

**From:** Boursheh, Issa <BourshehIX@state.gov>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 3, 2015 5:16 AM  
**To:**  
**Subject:** TLV Media Reaction: PM Residence, Poll, V15  
**Attach:** oledata.mso

**RELEASE IN FULL**

**PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE TEL AVIV**

**MEDIA REACTION REPORT:**

**Tuesday, February 03, 2015**

**SUMMARY:** State Comptroller Shapira announced yesterday formally that he would be publishing his report about the administration of the Prime Minister's Residence on February 17; Attorney General Weinstein is expected to begin to look into possibly criminal behavior by Sara Netanyahu in those affairs • Haaretz poll conducted by Dialog finds that Prime Minister Netanyahu is widening his lead over his main rival, Isaac Herzog at the expense of Bayit Yehudi. The Likud is currently up to 25 seats, Zionist Camp at 23, while Bayit Yehudi dropped to 14. • V15 representatives lodged a complaint with the police yesterday accusing the Likud of incitement. Yoaz Hendel writes in Yediot: "If indeed, as alleged, a state gave money to a non-profit organization and in the end was used for a campaign against the government – this is a serious problem that we should not ignore." End summary

**Front page headlines**

- Yediot: Saluting the Heroes [of Operation Protective Edge]
- Israel Hayom: With a Salute
- Haaretz: State Comptroller's Report on Prime Minister's Residence within Two Weeks
- Maariv: Hospitals Buckling Under the Weight

Click to jump: [Prime Minister's Residence](#) | [Israeli Public Diplomacy](#) | [#IsraElex](#) | [Iran](#) | [Rivlin in Hebron](#) | [Jordan – Israel](#) | [Schabas](#) | [Operation Protective Edge](#) | [ICC, Settlements](#) | [Haredim](#) | [Block Quotes](#)



Calcalist (2/3) by Yonatan Wachsmann; Trainer to Herzog: "And when your rival is on the floor... what do you

do?" Herzog: "Mumble?..."



Haaretz (2/2) by Amos Biderman; Attorney General and State Comptroller as PM Netanyahu's secret service bodyguards

#### **Prime Minister's Residence**

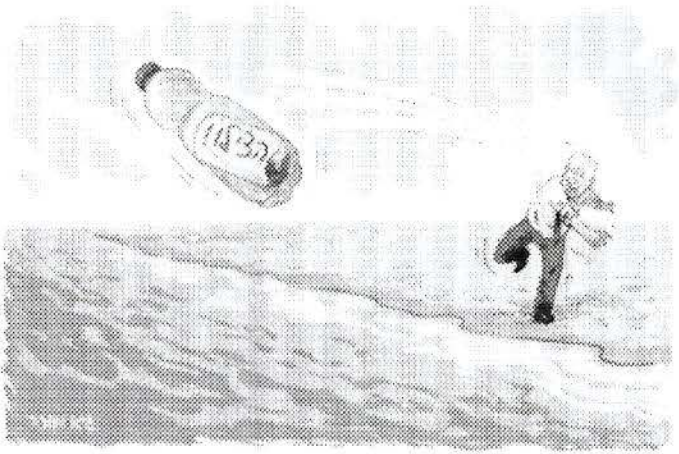
State Comptroller, Attorney General

Media report that State Comptroller Yosef Shapira announced yesterday formally that he would be publishing his report about the administration of the Prime Minister's Residence on February 17, precisely one month before the elections. Meanwhile, Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein is expected to begin to look into possibly criminal behavior by Sara Netanyahu in those affairs.

According to Yediot, the report will be comprised of two sections. The first will deal with the routine expenses of the Prime Minister's Residence. The second section of the report will address the expenses of the Netanyahu family itself in recent years, and is expected to be very critical.

#### Netanyahu Response

Israel Radio reports that Prime Minister Netanyahu said that he would respond to the report on the expenses in his residence once it came out and then it would be shown that everything was aboveboard.



