

**A PLO Leader Enjoys the Lifesaving Medical Treatment He Would Deny His Fellow Palestinians**

By David Horovitz

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October 21, 2020

**Saeb Erekat at Hadassah.**

An early Palestinian advocate of talks with Israel on a two-state solution, Saeb Erekat over the years has also proved himself a formidable and sometimes malevolent adversary.

At the height of the Second Intifada in April 2002, when the IDF entered the Jenin refugee camp from which waves of Palestinian suicide bombers were being dispatched to target Israelis, Erekat was at the forefront of an extraordinarily potent misinformation campaign that claimed Israel's soldiers had killed hundreds of Palestinian civilians there, massacring them in cold blood and burying them in mass graves. In fact, 50-55 Palestinians, most of them armed gunmen, and 23 Israeli soldiers lost their lives in bitter fighting. The horrific false allegations disseminated by Erekat and his colleagues were given wide credibility and immense coverage in much of the international media; in Britain, for instance, where those allegations made front-page news and were quoted in Parliament, Israel's image, already long under assault, has never quite recovered.

Weeks later, I remember watching the articulate, passionate Erekat describing live on CNN how Israeli troops were in the process of storming and burning the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Erekat wasn't there; he was speaking from his hometown of Jericho. The incendiary claim, again, was both false and immensely damaging to Israel.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, right, signs a request to join 15 United Nations-linked and other international treaties at his headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah on April 1, 2014. Standing next to him is Saeb Erekat. (Issam Rimawi/Flash90)

But PLO secretary-general Erekat has not only shown himself to be a malicious anti-Israel propagandist; he has also served as Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's righthand man in pursuing a strategy profoundly damaging to his own people's cause. Avowedly seeking Palestinian statehood, he and his boss nonetheless brushed aside prime minister Ehud Olmert's 2008 peace offer; stayed away from talks for nine of 10 months when US president Barack Obama persuaded Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to halt all new settlement building; and oversaw a diplomatic lawfare campaign designed to damage Israel's standing in every conceivable international forum. Most recently, they preemptively rejected the Trump administration's peace proposal, declined to reengage when the United Arab Emirates obtained the suspension of Netanyahu's proposal to annex up to 30 percent of the West Bank, and instead castigated the UAE

for plunging a "poison dagger" into the heart of the Palestinian cause.

Infuriated by Netanyahu's annexation plans, the Palestinian leadership has severed most dealings with Israel, to the direct detriment of its people, notably refusing to accept the tax revenues that Israel collects on the PA's behalf for Palestinian imports and exports. Most relevantly in Erekat's case, the PA also canceled the arrangements by which Palestinians needing medical treatment not available in PA areas can be transferred to Israeli hospitals.

These measures have not been reversed even though annexation is now indefinitely off the table; Israel and the UN, however, have formulated a mechanism, outflanking the PA, by which Palestinian patients are again being transferred to Israeli hospitals.

Just one more thing: The PA in early summer refused to take delivery of two planeloads with tons of medical supplies from the UAE to help in the battle against COVID-19 — including protective equipment and ventilators — because the cargo was flown into Israel's Ben Gurion Airport. This, incidentally, was months before the UAE announced it was establishing relations with Israel...

As I write, Saeb Erekat, 65, is on life support at Jerusalem's Hadassah Medical Center in Ein Kerem, suffering from COVID-19. Treating him, the hospital has said, is extremely complicated because he has a history of medical problems, including undergoing a lung transplant in 2017. The hospital said it has been reaching out to international experts for input.

Erekat was taken to Hadassah, the PLO's Negotiations Department said, because his condition required "special medical attention and supervision."

"Mr. Erekat is receiving top-notch professional care like all serious coronavirus patients at Hadassah," Zeev Rothstein, the hospital's director, said on Sunday. "And the staff will do everything to assist his recovery."

There's a whole world of tragedies, ironies, hypocrisies so foul and blatant they really don't need spelling out, and, potentially, lessons in this story — about what genuine coexistence between Israel and the Palestinians could achieve, about failed leadership, about what ultimately matters most to us all.

I truly hope Saeb Erekat will live to internalize and benefit from some of those lessons. What is certain is that a leading hospital in the State of Israel is doing everything in its power to give him that opportunity. Of course it is. "At Hadassah," said Rothstein, "we treat every patient as if he were our only patient."

## The BBC's Hostility toward Israel Will Be Hard to Root Out

By Melanie Phillips

jns.org

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### Glorifying the woman behind the Sbarro bombing.

In recent weeks, there have been indications that the British government intends to try to bring the BBC to heel.

The prime minister, Boris Johnson, is responding to public irritation with what is seen as the BBC's left-wing group-think over a range of issues ranging from Brexit to Black Lives Matter and from conservatism to Greta Thunberg.

He believes that the BBC no longer reflects the lives and attitudes of ordinary people in "middle Britain," but amplifies instead the "wokeish" worldview of the intellectual and administrative classes. I regularly appear on the BBC, but only as the representative of a conservative viewpoint to provide what producers consider to be "balance." But the left-wing mindset is so pervasive it overwhelms any such voices.

Now the prime minister reportedly intends to install as the BBC's chairman someone who is prepared to challenge its embedded leftism.

If it's doubtful whether this as yet unknown individual will have any degree of success, it's vanishingly unlikely that it will change the BBC's appalling treatment of Israel.

For years, it has presented Israel in the most distorted way, portraying it falsely as the rogue state in the region while downplaying or ignoring the attacks on Israelis and the incitement and anti-Semitism that are daily features of Palestinian Arab life.

The most recent example of this BBC mindset concerns a Jordanian-born Palestinian terrorist, Ahlam Tamimi. In August 2001, she handed a guitar case filled with explosives to an accomplice who detonated it in the Sbarro pizzeria in Jerusalem, murdering 15 people, seven of them children, and wounded more than 130.

Tamimi has repeatedly gloated over what she did. She was given 16 life sentences, but was released in a prisoner swap after only 10 years. Since then, she has lived in Jordan, where she hosts a talk show on the Hamas-affiliated Al-Quds TV.

Her husband, Nizar Tamimi, is himself a terrorist who participated in the murder of Israeli civilian Chaim Mizrahi in 1993 and who was forced by the Jordanian authorities to leave Jordan for Qatar.

The United States wants Ahlam Tamimi to stand trial on federal terrorism charges in Washington. It has repeatedly but unsuccessfully pressed Jordan to honor the extradition treaty signed between the Clinton administration and the current king's father, King Hussein.

Last week, BBC Arabic TV broadcast an item which sympathetically presented the story Tamimi wanted to tell about herself.

