in 2015) gets around the ban against it. The group has been replaced by a nonprofit organization called “The Islamic Nation’s Waqf for Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa,” which operates out of Turkey. The Islamic Nation’s Waqf seeks donations from governments, organizations and businesspeople. The group locates bank accounts into which the donations can safely be deposited and then invests the money in projects in Jerusalem, mainly at the Al-Aqsa compound and Muslim Quarter of the Old City. In effect, it is another Turkish arm that is reaching into the Old City and the Temple Mount.

The Turkish activity is prompting countermeasures by Jordan and Morocco. Just last week, residents of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, who regularly park in the quarter’s main parking lot, were amazed to see green lights flashing from the tower of a mosque at the edge of the quarter that has been abandoned for years. When Lt. Col. (res.) Baruch Yedid (a former advisor to the IDF’s Central Command on Arab issues) looked into the matter, it turned out that for months the Jordanian Waqf had secretly been renovating the mosque. The Al-Quds Committee, headed by King of Morocco Mohammed VI, helped the project. The project seeks to renovate and reopen six more defunct mosques in Jerusalem.

The newly renovated mosque, which lies flush on the border of the Jewish Quarter, is known as the Disi Mosque or the Olive Oil Mosque. Yedid explains that the mosque’s adjacency to the Armenian Quarter caused concern in Jordan that Turkey, which has already refurbished more than 100 buildings in the Old City, including mosques, would wind up wresting another Waqf property from Jordan’s hands.

The Al-Quds Committee, Yedid recently wrote on his Arab affairs blog, is also working to renovate a giant historical building in the Muslim Quarter, not far from the Temple Mount, known as Beit Morocco. This, too, he says, appears to be part of a battle against Turkey forcing its way into the Old City.

The Koren report maps out the various foreign players who have a finger in the east Jerusalem pie. Many of them challenge Israeli sovereignty in the capital. Other than the activity by the P.A. and the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement, he details Hamas’s strong grip on neighborhoods in southeast Jerusalem: Zur Baher, Umm Tuba, Jabal Mukaber and Umm Lisun. In Jabal Mukaber, for example, there is an influential PTA, some of whose members were senior Hamas officials recently released from prison in Israel.

In eastern Jerusalem, and the Temple Mount and the Muslim Quarter, in particular, Hizb ut-Tahrir (The Party of Liberation) is active. Hizb ut-Tahrir has already been outlawed by European countries, but Israel has thus far refrained from doing the same. Ideologically, it is a twin of Islamic State, a fundamentalist Islamist movement that aspires to eradicate political structures and establish international Islamic caliphates in their place.

But unlike ISIS, Hizb ut-Tahrir operates through dawa, the concept of strengthening religious faith by persuasion and preaching rather than by violent jihad. However, the organization runs “modesty patrols” in the east of the city and has acquired influence in a few mosques in the Beit Zafafa and Beit Hanina neighborhoods.

Besides the Turkish activity, which has been extensively reported in Israel Hayom, the report unveils growing attempts by Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to strengthen their hold in eastern Jerusalem. Saudi Arabia recently donated \$150 million to various projects in eastern Jerusalem and, with the UAE, has even purchased property in the Old City, near the Temple Mount.

Another foreign actor that is investing vast sums in the capital is the European Union.

“The E.U. is involved in funding political NGOs identified with the left wing of the Israeli political map,” Koren tells Israel Hayom.

The E.U. funding goes to support position papers and execute projects in two main areas: questioning Israeli sovereignty in east Jerusalem while tarnishing Israel and the Jerusalem Municipality in international public opinion; and promoting civil projects for the benefit of Palestinian residents of the city, while battling Israeli authorities on their behalf.

EU involvement is particularly noticeable in the planning and construction field, in the form of legal advice to families and organizations

that are facing trial for building illegal homes. But the EU also helps businesses; it is trying to reopen the Palestinian Board of Trade, which Israel closed down. The board of trade is now asking to re-launch as the P.A.'s business branch in Jerusalem.

Koren, who currently directs the Education Ministry's five-point strategic plan for east Jerusalem, describes how Fatah operatives put heavy pressure on parents who register their children in schools that offer the Israeli curriculum, hoping to keep them on the Palestinian matriculation track. He says the P.A. is also sowing disinformation about the confiscation of land for projects meant to benefit the Arab population, such as paving roads. These steps by Israel are misrepresented as attempts to steal the Palestinians' land from them.