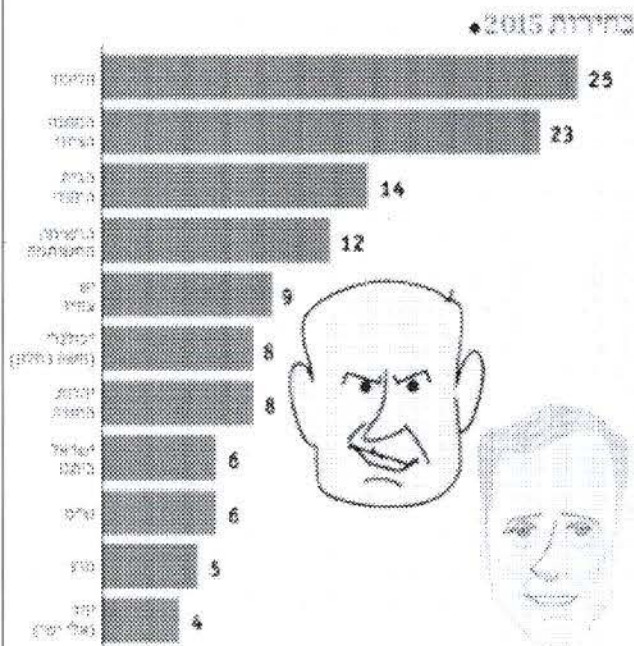
Yediot (2/3) by Guy Morad; Netanyahu throwing a bottle with the message: "Help!" in reference to the 'Bottlegate affair'. The affair refers to allegations that Sara Netanyahu and possibly others under her direction improperly returned used drink bottles for their deposits and kept the cash, though the drinks were bought with state funds.

### **Israeli Public Diplomacy**

Haaretz reports on today's front page that the Prime Minister's Office uses employees from the National Public Diplomacy Division's information and communications technology department to monitor the Israeli media for items about Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's wife, Sara, and their children.

### **#IsraElex Poll**

Haaretz reports that according to a Dialog poll Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is widening his lead over his main rival, Isaac Herzog (on the expense of Bayit Yehudi); the three ultra-Orthodox parties stabilizing at about 18 seats, similar to what they had in the previous Knesset; and the centrist parties have collectively lost four seats. According to the analysis, Netanyahu would undoubtedly be Israel's next prime minister.



Haaretz (2/2)

According to the poll analysis and interviews with the media, Prof. Camil Fuchs said that the rise of PM Netanyahu's party is at the expense of Bayit Yehudi, which is losing two seats to Likud (which would see it with a projected 14 seats).

Poll conducted Monday, February 2 among 514 respondents. The margin of error is 4.2 percent.

Party	February 2	January 7
Likud (Netanyahu)	25	22
Zionist Camp (Herzog – Livni)	23	23
Bayit Yehudi (Bennett)	14	16
Joint list (Hadash, Raam-Taal, Balad)	12	10
Yesh Atid (Lapid)	9	12
Kulanu (Kahlon)	8	9
United Torah Judaism	8	7
Yisrael Beiteinu (Lieberman)	6	6
Shas (Deri)	6	5
Meretz (Gal-On)	5	6
Yachad (Yishai)	4	4

Prospective Government

According to Haaretz, the picture painted by the poll is that there would be a rightist/religious government led by Netanyahu, together with Bayit Yehudi, the ultra-Orthodox parties, Moshe Kahlon's Kulanu party (a projected 8 seats), and presumably also Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu, which is liable to have only half as many seats as it did in the last Knesset (the new poll gives it 6 seats).

Another alternative is the formation of a broad government with Herzog's Zionist Camp as Likud's main partner but without the fringe parties, and of course without a rotation of the prime minister's job.

Netanyahu Speech

According to the Dialog poll for Haaretz, a plurality of respondents didn't think Netanyahu should address Congress on Iran (46 percent to 40 percent). Most think Netanyahu's speech will do nothing to keep Iran from going nuclear (56 percent think it will make no difference; 11 percent think it will hurt; and 19 percent think it will help). Most also don't buy "Likud's whining about how overseas organizations are mobilizing to help Zionist Camp topple Netanyahu." (34 percent to 45 percent).

