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Netanyahu Offers Jewish History Lesson to UN Diplomats

Five Suicide Bombings Foiled by Shin Bet This Year To Date

The Israeli Shin Bet security agency foiled 77 terror attacks since the beginning of 2016, including five suicide bombings and 10 other bombings, seven kidnappings and 34 shooting attacks, according to figures recently released.

The report detailing the agency's activities in the past five years came as outgoing director Yoram Cohen stepped down, and was replaced by Nadav Argaman.

In 2015, the security agency foiled some 239 attacks overall, among them 12 suicide bombings, 19 kidnappings, 41 bombings and 120 shootings. In 2014, some 217 attacks were prevented by the security agency, up from 187 in 2013, 112 in 2012 and 88 in 2011.

During the past three years, 302 indictments have been filed against suspected Jewish terrorists, the report said. Since January, 34 Jewish suspects have been indicted on terror charges.

In the past five years, 65 Islamic State members were arrested in Israel, the Shin Bet said. Eight attacks on Israelis by members of the IS cells were foiled, it said.

The agency is chiefly responsible for dealing with Palestinian terror in Israel and in the West Bank and Gaza, gathering intelligence, and taking part in arrest operations and assassinations of terror leaders.

[TimesofIsrael.com]

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu recently offered to personally host a lecture on Jewish history for local U.N. staff following outrage over a resolution adopted by the U.N. cultural agency that failed to acknowledge Jewish ties to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, the holiest site in Judaism.

Netanyahu said he was "shocked to hear that UNESCO adopted a decision denying any Jewish connection to the Temple Mount, our holiest site." The prime minister expressed disbelief that "anyone, let alone an organization tasked with preserving history, could deny this link which spans thousands of years." Netanyahu said he will "personally" host the lecture at his office.

"The seminar will be given by a leading scholar of Jewish history and will be free to all U.N. staff and diplomats, including from countries which voted for this outrageous decision," Netanyahu said.

The UNESCO resolution was sponsored by several Arab countries and adopted by UNESCO's 58-nation executive board last month. Israelis and many Jews and others around the world were appalled by the language of the resolution.

The resolution was seen as a disavowal by UNESCO of ancient Jewish ties to the holy sites in Jerusalem and elsewhere. It referred to the sites by their Arabic or English names or, in the case of the Western Wall, used quotation marks around the name.

Many people viewed it as the latest example of an ingrained anti-Israel bias at the United Nations, where Israel and its allies are far outnumbered by Arab countries and their supporters. It was also the latest chapter in Israel's rocky relations with UNESCO, which it accuses of making decisions out of political considerations.

"The Jewish people's connection to the Temple Mount goes back thousands of years. Denying that isn't only ahistorical. It actually makes peace harder to achieve," Netanyahu's spokesman David Keyes said, adding that the UNESCO text was "an outrageous distortion of basic fact." Keyes expressed hope many diplomats would attend the lecture because "everyone should hear the truth."

Nickolay Mladenov, the U.N. special coordinator for the Middle East peace process, briskly rejected Netanyahu's offer, saying, "U.N. staff in Jerusalem know the history of the region, its people and religions all too well." [Israelhayom.com]

The Israel That Arabs Don't Know

By Ramy Aziz

When the Israeli Ministry of Exterior invited me to visit Israel as part of a delegation of European-based Arab journalists and media representatives, I accepted without hesitation. The goal of the invitation was to provide us with an opportunity to freely explore the different dimensions of life inside the state of Israel ... Arab media coverage of Israel continues to be characterized by a lack of clarity and misrepresentation, making it difficult for Arab citizens to truly understand the country. ...

The following is an honest testimony of what I saw during my visit, without influence by any person or institution. I hope to present an alternative perspective from other Arab media outlets that I have found to exaggerate and mischaracterize the realities of Israeli life. ...

