The Resignation of Lebanon’s Prime Minister ................................................................. 2
Interview with Avi Issacharoff on Palestinian Reconciliation ................................. 3
Remembering Sadat’s Historic Visit: 40 Years Later.................................................. 7
The U.N. Partition Resolution: A Milestone on the Road to Israel’s Independence...... 9
Washington Brief: A Recap of News from the Hill and Beyond .............................. 13
ANALYSIS

The Resignation of Lebanon’s Prime Minister

On Nov. 4, Lebanon’s Prime Minister Saad Hariri unexpectedly resigned, condemning Iran and Hizballah’s growing regional dominance. While it remains to be seen how this resignation will affect Lebanon, one thing is clear: Iran and its terrorist proxy Hizballah are effectively consolidating power across the region.

In a televised address from Riyadh, Hariri explained his decision to vacate the post: “Over the past decades, Hizballah has unfortunately managed to impose a fait accompli in Lebanon by the force of its weapons, which it alleges is a resistance weapon. Lebanon and the great Lebanese people became in the eye of the storm [sic] and subjected to international condemnations and economic sanctions because of Iran and its arm Hizballah.”

IRAN USES HIZBALLAH TO EXERT STRONG INFLUENCE IN LEBANON.

Since the 1979 founding of the Islamic Republic, Iran has exported its revolutionary presence throughout the Middle East in a bid to restore Persia’s historic imperial role and to supplant American influence. To help accomplish its goals, Tehran provides the Lebanon-based Hizballah up to $1 billion annually and transfers huge weapon stocks to the terrorist organization—including an estimated 150,000 rockets and missiles, many of which are capable of striking any location in Israel.

For more than 30 years, Hizballah has served as a de-facto arm of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Its unmatched military and political influence in Lebanon allow it to: (1) facilitate Iran’s revolutionary goals, (2) promote the spread of Iran’s anti-Israel and anti-American ideologies, and (3) ensure that the Lebanese government is unable to stop the transfer of Iranian weapons across the Lebanese-Syrian border. In addition, it directly threatens Israel, props up the brutal Assad regime in Syria and jeopardizes Lebanon’s sovereignty.

Former Prime Minister Hariri was appointed to Lebanon’s premiership last November as part and parcel of an agreement to choose Gen. Michel Aoun—the hand-picked candidate of Iran and Hizballah—as president. As the Sunni leader of the Saudi-backed March 14 Alliance, Hariri initially opposed Aoun, but he subsequently dropped his opposition. This reversal was stunning, considering that Hizballah was directly responsible for the 2005 assassination of Hariri’s father, former Prime Minister Rafic Hariri.

During Hariri’s tenure, Hizballah won “key appointments in the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF), the intelligence and security agencies, the judiciary and state administrative office,” according to Tony Badran, an expert on Lebanon at the Foundation for the Defense of Democracies. “Hariri’s function was simply to provide Hizballah with cover...lobbying Washington for softer sanctions...”
ISRAEL IS ALARMED BY TEHRAN’S AMBITIONS.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu stated that Hariri’s resignation should be a “wake-up call to the international community” regarding the threat posed by Iran’s regional ambitions. Iran is “turning Syria into a second Lebanon,” Netanyahu tweeted. “This aggression endangers not only Israel, but the entire Middle East.” Perhaps most concerning, in February 2017, President Aoun declared Hizballah an “essential part of Lebanon’s defense.”

THE WAY FORWARD FOR THE UNITED STATES

While the United States quickly reaffirmed support for Lebanon after Hariri’s resignation, it is incumbent upon American leaders to review our relationships there. Iran continues to undermine Lebanon’s sovereignty and employ Hizballah to assert its influence to threaten the Jewish state. The United States must devise a comprehensive bipartisan strategy to counter the threat from Hizballah. To this end, Congress should complete action on the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Amendments Act of 2017 (S.1595 and H.R.3329), which would target the terrorist group and those that support it.

Interview with Avi Issacharoff on Palestinian Reconciliation

L ast month, the Palestinian political party Fatah and the terrorist organization Hamas signed a reconciliation deal that would bring the Gaza Strip—controlled by Hamas—back under the civil control of Fatah. The two fought a bloody war nearly ten years ago; subsequently, Fatah was expelled from the Gaza Strip. This most recent reconciliation attempt has resulted in some progress, raising questions and concerns. The Near East Report caught up with Times of Israel analyst and Palestinian expert Avi Issacharoff to find out more:

Q: WHAT IS YOUR VIEW OF THE MOST RECENT PALESTINIAN RECONCILIATION ATTEMPT? IS IT DIFFERENT FROM PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS? WHAT DO YOU HEAR FROM PALESTINIANS AND ISRAELIS?