V15

Media report that V15 representatives lodged a complaint with the police yesterday accusing the Likud director of its campaign staff, Nir Hefetz, of incitement. V15 lodged its complaint in a wake of a clip showing a picture of a terrorist armed with the V15 sign. The left wing V15 organization wants to replace the government in Israel.



Walla (2/2)

According to Yediot, the Likud was unmoved by the complaint and called again last night on the law enforcement agencies to investigate "the criminal activity of the V15 project and the extreme left wing organizations that fund it in violation of the Party Funding Law. This is a blatant attempt to steal the government with money and saying anything else is only distraction."



Calcalist (2/2) by Yonatan Wachsmann; Netanyahu accompanied Akonis and Regev: "Look! Foreign American funding!"

#### The New Israel Fund

Yediot reports that Attorney David Shimron, the Netanyahu family lawyer, apologized to the New Israel Fund after the latter threatened to sue him for slander. "If I misspoke, I apologize," Shimron said after accusing the New Israel Fund of being involved in the V15 campaign against Netanyahu.

#### OneVoice, Abbas

Israel Hayom reports that one of the more senior advisers to the OneVoice International organization – the organization whose Israel branch announced cooperation with V15, which was formed in advance of the elections in order to "replace the government" – is Mahmoud Abbas's son, Yasser Mahmoud Abbas.

According to the report, the international movement's website cites Yasser Mahmoud Abbas as a member of OneVoice's Trustee Advisory Council.

A spokesperson for OneVoice said in response, "Abbas's son is a member of the advisory council in the Palestinian Authority, which is working to achieve a political arrangement and two states for two peoples. Just as Mickey Ratzon who ran in the Likud primary served on the advisory committee in Israel and David Azulai, Avraham Michaeli, Yitzhak Vaknin and Yitzhak Cohen from Shas serve on the movement's Knesset caucus, in addition to MK Elazar Stern, MK Rabbi Dov Lipman and many others.

The Jerusalem Post reports that OneVoice head Daniel Lubetzky said Monday that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has displayed chutzpah by targeting One Voice, the pro-peace organization the Likud accuses of using illegal means to try to topple him.

According to the JPost report, Lubetzky noted that the prime minister had been helped by Israel Hayom, a newspaper owned by American billionaire Sheldon Adelson.

#### Vincent Harris

Army Radio reported yesterday that the Likud employed Vincent Harris, who worked for Republican senators Mitch McConnell and Ted Cruz. The report said the Likud complained about President Barack Obama's former field director, Jeremy Bird, advising groups working to unseat Netanyahu, even though they were using the same tactic.

Harris told The Jerusalem Post that he started working for the Likud more than six weeks ago, just like Republican strategist John McLaughlin and just like other American strategists had worked for Netanyahu in other elections going back to 1996. He denied any connection between the senators and his employment with the Likud.

#### Israel Democracy Conference

Haaretz and Israel Hayom report that Likud Knesset members and Economy Minister Naftali Bennett canceled their participation Monday in next month's Israel Democracy Conference, sponsored by Haaretz, because the New Israel Fund is financing part of it.

#### **Iran**

IDF Radio reports that European officials have expressed concern in recent days to their Israeli counterparts that the U.S. is willing to make concessions towards Iran in the nuclear talks, in return for it (Iran) providing stability in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. Among those concessions that are being considered is allowing Iran to keep more centrifuges. It was claimed that this was a topic of discussion in the meeting between Kerry and Zarif.

### **Rivlin in Hebron**

Media report that President Reuven Rivlin on Monday made his first official visit to the settlement of Kiryat Arba and the Jewish enclave in Hebron. He then visited the Tomb of the Patriarchs and attended a ceremony that opened a new visitors' center in the city's Beit Hadassah.

