

# Israel's new leader to present Iran plan in first White House visit

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JERUSALEM/WASHINGTON: New Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett plans to push for a new Iran strategy during his first White House visit.

He is saying he will urge US President Joe Biden not to revive the 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran.

Biden's aides hope the talks will set a positive tone for his relationship with Bennett, a far-right politician and high-tech millionaire who ended Benjamin Netanyahu's record 12-year run as prime minister in June.

This would stand in sharp contrast to years of tensions between the conservative Netanyahu, who was close to former President Donald Trump, and the last Democratic administration led by Barack Obama with Biden as his vice president.

The visit gives the US administration an opportunity to demonstrate business as usual with its closest Middle East ally while it contends with the chaotic situation in Afghanistan, Biden's biggest foreign policy crisis since taking office.

The talks will be relatively low-key. The two leaders are expected to speak briefly to a small pool of reporters during their Oval Office talks but will not hold a joint news conference.

Bennett is less dramatic but publicly just as adamant as Netanyahu in pledging not to allow Iran, which Israel views as an existential threat, to build a nuclear weapon, telling a cabinet meeting on Sunday the situation was at a critical point.

"Iran is advancing rapidly with uranium enrichment and has already significantly shortened the time it would take to accumulate the material required for a single nuclear bomb," he said.

Bennett said he would tell Biden: "This is the time to stop the Iranians, not to give them a lifeline in the form of re-entering an expired nuclear deal."

A US official said Bennett's expected entreaties for the Biden administration to drop its efforts to revive the agreement are not likely to bear fruit.

To Israeli acclaim, Trump in 2018 withdrew the United States from the deal between six world powers and Iran. He deemed it too advantageous for Tehran and reimposed US sanctions.

In a report seen last week by Reuters, the International Atomic Energy Agency said Iran had accelerated uranium enrichment to near weapons-grade.

Iran has consistently denied seeking a bomb, but the enrichment raised tensions with the West as both sides seek to resume talks on reviving their deal to curb Tehran's nuclear activities in return for the lifting of sanctions.

Bennett told his cabinet he would present Biden with "an orderly plan that we have formulated in the past two months to curb the Iranians, both in the

nuclear sphere and vis-à-vis regional aggression." He gave no further details.

Asked on Monday about any new Iran strategy proposal from Bennett, US State Department spokesman Ned Price said: "I will leave it to the Israeli prime minister to describe to the American president any thoughts that the Israeli government may have when it comes to Iran."

Bennett, 49, is the son of American immigrants to Israel. A former head of Israel's main West Bank settlers council, he heads an unlikely coalition of left-wing, right-wing, centrist and Arab parties.

With consensus on Palestinian statehood virtually impossible within the diverse Israeli government, Biden and his aides are not expected to press Bennett for any major concessions toward the Palestinians in his first foreign visit.

But even with little sign of US pressure to resume peace negotiations with the Palestinians that collapsed in 2014, Israel faces concern from Washington over its settlement activity in areas it captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

The Biden administration has already made clear it opposes further expansion of Jewish settlements on occupied land Palestinians seek for a state. Most countries consider such settlements illegal. Israel disputes this.

So far, Bennett, who has advocated annexation of parts of the West Bank, has moved cautiously on the settlement issue.

Scheduled approval last week of 2,200 new settler homes, along with 800 houses for Palestinians, was postponed, apparently to avoid dissonance with Washington ahead of his visit.

But rising tensions and violence along the Israel-Gaza border, three months after an 11-day war between Israeli forces and Palestinian militants, could cast a shadow over Bennett's trip.



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## [Doctor in Lebanon needs two motorcycles and a car to dodge traffic, reach woman in labor](#)

Tue, 2021-08-24 20:03

BEIRUT: Lebanon's massive fuel crisis obliged a doctor to use two motorcycles and a car to dodge roadblocks caused by petrol station queues and attend his patient's urgent delivery operation. In less than an hour, Lebanese obstetrician-gynecologist Dr. Julien Lahoud was forced to take unusual commuting methods to reach his patient, who was in labor since 8 a.m. Monday morning.

"My patient was in her ninth month, and I had previously operated on her for a C-section," Lahoud told Arab News on Tuesday, recounting what had happened due to blocked roads.

He said the "patient was in pain, and it took her a few hours to reach the hospital" in Ghazir, eastern Beirut.

The doctor had left his Beirut clinic toward Jounieh (around 25 km away) but was stuck in heavy, bumper-to-bumper traffic caused by roadblocks and

kilometers-long queues of cars waiting at stations along the Beirut-Dawra-Dbayyeh-Jounieh highway.

"Recently, we've been seeing cars queueing at petrol stations. As a precautionary measure, I have been keeping a bicycle in my car trunk and have used it for short distances," said Lahoud, explaining that would not have been an option for Monday's incident.

Monday traffic was at a near standstill, and the first part of the doctor's route to Ghazir had to be on a motorcycle.

"I arranged for a car ride at some point where traffic had eased up near Dbayyeh. The car moved for some distance but traffic came at a complete halt after the Nahr Al-Kalb tunnel," he said.

Not thinking twice, he opened the car window and stopped the first motorcyclist he spotted. "Without even knowing the motorcyclist, I didn't hesitate to ask if he could give me a quick lift to the hospital. He instantly said yes," Lahoud said, calling the motorcyclist "gallant" and a "savior."

A public health professional, Lahoud explained that his patient's medical situation was critical, as she had already had a C-section, and time was a major factor.

"Mercifully, I arrived on time and she had a smooth delivery. Her husband arrived late due to traffic."