Let me leave aside the Israeli perspective for now. I do believe that something new is going on. Maybe I am a bit more optimistic than the average Israeli analyst, especially compared to the “old school analysts” who have been very skeptical about it. I believe that something is going on here that is different from the former reconciliation attempts, for the simple fact that Hamas is willing to give up civil control of the Gaza Strip. Now, I know it is not much from the Israeli perspective given that Hamas still has its military wing, but from the Hamas perspective it is kind of a statement—meaning they are
saying “we give up the control or rule of the government and we acknowledge that we fail on the governmental side. Meaning we cannot really manage issues like municipality, sewage, water, electricity, and at the end of the day we are good to be a resistance organization but not to be a real government.” This is why I do look at this attempt differently.

I think there are a few additional reasons: One of the most dominant and major ones is Egypt. The Egyptian approach is very, very supportive of reconciliation. Even the U.S. and Israeli approaches are very, very careful about it—no one is looking to stop or ruin the reconciliation that is going on.

Being realistic about it, I do not expect now that we might have genuine reconciliation—that there could be real unity. Hamas will keep its armed forces in Gaza. It will keep its military wing in Gaza. There’s no chance that we’ll see them give up their weapons, rockets, etc. etc. What we might see is the PA [Palestinian Authority] taking over. They took over passages, they took over the Erez checkpoint, they took over the Kerem Shalom checkpoint. That’s dramatic; that’s a change for Palestinians living in Gaza.

Q: WHAT IS MOTIVATING HAMAS AND FATAH TO PURSUE A UNITY GOVERNMENT AT THIS TIME? HOW LIKELY IS IT THAT HAMAS WILL AGREE TO DISARM AND TO ACCEPT THE QUARTET PRINCIPLES (NAMELY, TO RECOGNIZE ISRAEL, RENOUNCE TERROR AND ACCEPT PRIOR AGREEMENTS)?

Hamas will not [pursue a unity government], but no one is asking them to. They are not supposed to be part of the government—at most they are supposed to be part of a technocratic organization, if there is any sort of new government. So, it is not that Hamas as an organization needs to recognize anything. If there will be a unity government—that government will need to recognize the Quartet demands. But Hamas will never recognize the State of Israel—it is as simple as that.

I think that part of the motivation for Hamas withdrawing from the civil control of Gaza is their understanding that they cannot comply with the international demands—the Quartet demands—and at the same time continue to meet the demands of the local population. If you ask Hamas and Fatah, the fear of having a ‘Gaza Spring’ or ‘Palestinian Spring’ in Gaza—meaning that there would be demonstrations, marches and protests against Hamas—is one of the issues that pushed them. They understand that the humanitarian situation in Gaza is on the edge of a catastrophe, and I do believe this is what led and pushed Hamas to understand that they must avert this.

Why should Hamas continue to manage issues like sewage and electricity if they can pass it
to the PA? Yes, the PA would get the taxes, but Hamas already knows how to survive without the tax revenue and they will continue to survive without it. I think this is the approach it is taking in Gaza now.

And we must keep in mind that the leaders of Hamas today are different from those who led Hamas about six months ago – or a bit more than that. Yahya Sinwar and Ismail Haniyeh are the ones who are leading the reconciliation approach. And they are pushing very, very aggressively for some kind of reconciliation.

Q: HOW WOULD RECONCILIATION AFFECT THE PA’S SECURITY COOPERATION WITH ISRAEL?

As of now, in the West Bank, it doesn’t. I recently had an interview with the PA chief of police, Hazem Atallah, who acknowledged that security coordination between Israel and the PA has been renewed.

If you remember, on July 14 after the crisis at the Temple Mount, the PA announced that it will stop security coordination. It didn’t stop completely, but yes, the profile was lowered.

Now, they are back on track to the classic coordination—meetings, arresting Hamas and Islamic Jihad, etc.