### **Jordan – Israel**

Media reports that Jordan returning ambassador to Israel after three month absence, citing a senior Israeli official.

### **Schabas**

Media reports that head of UN inquiry into 2014 Gaza operation says he will resign amid Israeli allegations of bias.

Army Radio reports that Bayit Yehudi Chairman Naftali Bennett said this morning that the resignation of Prof. William Schabas will not change the nature of the report, which will be anti-Israeli.

### **Operation Protective Edge**

Media report in today's front pages that some five months after the end of Operation Protective Edge, IDF Chief of Staff Benny Gantz granted decorations, citations and awards on Monday at the Palmachim Airbase to over 50 officers, NCOs, and soldiers (active duty and reserves) - including four women - who fought in the Gaza war.

### **ICC, Settlements**

Israel Hayom reports that the Palestinians intend to file a complaint in the next several months to the International Criminal Court at The Hague about the settlements and the construction in them. That decision was announced by Palestinian Foreign Minister Riyad al-Malki in an interview to the Voice of Palestine radio station.

### **Haredim**

Media report that thousands of Haredim went out yesterday morning to demonstrate without a police permit against the arrest of four young Haredi men who failed to report to the IDF central induction base for their preliminary interview. The demonstrations turned violent, and the police arrested 45 demonstrators for disrupting the peace. The focal points of the demonstrations were Jerusalem, Bnei Brak and Ashdod.

### **Block Quotes**

#### WHERE IS THE MONEY FROM?

Nationalist columnist and former senior staff member of Prime Minister Netanyahu's bureau Yoaz Hendel wrote [Hebrew] in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (2/3): "Since all are equal before political money, the story of the non-profit organizations reported by the Likud is interesting from another aspect – the involvement of foreign governments and their contribution to what happens in Israel and in the international arena. If indeed, as alleged, a state gave money to a non-profit organization and in the end was used for a campaign against the government – this is a serious problem that we should not ignore. [...]Israel is the only democratic country in the world where there are organizations that enjoy the monetary support of foreign embassies and governments. This is direct involvement coming to millions of dollars a year. Some of the organizations deal in human rights, some in politics. All are critical of Israeli policy. [...]The reasonable becomes unreasonable when it comes to governments trying to influence what happens here."

#### CONTAINMENT OR WAR

Former Mossad Director Ephraim Halevy wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (2/3): "Israel

must also factor in Russia's position about a war of that kind [A military conflagration between Israel and Iran on Syrian soil] [...] Serious American security and political support will be more important than ever for the Israeli government. Perhaps those considerations are what promoted Israel to opt to "contain" the most recent eruption of violence, a result that Nasrallah wanted as well. The problem is that "containment" is never anything more than a temporary remedy."

#### IT IS UNDEMOCRATIC TO RESTRICT POLITICAL NPOS

Political commentator Shalom Yerushalmi wrote [Hebrew] in the online service NRG (2/3): "Every movement has an agenda. Sometimes it is against the government and sometimes it supports it. It depends on the circumstances. Should this activity be stopped at this time because maybe the intent is to replace the government? How are organizations' actions and intentions measured? Is an organization that has been around for years, including election years, different from an organization that is established ahead of the elections? There is no end to this, and such activity cannot be restricted by means of any reasonable law."

#### THE DIRTY BATTLE OVER AGENDA IN ISRAEL'S ELECTIONS

Dr. Ido Baum wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: "No law forbids NGOs such as grassroots V15 from accepting foreign funding, nor does any law bar them from engaging in political activity."

#### THE DIRTY BATTLE OVER AGENDA IN ISRAEL'S ELECTIONS

Political parties columnist Yossi Verter wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (2/3): "It's hard to understand how Likud MKs can call a press conference and with a straight face accuse 'foreign elements' of funding groups to bring down their party. After all, outside the hall, pensioners in Israel Hayom's red overalls were handing out that pro-Bibi free newspaper generously funded by a foreign casino mogul."

Privacy/PII  
This email is UNCLASSIFIED.