Lahoud took to social media to share his experience, saying that both mother and child fared well, though the same could not be said of his country.

"Lebanon is NOT fine," he wrote.

I was delivered to do an urgent delivery. Both Mom and baby are fine. However Lebanon is NOT fine [#لبنان\\_ليس\\_خير](#) [#لبنان\\_ينهار](#)  
[pic.twitter.com/jZ1W865jN8](https://pic.twitter.com/jZ1W865jN8)

– julien lahoud (@julienylahoud) [August 23, 2021](#)

Doctors have been acutely suffering the effects of the fuel crisis and blocked roads in the past few weeks, Lahoud said.

“There are some petrol station owners who used to refuel our tanks, but unfortunately we are hesitant to approach them anymore because they are constantly angered by this ongoing crisis,” he said, explaining that doctors have had to rely on each other up for support.

Lebanon’s fuel prices are expected to double after the state decided on Saturday to change the exchange rate used to price petroleum products in a bid to ease crippling shortages that have brought the country to a standstill.

Roads have been clogged across Lebanon as motorists have queued for the little gasoline left. Meanwhile, prices soar on the black market, and some confrontations over gasoline have turned deadly.



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Crisis-hit Lebanon to reopen classrooms starting next month  
Prices at pump soar in Lebanon after new subsidy cut

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# Algeria says cutting diplomatic ties with Morocco

Tue, 2021-08-24 19:22

ALGIERS: Algeria is cutting diplomatic relations with Morocco, Foreign Minister Ramdane Lamamra said on Tuesday at a news conference, accusing its neighbor of "hostile actions."

Morocco and Algeria have had strained relations for decades, mainly over the issue of Western Sahara, and the border between the two countries has been closed since 1994.

"The Moroccan kingdom has never stopped its hostile actions against Algeria," he said.

Morocco's Foreign Ministry could not be immediately reached for comment. King Mohammed VI has called for improved ties with Algeria.

The cutting of diplomatic relations is effective from Tuesday but consulates in each country will remain open, Lamamra said.

Algeria last week said lethal wildfires were the work of groups it has labelled terrorist, one of which it said was backed by Morocco.

Lamamra cited what he called Moroccan support for one of those groups, which seeks autonomy in Algeria's Kabylie region, and said Rabat had spied on Algerian officials and failed to meet bilateral obligations including over Western Sahara.

Algeria backs the Polisario movement that seeks independence for Western Sahara, which Morocco regards as part of its own territory.



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Algeria to review relations with Morocco after 'hostile acts' Algeria forest fires extinguished: emergency services

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## [Tunisian president extends suspension of parliament's work](#)

Author:

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Tue, 2021-08-24 02:09

TUNIS: Tunisian President Kais Saied extended on Monday the suspension of parliament until further notice, the presidency said. He also extended the suspension of the immunity of members of parliament. Saied last month dismissed his prime minister, froze parliament and assumed executive authority in a sudden intervention that his Islamist opponents have labeled a coup but that he said was necessary to save the country from collapse.



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## [Aid groups: Millions in Syria, Iraq losing access to water](#)

Author:

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BEIRUT: Millions of people in Syria and Iraq are at risk of losing access to water, electricity and food amid rising temperatures, record low water levels due to lack of rainfall and drought, international aid groups warned on Monday.

The two neighboring countries, both battered by years of conflict and mismanagement, are in need of rapid action to combat severe water shortages, the groups said.

The drought is also disrupting electricity supplies as low water levels impact dams, which in turn impact essential infrastructure, including health facilities.

More than 12 million people in both countries are affected, including 5 million in Syria who are directly dependent on the Euphrates River.

In Iraq, the loss of access to water from the Euphrates and Tigris River, and drought, threaten at least 7 million people.



Some 400 sq. km of agricultural land faces drought, the groups said, adding that two dams in northern Syria, supplying power to 3 million people, face imminent closure.

Carsten Hansen, regional director for the Norwegian Refugee Council, one of the aid groups behind the warning, said that for hundreds of thousands of Iraqis still displaced and many more still fleeing for their lives in Syria, the unfolding water crisis “will soon become an unprecedented catastrophe pushing more into displacement.”

Other aid groups included Mercy Corps, the Danish Refugee Council, CARE international, ACTED and Action Against Hunger.

They warned that several Syrian provinces – including Hassakah, Aleppo and Raqqa in the north and Deir Ezzor in the east – have witnessed a rise in water-borne diseases.

The areas include displacement settlements housing tens of thousands of people displaced in Syria’s 10-year conflict.

CARE’s regional chief for Mideast and North Africa, Nirvana Shawky, urged authorities and donor governments to act swiftly to save lives.

The latest crisis comes on top of war, COVID-19 and severe economic decline, she said.

“There is no time to waste,” said Gerry Garvey of the Danish Refugee Council, adding that the water crisis is likely to increase conflict in an already destabilized region.

Severe water shortages have also hit Lebanon, which is mired in the worst economic and financial crisis in its modern history, where more than 4 million people – mainly vulnerable children and families – face critical water shortages in the coming days, the UN’s children agency warned last week.

In Lebanon, severe fuel shortages have also halted the work of thousands of private generators long relied on for electricity in the corruption-plagued country.

UNICEF called for urgent restoration of the power supply to keep water services running.

Lebanon’s rivers are also heavily polluted.

Activists have long warned about pollution levels caused by sewage and waste in the Litani River, the country’s longest and a major source for water supply, irrigation and hydroelectricity.



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Graft and security issues feed the trade in Iraq's past