I think this cooperation could really accelerate the coordination over the Gaza Strip. Meaning if you now have the PA completely in control of checkpoints—in Erez and Kerem Shalom—it means Israelis and the PA will need to coordinate more regarding the Gaza passages. You don’t have any more Hamas checkpoints on the southern part of Erez. I know it doesn’t mean much for Americans or Israelis, but for Palestinians living in Gaza…not having a Hamas checkpoint one kilometer away from the Erez checkpoint, this is huge. Meaning: When you go to Israel for medical treatment or business or whatever, you don’t need to go through Hamas investigation time after time. You don’t have to come under pressure to becoming an informant for Hamas security forces, meaning: go back to Israel, collect the information, and return to Hamas. They did it. They were doing it all the years that they controlled the south points of the Erez checkpoint. And now the Palestinians are free. They can even bring alcohol—I know that it sounds minor—but think about it, for last 10 years they couldn’t even bring alcohol from Israel because of Hamas’ regulation.

Q: FOLLOWING THE RECONCILIATION ANNOUNCEMENT, HAMAS’ LEADER IN THE GAZA STRIP, YAHYA SINWAR, DECLARED THAT IT IS STILL HAMAS’ INTENTION TO “WIPE ISRAEL OUT.” WHAT DO YOU MAKE OF THIS?

This is the Hamas that we know; I’m not surprised at all. You know they don’t like us. But they understand that for now they need to be open to some sort of concession. Yet, bottom
line, if they could push a button and wipe us out, they would do it. But they understand they cannot, although Yahya Sinwar has been one of the most radical political leaders of Hamas. Since he’s been released from jail, he has understood slowly, slowly, that Hamas could not win. If he thought he could win a war and wipe Israel from the map, he would go for a war. He has all the rockets and explosives, but he doesn’t use them.

Coincidentally, he’s arresting members of Al-Qaeda and ISIS-affiliated groups operating in Gaza in order to prevent escalation. I feel that that says a lot. Of course, in order to be seen as the same old classic Hamas, for the sake of public relations they have to say they will wipe out Israel one day…whatever. The bottom line is that despite the statement, Sinwar is doing the opposite and that’s what’s important.

Q: YOU RECENTLY TWEETED: “PA RECEIVED FROM HAMAS THE CONTROL OVER THE BORDER PASSAGES OF GAZA. RECONCILIATION BEHIND THE CORNER OR JUST A PR MOVE?” CAN YOU ELABORATE ON THIS? AND WHAT HAS THE PROGRESS OF THE PA TAKING OVER CONTROL OF GAZA’S BORDER CROSSINGS LOOKED LIKE?

There’s one word that I can sum it up with—money. Money. Money. The tweet is an old tweet, before we understood what happened on the ground. The bottom line is that Hamas removed the checkpoints outside of the Kerem Shalom checkpoint, and with it all of the taxes that it used to collect. Think about it, 1,000 trucks a day and each and every truck needed to pay taxes to Hamas’ government. Hamas gave it up. It’s millions of dollars a month. It’s tens or hundreds of millions of dollars per year. Big money. And they gave it up for the reconciliation. This is dramatic.

And then, there is what the Palestinians call the Arba-Arba checkpoint south of Erez—it’s a major concession from Hamas’ side related to security issues. It was one of the best locations for them to urge people to become their agents, their informants. It was one of the best ways for them to control the entrance to Gaza strip, so that they knew who is getting in—and they stopped it.

Q: WHAT ROLE IS THERE FOR AMERICA TO PLAY IN PALESTINIAN RECONCILIATION?

I think that America played a very major role by not intervening—meaning they didn’t try to stop it, they didn’t try to block it. When PA President Mahmoud Abbas felt that there was no resistance, and that the United States wasn’t going against it, he understood that he could move forward. I believe that the American approach, and don’t be mistaken… also the Israeli approach, is that in a way it’s better for Israel and the U.S. to have Gaza in a more normal situation humanitarianly speaking, than having it on the brink of a catastrophe and split between Hamas and Fatah. Having the PA over there, giving more money, food and work for the people will probably decrease the chance of another war in the next few years.

Q: PENDING U.S. LEGISLATION, THE TAYLOR FORCE ACT, WOULD ELIMINATE ASSISTANCE THAT DIRECTLY BENEFITS THE PA UNLESS IT ENDS THE ABHORRENT PRACTICE OF PAYING SALARIES TO TERRORISTS AND THEIR FAMILIES. WILL THE BILL, IF PASSED, HAVE ITS INTENDED EFFECT OF ENDING PALESTINIAN PRISONER PAYMENTS? IS THERE ANYTHING THAT CAN BE DONE TO END THIS PRACTICE, OR DOES ABBAS
PERCEIVE IT AS SO CENTRAL TO HIS SURVIVAL THAT HE WOULD NEVER END THE PAYMENTS?