This six-minute *item*, titled: "Ahlam Tamimi, your voice is loud and clear," was framed as a sentimental human interest story which whitewashed the murderous

activities by both Tamimi and her husband, and presented them as victims of censorship and the Americans.

A few days previously, a Jordanian radio host had reportedly cut her off while she was making an on-air plea to King Abdullah II to let her husband back into Jordan.

The BBC program concluded with a video of Ahlam Tamimi addressing the king for a second time, enabling her to make the plea which Jordanian radio had censored.

The media watchdog CAMERA UK has observed that the program made no criticism of either of the Tamimis. None of those who were murdered in Ahlam Tamimi's terror attack was mentioned. The item said she was merely "accused of involvement" in the Jerusalem bombing (despite her own public admission of the crime) and failed to mention the reason for her husband's imprisonment at all.

The true wickedness of the Tamimi item is that it was broadcast on the BBC's Arabic service. The BBC's foreign-language services have a global reputation for broadcasting supposedly factual, trustworthy information to countries where objective news is in short supply.

Yet this item gave a platform to a heinous terrorist to spout her propaganda, thus confirming the lies about Israel and the West that incite the Arab world to hatred and violence. More specifically, it added to the mythology around her in Jordan which, despite its peace agreement with Israel, has a population consumed by hatred of Israel and the Jews and for whom the murderous Tamimi is a rock star.

This is hardly an isolated example. CAMERA UK, which focuses closely on the BBC's anti-Israel bias, reports that since the beginning of the year the BBC News website covered only 5.3 percent of the terror attacks which took place against Israelis. In six of the first nine months, during which period there were 656 terror attacks against Israelis, the BBC reported on none of them.

CAMERA UK also observed how the BBC framed the Abraham Accords between the UAE and Israel in the most negative light. An edition of World Service radio's flagship news and current affairs program Newshour downplayed this deal, said it hadn't moved the dial at all on Israel "keeping millions of Palestinians under occupation," and allowed a Palestinian spokesman to make baseless accusations about the "occupation" and "siege in Gaza" without challenge.

Last month, the Jewish Chronicle reported that the City of David organization had complained to BBC executives about Rosie Garthwaite, a senior BBC producer working on a new documentary about Israeli activities in eastern Jerusalem. Its vice president wrote she had "repeatedly presented us with one-sided and inaccurate statements" and that the program "intends to vilify Israel, Jewish history and Jewish charities and present a number of false and misleading claims."

The paper also discovered that Garthwaite admitted sharing “inaccurate” pro-Palestinian propaganda on social media and had shared several other false or controversial claims about Israel, including attacking “British duplicity” over the signing of the Balfour Declaration, wrongly suggesting Gaza’s “one” border was controlled by Israel and retweeting an article from Middle East Eye describing the troublemaker Ahd Tamimi as an “icon for Palestinian resistance.”

These are but a tiny sample of the BBC’s institutionalized hostility towards Israel. For years, it has uncritically recycled Palestinian propaganda as innately credible and true, while treating demonstrably factual Israeli statements as mendacious propaganda.

It systematically downplays or disregards Palestinian attacks on Israelis and generally treats any eruption of violence as a story which only “kicks off” (as one BBC reporter said gleefully during an escalation of hostilities) when Israel retaliates with force. Israeli victimization is simply not seen as a story at all.

When Israel is forced to defend itself, the BBC frequently portrays its armed forces—the most ethical and human rights-obsessed military in the world—as monstrous child-killers and aggressive destroyers.

The immediate and demonstrable effect on the British population is hatred of Israel and a spike in attacks on British Jews. It is no exaggeration to say that when it to

comes to Israel, the issue is not BBC bias. It is BBC incitement to baseless hatred.

The BBC is regarded around the world as a byword for objectivity and accuracy. That’s why its departure from those ideals is so pernicious.

Perhaps the most chilling thing about it, though, is this. BBC executives are genuinely, painfully aware of the news outlet’s unique power and reach, and of their duty under its founding charter to uphold objectivity and fairness and hold the line for the middle ground.

But they are simply unable to process the fact that they view Israel, among other issues, through a profoundly distorting ideological prism. And that’s because they believe implacably that the positions they hold are unarguably objective and fair, that they do represent the middle ground, and that therefore by definition those who claim the BBC is biased are themselves extremists and can be safely disregarded.

In other words, BBC group-think is a hermetically-sealed thought system. Which is why, if whoever takes over at the top wants to restore the once iconic BBC to elementary standards of objectivity, fairness and decency, they will have their work cut out for them.

*Ms. Phillips, a British journalist, broadcaster and author, writes a weekly column for JNS. Currently a columnist for “The Times of London,” her personal and political memoir, “Guardian Angel,” has been published by Bombardier.*

## Sudan’s Long Road to Peace with Israel

By Amnon Lord

**There were many overtures of friendship before last week’s historic announcement.**

Haim Koren, Israel’s former ambassador to Egypt and South Sudan, said the current normalization with Sudan closes a 64-year-old circle. “Sudan received its independence in 1956. At that time, the Mahdi party wanted to forge ties with Israel, but the Nasser regime, following the nationalization of the Suez Canal, was at its apex, and Sudan wavered on whether or not to join the wave of Nasser’s pan-Arabism.

The Egyptian leader’s charisma and influence in the Arab world swayed Sudan’s leaders to opt for pan-Arabism. Sudan joined the Arab League. It became an integral part of the Nasserite movement, the height of which came at the infamous Khartoum Conference of September 1967 and the “Three Nos” resolution.

As an ally of Egypt, Sudan partook in the War of Attrition and Yom Kippur War, when it sent a brigade to the Egyptian front. One of the commanders of this brigade was an officer by the name of Omar al-Bashir, the recently deposed dictator of Sudan.

Koren says that beyond their military significance, the strategic airstrikes in 2009 and 2012 – which foreign reports attributed to Israel and which destroyed a terror base and weapons convoy earmarked for the Gaza Strip via the Sinai Peninsula – were diplomatically important as

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well. The successful strikes nudged the Sudanese more toward the American-Saudi axis; and made it obvious to its rulers that their alliance with global terror – chiefly with Iran – was ruining them. Sudan was an important base of operations for al-Qaida, and the Sudanese government even armed al-Qaida terrorists with diplomatic passports. The sea-change in this regard is absolute. Sudan, where an American ambassador was murdered in 1973 under orders from Yasser Arafat, and where notorious terrorists Carlos the Jackal and Osama Bin-Laded found refuge, is now changing its colors.

The word “Sudan” means “black” in Arabic (bilad as-sudan means “Land of the Blacks”). Over hundreds of years, Sudan was infiltrated by Islam. Essentially, all of East Africa used to be called “Cush,” which is traditionally considered the eponymous ancestor of the people of the “land of Cush,” an ancient territory that is believed to have been located on either side or both sides of the Red Sea. As the centuries passed, three main population groups formed. Islam, in its flexibility, joined two of these groups together.

