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Die Themen dieser Ausgabe

1. Neue Regierung vereidigt	1
2. Pompeo bekräftigt US-Friedensplan.....	3
3. Ende der Corona-Sperre	5
4. Medienquerschnitt.....	7

1. Neue Regierung vereidigt

Israel hat eine neue Regierung. Ministerpräsident Benjamin Netanyahu vom konservativen Likud und Benny Gantz, Chef der Mitte-Partei Blau-Weiß, einigten sich darauf, das höchste politische Amt zu teilen. Netanyahu soll in den ersten 18 Monaten Chef der Regierung sein, und am 17. November 2021 das Amt an Gantz abgeben. Teil der neuen Koalition sind auch die zwei ultra-orthodoxen Parteien, die Arbeitspartei, die aus zwei Abgeordneten bestehende Derech Eretz und Gesher-Vorsitzende Orly Levi-Abekasis. Das Oberste Gericht in Jerusalem hatte Petitionen gegen eine weitere Amtszeit Netanyahus sowie die Koalitionsvereinbarung zurückgewiesen. Die Richter entschieden, dass es trotz der Korruptionsanklagen gegen Netanyahu "keinen juristischen Grund" gebe, ihm das Mandat zur Regierungsbildung zu verweigern. Nach israelischem Recht muss ein Ministerpräsident erst nach einer rechtskräftigen Verurteilung zurücktreten. Ein Minister muss sein Amt dagegen bereits abgeben, wenn Anklage erhoben wird. Wenn das Gericht gegen eine weitere Amtszeit des 70-Jährigen entschieden hätte, hätten die Israelis vermutlich zum vierten Mal seit April 2019 wählen müssen. Die Koalitionsvereinbarung von Likud und Blau-Weiß sei juristisch problematisch, hieß es in dem einstimmigen Urteil. Dennoch gebe es gegenwärtig keinen Grund für das Gericht, sich einzumischen. Gantz hatte den nun geschlossenen Pakt mit Netanyahu wegen der Korruptionsvorwürfe gegen den Likud-

Chef lange verweigert. Dass er letztendlich doch einem Zusammengehen zustimmte, begründete Gantz vor allem mit der Corona-Krise. Man werde sich jetzt dem Kampf gegen das Virus widmen und sich um die Menschen in Israel kümmern, versprach er. Auch der Vorstand der Arbeitspartei hatte sich – trotz heftigem Widerstand von Knessetabgeordneten Merav Michaeli – für eine Regierungsbeteiligung entschieden

A time to judge

By joining with Benjamin Netanyahu, Benny Gantz made the impossible possible: A man who has been charged with serious crimes will form the next government and serve at its head, unless the High Court of Justice intervenes. (...) the prime minister himself spreads blood libels and advocates for a coup by judicial means (...) he appoints a justice minister who incites a civil revolt against the legal establishment or a public security minister who abandons the police force and the investigative agencies to the prime minister's attacks. Netanyahu is reaping the fruits of his incitement against the judiciary, the police commissioner, the state prosecutor, the attorney general and everyone who dared to investigate and to prosecute him. This is a dangerous turnabout. Instead of the accused defending himself in a court of law, the court is asked to defend itself in the public arena against attacks from the defendant, who uses the power, status, resources and stage afforded to him by his office. The attempt

to portray a High Court ruling as wrongful interference with the will of voters is dangerous demagoguery. Israelis don't vote for a prime minister, they vote for a party. The voters' will is expressed in the composition of the Knesset, not the identity of the prime minister. (...) A government formed solely by stealing votes and deceiving voters is a distortion of the will of the voters. Regrettably, even the attorney general, in his brief, sanctioned this abomination. The separation of powers is intended to create a system of checks and balances among the three main branches of government, so that none of them becomes supreme. The role of the judiciary is to interpret laws and to judge. Thus, not only does the court have the legal authority to rule on whether a Knesset member who has been charged with serious offenses may form the government is not only under the court's purview, it has an ethical obligation to do so.