Wow, that’s a tough question. My feeling, according to what I’ve heard and read, is that it is not going to stop, even if it is going to cost Abbas a lot of money. But then again, never say “never” in the ever-changing Middle East—statements, approaches, everything is changing. Even if Abbas is saying today “I will never, ever…” it might be changed after a few months or years, depending on what he gets from the U.S. or from Israel. He might have something to offer to his people and he might give up paying the salaries of killers, terrorists, etc.

Q: AS PA PRESIDENT ABBAS APPROACHES HIS 83RD BIRTHDAY, WHAT IS THE MOST LIKELY SUCCESSION SCENARIO? HOW COULD REGIONAL ACTORS PLAY A ROLE?

So, this depends on the reconciliation. If we have reconciliation, real reconciliation and elections, there will probably be some kind of very ordinary or organized succession process, meaning two months of some kind of interim government or interim Palestinian president. We don’t know who because we’d need to have the elections before in order to have an interim president. But we can assume that if there is real reconciliation, we will see elections coming after two months.

If we do not see reconciliation—it will be a terrible mess, as there is no real successor. There’s no real succession mechanism in place, and without real reconciliation it’s probably going to be that the PLO and Fatah will take over in one way or another and decide who is going to be the next president.
Menachem Begin, who extended the official invitation for the visit. The two leaders held an historic meeting in Jerusalem. Then Sadat addressed the Knesset, promising:

“Today I tell you, and declare it to the whole world, that we accept to live with you in permanent peace based on justice. We do not want to encircle you or be encircled ourselves by destructive missiles ready for launching, nor by the shells of grudges and hatred.

“I come to you today on solid ground to shape a new life and to establish peace… But to be absolutely frank with you, I took this decision after long thought, knowing that it constitutes a great risk.”

Sadat’s 1977 visit was viewed by Israelis and the world as an earthshaking shift in the region. Over the previous two decades, Egypt—the largest, most populous and most powerful Arab country—had led multiple Arab efforts to destroy the Jewish state. But in a gesture of hope and goodwill, both Egypt and Israel were reaching out to each other in peace and acceptance.

A LASTING OUTCOME IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Following Sadat’s trip, Israel and Egypt signed the Camp David Accords on Sept. 17, 1978, establishing the path for permanent peace between the two nations.

Six months later, on March 26, 1979, Sadat, Begin and U.S. President Jimmy Carter joined hands on the lawn of the White House. Together, they signed the final peace treaty and other documents ending decades of war and paving the way for diplomatic and commercial relations.

Each side paid a price for the first peace agreement between the State of Israel and one of its Arab neighbors. Israel took what it saw as a major security risk by retuning all of the Sinai Peninsula to Egypt, which it had won during

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Moving forward, the United States must continue to provide protection and support for the Egyptian-Israeli accord. And the courage displayed by Egyptian and Israeli leaders should serve as a model for future Arab-Israeli peace endeavors, which can help bring stability, prosperity and security to the Middle East.

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The U.N. Partition Resolution: A Milestone on the Road to Israel’s Independence

In 1947, the United Nations passed a resolution calling for the partition of the British Mandate for Palestine into two states—a Jewish state and an Arab state. Due to the violent Arab opposition to U.N. Resolution 181, it was never implemented. Yet the resolution constitutes one of Israel’s four foundational documents, along with the 1897 First Zionist Congress’s platform, the 1917 Balfour Declaration, and Israel’s 1948 Declaration of Independence.

Unlike its two predecessors—the Zionist platform and the Balfour Declaration—which respectively called for a Jewish “homeland” and a “national home for the Jewish people,” the U.N. resolution specifically proposed the establishment of a “Jewish state.” Adopted with a required two-thirds vote, the resolution constituted the first modern-day, international recognition of full Jewish statehood in the ancestral homeland of the Jewish people.

PRELUDE

Although Britain prevailed in World War II, the war critically depleted its treasury and manpower. Subsequently, London began to divest itself of much of its worldwide empire, beginning with problematic places where large British forces were needed to suppress local revolts. The British Mandate for Palestine, awarded by the League of Nations in 1920, was one such place given the local Jewish community’s armed struggle for independence and the need to restore order following frequent skirmishes between Jews and Arabs.