One group was the Arab Muslims in the fertile, wealthy northern part of Sudan, and the other was the Africans who were converted to Islam but to this day pass on the harsh memories of the days they were hunted by slave traders. Another group, in the southern part of

Sudan, consists of black Christians who essentially formed the bridgehead for relations with Israel during the premiership of Golda Meir.

The relations that developed at that time formed complexities that are difficult to comprehend. On one hand, Israel sent Mossad agents led by David Ben Uziel ("Tarzan") to help the Christians in South Sudan defend themselves against genocidal campaigns. Jaafar Nimeiri, who recognized the autonomy of South Sudan in the early 1970s, permitted Ethiopian Jews to immigrate to Israel more than a decade later. He was also the only one in the Arab world who supported former Egyptian President Anwar Sadat when he made peace with Israel. Under Nimeiri's leadership of Sudan, however, an Islamist leader named Hassan al-Turabi rose to prominence. Al-Turabi pushed Sudan toward Islamism and an alliance with Iran immediately after the Khomeini-led Islamic Revolution in 1979.

"Turabi was among those who celebrated Sadat's murder, and his people later tried assassinating [former Egyptian President Hosni] Mubarak," Koren said, noting that a "process of Islamist radicalism had begun." This was the world of al-Bashir and al-Turabi up until 2011. They had a hand – beyond acts of genocide inside Sudan – in

efforts to topple moderate Arab regimes. This period of time was disastrous for Sudan. "Bashir's successors, [Abdel Fattah] al-Burhan and [Abdalla] Hamdok, who seized power following the protests that ousted [al-Bashir], essentially followed a path he had set," according to Koren. "Bashir understood his situation was increasingly precarious, and the matter of establishing relations with Israel was part of the answer to this decline."

As early as three or four years ago, voices began emerging and articles began being written in favor of relations with Israel. The important point is that Arab nationalism, followed by the period of Islamism, didn't inculcate the Sudanese population with a hatred of Israel, contrary to countries in the Arab world. Egyptian society, to this day, is imbued with a deep, venomous anti-Semitism.

Swinging a gigantic, vast country (population of 42 million) such as Sudan, which sits on the Red Sea, is an extremely significant geopolitical move. The new Middle East is bustling with realignment in the face of Turkey's Ottoman ambitions and Iranian imperialism. For the first time, it appears the forces predicated on militaristic anti-Israel ideology are becoming isolated.

## The Israel-Sudan Deal Is a Blow to Both Hamas and Iran

By Yoav Limor

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And another dent in Arab and Muslim opposition to the Jewish state.

The main achievement entailed in the peace treaty between Israel and Sudan is not bilateral, rather regional: another country has left the cycle of conflict and ceases to serve as a hotbed of anti-Israel political and security activity.

Unlike the peace deals with the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain, the treaty with Sudan has little to offer from an economic standpoint. Sudan has nothing to export to Israel, and given the state of Khartoum's coffers, it is doubtful whether it can import much from the relatively expensive goods Israel has to offer.

There is no doubt that some business deals are on the horizon, mostly involving Israeli technologies in the fields of water, agriculture and food, and they will help bring Sudan into the 21st century, but overall trade between the two countries is likely to remain small-scale.

The peace deal with Sudan, however, offers Israel three equally important boons: First, diplomatically speaking, it means another country previously hostile to Israel now recognizes it and establishes full diplomatic and trade ties with it.

This goes beyond having declarative importance, and this means one less country will vote against Israel in international organizations and forums, and will no longer join efforts impose boycotts or sanctions on the Jewish state.

Secondly, from an Arab-Muslim standpoint, the accord means another dent has been made in the wall of opposition Israel faces in the Arab world. Sudan, where in 1967 the Arab League infamously declared it's Three Nos policy – no to recognizing Israel, no to negotiating with it, and no to peace with Israel – has now become the fifth Arab nation to recognize Israel, and by doing so it has further chipped at the notion that any progress between the Arab world and Israel is inextricably linked to the Palestinian issue.

And last – but by no means least – is the security issue. It is not for nothing that Sudan was included in the US in the list of state sponsors of terrorism – there are more than a few terrorist groups that call Sudan home, and Khartoum maintains close ties with Iran.

Iranian ships regularly docked at Port Sudan, en route to delivering anything from rockets and mortars to anti-tank missiles, explosives and weapons to Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas and the Islamic Jihad in the Gaza Strip.

According to foreign media reports, Israel has, on several occasions, thwarted these smuggling efforts, mostly by eliminating these deliveries at sea.

This activity has significantly reduced the scope of terrorism emanating from Sudan, but now it seems that the new agreement will make it possible to further tighten control over any terrorist activity on Sudanese soil.

This deals a significant blow to terrorist organizations, and especially to their chief patron, Iran, which is no doubt concerned about the growing number of smuggling routes being cordoned off, as well as the growing number of Muslim countries that are choosing to seek peace with Israel.

Tehran will undoubtedly carve out new smuggling routes to keep assisting its proxies in Lebanon and Gaza, and the ayatollahs will certainly do what they can to pressure Arab leaders against following in the footsteps of the UAE, Bahrain and Sudan.

Behind the scenes a diplomatic battle is being waged for Qatar's allegiances: The US and Israel are trying to mediate rapprochement between Qatar and Saudi Arabia in an effort to pull Doha away from the radical Islamist axis, headed by Turkey.

If these efforts prove effective the radical states will become more isolated than ever and the Middle East will be very clearly divided between the "good guys" and the "bad" ones.

Visit [suburbanorthodox.org](http://suburbanorthodox.org) for the current issue.

## The Syrian peace mirage posted by the Washington Times

By Moshe Phillips

israelnationalnews.com

October 28, 2020

**Peace with Syria is a suicidal fantasy - the war torn country is unstable, and would insist on Israel giving up the Golan Heights.**

A new government in Jordan was sworn in on October 12, 2020, and the significance of the government change deserves attention. The new prime minister, Dr. Bisher Khasawneh, who was most recently the king's political adviser, has reportedly held extensive talks with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman over the past six months and was scheduled to meet with Abu Dhabi's Crown Prince. It was also reported that he has a very close connection to Jared Kushner, President Trump's Middle East Peace Plan architect, as well as special ties to Egyptian President al-Sisi. The implication: the new government could be an integral part of the Trump Peace Initiative. Until now, Jordan was reluctant or even hostile to Trump's Plan and worked to improve its relations with the Palestinian Authority, emphasizing the coordination with the Palestinians on issues related to Jerusalem.