Editorial, HAA, 03.05.20

Respect the court

(...) a sitting prime minister can remain in office all the way until a final verdict (...) is handed down in his or her case. (...) The reason the law allows a prime minister to remain in office until the end of the trial is because the resignation of a prime minister leads to the collapse of the entire government and effectively means new elections. A minister leaving a ministry does not. (...) the court knows that if it rules that Netanyahu cannot form a coalition, he is unlikely to accept the ruling. This would lead to an unprecedented constitutional crisis in Israel that would not only undermine the rule of law but could lead to a dangerous divide in the country, the outcome of which is unknown. (...) If it allows Netanyahu to form a coalition, it will pretty much be giving alleged political corruption a stamp of approval. What kind of message does this send other politicians or regular folks in Israel who see that even when facing severe allegations, there are some people above the law. On the other hand, doing so would further undermine the court's standing in the eyes of a public that is already wary of what has appeared to be the court's gross intervention into matters that many – particularly in the right-wing camp - have argued it should not. (...) These are precarious times for Israel. Whether you support Netanyahu or not, Israel needs to retain its democratic institutions and ensure that the rule of law survives no matter who leads the country.

Editorial, JPO, 03.05.20

Netanyahu-Gantz deal isn't the end of democracy, and the court is stronger than ever

(...) The High Court is (...) threatened by senior Likud figures, and this is nauseating. (...) The court is not supposed to interfere in political agreements. (...) The High Court presumably will not disqualify Netanyahu, but not because it's weak. The legal basis for disqualification simply doesn't exist, especially when he has the support of 61 of the Knesset's 120 members and when the law says explicitly that a prime minister can serve under indictment. (...) The coalition agreement contains myriad repulsive provisions, but it isn't "the end of democracy" and doesn't turn us into Turkey, or even Hungary. It is definitely repulsive to amend Basic Laws like this, in a hasty, destructive manner. There's nothing terrible about giving politicians – in the future as well – the option of forming a rotation government. But it's an atrocity that they've decided not to make any senior appointments during a six-month emergency period, following 18 months in which there were no such appointments due to repeated elections. This provision, which stems from the infinite paranoia of Netanyahu and his family, apparently won't be honored in any case. (...) Netanyahu isn't gaining any control over the legal system (...). The Judicial Appointments Committee will operate in exactly the same format that it always has, chaired by a minister from Kahol Lavan, with no restrictions on its activities. (...) The betrayal felt by people who voted for Gantz and Labor Party Chairman Amir Peretz are understandable. Thanks to their votes, Netanyahu will remain in power even during his criminal trial. Absurdly, however, these justified feelings are being translated into apocalyptic forecasts about the coalition agreement, though the vast majority of its provisions are meant to protect Gantz. Netanyahu would cheerfully abandon most of the agreement tomorrow morning.

Raviv Drucker, HAA, 05.05.20

High Court was right to let Netanyahu serve as PM

The unanimous decision by the High Court (...) to reject the petitions against Benjamin Netanyahu serving as prime minister and to approve the coalition agreement was not only the right move from a legal perspective, it was also right for the public. (...) we returned to the shores of restraint. It was not a cowardly decision, it was not the result of the threats hurled at the court by Netanyahu and the rest of the Likud. (...) Too often did public discourse leak from politics into the judiciary and too often did judges'

rulings seems like public relations copy. (...) There is no arguing that there is something fundamentally wrong with allowing a man to form and lead a government while the sword of three indictments hangs over his head. It is beneath the Knesset, the government and the nation. But a debate took place in the Knesset and it wasn't Netanyahu's acolytes who believed parliament - and not the courts - should deliver the final verdict on the matter. (...) It does not matter what the judges personally think of an indicted candidate, it is important that they respect the rule of law and court. Yet the story is far from over. The coalition agreement between Likud and Blue & White has passed the test of the High Court, but only "for the time being". (...) The judges showed restraint, now is the time to see if the politicians will do the same.

Ben-Dror Yemini, YED, 07.05.20

A government of fraud and breach of trust

The (...) unity government (...) was born in the sin of the severe crimes of bribery of which Benjamin Netanyahu is accused. This coalition was only made possible by defrauding massive numbers of voters, and even before it has been established, it has already become synonymous with the political system's breach of the public's trust. (...) Kahol Lavan chairman Benny Gantz's resignation as Knesset speaker is accompanied by major concern that his coalition agreement could suddenly "collapse" (...). It's difficult to think of a clearer expression of the measure of trust prevailing between the two sides, which will accompany the new government until the moment Netanyahu cedes the prime minister's position to Gantz. (...) The entire public will have to learn to live with this absolute uncertainty when it comes to the government's motives, in the shadow of doubt that it may not be the national interest that is dictating its actions but rather the legal considerations of the person at its helm. This is an undesirable situation for the citizens of any country, at any time and under any circumstances. But in the State of Israel, which at any given time is either before, after or in the midst of a round of hostilities, it involves an explosive and dangerous situation. Even worse, it is coming while the government's agenda includes a unilateral change to the country's borders; an initiative that could put an end to the two-state solution – with the ardent encouragement of an irresponsible American president – which is a reckless gamble over the country's future. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 14.05.20

