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December 21, 2010

Middle East News: World Press Roundup

Aid groups say Gaza restrictions hinder them, not Hamas. A survey finds Palestinians afraid to criticize their leaders. Aaron David Miller says Pres. Obama must proceed very cautiously on peace. Fatah denies that it ever asked Israel to attack Hamas. A PA court convicts a man of treason. Violence escalates along the Gaza border. Pres. Abbas says international recognition encourages Palestinians to stay on the peaceful path to independence. Israeli police arrest gangs accused of beating up Palestinians. Pro-settler Israelis begin to acknowledge the inevitability of withdrawing from the West Bank. Bradley Burston asks what went wrong with Obama's Middle East policy. Gershon Baskin says the Israeli left desperately needs a leader. Raji Sourani says victims of the Gaza war are still being denied justice by Israel. FM Lieberman's settlement home is a virtual fortress. Hassan Barari says wikileaks don't tell the whole story about Arab attitudes. Hussein Ibish says Palestinians are pursuing bilateral, not unilateral, approaches.

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Aid groups say they, not Hamas, are thwarted by Israeli restrictions on Gaza

Article Author(s): Janine Zacharia
Media Outlet: The Washington Post
Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/12/20/AR2010122004661....> [6]

Despite recent moves by Israel to ease construction in the Gaza Strip, restrictions on building materials are hampering international humanitarian efforts while doing little to impede the Hamas-led government they are designed to weaken, aid and nongovernmental groups say.

Israel says the limits on cement and other imports are intended to prevent misuse by Hamas. But the Islamist militant group has ready access to construction materials through smuggling tunnels along the border with Egypt.

Poll finds Palestinians afraid to criticize authority

Article Author(s): Maher Abukhater

Media Outlet: The Los Angeles Times

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/babylonbeyond/2010/12/west-bank-poll-finds-pales...> [7]

A Palestinian public opinion poll published Monday in the West Bank city of Ramallah found out that only a quarter of the Palestinians in the West Bank believe they can criticize the Palestinian Authority. In the Hamas-controlled Gaza Strip, the record was even worse as less than a fifth of the Palestinians there believed it is possible to criticize Hamas rule of the coastal enclave.

Wooing the Gods of the Peace Process

Article Author(s): Aaron David Miller

Media Outlet: Foreign Policy

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s):

http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/12/20/wooing_the_gods_of_the_peace_pr... [8]

If the peace process gods have a sense of humor (and history), sometime around next summer -- the 11th anniversary of Bill Clinton's failed Camp David summit -- another Democratic president's peace initiative will be tested.

Fatah: Would never ask occupation for help

Media Outlet: Ma'an News Agency

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=344112> ^[9]

Israeli general intelligence chief Yuval Diskin perjured himself during a June 2007 meeting with US officials, Fatah leaders said in a statement on Tuesday, after comments made by the chief were revealed by WikiLeaks.

One day after leaked cables were made public by WikiLeaks, of a meeting between Diskin and US officials where the former told diplomats that following the Hamas take over of Gaza, Fatah officials had asked for Israeli assistance to "attack Hamas," noting he believed the party left ruling the West Bank was "desperate."

PA court convicts Salfit man of treason

Media Outlet: Ma'an News Agency

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=343995> ^[10]

The Court of First Instance in Nablus on Monday sentenced a 39-year-old man to ten years of penal servitude after he was found guilty of treason.

The unidentified man, from the village of Bidya in the Salfit district, was detained on 3 June 2008.

For the prosecution, attorney Khalil Salama said the court found evidence submitted was sufficient to convict the man of treason.

Kindergarten near-miss highlights Gaza risks

Media Outlet: Alertnet

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/update-4-kindergarten-near-miss-highlights-ga...> ^[11]

A rocket fired from Gaza exploded near an Israeli kindergarten on Tuesday as cross-border violence surged in the approach to the two-year anniversary of Israel's war in the Hamas Islamist-run enclave.

No one was hurt at the preschool but a teenage girl in a nearby building was cut by flying glass in the shower.

"We were lucky," said Ilan Goldsmith, community manager at Kibbutz Zikim, just north of the Gaza Strip. "It exploded at quarter to eight this morning, the exact time when parents are bringing their children in ... 28 children."

Violence escalates along Gaza-Israel border

Article Author(s): Amy Teibel

Media Outlet: The Statesman

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.statesman.com/news/nation/violence-escalates-along-gaza-israel-border...> [12]

The Israeli air force hit seven suspected militant sites in the Gaza Strip in an unusually large operation early Tuesday, and Palestinian militants retaliated by sending a rocket crashing down near a kindergarten in southern Israel.

Gaza health official Adham Abu Salmia said three Palestinians were wounded in the airstrikes. A 16-year-old girl told Israel Radio she was slightly wounded by shattered glass in the rocket blast.