I wondered ... Do the "Jews" in Israel actually hate Arabs? If they found out I was Egyptian, would they treat me poorly? Would I be verbally or physically abused if Israelis heard me speaking Arabic?

... I met with both Arabs and Jews of Arab origin, and they recounted their memories of life in Iraq, Egypt, and the other countries from which they had come. I listened to how they had left those countries after bitter experiences of incitement and hatred. Life had brought them to a place where they peacefully coexisted. Unfortunately, the truth of coexistence has been muddled with the help of many media organizations.

In another repudiation of a false claim, my visits to places of worship were not stopped or barred from entry by either the Israeli army or police, as they have been rumored to do, despite the escalating incitement and violence in the city. Life in the holy city goes on, filled with vitality during all hours of the night and day. It is a city that does not sleep, filled with people from all over the world.

After spending two days in Jerusalem, I headed to Tel Aviv, a capital of technology, money, and business. I was astounded by the presence of such a huge number of both local and international communications and technology companies, whose numbers have helped the city earn its nickname: Israel's "Silicon Valley." Besides the bustling business, life in Tel Aviv is filled with activity. In the morning, people walk, run, and ride bicycles in designated bicycle areas along the many beaches of the Mediterranean, all of which are equipped for people to enjoy their time there. At night, restaurants and cafes are filled with both city residents and international tourists. Like Jerusalem, Tel Aviv is an international and welcoming city that blends a variety of cultural influences. ...

In the beautiful coastal city of Haifa, I visited the large educational edifice of the University of Haifa. Its towering buildings and libraries hold over two million books and

periodicals, and the university has departments for the disabled and the blind. What caught my attention was the children's library in its center. Children pay visits to the library in order to learn how to conduct research and to be instilled with a love of reading and discovery at a very young age. The university is considered a model and reflection of Israeli society. Within its walls, students of Jewish, Arab, Druze, and Circassian origin study together. It appeared to me that Muslims, Christians, Druze, Baha'is, and atheists are all given equal opportunities based on the principle of equality and without discrimination or segregation based on race or religion.

In Haifa, I visited the village of Daliyat al-Karmel on the al-Karmel mountain, where I met with Druze elders. They recalled the experience of Druze integration into Israeli society and informed me that they preferred to call themselves Israelis instead of Arab citizens of Israel. Because they hold Israeli citizenship, enlist in the Israeli Defense Forces, and are treated as full citizens with equal rights, they have no reason to deny their Israeli nationality.

In the evening, I found dinner on Ben Gurion Street. ... It is filled with Arab cafes and restaurants, identifiable by the songs they play and their customers' conversations. I struck up discussions with various restaurant patrons and employees regarding life in Israel, and I asked whether there was differentiation between citizens of non-Jewish origin and Jewish citizens. In every instance, I was told that this was not the case, and these Arab-Israelis informed me that in Israel the law is equally applied to everyone without distinction or discrimination.

At the end of my trip, I had spent five days between Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and Haifa. I had visited official state, national, social, and educational institutions and heard from Jewish, Arab, Druze, and Bedouin segments of Israeli life. After my experience there, I can now say that in my eyes, Israel is the only true democracy in the Middle East, and is a country open and accepting of religious and ethnic minorities. I heard the call to prayer from mosques in various cities – a religious expression that is banned in Europe. I saw Christians with crosses on their chests who had no fear of exposing their identities, a marked contrast to some neighboring states. I saw Baha'i gardens and memorials the likes of which exist nowhere else in the world.

Through these experiences, I saw a recently formed state that has become a democratic institution rivaling the oldest democracies in the world. Despite the youth of the new Israeli state, I saw, without exaggeration, a bright flame in a pitch-black region. I realized that without a doubt, the secret to Israel's existence in spite of all the dangers and controversy that surround it is the democracy and freedom of Israeli society, a society composed of so many different yet coexisting segments and components.

Ramy Aziz is an Egyptian journalist based in Europe.

[washingtoninstitute.com]