The new Israeli government of the walking dead

A unity government that includes a painful compromise – legitimizing Benjamin Netanyahu as premier – was the only option, given the situation that had developed. But it was implemented in such a crooked, foul way that not only is it very hard to defend, it's very hard to see anything good in it at all. The coalition agreement is nothing but an insurance policy for both sides. It includes a wealth of contortions and distortions of a kind redolent of a lack of integrity and basic trust. The most important ministries in dealing with the coronavirus – the supposed purpose for which this government was established – haven't been given to people capable of rebuilding from the ruins or of dealing with a second wave. The legislative branch continues to be trampled (...). Netanyahu should have paid with his job (...) for his sins against Israeli society (...) and (...) his forcible (...) dismantling of it. (...) Amir Peretz and Itzik Shmuli of the Labor Party lost their voters' trust and respect, and aside from the hacks that surround them, it's doubtful they have any hard-core supporters. Geshar leader Orli Levi-Abekasis, who started out with great momentum, has become a joke, and the reward she received for stealing votes is running a community center. Yoaz Hendel and Zvi Hauser (formerly Kahol Lavan, now Derech Eretz), who came to build an ethical right as a contrast to Netanyahu, spat politely in their leaders' faces and fought valiantly to receive state funding for their new party. If they ever run for election independently, it's unlikely they would win the votes of anyone but their own families. (...) What all these people have in common is a lack of confidence in their own political futures, which spurred them to take what they could now. It's a coalition of the walking dead. (...)

Ravit Hecht, HAA; 15.05.20

2. Pompeo bekräftigt US-Friedensplan

US-Außenminister Mike Pompeo hat im Verlauf seines Israel-Besuchs den Willen zur Umsetzung des Nahost-Plans von Präsident Donald Trump bekräftigt. Trump hatte den Plan im Januar veröffentlicht. Israels Ministerpräsident Benjamin Netanyahu bezeichnete den Besuch Pompeos trotz der Corona-Krise als einen "Beweis für die Stärke unseres Bündnisses". Ob Israel die Annexionspläne im besetzten Westjordanland umsetzt, sei "letztlich eine israelische Entscheidung", meinte der US-Außenminister. Palästinenserpräsident Mahmud Abbas verurteilte die Pläne scharf und erklärte nach einem Treffen der Palästinenserführung in Ramallah

am 19. Mai sämtliche Abkommen mit Israel und den USA für ungültig. Seine Regierung sei "ab heute" von all diesen Vereinbarungen entbunden, sagte Abbas. Dies gelte auch für die Kooperation in Sicherheitsfragen. Israel betrachtet das Westjordanland nicht als besetztes Land, sondern erhebt historische und juristische Ansprüche auf das Gebiet mit der Argumentation, es habe vor seiner Eroberung 1967 keinem Staat gehört. Damit sei es lediglich "umstrittenes Gebiet". Die EU-verurteilte die geplante Annexion mit ungewohnter Schärfe und stellte Konsequenzen in Aussicht.

Give Netanyahu his lasting legacy with annexation

(...) The Israeli consensus now mirrors the positions in Trump's peace plan, including the clauses enabling Israel to apply sovereignty to parts of Judea and Samaria. (...) an American election is coming up, and it is possible that Trump could be defeated by former vice president Joe Biden. (...) that could be very dangerous for the future of Israel.

(...) Former Clinton and Obama staffers are already advising Biden about how to handle Israel, and misleading him, and it is already starting to show. In a statement to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency (...) Biden said the US should press Israel not to take any actions that jeopardize a two-state solution. (...) Israel does not need pressing. It needs to apply sovereignty to its land, and it may very well need to do this sooner rather than later. This can indeed give Netanyahu a lasting legacy, and it would also preempt future nightmares for the Jewish state.