Abbas says int'l recognition urges Palestinians to stick to peaceful choices

Media Outlet: Xinhua

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/world/2010-12/21/c_13658851.htm [13]

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas said Tuesday that recent recognition of the Palestinian statehood by some countries will encourage the Palestinians to stick to their peaceful choices.

At a meeting with Brazilian representatives in the Palestinian territories, Abbas praised Brazil for being the first Latin American country to recognize the Palestinian state, saying the Palestinians will stick to peaceful solution as "a strategic option," official Wafa news agency reported.

Teen gang arrested on suspicion of attacking Arabs in Jerusalem

Media Outlet: Haaretz

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/teen-gang-arrested-on-suspicion-of...> [14]

Israeli security force have arrested nine suspects over the last two weeks suspected in a string of attacks against Arab in central Jerusalem, it emerged Tuesday after a gag order on

the investigation was lifted.

Seven of the nine suspects are minors and all are residents of Jerusalem or West Bank settlements. The suspects were released to house arrest following questioning.

Pro-settlement Likud members begin floating idea of West Bank pullout

Media Outlet: Haaretz

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.haaretz.com/news/diplomacy-defense/pro-settlement-likud-members-begin...> [15]

With Middle East peace talks at an impasse, two senior members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party are shopping around a new idea: In the absence of peace, Israel should pull large numbers of settlers out of the West Bank while leaving its soldiers in place.

They believe the arrangement could relieve international pressure on Israel over settlements and give the Palestinians wider autonomy in an area they hope to make their future state, while leaving Israel in control of security matters until a peace agreement is reached.

How did Obama go so wrong with Israel-Palestine peace?

Article Author(s): Bradley Burston

Media Outlet: Haaretz

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.haaretz.com/blogs/a-special-place-in-hell/how-did-obama-go-so-wrong-w...> [16]

Where it comes to the Mideast, the craft of peacemaking often bears marked resemblance to the art of war. Especially when it goes wrong.

And where it comes to Israel-Palestine diplomacy in the two years of the Obama administration, little has gone right.

Now, with the White House and State Department having gone back to the worn-thin drawing board, this would seem as good as any to invoke Sun Tzu's ancient The Art of War, to examine how things went awry, and how much point there is in trying, in the coming two years, to set it right.

Encountering Peace: Wanted: A progressive leader

Article Author(s): Gershon Baskin

Media Outlet: The Jerusalem Post

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Columnists/Article.aspx?id=200327> [17]

The gathering of the leadership of the Israeli "peace camp" on Sunday in Ramallah under the auspices of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas and almost the entire leadership of the PLO was its largest get-together in the past 10 years. What is left of the Left is a small group of dedicated individuals divided into splinter groups of political initiatives and non-government organizations sharing a very similar platform with a common sense of urgency and a total inability to work together.

Israel must grant Gaza justice

Article Author(s): Raja Abdulrahim

Media Outlet: The Guardian

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/dec/20/gaza-justice-israel-courts> [18]

The reality of life in the Gaza Strip is hard to convey. Systematic violations of international human rights law have created abject poverty and reduced approximately 1.7 million people to "beneficiaries" of international aid, forced into dependency as the result of a human-made, and completely preventable, humanitarian crisis.

Avigdor Lieberman's home is a virtual fortress

Article Author(s): Hugh Naylor

Media Outlet: The National

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s):

http://www.thenational.ae/national/overrides/national_interstitialAd.jsp?scriptV... [19]

Of Israel's roughly 120 West Bank settlements, why, one might ask, would Avigdor Lieberman choose to live in Nokdim?

The isolated community, about a 20-minute drive from Jerusalem, lacks a single shop or

restaurant to entertain Israel's foreign minister and his wife, Ella. State-provided armoured vehicles and bodyguards must shuttle Israel's top diplomat through a labyrinth of Palestinian villages and checkpoints for his 20-minute commute into Israel proper.

Arabs? priorities

Article Author(s): Hassan Barari

Media Outlet: The Jordan Times

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.jordantimes.com/?news=32795> [20]

A question Westerners often ask is whether solving the Arab-Israeli conflict constitutes a priority for Arab regimes. No matter how one answers this question, a majority of them are convinced that political survival for the ruling regimes is the number one priority, and not the Palestinian cause.

Some in our part of the world wonder if there is a contradiction between the two matters in the first place.

?Annoying? Palestine is on the right track

Article Author(s): Hussein Ibish

Media Outlet: NOW Lebanon

Article Type: Opinion

Date: December 21, 2010

Source Link(s): <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArticleDetails.aspx?ID=224852> [21]

Last week the US House of Representatives adopted a resolution threatening a potential cutoff of aid to the Palestinians if they unilaterally declared statehood. It was essentially meaningless bluster, taking a strong stance against something the Palestinians aren't currently pursuing or even seriously considering.

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