

Israel's Netanyahu makes snap trip to London for Johnson talks

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JERUSALEM: With less than two weeks to go before Israel's general election, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said he is to visit London on Thursday for talks with Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

It said Netanyahu, facing what could be a tough fight for re-election on September 17, would also meet US Defense Secretary Mark Esper while in the British capital.

Netanyahu returns to Israel on Friday.

It would be his first meeting with Johnson or Esper since the two took up their current posts, his office said in a statement.

"The PM will discuss with British prime minister Johnson the situation in the (Middle East) region and how to repel Iranian terror and aggression," it said.

The meeting with Esper, it added, would focus on "Israel's security needs" after the two had spoken by phone on Tuesday and agreed to "expand their conversation in London."

Israeli media have said the United States and Israel are discussing the possible announcement of some form of defense alliance, likely to boost Netanyahu's image as an international statesman.

Just ahead of inconclusive April 9 parliamentary polls, US President Donald Trump acknowledged Israeli sovereignty over the Golan, in what amounted to a major pre-election gift to his close ally Netanyahu.

On March 25 the two men met in Washington for a signing of Trump's order recognizing Israel's right to the strategic Golan Heights it captured from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War.



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[UN envoy on Libya warns conflict could trigger chaos](#)

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United Nations: The UN special envoy to Libya warned Wednesday that without action by the Security Council, the country's war could escalate if outside patrons step up support for the warring sides.

"Many Libyans feel abandoned by part of the international community and

exploited by others," Ghassan Salame said by video link with the council. "Without the unequivocal support of this council and the broader international community for an immediate end to the Libyan conflict, I believe we are faced with two highly unpalatable scenarios," Salame added. One is "persistent and protracted low intensity conflict," he said. The other is increased support for either warring side by their outside patrons.

This, he said, would lead to "a sharp escalation that will assuredly plunge the entire region into chaos."

"The idea that war should be given a chance and that a military solution is at all possible is quite simply a chimera," said Salame, who has often complained that the council is not united on the Libyan conflict and that some members support one or the other of the warring sides.

Libya has been wracked by chaos since the 2011 uprising in which president Muammar Qaddafi was killed.

Strongman Khalifa Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army launched an offensive on April 4 to conquer the capital, Tripoli.

His soldiers are fighting those of the Government of National Accord led by Fayed Al-Sarraj.

A member of Lawyers for Justice in Libya, Marwa Mohamed, also told the council there was no clear message on Libya from the international community. During discussions on the conflict, several countries, such as Kuwait, South Africa, Indonesia and Germany, complained about what they called interference in that country's affairs and repeated violations in the past five months of an arms embargo imposed on Libya in 2011.

Major powers such as the US, Russia, France and Britain avoided giving speeches Wednesday, saving their turns for a closed door session to be held after the public one.



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Four wounded in rocket fire on Libyan capital's airport

[Palestinian women demand legal protection after suspected "honor killing"](#)

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RAMALLAH: Hundreds of Palestinians demonstrated in the West Bank on Wednesday to demand legal protection for women after a 21-year-old woman died last month in what rights groups say was a so-called honor killing.

A Palestinian Authority investigation is underway into the death of Isra'a Ghrayeb, a make-up artist who activists say was beaten by male relatives after a video posted on Instagram allegedly showed a meeting between her and a man who had proposed to her.

According to Palestinian media reports, Ghrayeb sustained serious spinal injuries after falling from a balcony in her home in Beit Sahour, near Bethlehem, while trying to escape an assault by her brothers. She died on Aug. 22.

At least 18 Palestinian women have been killed this year by family members angered at perceived damage to their honor, which may involve fraternizing with men or any infringement of conservative values regarding women, according to the General Union of Palestinian Women and Feminist Institutions.

Ghrayeb's family has denied the accusations. They said in a statement that Ghrayeb had a "mental condition" and died "after she had a heart attack, following an accidental fall into the (family's) courtyard."

The circumstances surrounding Ghrayeb's death have stirred outrage within the Palestinian territories and on social media, with rights activists demanding action against the alleged perpetrators and legal protection for women under the hashtag #JusticeforIsraa.

In the West Bank city of Ramallah, female demonstrators held signs reading: "We are all Isra'a" and "My body is my property. I don't need your supervision, your care, your honor."

"I'm here to say enough is enough. We've lost enough women. Enough victims have died, have been killed, have been tortured, raped, harassed, and still

there's no justice," said Amal Khayat, 30, an activist from Jerusalem. Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh said this week that several people had been detained for questioning over Ghrayeb's death as part of the inquiry by the Palestinian Authority (PA), which exercises limited self-rule in the Israel-occupied West Bank.

The Palestinian penal code dates to the 1960s and has been criticized for inadequate protection for women and lenient penalties for men who kill them in honor crimes.

"The case of Isra'a Ghrayeb shocked our conscience just like those before her. These are women and girls who dream to live in safety in a society free from violence and injustice," the General Union of Palestinian Women and Feminist Institutions said in a statement.

The group called on the Palestinian government to "develop targeted programs that teach the principle of gender equality" and to reform laws to ensure accountability for perpetrators.

Protesters voiced optimism that Wednesday's rally and others earlier this week would push the PA to make reforms. "The victims are a part of us, they're a part of our history," Khayat said. "We will continue (to protest) until we get justice."