Koren also discusses the physical assaults and violent discourse that the P.A. and its envoys employ against leaders of Arab neighborhoods who don't even identify as pro-Zionist, but who work with the Israeli authorities to improve the residents' quality of life.

About two weeks ago, police raided Al-Makassed Islamic Charitable Society Hospital in A-Tur. They were informed that a ceremony hosted by the P.A. to mark the hospital's 50th anniversary would be taking place and that Governor Ghaith and al-Husseini would both be participating.

Last weekend, police learned that Shadi al-Matour, identified as one of the leaders of Fatah in Jerusalem, had gone to Syria with a delegation on behalf of Abbas to discuss the matter of Syrian refugees. The police wanted to arrest al-Matour so they could question him as an Israeli citizen who entered an enemy state and was suspected of contact with an enemy agent. Jerusalem Magistrates' Court Judge Daniel Dembitz ordered his release, but the police do not intend to give up and have appealed the decision.

"Overall, we can say that the P.A. is working assiduously, aggressively and violently to prevent the Arab residents of Jerusalem from acting like residents who implement their rights under the Israeli authorities," says Koren.

"The P.A. is unceasingly undermining the foundations of Jerusalem's unification and seeking to create a de facto division of the city, in which the Arab residents are linked more strongly to Ramallah than to Jerusalem," he says.

Koren suggests establishing an inter-ministerial committee that will work with everyone involved. It would take action to eradicate illegal activity by the P.A. and other foreign entities with particular emphasis on the financial side. He suggests amending the Implementation Law to constrain the steps the P.A. is taking in Jerusalem, and in particular, setting up a good Israeli alternative for the civil services that the foreign groups currently offer eastern Jerusalem residents. (Israel Hayom Feb 10)

Cory Booker's Jewish Enablers By Shmuley Boteach

My closest friend since his years as a Rhodes Scholar in Oxford, where he served as president of my organization The Oxford L'Chaim Society, Booker was once considered the greatest ally the Jewish community might ever have in elected office. Having spent countless hours studying Torah texts with me, he was able to dazzle Jewish audiences with his insights on the parasha, often quoting passages that we practiced together in Hebrew.

Upon his rise into the Senate, however, Booker's support for Israel has cratered. He notoriously voted for the Iran nuclear deal, which presented a clear-cut existential threat to Israel and did so even as his senior Democratic Senator from New Jersey, the heroic Bob Menendez, led the charge against it. When it was brought before the Senate subcommittee on Foreign Affairs, Booker betrayed his moral convictions when he voted against the Taylor Force Act, a law that merely forbade the Palestinian Authority from using American taxpayer funds to finance the families of terrorists. Even as his pro-Israel support evaporated, however, some expected presidential-candidate Booker to adopt a more sympathetic approach to the Jewish State. Perhaps in his efforts to represent the entirety of Democratic America, he might finally commit to the Democratic Party's stated approach – and his own countless promises – to be a stalwart friend of Israel.

This past Thursday, less than a week into his race, he removed all doubt as to just how firmly he would pander to anti-Israel extremists whose support he believes he needs to secure his party's nomination. He voted against a critical federal anti-BDS bill designed simply to protect Israel from being brought, economically, to its knees. Known as the Strengthening America's Security in the Middle East Act (S.1), the act provides legal cover to state governments that seek to stymie the BDS movement. The law passed 77 to 23, earning yeas from every Republican except one, and with a substantial 25 Democratic senators supporting the bill.

Yet Booker voted against it. Funny thing, that. Just last December, Booker committed himself to co-sponsoring anti-BDS legislation.

"I have long and staunchly opposed the BDS movement, and support this bill," he claimed then. Even in his own recent explanation for voting against it, he insists on his "strong and lengthy record of opposing efforts to boycott Israel." But instead of actually keeping his word, he abandoned Israel while meting out lame excuses that add insult to injury, claiming that the law "raised First Amendment concerns... There are ways to fight BDS without compromising free speech," he declared.

His explanation itself leaves us with two possible explanations. Either 80% of the Senate overlooked a critical threat to the First Amendment or

Booker sold out America's closest ally to align more tightly with far-Left Democrats whose heft has grown in the primaries. Considering all but one of the seven other Democratic Presidential candidates voted against the bill, that's not a tough riddle to solve.