Martin Oliner, JPO, 13.05.20

Stop the madness of West Bank annexation

Any annexation of territory in the West Bank would deal a harmful blow to Israel's national security, mainly by destabilizing the relatively calm border with Jordan. The Hashemite Kingdom has been an ally of the Jewish State since the 1994 peace treaty. The border region between the two states has even turned into a strategic security zone that spans all the way to Iraq. (...) Aside from a few sporadic interactions, the border between the two states remains peaceful, and an "invisible hand" of the Jordanian security forces should be commended for that. Any application of Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank - especially of the strategic Jordan Valley - will be perceived by the kingdom as a violation of the historic peace treaty. Such a move would undermine the Jordanian government in the eyes of its population, opening the door for Iran and their proxy in

Lebanon, Hezbollah, to finally get their foot into the strategic area. Why would Israel risk its national security with such brash and irrational political decisions? The quiet on the Jordanian border is rooted in the security cooperation with the kingdom as well as the relative calm in the Palestinian Authority-ruled areas of the West Bank - achieved through blood, sweat and tears. It should be remembered that the mere existence of the Palestinian Authority as a result of the agreements between Israel and The Palestine Liberation Organization. If, by any chance Jerusalem steers away from the clauses agreed upon in the Oslo Accords, the continued existence of the PA would be meaningless, and the area would plunge into chaos. (...) Again, why Israel risk destabilizing the West Bank and strengthening these terror organization? The collapse of the PA would force Israel to militarily occupy the West Bank, which is a burden on Israel's economy and military. (...) U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is a true friend of Israel and therefore he should be convinced during his visit to pull the plan of annexation out of the proposed American peace plan.

Amos Gilad, YED, 13.05.20

Stop the annexation

U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo's lightning visit to Israel is surprising. The U.S. ambassador to Israel, David Friedman, has made clear that the U.S. administration can prepare for annexation within weeks, but he also conditioned the move on the need for negotiations with the Palestinians according to President Donald Trump's peace plan.

(...) Trump's envoy to the Middle East, his son-in-law Jared Kushner, explained that what had been agreed on between the United States and Israel was the establishment of a joint committee to discuss an organized road map. These statements are far from clarifying whether the United States encourages or objects to unilateral annexation. The common assumption is that the U.S. administration will support any decision the Israeli prime minister makes, whether it is in the framework of a peace plan or not. This is not only because of Trump's commitment to Netanyahu, but because he wants the support of the American right, particularly the evangelicals, ahead of the November presidential election. (...) The huge damage anticipated from unilateral annexation of parts of the West Bank is already visible, with the statement by European Union countries of their intention to discuss sanctions on Israel. But a harsh international response or a deep and irreconcilable rift with Jordan are only part of the poisonous fruit

that annexation will bear. More important is the crushing of any chance of future diplomatic negotiations with the Palestinians based on two states for two peoples, even when the prime minister is replaced, and the creation of an impassible obstacle facing any future government. (...) Gantz should present an unequivocal stand and make clear to Pompeo that annexation is an existential danger to Israel.

Editorial, HAA, 13.05.20

Pompeo's green, yellow and red lights for Israel

(...) it appears the secretary of state carried with him to Jerusalem a three-part message akin to a traffic light, whose colors alternate based on the specific matter at hand. The first message, green, signals full support and encouragement for Israeli military activity against Iranian forces and weapons systems in Syria. (...) The second message, yellow, pertains to the timing of Benjamin Netanyahu's decision to launch legislative initiatives to apply Israeli sovereignty in the Jordan Valley and north Dead Sea region. (...) the administration would rather Israel coordinate this step to the fullest with Washington, and that it be implemented only after the joint American-Israeli mapping committee completes its work. (...) From the perspective of the White House, postponing annexation from early summer to the end of autumn 2020 comes with another considerable advantage. Israeli implementation with declared presidential support, on the eve of the US election on November 3, could be optimal from Trump's point of view in terms of spurring his evangelical base to go out and vote. The vast majority of this constituency unreservedly supports this aspect of Trump's deal of the century, as does a segment of American Jewry. In light of his contentious battle with Democratic rival Joe Biden, Trump would prefer to hold this card in his pocket for the time being (...). Finally, the red light. (...) We are witnessing the dawn of a new Cold War between Washington and Beijing. Israel's announcement Wednesday that it will reconsider China's role in a desalination project in the south indeed indicates Netanyahu's desire to mitigate any potential friction with the US on this highly-charged front.