Jared Kushner, Senior Advisor to President Trump, meeting with Jordan's King Abdullah on May 29, 2019. American officials are on the left. Jordanian officials, including then-senior advisor Bisher Khasawneh, are on the right. (King Abdullah II's official website)<sup>2</sup>

However, there is a dramatic event, not even taking place in Jordan, that may ultimately influence the possible rapprochement between Jordan and Saudi Arabia. The Saudi government began the evacuation of an estimated 20,000 of the al-Huwaytat tribe from ancestral territory along the Red Sea coast in the Hijaz province to construct NEOM, planned by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, an ambitious development for high technology, a future city, and a tourism center for Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan. Human rights advocates claim the evacuation so far has been abusive and violent.

The al-Huwaytat tribe is a large tribe that made up the Hashemite army of the Sharif of Mecca, which marched on Damascus during the great Arab revolt of Lawrence of Arabia in World War I. After their expulsion from Mecca and the Hijaz province by the Saudis, they established the Kingdom of Jordan with the help of Great Britain. Today, the members of the tribe in Jordan are worried about the fate of their brothers in the Hijaz, provoking discontent in Jordan. It is therefore assumed that in the framework of an expected rapprochement between Jordan and Saudi Arabia, the matter of the Saudi al-Huwaytat tribe will also be resolved through appropriate compensation.

The al-Huwaytat issue may have an impact on Jordan's policy regarding Jerusalem. The new Jordanian government appears to have less focus on the city. Unlike the previous government, there is no minister with the Jerusalem portfolio, according to Jerusalem sources. When comparing the composition of the new government with the previous one, the last one had a minister who was a Jerusalemite; there is none now.

In presenting his government, Prime Minister Khasawneh laid out 12 planks for his government's platform.<sup>3</sup> The Palestinian issue and the "Hashemite Custodianship of Jerusalem's Islamic and Christian holy sites" were only the eleventh item. His message was that Jordan now prefers economic programs to "enhance economic resilience and combating poverty and unemployment" over political activism.

These are the first signs. It remains to be seen how things develop.

*Mr. Inbari, a veteran Arab affairs correspondent formerly reported for Israel Radio and Al Hamishmar newspaper, and now serves as an analyst for the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.*

## Can Israel Make Peace with Qatar?

By Kobi Michael and Yoel Guzansky

inss.org.il

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**A problematic partner—that exports anti-Western and anti-Semitic propoganda—already cooperates with both Jerusalem and Washington.**

The normalization process between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain is not isolated from the

conflict between these Arab states and Qatar. The seeds of the crisis between the Arab Quartet – Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain, and the UAE – lie in the 1995 seizure of power in Qatar by Hamad al-Khalifa from his father, and the establishment a year later of the al-Jazeera network, the

mouthpiece of independent Qatari policy. Qatar sought to balance its fears of Iran and its wish to limit Saudi domination of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). Since then there have been reports of Saudi attempts to bring about a coup in Qatar. The Saudis are also openly fostering opposition to the current Emir, Sheikh Tamim. Last June, the Qatari Foreign Minister accused the “siege states” of attempting to foment revolution in Qatar. He mentioned a disinformation campaign on Twitter a month earlier, which reported a coup attempt in the Qatari royal house. In the Abraham Accords, apart from the UAE’s wish to improve its image in the US Congress and its access to advanced American weaponry, Abu Dhabi is striving to score points with the United States administration regarding its conflict with Qatar and to strengthen its status and influence in the regional and international arenas.

The closer ties between the UAE and Israel also allow the Emirates to increase their influence in the Palestinian territories at Qatar’s expense, even if not in the short term. Unlike Qatar, the UAE currently lacks leverage in the Palestinian arena because it considers Hamas, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, an enemy. In addition, the Palestinian Authority leadership is removed from the UAE, mainly due to its support for Mohammed Dahlan, a rival of Mahmoud Abbas for leadership of the PA. This issue was part of the well-orchestrated Qatari media campaign strongly criticizing the normalization with Israel, which even attacked the acting ruler of the Emirates, Mohammed Ben Zayed, accusing him of neglecting the Palestinians. However, officially Qatar maintained its room to maneuver by refraining from official criticism of the normalization process in itself, and even recently expressed support for President Trump’s peace plan, while declaring that it would not normalize relations with Israel until there was a settlement with the Palestinians, and that it supported the Arab Peace Initiative as the basis for a solution of the conflict.

For Israel, Qatar is a pipeline for transmitting messages to Hamas and sending essential humanitarian aid to Gaza, which lessens the risk of further outbursts of fighting in this arena. Therefore Israel has a clear interest in the continuation of this aid, despite its own tension with Qatar, and the tension between Qatar and its neighbors in the Gulf. For the United States, a thawing of relations between the Gulf states would be an achievement, for the administration and for President Trump personally, as the implementation of the clear interest in establishing a strong Gulf coalition against Iran – and with Israel’s cooperation.

Reaching a dual agreement of this nature – between the Quartet and Qatar, and between Qatar and Israel – is certainly not easy given the tension, if not longstanding hostility, between Doha and Abu Dhabi and Riyadh. Therefore, even if the states reach a compromise, it could be temporary and on paper only. Another hurdle involves the personal enmity between the leaders, and the need to

persuade Doha to reduce its support for the Palestinians, which it recently increased. However, a relaxation of the tension between it and its neighbors will not necessarily convince Doha to give up the considerable influence it has, not only over Hamas but also over the Palestinian Authority.

Qatar’s involvement in the Palestinian arena is an important item in the Qatari toolbox to establish its status as an influential and essential regional player. Qatar, a small but rich emirate that feels threatened by its Gulf neighbors, sees its regional status as an insurance policy for its existence in the area. Consolidating its regional status gains it importance in the eyes of significant regional players like Israel, but no less important, to maintain its essential closeness to the United States. However, this in turn exacerbates the tension and strategic competition with Saudi Arabia and the UAE. Thus in addition to its efforts in the Palestinian arena, Qatar is careful to nurture its links with Turkey and Iran, and in effect to operate in all camps in order to diversify its leverage. At the same time, Qatar understands the necessity of links with the United States and the importance of its support, particularly when it is the object of a regional boycott. Although it has managed to overcome many of the restrictions of the boycott with Iranian and Turkish help, it is eager to have the boycott lifted and to return to the GCC.

Even if the United States manages to persuade Abu Dhabi and Riyadh to lift the boycott of Qatar and ensure that Qatar joins the Abraham Accords framework and later normalizes relations with Israel, this will probably not signal the end of the tension between Qatar and the UAE, which has already signed a normalization agreement with Israel, and as a result Israel could face a complex challenge over how it conducts its relations with each of these countries. This complexity would be most prominently expressed in the Palestinian arena.