In response to a British government decision in February 1947 to terminate the Mandate and request the U.N. General Assembly to “make recommendations…concerning the future government of Palestine,” the U.N. Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) was formed three months later. Composed of 11 neutral countries, it produced a report for the U.N. by that September. Most notably, its recommendations included the partition of the Mandate territory into a Jewish state and an Arab state.

U.S. POSITION

In 1947, the U.S. Department of State, Department of Defense and Central Intelligence Agency all vehemently opposed Jewish statehood. They—and many other opponents of a Jewish state—argued that it would undermine U.S. relations with the Arabs. Arab nations, they claimed, would turn to the Soviet Union, with disastrous consequences for Mideast oil supplies, U.S. military bases and business interests. These Americans also believed that a nascent Jewish state would be unable to withstand an Arab invasion, forcing America to...
intervene militarily.

Supporters of Jewish statehood argued that partition was fair, there was no reasonable alternative, it would provide a home for Jewish refugees mired in displaced-persons (DP) camps in Europe, and that recommendations by an organ of the newly created U.N. should be supported.

In addition, although presidential elections were still nearly a year away, President Harry Truman may have been influenced by the strong American public support for Jewish statehood following the recent tragedy of the ship *Exodus 1947*, whose passengers—thousands of Jewish refugees from Europe—were forced by the British Navy to return from Palestine to Germany, where they were forcibly removed from the ship and taken to two DP camps. After much vacillation, Truman decided to support the UNSCOP recommendation to partition Palestine.

Yet the U.S. bureaucracy continued to resist. The State Department first suggested that the United States recommend transferring the Negev desert to the proposed Arab state. When this suggestion failed, the department did nothing to persuade U.N. members to support partition, evidently hoping to prevent the formation of the required two-third majority.

A few pro-Zionist U.S. officials, headed by Special Assistant to the President for Minority Affairs David Niles and Special Counsel Clark Clifford—at their own initiative—lobbied U.N. member states to vote for partition, as did American Zionist supporters outside the government.

### THE VOTE

The historic vote on Resolution 181 took place on Nov. 29, 1947. Virtually the entire Jewish world followed the dramatic vote on the radio with bated breath. Thanks in part to American and Soviet support, the U.N. adopted the resolution by a 72-percent majority—33 to 13 (with 10 abstentions and 1 absent)—thereby approving UNSCOP’s recommendation to partition Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state. In addition to the United States and the Soviet Union, all Western nations except Britain and Greece voted in favor of the resolution, as did all Eastern Bloc states except Yugoslavia, and most of the Latin American delegations. All Arab and other Muslim-majority countries voted against, as did India, Greece and Cuba. Among the abstentions, the most significant were Britain, China, and Yugoslavia.

### THE RESOLUTION AND ITS AFTERMATH

Stripped to its essence, the resolution divided the British Mandate for Palestine into a Jewish state and an Arab state to be joined by economic union, with the Jerusalem region, including Bethlehem, to come under international control.

Some have wondered why the resolution called for an Arab, not a Palestinian, state alongside the Jewish state. The reason: Under the British Mandate for Palestine, all residents—Arabs and
Jews alike—were officially termed “Palestinian nationals.” Thus, the Jewish-owned Jerusalem Post was then called Palestine Post, and the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra was then the Palestine Philharmonic Orchestra. Use of the term “Palestinian” exclusively for Arabs came later.

Despite its many flaws—from both Arab and Zionist perspectives—the resolution was immediately accepted by the leadership of the local Jewish community, headed by future Israeli Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion. Throughout the country, Jews danced in the streets as soon as the results of the vote became known.

Arabs, however, unanimously rejected the resolution and vowed to prevent its implementation. Within hours, armed Palestinians launched attacks on the Jewish community. In addition, the Arab League, composed of all Arab states, vehemently rejected Jewish statehood and vowed to destroy it. The league’s secretary general, Azzam Pasha, was quoted as saying on Oct. 11, 1947, “It will be a war of extermination and a momentous massacre which will be spoken of like the Mongol massacres and the Crusades.”

Several months later, just hours after the British Army left Palestine and Israel declared independence on May 14, 1948, the armies of five Arab states—Egypt, Syria, Iraq, Jordan (then known as Transjordan), and Lebanon—invaded the newborn Jewish state with the explicit goal of destroying it. Over the next nine months, three weeks and two days, Israel fought for its survival, ultimately signing separate armistice agreements with Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, and Syria.