But Booker wants to have his cake and eat it, too. He wishes to appease far-Left anti-Israel activists whom he believes have a veto on the Democratic Party nomination, but mindful of the fact that pro-Israel contributors have been his biggest financial backers, he deflects criticism by using the "Torah thoughts" to demonstrate his kinship before Jewish audiences. However, repeating Hebrew verses I practiced with him is no substitute for standing with Israel against the genocidal onslaught from Hamas, Hezbollah and Iran.

Yet Booker has found a number of Jewish enablers – prioritizing political access before principle – who have allowed him to continue to vote against Israel while maintaining Jewish support. Like the path to hell, theirs, too, may have been well-intentioned. But, in the end, it allows him to abandon Israel's vital security interests while continuing to raise significant sums from Jewish networks. The thought being on first-name basis with a man who might become the most powerful person on earth can be dizzying for some and intoxicating for others. For the Booker enablers, it became dangerously addictive. Which is why no matter how far he veered from protecting the nation he swore to fight for, they continued not only to forgive but to provide him with the political cover he needed to forsake the Jewish state.

Before Booker shockingly announced his support for the Iran Deal, the head of NORPAC, my friend Ben Chouake, joined me and then-governor Chris Christie at a press conference in which we implored Booker to join Senator Menendez in pressuring president Obama to negotiate a better deal with Iran. Considering NORPAC is Booker's second-biggest lifetime source of campaign contributions, one might have expected him to pay some price for having broken with their primary purpose.

Yet despite Booker's "yes" vote on Iran, Chouake publicly forgave him without Booker ever having condemned the mullahs' repeated promise to annihilate Israel.

"When he saw that his vote either way was not going to make a difference," Chouake explained, "[Booker] felt this was not one to fall on the sword for. He said, 'I'm going to give the president a leap of faith.' I trust his intentions." So Chouake went from calling on Booker to oppose the Iran deal to explaining to the Jewish community why it was okay that he didn't.

Shortly after voting for the Iran deal, Booker held a closed-door session with Jewish leaders ostensibly to explain his stance. Because only those who defended him were invited (I, understandably, was not) it seemed the meeting's real message to Jewish leaders was that access to Booker would hinge upon a public endorsement. Further confirming this theory is the fact that Rabbi Menachem Genack, head of the Kashruth division at the OU, told a reporter from The New York Observer that he would be attending the meeting, though he was "profoundly disappointed" in Booker. This disappointment seemed odd, because Genack had helped arrange a conference call for Booker to explain his position to Jewish leaders. But even that rare moment of criticism would be exceptionally short-lived: just moments after expressing his disappointment, Rabbi Genack demanded that the reporter not publish his criticism (he did).

Other Jewish leaders would go further, allowing themselves to be entirely recast as Booker's sycophantic apologists. In particular, Rabbi Shmully Hecht of Chabad of Yale worked tirelessly to draw Jewish leaders into meetings with Booker to preserve his standing in the Jewish community.

Interestingly, you don't need to be a presidential hopeful to get Hecht to go wobbly on Israel – middle-Eastern dictators apparently make the cut as well. The rabbi recently leaped into the center of the Jewish community's Qatar scandal, defending the Jewish leaders (Genack was one) who traveled to Doha to sit with the foremost funder of the Hamas terrorist organization. Hecht published a bizarre column praising Nick Muzin, the Washington swamp lobbyist who took millions to whitewash Qatar when the Emirate faced American censure for funding terrorism. Hecht has not revealed if he and Muzin have any financial relationship or why he published the obsequious column.

Most tellingly, though, is the fact that last Thursday – the same day that Booker voted against the anti-BDS bill – Hecht fawned over Booker for the Yale Daily News, calling him "truly an out-of-this-world person... and the most magnetic and charismatic person I have ever known." Though Booker had just officially crossed into the quadrant of the Senate most critical of Israel, Hecht still felt the need to endorse him. "America," he concluded, "would be lucky to have a president like him."

Now comes the news that AIPAC is considering giving Booker and other similarly declared presidential candidates with flimsy records on Israel a speaking platform at next month's policy conference. If this were an election year – as next year is – it would be vital that AIPAC show fairness and balance to all candidates, but providing a platform to those who vote against Israel on BDS sends the message that there is no price to pay for such betrayal.

That would be the wrong message for America's most important pro-Israel group to deliver. (Jerusalem Post Feb 11)