Israel has a clear interest in thawing relations with the Gulf states, mainly because this will drive a wedge between Turkey and Qatar – in effect breaking the Muslim Brotherhood axis. It would also weaken Turkey’s influence in the Gulf arena, damage Ankara’s regional standing, and limit the financial assistance flowing from Qatar to Turkey and thence to the Muslim Brotherhood. As long as Qatar chooses an alliance with Turkey, the Israeli interest must be to limit its role and influence in the Palestinian arena, and demonstrate a clear preference for the influence of the UAE. It is an open question as to whether the UAE not only has the tools and the influence but also the desire to invest considerable resources in the Gaza Strip.

Recent reports have cited an official Qatari request to purchase the F-35 from the United States. This in part reflects Doha’s competition with the UAE, but might also signal to the US administration its willingness to normalize ties with Israel – though in opposite order from the UAE process. A development of this sort would be an additional challenge to Israel’s critical qualitative military edge (QME) and accelerate the regional arms race. This poses a serious

dilemma for Israel, as opposition to the sale might impede the prospects for normalization. The US as well faces a dilemma, as sale of the F-35 to Qatar, along with heightened security coordination with Doha and granting it the status of a major non-NATO ally, might erode Israel's QME and harm the relations between Washington and Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. Israel must be prepared for close coordination with the US administration in efforts to address this dilemma and prevent the UAE precedent from recurring with Qatar.

Qatar's ongoing influence in the Palestinian arena ultimately means bolstering the more radical wing of Hamas under the leadership of Ismail Haniyeh and Saleh al-Arouri and maintaining Turkey's status and influence. Strengthening Haniyeh and al-Arouri and their ambitions to lead Hamas to control of the whole Palestinian arena (and they are also in competition with each other) will cause increasing difficulty for Yahya Sinwar in Gaza. This could translate into deliberate escalation, ending in a widespread military campaign in Gaza, with its various ramifications. These include an Israeli effort to deliver a mortal blow to Hamas's military infrastructures, leading to the collapse of Hamas rule and creating a vacuum that would have to be filled by Israel, in the absence of other reasonable options.

On the other hand, due to the weakened status of the UAE among the Palestinians, whether because of its unpopularity in Gaza or because of the disgust and suspicion it arouses among the leaders of the Palestinian

Authority and Fatah in the West Bank, and also because of its declared support for their bitter enemy Mohammed Dahlan, it will not be able to step into Qatar's shoes in the foreseeable future. In this situation, Israel will need the mediation services of Qatar, and Qatar will continue to leverage this need to establish its regional position.

Israel's continuing reliance on Qatar as its preferred broker in the Palestinian arena, together with the ongoing hostility and strategic competition between Qatar and the United Arab Emirates, even if the Gulf boycott is lifted, will put Israel in a difficult position with the UAE. Against its will and due to circumstances, Israel could find itself caught in the struggle between Abu Dhabi and Doha, affecting its relations with them. An escape from this conundrum involves an Israeli move, with regional and US backing, that leads to renewal of the talks and bilateral links with the Palestinian Authority on one hand, and significant progress toward implementation of an arrangement with Hamas in the Gaza Strip on the other hand, in a way that makes the Qatari mediation efforts superfluous. Eliminating or at least limiting Qatari involvement will weaken the radical axis in Hamas, allow Sinwar to determine the local agenda in the Strip, and push Turkey out of the arena. It is not impossible that limiting Qatari influence in the West Bank will also weaken Jibril Rajoub and his camp, and thus help to moderate the tribalism and rivalries in the ranks of Fatah and establish a consensus with regard to Palestinian leadership on the day after Abu Mazen.

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Weeks later, I remember watching the articulate, passionate Erekat describing live on CNN how Israeli troops were in the process of storming and burning the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Erekat wasn't there;

he was speaking from his hometown of Jericho. The incendiary claim, again, was both false and immensely damaging to Israel.

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, right, signs a request to join 15 United Nations-linked and other international treaties at his headquarters in the West Bank city of Ramallah on April 1, 2014. Standing next to him is Saeb Erekat. (Issam Rimawi/Flash90)

But PLO secretary-general Erekat has not only shown himself to be a malicious anti-Israel propagandist; he has also served as Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's righthand man in pursuing a strategy profoundly damaging to his own people's cause. Avowedly seeking Palestinian statehood, he and his boss nonetheless brushed aside prime minister Ehud Olmert's 2008 peace offer; stayed away from talks for nine of 10 months when US president Barack Obama persuaded Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to halt all new settlement building; and oversaw a diplomatic lawfare campaign designed to damage Israel's standing in every conceivable international forum. Most recently, they preemptively rejected the Trump administration's peace proposal, declined to reengage when the United Arab Emirates obtained the suspension of Netanyahu's proposal to annex up to 30 percent of the West Bank, and instead castigated the UAE

for plunging a “poison dagger” into the heart of the Palestinian cause.

Infuriated by Netanyahu’s annexation plans, the Palestinian leadership has severed most dealings with Israel, to the direct detriment of its people, notably refusing to accept the tax revenues that Israel collects on the PA’s behalf for Palestinian imports and exports. Most relevantly in Erekat’s case, the PA also canceled the arrangements by which Palestinians needing medical treatment not available in PA areas can be transferred to Israeli hospitals.

These measures have not been reversed even though annexation is now indefinitely off the table; Israel and the UN, however, have formulated a mechanism, outflanking the PA, by which Palestinian patients are again being transferred to Israeli hospitals.

Just one more thing: The PA in early summer refused to take delivery of two planeloads with tons of medical supplies from the UAE to help in the battle against COVID-19 — including protective equipment and ventilators — because the cargo was flown into Israel’s Ben Gurion Airport. This, incidentally, was months before the UAE announced it was establishing relations with Israel...

As I write, Saeb Erekat, 65, is on life support at Jerusalem’s Hadassah Medical Center in Ein Kerem, suffering from COVID-19. Treating him, the hospital has

said, is extremely complicated because he has a history of medical problems, including undergoing a lung transplant in 2017. The hospital said it has been reaching out to international experts for input.

Erekat was taken to Hadassah, the PLO’s Negotiations Department said, because his condition required “special medical attention and supervision.”

Zeev Rothstein, director of Hadassah Medical Center (courtesy of Hadassah Medical Center)

“Mr. Erekat is receiving top-notch professional care like all serious coronavirus patients at Hadassah,” Zeev Rothstein, the hospital’s director, said on Sunday. “And the staff will do everything to assist his recovery.”

There’s a whole world of tragedies, ironies, hypocrisies so foul and blatant they really don’t need spelling out, and, potentially, lessons in this story — about what genuine coexistence between Israel and the Palestinians could achieve, about failed leadership, about what ultimately matters most to us all.