**BORDERS**

Even a quick glance at the 1947 U.N. Partition map makes plain that the borders assigned to the Jewish state were extraordinarily restrictive, with three sections just touching on each other with no geographical contiguity. Much of the Galilee, part of northwestern Negev, and the southern coastal area (including today’s Ashdod and Ashkelon) were to go to the Arab state, which also would have incorporated an area much larger than today’s West Bank, including Ramle, Lod and Beersheba; and Jaffa was to become an Arab enclave. Most important, the jewel in the crown—Jerusalem—was to be a separate international entity surrounded by the Arab state, with no access from the Jewish state. Had the partition plan been implemented, in time, Jerusalem would have likely been taken over by the surrounding Arab state.
Nonetheless, the Jewish community joyously accepted the partition plan while the Arabs rejected it, seeking instead to destroy the Jewish state by force. The ensuing Arab-Israeli war led to more secure boundaries for Israel, officially known as the 1949 Armistice Lines, and—inaccurately—as the pre-1967 borders.

Israel’s detractors have presented these improved boundaries as evidence of “Zionist expansionism.” Left unmentioned is this fact: Had the Arabs accepted partition as did the Jews, Israel would have lived within the narrow partition borders. The expansion of Israel’s territory stemmed from its defensive War of Independence, which came about solely because of the Arabs’ failed military attempt to annihilate it in defiance of the U.N. resolution. The 1949 Armistice Lines, which were agreed upon by all of Israel’s Arab neighbors, simply reflected the deployment of the opposing forces at the end of the war.

In addition, some detractors have argued that the U.N. resolution was unfair because the Arab majority in Palestine was to receive less than half the land. In fact, the U.N. not only assigned the territory of each state according to its majority population, but also balanced the larger size of the Jewish state by including in it much of the barren Negev desert to constitute more than half its territory. At the time, the Negev was regarded as economically worthless.

REFUGEES

Few issues have been used more consistently to demonize Israel than the enduring existence of Palestinian refugees. Detractors argue that Israel expelled Palestinians during the war, which the Arabs call Nakba (“catastrophe” in Arabic), thus Israel is legally and morally bound to allow the refugees and their millions of descendants to “return” to land within its borders.

Missing in this narrative is the key point: All Palestinian refugees became refugees because of the aggressive war that the Palestinian leadership and the Arab governments waged against Israel. There were no refugees on Nov. 29, 1947—the day the partition resolution was adopted. Had the Arabs accepted the resolution as did the Jews, there would have been no war and hence no refugees.

During the war itself the record was mixed. The vast majority of the refugees simply ran for their lives because of the fighting; some heeded the call of Arab leaders to leave in order to facilitate the Arab invasion; and others were displaced from highly strategic locations within Israel, particularly around what became Israel’s sole international airport near Tel Aviv.

But the main point is that the fundamental responsibility for the refugee problem lies exclusively with the Palestinian leadership and Arab governments, which initiated and fought an unjust war that caused hundreds of thousands of Palestinians to become refugees. In addition, the problem has been exacerbated in two ways: by Arab nations that deliberately prevented the assimilation of Palestinian refugees, relegating them to refugee camps; and by the creation of a U.N. agency (UNRWA) that has perpetuated, aggravated and expanded the problem by granting refugee status to all descendants of male refugees.

CONCLUSION

Seventy years after its passage, the momentous historic importance of the 1947 U.N. partition resolution remains undiminished. By conferring, for the first time, full international legitimacy on the creation of a Jewish state in the historic Land of Israel, the resolution helped pave the way to Israel’s Declaration of Independence less than six months later. The resolution’s violent Arab rejection led to Israel’s War of Independence, which tragically cost
more than 6,000 Jewish lives, but resulted in much safer boundaries for Israel than those envisioned by the resolution. It also caused the flight of hundreds of thousands of Palestinian refugees, an issue that is still unjustly exploited by Israel’s detractors.

Yet Israel would have never been established in any boundaries had the Jewish community failed to create effective civilian and defense institutions under the British Mandate, which enabled Israel to emerge as a viable state and defeat the invading Arab armies. This outcome was immensely helped by President Truman’s decision to vote for partition and, subsequently, to recognize the State of Israel just minutes after its Declaration of Independence.

