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**Middle East Update**



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# Headlines

## PM: UNESCO ignoring historic Jewish ties to Temple Mount

UNESCO votes to accept Palestinian request to refer to Temple Mount as "Al-Aqsa Mosque" • Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu: U.N. is rewriting a basic part of human history and has proven again there is no low to which it will not stoop.

The resolution accuses Israel of "planting Jewish fake graves in other spaces of the Muslim cemeteries" and of "the continued conversion of many Islamic and Byzantine remains into the so-called Jewish ritual baths or into Jewish prayer places."





# Golan Heights

- ❖ "Israel will never come down from the Golan Heights," Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday at the start of a weekly cabinet meeting, which was being held for the first time ever on the Golan -- the strategic plateau Israel took control of from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed in 1981 in a move that was not recognized internationally.
- ❖ "In the 49 years Israel has controlled the Golan, it has been a place of peace and prosperity," Netanyahu said. "Israel today is the solution, not the problem."
- ❖ The prime minister went on to say, "The border line is not going to change, regardless of what there is on the Syrian side."





# Syria's Response

- ❖ After Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu declared at Sunday's cabinet meeting that the Golan Heights would "forever remain in Israel's hands," Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad vowed later in the day that Syria would use any means necessary to retake the Golan from Israel.
- ❖ Calling the Golan "occupied territory," Mekdad warned that Syria has "never given up on getting back the Golan ... we are prepared to do anything [to get it back], including the use of military force."
- ❖ "While what is happening on the Israeli side of the Golan Heights is clear, one cannot say this about what is happening on the Syrian side. I spoke last night with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and I told him that I doubt that Syria will ever return to what it was.

Golan Heights are "not part of Israel and the status of those territories should be determined through negotiations," says U.S. State Department





# MORE GAZA TUNNELS

- ❖ For the first time since Operation Protective Edge in the summer of 2014, the IDF recently uncovered a Hamas attack tunnel that reached inside Israeli territory. The tunnel, which entered Israel from southern Gaza, was uncovered thanks to new tunnel detection technological capabilities employed by the IDF.
- ❖ Lt. Col. Peter Lerner of the IDF Spokesperson's Unit said on Monday, "We have neutralized the tunnel in Israeli territory, rendering it unusable for infiltration by Hamas terrorists."
- ❖ Lerner said the tunnel was lined with cement and outfitted with electricity, ventilation and rail tracks to cart away dirt from digging. The tunnel was found several dozen meters (yards) inside Israel at a depth of 30 or more meters (over 98 feet) under the ground.





# Obama Legacy?

- ❖ Ninety percent of Congress sent a clear message to President Obama – back off of Israel.
- ❖ House Republicans and Democrats united in urging President Barack Obama to reject any one sided actions by the United Nations attempting to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that are biased against Israel, a move Obama is reportedly considering.
- ❖ In a letter sent to Obama on Thursday, authored by Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY) and signed by 394 including Democratic leader Nancy Pelosi, House members warned that one-sided initiatives may come up at the UN in the coming months. They say the proposals should be vetoed because they could “dangerously hinder” the prospects of the two sides resuming the direct negotiations that are key to resolving their differences.

## **The US - Friend or Blackmailer of Israel?**

The United States refused to say on Thursday whether or not it would support a PA proposal for a United Nations resolution to condemn Israeli “settlement building” as a war crime -- but ruled nothing out.





# Biden Slams Bibi

- ❖ Vice President Joe Biden said Monday night that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government was leading the country "in the wrong direction" hours after a bus bombing in Jerusalem wounded at least 21 people.
- ❖ In a speech to the Israel advocacy group J Street, Biden criticized Palestinian leaders, but saved his harshest words for Israeli officials.
- ❖ "I firmly believe that the actions that Israel's government has taken over the past several years -- the steady and systematic expansion of settlements, the legalization of outposts, land seizures -- they're moving us, and, more importantly, they're moving Israel in the wrong direction," Biden said.
- ❖ The fact that the bulk of Biden's criticism was reserved for Netanyahu reflected diminishing patience within the White House as President Obama's term nears an end. Tension between the longtime allies has been compounded by deep disagreements over Iran and a strained relationship between the two leaders.





# Jerusalem BUS

- ❖ Police have determined that the explosion that ripped through a Jerusalem bus – injuring 21 people, two seriously – was a bomb. Hamas praised the attack. A bomb squad determined that “an explosive device was detonated in the back of the bus, causing the passengers’ injuries and subsequent fire,” said a Jerusalem Police spokesperson.
- ❖ Several passengers were injured in the explosion, which occurred near the Talpiyot industrial zone, but all managed to get off the bus before it caught fire. Police investigators are exploring the possibility that one of the two seriously injured men is the terrorist behind the bombing.
- ❖ “We will locate the men who created this bomb, we will reach the men who sent the bomber as well as the ones behind them. We will settle the account with these terrorists,” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated.
- ❖ Hamas praised the attack, calling it “the natural response to Israeli crimes, particularly the field executions it conducts, and the assaults on the Al-Aqsa Mosque.”





# Fatah - Israel's Peace Partner?

Praise for bus bombing in  
Jerusalem posted by Fatah  
on Facebook

"The Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades  
bless the self-sacrificing operation...  
the good news of victory keeps  
arriving... a bus bombing operation  
in the occupied city of Jerusalem,  
in which dozens of Zionists were  
injured"







- ❖ Leading Jewish groups harshly denounced CNN on Monday for failing to refer to a major bus bombing in Jerusalem as a terrorist attack.
- ❖ "There's no excuse for this; hopefully it's not part of a pattern," Rabbi Abraham Cooper, associate dean of Jewish human rights group the Simon Wiesenthal Center, told The Algemeiner.
- ❖ Cooper was responding to CNN's coverage of an explosion on the number 12 bus as it drove through Jerusalem's Talpiot neighborhood during rush hour. At least 21 people were wounded in the incident, two of them critically. Although the cause of the incident was initially unclear, Jerusalem Police Chief Yoram Levy soon confirmed, "There is no doubt that this is a terror attack."
- ❖ But, as of the time of this publication, the leading CNN article reporting on the incident carried the headline, **"Bus fire in Jerusalem injures at least 21, police say."**







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