I truly hope Saeb Erekat will live to internalize and benefit from some of those lessons. What is certain is that a leading hospital in the State of Israel is doing everything in its power to give him that opportunity. Of course it is. “At Hadassah,” said Rothstein, “we treat every patient as if he were our only patient.”

## Andrew Cuomo again Provokes Antipathy toward New York’s Jews

By Melissa Langsam Braunstein

[nationalreview.com](https://www.nationalreview.com)

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**His claims about a giant ḥasidic wedding don’t withstand scrutiny.**

People want answers. They crave certainty amid chaos. But for a year filled with tremendous upheaval and so much newness, there have been notably few questions — and that’s a problem.

In pre-pandemic days, New Yorkers knew that Governor Andrew Cuomo was an abrasive bully, intolerant of those who didn’t share his political beliefs. Yet Cuomo’s eagerness to take charge matched the moment back in March. Cuomo comforted those nervous about COVID-19 by communicating clearly at his daily press conferences.

Seven months later, though, the picture is different. It’s clear that too much power has been ceded to Governor Cuomo. Not only have state legislators provided the governor with “nearly unchecked power,” but the media have too. Events now follow an all-too-familiar script. Consider, for example, the story surrounding the Satmar Hasidic wedding in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, on Monday night. Governor Cuomo said something, reporters accepted it, and a negative narrative about New York’s Orthodox Jews took hold.

If you read or watch the New York Times, The Hill, New York’s NBC 4, ABC News, the Daily Beast, the

Miami Herald, Britain’s Daily Mail, Australia’s Business Insider or countless other outlets, you may have heard “that upwards of 10,000 people were expected to attend” the wedding of the Grand Rebbe’s grandson. However, there are many questions that should have been asked — and indeed appear to have gone unasked — before Cuomo publicly blasted New York’s Satmar Hasidic community, and before the international media broadcast the story far and wide.

To recap, on Saturday, while Orthodox Jews were unplugged for the Sabbath, Cuomo told the media, “We received a suggestion that [an enormous wedding] was happening. We did an investigation and found that it was likely true.”

While some unquestioningly accept the governor’s remarks, I, for one, would like to know more about this investigation and the related activities.

For starters, is nobody else curious about — or perhaps troubled by — the decision to deliver the “Section 16 order prohibiting the mass gathering” on Friday evening? New York’s leaders know that Orthodox Jews are indisposed starting at sundown on Friday, when the Sabbath begins. So, when exactly did state authorities learn about this wedding?

Next, the government’s source was someone with known animus toward New York’s Haredi community

who has since acknowledged in an op-ed that he had “other motivations” beyond saving lives. Did no one on the governor’s staff think it important to be absolutely certain of the facts before discussing this wedding so publicly?

Did anyone ask a Yiddish speaker to translate the public wedding invitation? It included a box — in red — that read: “Please follow all of the regulations from the health department scrupulously; they will be strictly enforced.” That this health notice appeared in Yiddish, a language all invited guests would speak, implies that this wasn’t virtue signaling.

As for logistics, the synagogue in question could never hold a crowd of 10,000, as Satmar leader Rabbi Moshe Dovid Niederman explained to Cuomo during a Sunday call, published in the Orthodox daily *Hamodia*. The hosting congregation even published a statement explaining that “this wedding was designed differently,” because of COVID-19. So, only “a small circle of close family members” were expected to attend the ceremony and celebratory meal. The statement also noted that “unwarranted attacks on this event” were “detached from the facts” before remarking, “It’s sad that nobody verified our plans before attacking us.”

Americans Against Antisemitism founder Dov Hikind considered that statement credible. During a call, he asked rhetorically, “Are the Satmar so out of their minds that they’re planning a wedding with 10,000 or even 1,000, and TV cameras would’ve been down there? It would have been a disaster.”

Another nagging question remains: Why didn’t Cuomo just call Satmar leaders? On Sunday’s call, Cuomo described knowing Rabbi Niederman for “over 20 years.” Given that, Cuomo could easily have buzzed Niederman

to fact-check. Hikind commented, “Why didn’t the governor pick up the phone before making it into a national story? That’s being sensitive? That’s not being a friend.” A friend would inquire directly. Further, if anything in the original wedding plans didn’t fully comply with state health guidelines, a friend would offer private guidance on how to remedy shortcomings.

Cuomo’s response to Niederman during Sunday’s call truly stands out, though: “In this crazy world, everything gets blown out of proportion. And you’re right, the press comes to me, they ask me a question, with an asserted fact in it. ‘There is a wedding that’s gonna have 10,000 people, how can you let that happen?’ They assert the fact, and then it’s hard to say to the reporter, ‘Well, I don’t know if you, if that’s true or not.’ And I understand that things are said.”

But Cuomo clearly accepted the premise of a large wedding taking place, and his words have had consequences. Reporters descended on Williamsburg on Monday, something locals did not appreciate. Further, harassment and anti-Semitic graffiti continue apace for New York’s Orthodox Jews, as does the cementing of the dangerous narrative that Orthodox Jews deserve unique blame for COVID-19’s spread.

If New York is to conquer COVID-19, there must be universal compliance with public-health guidelines. However, public officials must simultaneously demonstrate true leadership. In Governor Cuomo’s case, that includes ending his recent, troubling pattern of singling out New York’s Orthodox Jewish community. Perhaps he could start by publicly taking responsibility for the response that launched a thousand nasty news stories.

*Ms. Braunstein, a former U.S. State Department speechwriter, is now an independent writer in metro Washington, D.C.*

## Will a Biden Administration Undermine Recent Progress in the Middle East?

By Danielle Pletka

thedispatch.com

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Unlikely, but it could drive U.S. allies into the arms of China.

When Donald Trump appointed his son-in-law Jared Kushner to the post of senior adviser and charged him with brokering Middle East peace, most of the veteran diplomats, scholars, and pundits who watch the region reacted with derision and disbelief. A vituperative blogger noted in 2017 that, “he is entirely in over his head and dangerously ignorant on policy matters.” Against the odds, however, Trump and the Kushner-led White House Middle East team have delivered a new era of peace in the Middle East. Would a Biden administration mean the end of the road for that era? Or could there be more good news ahead?

Few appreciate the break with history that the Trump administration’s Middle East policies represent. The conventional wisdom that guided generations of diplomats, experts, and leaders—that the road to Israeli-Arab peace is through Palestine; that recognizing Jerusalem as Israel’s capital will inflame the “Arab street”; that annexation will lead to war—have all proven wrong.