On Oct. 25 the House passed the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Amendments Act of 2017 (H.R. 3329) by voice vote. The legislation would strengthen and expand the scope of economic and financial sanctions imposed by the Hizballah International Financing Prevention Act of 2015. It targets foreign governments that knowingly provide significant financial support to Hizballah and foreign individuals and companies that aid its fundraising or recruitment activities. Last month, the Senate passed companion legislation (S. 1595). Reps. Ed Royce (R-CA) and Eliot Engel (D-NY) introduced the measure.

Also on Oct. 25, the House adopted the Hizballah’s Illicit Use of Civilians as Defenseless Shields Act (H.R. 3342) by voice vote. The bill would require the president to impose sanctions on foreign persons responsible for the use of civilians, prisoners of war, and other noncombatants as human shields, in violation of international law. Reps. Mike Gallagher (R-WI) and Tom Suozzi (D-NY) authored the bill.

Finally, the House passed a resolution urging
the European Union to designate Hizballah in its entirety as a terrorist organization and increase pressure on it and its members (H.Res. 359). Passed by voice vote on Oct. 25, the resolution encourages the EU to expand this designation beyond Hizballah’s so-called military wing. Reps. Ted Deutch (D-FL) and Gus Bilirakis (R-FL) introduced the legislation. “More can be done to counter the Iranian proxy Hizballah, and that begins with calling them what they are – a terrorist organization committed to the destruction of Israel and undermining the values and interests of the United States,” Rep. Deutch said.

House Foreign Affairs Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Member Eliot Engel (D-NY) issued a statement on behalf of the House Foreign Relations Committee praising the four measures. “Hizballah is Iran’s leading terrorist proxy, and it is only growing more dangerous. It now has an arsenal of more than 100,000 rockets aimed at Israel…Hizballah has taken hundreds of thousands of lives, including American lives. With the House’s action, we send a strong message that the United States will not allow this threat to go unchecked. These critical measures will impose new sanctions to crack down on Hizballah’s financing, and hold it accountable for its acts of death and destruction.”

ISRAEL’S DAVID’S SLING WINS PRESTIGIOUS U.S. DEFENSE AWARD

David’s Sling medium-range anti-missile system was awarded the Technology Pioneer Award by the U.S. Missile Defense Agency at the 2017 Multinational Ballistic Missile Defense confab in Boston. Jointly developed by Israel’s Rafael Advanced Defense Systems and the United States’ Raytheon Company, David’s Sling is designed to intercept short-range to medium-range rockets and missiles. Israel Missile Defense Organization Director Moshe Patel, who accepted the award on behalf of Israel, called the defense system’s capabilities a “significant breakthrough in the world of interception technology.” “[David’s Sling] is an important component of Israel’s operational capability to defend the country against regional missile threats,” he said.

HOUSE COMMITTEEadopts legislation to penalize support of terrorism

On Nov. 15, the U.S. House Foreign Affairs Committee (HFAC) adopted the bipartisan Taylor Force Act (H.R. 1164), which would eliminate funding that directly benefits the Palestinian Authority if it continues its abhorrent practice of paying salaries to terrorists or their families. The panel also passed two other measures targeting supporters of terrorism.

Originally introduced by Reps. Doug Lamborn (R-CO) and Lee Zeldin (R-NY), the Taylor Force Act was adopted as an amendment in the form of a substitute authored by HFAC Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) and Ranking Democrat Eliot Engel (D-NY). The bill was named in honor of U.S. Army veteran Taylor Force, who was killed by a Palestinian terrorist in Tel Aviv last year. Versions of the bill have been adopted in the Senate by the Foreign Relations and Appropriations Committees.

HFAC also passed the Palestinian International Terrorism Support Prevention Act of 2017 (H.R. 2712), which was introduced by Reps. Brian Mast (R-FL) and Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ). This bipartisan measure imposes sanctions on foreign persons and governments that provide support to Palestinian terrorist groups—including
Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad.

Finally, the panel adopted the Hamas Human Shields Prevention Act (H.R. 3542), which imposes sanctions on the terrorist organization Hamas and its related entities that use civilians as human shields. This bipartisan legislation was sponsored by Reps. Joe Wilson (R-SC) and Seth Moulton (D-MA).

