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July 27, 2009

Middle East News: World Press Roundup

Shas spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef denounces President Obama's efforts to secure a settlement freeze, saying "We are being ruled by slaves," and that, "Our messiah will come and throw them out." (8). The New York Times profiles two ultra-Orthodox Israeli settlements that show signs for potential compromise with Palestine (1). Special Mideast envoy George Mitchell meets with Syrian leadership before heading to Israel (2) (4) (16). Gaza's top Hamas-appointed judge orders all female lawyers to wear the Muslim head scarf and "cover all except face and hands" when they appear in court (3). The Israeli military reports that there are now over 300,000 settlers in the West Bank (5). Israel prepares a "defense brief" ahead of the expected publication by the UN of two critical reports on the Gaza war (7). Two U.S. Senators circulate a letter urging President Obama to press Arab nations to make peace overtures to Israel (13).

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In 2 West Bank Settlements, Sign of Hope for a Deal

Article Author(s): Ethan Bronner
Isabel Kershner

Media Outlet: The New York Times

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s):

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/27/world/middleeast/27settlers.html?_r=1&ref=worl... [6]

Seen from afar, this fast-growing settlement embodies everything that the Obama administration wants to address through its demand for a freeze on settlement building: it sits on land captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war and, with 45,000 residents and 60 births a week, it is the largest and fastest-growing Jewish community in the West Bank.

If, as is widely believed abroad, "natural growth" by Israeli settlers is blocking the creation of a viable Palestinian state, this community should show why.

U.S. Envoy Visits Israel After Talks in Damascus

Media Outlet: Agence France Presse (AFP)

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/26/AR2009072602821....> [7]

U.S. Middle East envoy George J. Mitchell held talks in Israel on Sunday after having a "candid and positive" discussion with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad amid a diplomatic push by Washington to restart stalled peace talks.

Washington is committed to a "comprehensive peace in the Middle East, and that includes Israel and Palestine, Israel and Syria, Israel and Lebanon, and normal relations with all countries in the regions," Defense Minister Ehud Barak's office quoted Mitchell as saying after the two held talks in Tel Aviv.

Gaza judge tells female lawyers to wear head scarf

Article Author(s): Ibrahim Barzak

Diaa Hadid

Media Outlet: The Associated Press

Date: July 26, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/26/AR2009072600596....> [8]

Gaza's top judge said Sunday that he has ordered female lawyers to wear Muslim headscarves when they appear in court, the latest sign that the Islamic militant group is increasingly imposing its strict interpretation of Islamic law on residents of the coastal strip.

Supreme Court chief justice Abdul-Raouf Halabi said female lawyers will be required to wear a headscarf and a long, dark colored cloak under their billowing black robes when the court returns from its summer recess in September.

Envoy Mitchell kicks off Mideast peace push

Article Author(s): Ilene Prusher

Media Outlet: The Christian Science Monitor

Date: July 26, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0726/p06s13-wogn.html> [9]

The Obama administration embarked on a multipronged Middle East peace drive on Sunday, with four senior US officials coming here to push for progress on some of the region's thorniest issues.

In the course of what promises to be an intense week of diplomatic activity, Israeli, Palestinian, Syrian, and Egyptian leaders are meeting with Middle East special envoy George Mitchell. Three other heavy-hitters will also be in town: Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, special adviser Dennis Ross, and National Security Adviser James Jones.

IDF: More than 300,000 settlers live in West Bank

Article Author(s): Chaim Levinson

Media Outlet: Haaretz

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1103125.html> [10]

There are now more than 300,000 residents living in Jewish West Bank settlements, according to a Israel Defense Forces Civil Administration report covering the first half of 2009.

As of June 30, the settlements had 304,569 residents, an increase of 2.3 percent since January.

Most of the growth was in the most religious communities, including the ultra-Orthodox settlements. Modi'in Ilit gained 1,879 residents, a 4.5 percent increase. Beitar Ilit gained 1,074 residents, a 3.1 percent jump.

U.S., Israel inch closer to deal on settlement freeze

Article Author(s): Amos Harel

Avi Issacharoff

Media Outlet: Haaretz

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1103115.html> [11]

U.S. envoy to the Middle East George Mitchell arrived in Israel Sunday and met with Defense Minister Ehud Barak as part of an ongoing effort to reach an agreement on construction in the

settlements. The two are reportedly close to a deal in which Washington would allow a limited number of projects in advanced stages of construction to be completed, but Israel would freeze all other building for an as-yet undetermined period of time.

Israel prepares 'defense brief' ahead of UN Gaza reports

Article Author(s): Barak Ravid

Media Outlet: Haaretz

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1103109.html> ^[12]

A group of legal experts from the Foreign Ministry is writing a defense brief for the government in advance of two harsh reports on Operation Cast Lead expected to be released soon.

The ministry's defense brief is expected to be finished in a week or two, ahead of two United Nations reports that are expected to be highly critical of the extent of civilian injuries in the Gaza Strip during the operation.

A draft of the two reports is expected to be given to Israel around the end of August, before they are officially presented to the Human Rights Council in mid-September.

Rabbi Ovadia slams US: We're not their slaves

Article Author(s): Kobi Nahshoni

Media Outlet: Ynetnews

Date: July 26, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3752180,00.html> ^[13]

In his weekly sermon Saturday evening, Shas' spiritual leader Rabbi Ovadia Yosef slammed US President Barack Obama and other western leaders for pressuring Israel to freeze construction in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

"You can't build here, you can't build there' ? it's as if we were their slaves," the rabbi protested. "We are being ruled by slaves," he said," adding that, "Our messiah will come and throw them out."