The Arab world moved on, but the world of Arabists remained stubbornly mired in the same tropes that have animated it since 1967. Call it ignorance, call it groundbreaking—but there can be no denying that the Trump team achieved both historic changes and a fundamental realignment of the region. But much of this narrative appreciating Team Trump’s work ignores the pernicious role of the Obama administration in fueling that transformation.

Though they may not say it openly, the national security staff that walked in the door on the first days of the Obama presidency had a contrarian view about the Middle East. In their view, the U.S. focus on alliances with Sunni Arab powers had delivered little tangible progress against terrorists and dictators, and little peace. It was time for a Shiite-first policy, and though the vision initially faltered in the face of Iranian opposition, once at the table, the Islamic Republic and the Americans shared the hope that a revitalized U.S. relationship with the ayatollahs could

drive deeper changes—though each likely had different views of what such a change might look like.

In addition, both the Obama administration and the Trump administration that followed had one clear imperative: no new wars in the Middle East. Of course, the region has a vote in international affairs, and in the turmoil of the Arab Spring, Obama joined a war to oust Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. He also ultimately sent troops back to Iraq, into Syria, and to Yemen during his tenure. Trump, while less inclined to deploy boots on the ground, notably oversaw a joint U.K.-French-American bombing in response to Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad's use of chemical weapons, and ramped up (and then down) U.S. troop presence in many of the same countries as Obama.

But these were aberrations, as both Donald Trump and Barack Obama—not to mention American voters—voiced a desire to turn away from the problematic Middle East, and toward other priorities. Obama himself pointed out that the future would require Sunni Saudi Arabia and Shiite Iran to “share the neighborhood,” the implication being that the Pax Americana, such as it was, was over. Trump's version—a Pax Israelitica of sorts—is also intended to pave Washington's escape from the region. These professions of American uninterest after decades of intense engagement did not escape the notice of either America's allies or its enemies.

The new-look Middle East—Sunni Arabs and Jews against Shiite Iran and its many proxies—is rooted in both of those Obama and Trump policies, but in the region, there are fears worse is to come. The election is weeks away, but Arab leaders are already fretting about what a Biden presidency could mean for them. More than the Biden-Harris campaign promises to “reassess our relationship with the Kingdom, end U.S. support for Saudi Arabia's war in Yemen, and make sure America does not check its values at the door to sell arms or buy oil,” the

greater fear is of the pendulum swinging back to the pre-Trump status quo, and a rebalancing of American policy in the region to favor Iran. As much as anything else, the fear of a renewed American-Iran alliance is driving Sunni Arabs to Israel. Could they be wrong?

Team Biden has made it clear that if Iran comes back into compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or Iran deal, they will rejoin. But it seems unlikely that anyone from a Biden administration would conduct the aggressive lobbying campaign for Iran that Obama's hapless Secretary of State John Kerry embraced. Indeed, the more serious risk is not that Biden's Middle East advisers fall hopelessly in love with the Islamic Republic, as too many of Obama's negotiators did. It is that they will do nothing in the face of Iranian efforts to dominate the Middle East and that America's erstwhile allies take their security into their own hands, to dangerous effect.

With an America that ignores both Iranian predations against its own people and turns it back on supporting Washington's traditional allies among Israel and the Sunnis, the odds are that regional powers will take it upon themselves to protect their interests in the best way they know how. That began with a new alliance with Jerusalem, but where it could end is anyone's guess. The last time such fears were in the air, the Saudis escalated their conflict with Yemen, and began dabbling in opposition politics and worse in the neighborhood. This time they may well turn to other interested global players—Saudi Arabia is now China's top oil supplier—for weapons and more.

In short, while a rekindling of the Democratic love affair with Tehran promises rough seas ahead in the Middle East, the larger problem may be that both a Trump second term or a Biden administration will likely wash their hands of the region, feeling that the mission as they defined it has been accomplished.

## The Dangers of a Hasty Retreat from Afghanistan

By Noah Rothman

washingtoninstitute.org

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**The U.S. should learn from its mistakes in Iraq.**

Donald Trump perfunctorily insists that all the polls are wrong, but he certainly doesn't act like that's the case. “I saved your suburbs—women—suburban women, you're supposed to love Trump,” the president told a crowd of Michigan supporters. “Suburban women, will you please like me? I saved your damn neighborhood, OK?” he added at a Pennsylvania rally.

But female voters aren't the only source of presidential anxiety. In a video address to his “favorite people in the world—the seniors,” the president promised to provide access to pharmaceuticals “all free.” The administration followed this pledge with a scramble to provide seniors with federally funded \$200 cash cards redeemable for prescription drugs before Election Day.

It's no coincidence that this ham-fisted pandering is aimed at demographics that public polling suggests have been slipping away from the president. But Trump's

efforts to again ingratiate himself with the coalition that propelled him into the White House in 2016 aren't just a little cloying—they can be quite reckless. That is certainly true of the president's rushed effort to withdraw a substantial portion of America's presence in Afghanistan.

On October 7, the president revealed that he planned to pull all U.S. troops out of Afghanistan by Christmas—accelerating the timetable for withdrawal announced by Trump's national security adviser, who had claimed that the U.S. presence in country would dwindle to between 2,800 and 2,500 troops by early 2021.

But the president's directive has sparked a public dustup between the White House and the Pentagon. As Politico reported last week, Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Mark Milley subtly castigated National Security Adviser Robert O'Brien for engaging in “speculation” over the size of the U.S. presence in Afghanistan, adding that the “responsible, deliberate drawdown” the Defense

Department is tasked with executing must be based on security conditions on the ground. And at the moment, those conditions are not great.

Defense officials subsequently told Politico that Afghanistan is increasingly the scene of insurrectionary violence and U.S. negotiators tasked with striking a peace deal do not have a good-faith partner in the Taliban. That appraisal is substantiated by the rising number of terrorist attacks executed by the Taliban.

On Wednesday alone, Taliban forces killed 34 soldiers loyal to Kabul, including a provincial police chief, in overnight attacks in a province bordering Tajikistan. There were two Taliban-linked suicide car bombings in nearby Kandahar province on Wednesday amid sporadic engagements between terrorist elements and Afghan troops. And Lashkargah, the capital of Helmand Province, has been host to frequent clashes between Taliban insurgents and government forces, and more than 200 casualties are now attributable to the fighting.

Americans are and have been eager to wash their hands of the seemingly fruitless conflict in Afghanistan, but a rushed withdrawal that is obviously timed for maximum domestic political benefit isn't strategically sound. And if the president's efforts discomfit the Pentagon, America's allies seem outright contemptuous of them.

"We will make a decision together, coordinate our efforts based on the principle 'in together, adjust together, and when the time is right, when the conditions are met, then we will leave together,' but not before," NATO

Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told reporters on Wednesday.