Prof. Abraham Ben-Zvi, IHY, 14.05.10

3. Ende der Corona-Sperre

Nachdem die Kindergärten und die Schulklassen der ersten bis dritten Klasse bereits in der zweiten Maiwoche geöffnet wurden, hat Israel nun mit der

Öffnung der Schulen für alle Jahrgänge begonnen. Nach einem deutlichen Rückgang der Corona-Infektionen sollen auch die vierten bis zehnten Klassen schrittweise wieder unterrichtet werden. Nur in Ortschaften mit vielen Corona-Infektionen sollen die Schulen noch geschlossen bleiben. Die Schüler sollen den Vorgaben nach in kleineren Gruppen unterrichtet werden und einen Abstand von zwei Metern einhalten, um eine Ausbreitung des Coronavirus zu verhindern. Schuldirektor_innen und Lehrer_innen beklagen allerdings, dass die Einhaltung der strengen Hygiene- und Social Distancing Vorschriften in den Schulen nur bedingt möglich sei. So wurde zum Beispiel aufgrund der momentanen extremen Hitzewelle die ab der vierten Klasse geltende Maskenpflicht vorübergehend ausgesetzt. Der Druck der Bevölkerung, wieder zu einer relativen Normalität zurück zu kehren, hat dazu geführt, dass auch die Strände nun wieder geöffnet sind und Restaurants, Kaffeehäuser und Bars in den kommenden Tagen ihre Tore aufsperrern dürfen. Die Ungewissheit und Sorge in Bezug auf die wirtschaftlichen Folgen der zweimonatigen Corona-Sperre sind allerdings groß.

Please install a tracking app

Neither the decline in the incidence of illness, the flattening of the curve of infection nor the fact that the number of Israelis who have recovered from the coronavirus exceeds the number of active patients has diminished the government's appetite for tracking its citizens. The use of special tracking technologies has enthralled the state, which refuses to give them up even amid a gradual return to normalcy. It even seeks to increase intruding on citizens' privacy. (...) the state will require people who shop at malls and open-air markets to install a tracking app on their cellphones to allow the government to monitor where they went and to conduct a swift epidemiological investigation to determine whether anyone at the site was ill with coronavirus. Mall managers will be required to develop the app and install a system to monitor shoppers at their own expense as a condition for reopening. The (...) app will (...) show which stores every person visited, how long they spent at each one and which are the most popular places in the mall. This is a breach of privacy that invites thievery: Mall managers are likely to have access to this valuable information as well. The price of using technology to stop the spread of the pandemic has dealt a mortal blow to privacy, regardless of whether the information is in private hands or those of the government. In Israel, the blow has

been doubly severe, because the state has authorized its secret security service to monitor citizens, even though there are alternatives to employing the Shin Bet for this purpose. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 01.05.20

As restrictions are lifted, Israelis go back to school

(...) many local authorities decided to delay the return to school due to growing dissatisfaction with the government's handling of the issue. Not only was there insufficient notice for municipalities, school staff and parents, none of whom were properly prepared to go back to school, but the practical guidelines issued were unclear and even confusing. The result can be summed up in one word – balagan – a chaotic situation, which could have been avoided. (...) It was certainly not enough to announce that the number of pupils per classroom was limited to 17 and stipulate that children and teachers must wear masks and maintain social distancing. (...) The government clarified that local authorities were not obligated to open schools within their jurisdiction, with the Education Ministry saying they had until May 5 at the latest to reopen and that attendance was not mandatory except for matriculation students. This mixed message only complicated the situation even further for local authorities and parents who wanted to do the right thing and make sure their children were being protected. There are real concerns that children returning to school could become carriers of the virus and infect adults. (...) We urge all those involved to thoroughly consider the ramifications of their decisions before reopening any more classes. Because this is a serious matter, involving human lives, there is a lesson in this for all of us, and especially for the powers that be. Like any good student, they need to do their homework as thoroughly as possible. They need to consult with medical and educational experts and learn from other countries such as Taiwan and Singapore about how to operate schools responsibly. And then, perhaps most importantly, they need to show transparency, explain the rationale for their decisions, and give us clear and unambiguous rules to which we can all abide.

Editorial, JPO, 03.05.20

What Israelis can learn from the coronavirus crisis

What was before the coronavirus outbreak cannot be again, at least not until a vaccine is found. Even the return of various systems to our lives is not really

a return - it is more akin to a new beginning. While the myriad of complaints and anger are a way for the public to justifiably express its pain and frustration, it also serves to illustrate the public's inability to grasp just how much everything has changed. The criticisms we had for the ministries of health, economy and defense - legitimate as they were - are simply no longer relevant. (...) We are all in a state of complete uncertainty, feeling our way in the darkness. (...) While the modern world has given us the sense that we can predict everything in our lives in a way that makes us feel like we are in complete control, this is nothing but an illusion. The only thing in our arsenal is our ability to adapt, to find a solution and to solve problems. Hardships and challenges have never deterred us - quite the opposite (...). When it comes to groundbreaking technology, countering terrorist tunnels, shooting down Hamas missiles, scientific developments, and creating intricate applications, we are the champions, it is in our DNA. The ingredient we are lacking is patience, and that is because we are so good at solving problems quickly. But during the current crisis, speedy problem solving just isn't feasible and an abundance of patience is required. The energy expended looking for someone to blame for the situation would be better spent finding creative solutions. (...)