Reassessing our ties with US

Article Author(s): Yarden Gazit

Media Outlet: Ynetnews

Article Type: Opinion

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3752146,00.html> [14]

Barack Obama's demand that Israel freeze all settlement activity in Judea and Samaria, including east Jerusalem, created a rift between Washington and Jerusalem. Similar rifts existed in the past. Such temporary rifts do not undermine the close relationship between the two countries. They do, however, raise questions about its nature. Given that both countries' interests are not always aligned, Israel should reevaluate its policy of depending so heavily on American support.

Reality Check: Netanyahu's self-inflicted crisis

Article Author(s): Jeff Barak

Media Outlet: The Jerusalem Post

Article Type: Opinion

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s):

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1248277895021&pagename=JPost%2FJPArti...> [15]

Binyamin Netanyahu's second term as prime minister is proving the truth of Karl Marx's comment: "History repeats itself, first as tragedy, second as farce," although the speed with which his government is descending into the farcical is surprising, even for the most ardent of Netanyahu's critics.

Out of the Stone Age: Empowering a West Bank village

Article Author(s): Donald MacIntyre

Media Outlet: The Independent

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/out-of-the-stone-age-empower...> [16]

To the visitor it may seem picturesque. But when you've spent several hours a day for 20 years vigorously shaking a dead goat's stomach filled with milk to make butter, the novelty has long worn off. In the village of Susiya, not having electricity keeps them in their own dark age.

So for Samia Shineran, 30, who has been making goat's butter by hand since she was 10, the installation of a powered churn in the family tent this spring was an unalloyed delight, giving her that much more time for the many other tasks which fall to this Palestinian mother of 10.

US Middle East envoy calls on Arab world for peace

Article Author(s): Josef Federman

Media Outlet: The Independent

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/us-middle-east-envoy-calls-o...> [17]

President Barack Obama's Middle East envoy called on the Arab world yesterday to take steps towards normalising relations with Israel, while Israel's prime minister said he hoped his country's disputes with the US over West Bank settlement construction would soon be resolved.

Senators want Obama to press Arabs

Media Outlet: Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s): <http://jta.org/news/article/2009/07/26/1006786/senators-want-obama-to-press-arab...> [18]

Two U.S. senators, a Democrat and a Republican, are circulating a letter pressing President Obama to lean on Arab nations to make peace overtures to Israel.

Obama should not give in

Article Author(s): Uri Avnery

Media Outlet: Arab News

Article Type: Opinion

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s):

<http://www.arabnews.com/?page=7§ion=0&article=124889&d=27&m=7&y=2009> [19]

First, an honest disclosure: I loved the Shepherd hotel very much.

In the first years after the Six-Day War, I was a frequent guest there. My work in the Knesset demanded that I stay in Jerusalem at least two nights every week, and after the war I switched from the hotels of West Jerusalem to those in the eastern part of the city. My favorite was the Shepherd. I felt at home there.

A shared Jerusalem

Article Author(s): James Carroll

Media Outlet: The Boston Globe

Article Type: Opinion

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s):

http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/07/27/a_s... [20]

George Mitchell is in the Middle East, pressing for peace. His planned itinerary brackets Israel and Palestine with a start in Abu Dhabi and Syria and a conclusion in Bahrain and Egypt. The Obama administration's determination to revivify the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is further indicated by the arrivals in the region next week of Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, National Security Adviser James Jones, and special Middle East adviser Dennis Ross. President Obama has replaced the Bush policy of hands-off with a gloves-off readiness to push all parties hard.

Mitchell appeals to Syria over West Bank

Article Author(s): Vita Bekker

Media Outlet: The National

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s):

<http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090727/FOREIGN/707269828/...> [21]

George Mitchell, the top US envoy to the Middle East, landed in Israel yesterday as part of a regional tour this week that includes meeting senior Israeli and Palestinian leaders to try to reach a compromise on the disputed issue of Jewish settlements in occupied Palestinian territory.

Mr Mitchell's trip to Israel and the occupied West Bank comes after his visit to Damascus, where he stated that the US wants Syria's help in reaching a deal between Israel and the Palestinians.

Securing the nightspots of Ramallah

Article Author(s): Omar Karmi

Media Outlet: The National

Date: July 27, 2009

Source Link(s):

<http://www.thenational.ae/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090727/FOREIGN/707269851/...> [22]

Basem Sharawi is having a typically busy weekend. In between joking with would-be revellers at the popular Snowbar nightspot in Ramallah while politely but firmly telling them they cannot get in to the party raging below, the 28-year-old is constantly on his walkie-talkie to other members of his five-man security team.

?There?s always a way to convince people. They won?t always be happy, but they will eventually see things my way,? Mr Sharawi said with a smile.

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[9] <http://www.csmonitor.com/2009/0726/p06s13-wogn.html>

[10] <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1103125.html>

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[12] <http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/1103109.html>

[13] <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3752180,00.html>

[14] <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3752146,00.html>

[15]

<http://www.jpost.com/servlet/Satellite?cid=1248277895021&pagename=JPost%2FJPArticle%2FShowFull>

[16] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/out-of-the-stone-age-empowering-a-west-bank-village-1762065.html>

[17] <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/us-middle-east-envoy-calls-on-arab-world-for-peace-1762066.html>

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[20] http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/editorial_opinion/oped/articles/2009/07/27/a_shared_jerusalem/

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