**U.S. SENATORS PRESS HALEY FOR STRONGER IRAN INSPECTIONS**

On Oct. 26, a group of Republican senators sent a letter to U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley urging her to call on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) to strengthen reporting and verification requirements on Iran’s nuclear program.

Spearheaded by Sen. David Perdue (R-GA), the letter requests Ambassador Haley to work with her colleagues at the U.N. to address the IAEA’s “reporting shortcomings and vague inspection boundaries.” Specifically, the senators give three items to be raised with the IAEA: (1) “Improved verification and monitoring of uranium mining and ore concentration plants,” (2) “[b]etter reporting on uranium conversion activities,” and (3) “[m]ore specific information in reports on uranium enrichment activities.”

“We are confident that together we can bolster the inspection and verification regime of the JCPOA to ensure that the deal is fully and verifiably enforced,” wrote the senators. “With these improvements to inspection and reporting practices, we can better deny Iran’s access to a nuclear weapons capability.”

The letter was signed by Sens. John Boozman (R-AR), Johnny Isakson (R-GA), John Barrasso (R-WY), Mike Lee (R-UT), Mike Rounds (R-SD), Cory Gardner (R-CO), James Inhofe (R-OK), Ted Cruz (R-TX), Luther Strange (R-AL), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Jim Risch (R-ID), Dan Sullivan (R-AK), John Kennedy (R-LA) and Perdue.

**MEMBERS OF CONGRESS: NO PERMANENT IRANIAN FOOTHOLD IN SYRIA**

On Nov. 14, nearly 50 U.S. representatives who recently visited the Middle East sent a bipartisan letter to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson expressing their concern regarding Iran’s increased military presence in Syria.

“Should Iran be allowed to maintain a permanent military presence in Syria, it would pose a significant threat to Israel, Jordan, and United States interests,” wrote the members. “A permanent Iranian presence in Syria would connect Lebanon-based Hizballah to Iran via Iraq and Syria. This would give Iran the ability to project power from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea. Any agreement or policy that allows Iran to station forces on or near Israel and Jordan’s border does not serve U.S. interests.”

The letter calls on the United States to take action, highlighting Iran’s increased military action through its terror proxy Hizballah and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps’ foreign operations wing, the Qods Force.

“We urge you to come to Congress with a strategy for Syria that includes how the United States plans to prevent Iran from gaining a permanent foothold on Israel and Jordan’s doorstep and to block Iranian arms exports to Hizballah.”
UNITED STATES REMEMBERS U.S. SERVICE MEMBERS KILLED BY HIZBALLAH

On Oct. 23, the administration paid tribute to the U.S. service members killed in the 1983 Marine barracks bombing in Beirut—this year marks the 34th anniversary of the deadly attack.

“We will never forget the 241 American service members killed by Hizballah in Beirut. They died in service to our nation,” President Donald Trump said on Twitter.

Vice President Mike Pence and National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster also paid tribute to the fallen service members in a ceremony held at the Marine Barracks in Washington, D.C.

“The Beirut barracks bombing was the opening salvo in a war that we have waged ever since—the global war on terror. It’s a conflict that has taken American troops across the wider world—from Lebanon to Libya, from Nigeria to Afghanistan, from Somalia to Iraq, and many other battlefields in between,” said Vice President Pence.

UNITED STATES TO HAMAS: RECOGNIZE ISRAEL AND DISARM TERRORISTS

On Oct. 19, U.S. Special Representative for International Negotiations Jason Greenblatt released a statement regarding Hamas’ role in the Palestinian unity government following the reconciliation agreement reached between rival Palestinian factions Fatah and Hamas.

Greenblatt affirmed that Hamas must recognize Israel and disarm in order to participate in any Palestinian government.

“All parties agree that it is essential that the Palestinian Authority be able to assume full, genuine, and unhindered civil and security responsibilities in Gaza and that we work together to improve the humanitarian situation for Palestinians living there,” said the Special Representative.

“The United States reiterates the importance of adherence to the Quartet principles: any Palestinian government must unambiguously and explicitly commit to nonviolence, recognize the State of Israel, accept previous agreements and obligations between the parties—including to disarm terrorists—and commit to peaceful negotiations. If Hamas is to play any role in a Palestinian government, it must accept these basic requirements.”

Following the release of the statement, Hamas Chief Yahya Sinwar dismissed the U.S. requests, stating, “Over is the time Hamas spent discussing recognizing Israel. Now Hamas will discuss when we will wipe out Israel.”