



# News from the Nations

---

## Prince Hassan calls for EU-style Middle East union

A passionate plea for Middle East nations to form an EU-style organisation to deal with human rights, the environment and the scarcity of water has been made in London by Jordan's Prince Hassan. According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, "Hassan addressed an audience of diplomats and British supporters of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam, a village in central Israel where Jews and Arabs live together in equality. The prince warned that time was running out for the region. Economic and social cohesion were essential to the security concerns of Israel and the Arab world as 'we are mutually dependent', he said. Israel was an integral part of the region and together with its Arab neighbours should set up an economic community in Western Asia, Hassan said. The main concerns of such an organisation would be water, the environment and human dignity. It could be set up in Jerusalem where it would be a light to the region. It is time for real peace in which both the Jewish state of Israel and the Palestinians are part".

**UK embargo on arms to Israel**  
*Britain has imposed a partial arms embargo on Israel, refusing to supply replacement parts and other equipment for Saar missile boats because they participated in Operation Cast Lead in the Gaza Strip earlier this year. However, it is only a small percentage of Israel's defence-related imports that come from Britain; these sales total some 130 million shekels (\$32.5 million).*

## More Hussein than Barack

President Barack Hussein Obama's historic speech to the Muslim world in Cairo points to a new alignment between East and West which will have a major impact on the Arab-Israeli conflict. According to a Political Report in *Jerusalem Today*, "The Washington-Cairo track signals warming ties between the US, the Arab world, and more significantly between America and Islam. He said, 'I have come here to Cairo to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world, one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive and need not be in competition—I also know that Islam has always been a part of America's history'. Obama put the 'Holy Koran' on the same pedestal as the Bible, quoting the Muslim scriptures four times which can't be good for Israel, because without its Biblical, God-given claims to the Holy Land, it has no claims at all. If Obama wants reconciliation with the Arabs and Muslims, there is one easy way to get it: sell out Israel, by heaping pressure on Israel to halt construction in the settlements and agree to the creation of a Palestinian state. An official in the Foreign Ministry told *Israel Today*: 'The American public must wake up and realise that Obama is more Muslim than Christian'".

## NEW EU ALLIANCES ARE ANTI-RUSSIAN, SAYS MEDVEDEV

*According to World News in the Daily Telegraph, Russian President Dmitry Medvedev "has attacked the European Union for trying to forge closer relations with former Soviet states. At a summit between the EU and Russia in Khabarovsk, a city seven hours flight from Moscow, Mr Medvedev said a new EU partnership with six former Soviet states was anti-Russian in its makeup. He also warned of the possibility of a new European gas crisis by claiming Ukraine may be unable to meet payments for Russian energy".*

## US begins diplomatic Middle East peace deal

According to World News in the *Daily Telegraph*, "America began a fresh diplomatic offensive in the Middle East recently, aimed not only at unlocking the Palestinian dispute but bringing a truly comprehensive deal between Israel and its Arab neighbours. George Mitchell, the US special envoy to the region, said he had held 'candid and positive' talks with Bashar al Assad, the Syrian president, about the possibility of restarting Israeli-Syrian negotiations, as he recognised Syria as the key to peace. He then flew to Israel for talks in Tel Aviv with Barak, the Israeli defence minister, over freezing Jewish settlement building in the occupied West Bank and Arab East Jerusalem in an attempt to re-open talks with the Palestinians".

### **Catholics have high hopes**

*The pope's recent visit to the Middle East has profound implications for the Roman Catholic Church, for its papacy and for its relations with the Jewish people and Judaism. The pope went there as a leader of the biggest Christian denomination and also as a head of state, which means his every word has implications not only for faith but also for diplomacy and politics. His priority is to be a man of peace in a region marked by division, fear and mistrust. There could be conflict over other issues, as when the Holy See/Israel bilateral commission, which was set up to discuss controversial issues such as the Holy See's standing in Israel on property and taxation, failed to come to any agreements. President Shimon Peres entered the fray. He is pressing the government to hand over control of six key Christian sites to the Holy See, including the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth; the Coenaculum on Mount Zion in Jerusalem, where Jesus is said to have held the Last Supper; Gethsemane, which sits at the foot of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem; Mount Tabor; and the Church of the Multiplication on the Sea of Galilee. President Peres asked Interior Minister Eli Yishai to sign an order acceding sovereignty over these historic sites, including the garden of Gethsemane in Jerusalem, to the Vatican. Mr Yishai has so far refused to respond to the request.*

### **Pope supports Palestinian homeland**

The pope has pledged his support for the creation of a Palestinian homeland, and spoke of the "tragedy" of the separation barrier erected by Israel; but he has urged moderation, telling Palestinians they should refrain from violence. He said, "Although walls can easily be built, we all know that they do not last forever, they can be taken down". The pope expressed solidarity with moderate Palestinians such as Abbas, the president of the Palestinian national authority, when he gave his support to a "two-state solution".

### **US BACKS TWO-STATE FORMULA**

*Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's use of the words "two states for two peoples" at the start of a weekly cabinet meeting early in July was "most certainly" the result of intensive efforts by the US to restart the diplomatic process with the Palestinians, according to senior diplomatic officials reported in the Jerusalem Post. "Netanyahu uttered the 'magic formula' Washington had been urging him to say to his cabinet for months. The Palestinians have conditioned discussions with the Netanyahu government on an Israeli commitment to two states, as well as a settlement freeze still to be worked out. An agreement on this, he stressed, will necessitate the Palestinians recognising Israel as the 'state of the Jewish people', something that means the refugee issue will be solved outside Israel's borders".*

### **Call for UN to recognise Palestinian state**

The European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana called recently for the UN Security Council to recognise a Palestinian state even without a final-status agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

### **Increase in terrorist infiltration through Egypt's border**

The Israel Defence Force's Southern Command recently began constructing a barrier along part of the border near the Gaza Strip to try to stem infiltration by terrorists along the border with Egypt. The barrier, which includes a fence and barbed wire, is being constructed along a forty-kilometre stretch between the Kerem Shalom Crossing, at the southwest corner of the Gaza Strip, and the Israeli border town of Nitzana to the south. The border with Egypt is over 200 kilometres long; the section being sealed off is used frequently by drug smugglers and refugees entering Israel.

### **Tunnels targeted**

*Air force planes bombed five Gaza smuggling tunnels following rocket attacks on southern Israel in May. They were the first attacks from either side in two weeks.*

### **Weapons transfer to Hamas foiled**

An Iranian vessel loaded with weapons for transfer to Hamas via Sudan was recently sunk in the Red Sea by an unidentified missile ship believed to be Israeli, according to the *Jerusalem Post*. The vessel was attacked by either an Israeli or an American ship and destroyed. According to the report "the ship was destroyed at sea near the Sudanese coast—the cargo was to be taken through the Sudanese and Sinai deserts".

### **Richer gas reserves for Israel**

The natural gas reserves at the Tamar field off the coast of Haifa are 25-30 per cent richer than originally predicted, US oil operator Noble Energy Inc. announced on 8 July. The original prediction was that the field held 142 billion cubic metres of gas, but this has been increased to as much as 180 bcm.