Tamar Asraf, YED, 09.05.20

The new normal will impact the good results

Israel continues today to adjust to the new daily routine in the shadow of coronavirus. Due to the success in containing the pandemic, the continued drop in the number of newly infected and patients in critical condition, there is a possibility that the exit could be faster than what the government initially planned in the areas of education, trade, transport, culture, leisure, even in tourism and hotels. (...) However, the public and government must not live under the illusion that the coronavirus is behind us and that it is possible to go back to the routine we had before the pandemic. (...) The new routine, which includes physical and social distancing, wearing a mask and strict hygienic rules, is difficult for us all, since it goes against our natural habits and in a way that is contrary to our human nature and social existence. But the success of exiting the coronavirus restrictions depends very much on following these rules, despite this difficulty. (...) Israel must still maintain a cautious, responsible and balanced policy as it has until now, and continue to withstand the irresponsible and at times outrageous demands and calls from politicians, economists and unfortunately

doctors, that could ruin the considerable achievements in its battle against coronavirus. (...) the exit is still taking place under the fog of war and in a minefield (...).

Ran Reznick, IHY, 10.05.20

The battle against coronavirus requires an exit strategy

After more than a month in isolation and self-quarantine, it is time for Israelis to start to see that there is an exit plan in place. Like in a war against an enemy military, the battle against the novel coronavirus (...) also requires an exit strategy – (...) what happens the day after? Formulating a plan does not mean that we are at the point for it to be implemented, but it does give a sense of hope (...). Sadly, this country's leaders are setting a bad example. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Reuven Rivlin both hosted family members that do not live under the same roof as them for the Passover Seder. (...) While these (...) leaders seemed to have no problem violating regulations, they also had no problem calling on the public to adhere to them. (...) One of the ways for example for Israel to get out of the quarantine would be a higher number of tests, which would enable the country to create "green" zones for the places where there are no sick and "red" zones for the areas that have a high rate of infections. (...) For that to happen, though, Israel would need to get to a number of tests, such as 30-50 thousand a day (...). The opposition of the Health Ministry to this proven model has been a mystery for weeks. (...) Then there is the issue with the flights that continued to land in Israel from New York, the epicenter of the coronavirus in recent weeks. Why was Israel allowing people to come into the country with no control over who they were, where they were going, if they were sick and who they had come in contact with? This failure led to the continued spread of the disease. What happened until now is in the past and will hopefully one day be investigated by a state commission of inquiry. Now, the question is how Israel moves forward. Yes, the rate of infections seems to have slowed down and the number of dead remains at about 1%, but Israel is far from getting itself out of the coronavirus woods. (...) The people of Israel deserve answers to these questions and a path forward. (...)

Editorial, JPO, 12.05.20

4. Medienquerschnitt

Israels Feind im Libanon baut seinen Einfluss aus

Watching Hezbollah entrench itself in Lebanon

The Iranian proxy, Hezbollah, (...) has gotten increasingly entrenched into that territory. They have become a massive force to reckon with – the size of a regular army – with an arsenal of approximately 150,000 rockets staring down at Israel. And all this takes place under the watchful eye of the utterly useless UN International Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL). There are now conversion factories within Lebanon where their dummy missiles are having GPSs inserted into them, so with precision-guided missiles installed in them they can be programmed to strike critical points in Israel's infrastructure. (...) Israel has a sophisticated missile-defense system that can handle incoming missiles one at a time. We do not know whether they are capable of handling swarms of missiles, like flocks of vultures, which we know that Hezbollah is preparing for. (...) Hezbollah controls two major ministries in the Lebanese government (...). Hezbollah has grown from a force of approximately 600 men when Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000 to the formidable size of approximately 40,000 men today, with a vast arsenal of rockets. This answers the question as to how the withdrawal from southern Lebanon worked out. Israel is now careful to avoid a direct conflict with the Shi'ite force in southern Lebanon, and Hezbollah is well aware of Israel's massive artillery power. (...) The failed state of Syria, however, provides fertile ground for Israel to prevent a further build-up of men, arms and equipment en route to Lebanon, or for Syria becoming another front dominated by Hezbollah. (...)

Sarah N. Stern, IHY, 10.05.20

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