Indeed, officials are telling reporters on background what Republicans used to understand instinctively: Artificial and political timetables for withdrawal from a protracted and asymmetrical conflict embolden the insurgents and make the conditions for a mutually amenable peace more elusive.

Republicans accused Barack Obama of pursuing just such a heedless strategy in Iraq, and they were vindicated when U.S. troops were redeployed to that Middle Eastern country after the Islamic State militia spilled over the Syrian border and rapidly routed the unready Iraqi Security Forces. That should be a sobering legacy even for those who want out of Afghanistan regardless of the country's security conditions.

The only thing worse than keeping troops in Afghanistan one minute longer would be having to go back at a time and place that is not of our choosing and in response to a grotesque human-rights violation or the revitalization of the transnational terrorist groups who call that country home.

For partisans in an election year, the prime directive is to do no harm to the top of the ticket. But that objective should not compel Republicans to abandon the principles they know to be true or to sacrifice the pursuit of American national interests in the process.

*Mr. Rothman is the Associate Editor of Commentary and the author of Unjust: Social Justice and the Unmaking of America.*

## Israeli, Californian firefighters become band of brothers

By Abigail Klein Leichman

israel21c.org

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**'Israel sent 10 of its finest firefighters and they didn't come for a tour or a vacation but to jump in and fight fires,' says Cal Fire unit chief.**

Ten Israeli firefighters flew to California on August 30. Over the course of 15 days doing exhausting, dangerous work, they became a battalion of brothers with their California colleagues.

"During the time we spent with these Israelis who came to help us, we became much more than coworkers. We bonded with them as part of our firefighting family," said Chief Scott Lindgren of the Amador-El Dorado Unit of California's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (Cal Fire).

"They became part of our team and it was hard to see them go. We worked hard, we had some fun, we had discussions — heated discussions, too, about differences in how we do some of our work — and it was extremely beneficial for us."

Lindgren was speaking at a recent online presentation of the America Israel Friendship League about the extraordinary cooperative firefighting experience.

The idea for the volunteer delegation began with Israeli Consul General in San Francisco Shlomi Kofman.

On August 25, 10 days after 14,000 lightning strikes sparked fires across central and northern California, Kofman made inquiries about how Israel could contribute in "solidarity and friendship."

"They need boots on the ground ASAP," Kofman reported the next day to Itai Bardov, director of the US Consulates Department in Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

"In 2010 and 2016, the Americans sent us help when we had raging fires in Israel, and we were happy to give back," said Bardov, who accompanied the mission.

Bardov asked Israel Fire and Rescue Services Commissioner Dedy Simhi to find 10 volunteers, and raced to complete all the paperwork.

Despite knowing they would return to spend the Jewish High Holidays in quarantine away from their wives and children, "I had more volunteers than the 10 I was approved to gather," said delegation head Itzik Oz. "Everyone wanted to assist our friends overseas."

A taxing and critical shift

According to Cal Fire, 11,000 firefighters remain on the frontlines of 20 wildfires across the state, 13 of which are still major incidents.

“A lot of our employees have been on duty non-stop since July,” said Lindgren. “Early on, we knew we were in trouble and it would be a long fire season, but we didn’t know it would be the worst fire season in our history.”

His unit, headquartered at McClellan Air Tanker Base, has pumped 4 million gallons of fire retardant so far this season.

“Israel sent 10 of its finest firefighters and they didn’t come for a tour or a vacation but to jump in and fight fires. We don’t always get that from other [countries] delegations,” said Lindgren. “The Israelis stepped off the plane ready to go. That was huge for us.”

After a short orientation that included translating liters to gallons and kilometers to miles, the Israelis were prepared to work with “the special heroes from Cal Fire,” said Oz.

“We went over the equipment they had brought and issued them fire shelters and good boots,” said Lindgren. “Their radios were not compatible to ours — they were in many ways superior to ours, with automatic locators — so we got them squared away with gear. The next morning at 4am we were off to the August Complex in northern California.”

As of October 14, the August Complex fire in Mendocino County has burned more than a million acres and is not fully contained. Coming from a tiny country, the Israelis never encountered this kind of magnitude.

Just getting to the blisteringly hot site involved “a really gnarly hike full of boulders and steep slopes,” said Lindgren. “They worked with one of our hand crews for 24 hours. It was a taxing and critical shift.”

Hand crews are the infantry of wildland firefighting. They use tools such as chainsaws and drip torches to construct fire lines — strips of land cleared of flammable materials and dug down to mineral soil to prevent the spread of flames.

“Their dedication and cooperation in the field was amazing,” said Israeli First Officer Ido Braun.

“We did a little training to be certified in their procedures with hand tools and chainsaws. Here in Israel

is both entertaining and instructive. It makes me wish that I could read his words in the original Russian. One

we work more with hose lines. But we quickly understood what the operation was about and now we have new ideas for our fire services from our brothers in Cal Fire.”

CalFire firefighters giving gifts to the Israelis who came to help them, September 2020. Photo courtesy of Israeli Consulate in San Francisco

Volunteering at fire stations

After that first assignment, Lindgren rotated the Israeli volunteers to different units and assignments.

Some of the officers worked with Cal Fire operations chiefs and branch directors; one did a shift with the logistics personnel; others went to the Cal Fire training academy, manned engines at local fire stations, or accompanied the fire investigation unit. The volunteers also served another shift with the hand crew and with a strike crew. Finally, they returned to Amador-El Dorado and ended by cooking an Israeli dinner for their hosts.

“It was breathtaking and inspiring for us and for civilians affected by the fire,” said Amador-El Dorado Unit Assistant Chief of Administration Nathan Barclay.

“It was more than them coming to help; it was the inspiration of seeing the cooperation between our two countries and just as human beings.”

Matan Zamir, San Francisco Deputy Consul General of Israel, giving Dry Creek Rancheria Fire Dept. Chief Matt Epstein Israel’s donation of essential gear to help fight the wildfires plaguing California. Photo courtesy of Israeli Consulate in San Francisco

Braun said their California colleagues were surprised that the Israelis came to help fight a fire across the ocean, especially during a pandemic and a time when Israel’s fire season is also beginning.

“There’s a bond between firefighters — it doesn’t matter what country but especially between the US and Israel that have such a strong connection,” he said.

“I would like our cooperation with our brothers in Cal Fire to continue in the future. Unfortunately, even though we hope not to see more fire, it will happen because the climate is changing. We need to be ready and prepared to help each other.”

hopes that Brian Horowitz will translate more of them—and follow up with another book on the last 15 years of his extraordinary life.

**Current issue also available at [suburbanorthodox.org](http://suburbanorthodox.org).  
If you see something, send something” –editor**