

**EGYPT FACES THREATS FROM HAMAS & A LOOMING ENERGY
CRISIS; WHILE “CULTISH” ISRAEL APARTHEID WEEK VILIFIES
DEMOCRATIC ISRAEL**
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Isranet Daily Briefing, March 11, 2014

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[Egypt Ban Could Push Hamas Into New Fight With Israel](#): Philippe Agret & Adel Zaanoun, *Times of Israel*, Mar. 6, 2014 — An Egyptian court ban on Hamas activities could push the increasingly isolated Palestinian Islamist movement into another battle with Israel, analysts say.

[Sisi’s Gas Pains](#): Keith Johnson, *Foreign Policy*, Feb. 21, 2014 — Egypt faces plenty of threats, from a growing insurgency in the Sinai to a shaky and still unstable presidential regime.

[Egyptian Field Marshal Abd El-Fattah El-Sisi: A Profile](#): Col. (ret.) Dr. Jacques Neriah, *Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs*, Feb. 27, 2014 — When the last war between Egypt and Israel was fought in 1973, Abd El-Fattah El-Sisi was almost 19 years old.

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THE RETURN OF THE ISRAEL APARTHEID WEEK CULT

Jonathan Kay

[National Post](#), Feb. 25, 2014

In Syria, the Assad regime continues to rain artillery on rebel positions in the city of Homs, killing journalists and innocent civilians alike. Iran’s mullahs are set to execute a Canadian citizen for the crime of operating a web site they don’t like. The new Libyan regime is torturing Gaddafi loyalists. And Egypt’s rulers are prosecuting NGO leaders on trumped-up charges. And so next week, Canadian left-wing activists will congregate in Toronto to express their hatred of ... you guessed it: Israel.

The events of March 5-9 will take place as part of the 8th annual Israel Apartheid Week (IAW), and will feature presentations such as “Cutting the Ties to Israeli Apartheid: Cultural and Academic Boycott,” and “Rhymes Of Resistance And The Sounds Of Existence — with poets Remi Kanazi, Red Slam and Chand-nee.” The IAW website is full of the usual rhetoric about Israel’s “criminal” actions. There is not a word of acknowledgement about how utterly ridiculous it is to run a week-long event vilifying Israel when right next door in Syria, the government has just exterminated more Arabs than were killed in both Intifidas, the 2008 Gaza conflict, and the 2006 Lebanon war combined.

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The timing of IAW this year truly does represent something of a farce. The eyes of the entire world are focused on Syria and the Strait of Hormuz. Even West Bank Palestinians themselves now seem more concerned with building up their economy than with grand international gestures aimed at the Jewish state. And in the “occupied” Golan Heights, Druze Muslims have been stirring — not against Israel, but against the Assad regime that many once looked to for “liberation.” In the streets of Cairo, Sana’a and Tunis, no one is talking about Israel — only about when they will get the democracy they were promised. Only among cultish, single-minded anti-Israel activists has the news of the Arab Spring failed to circulate.

The word “cultish” is used here advisedly — because even some veteran anti-Israel activists are getting tired of the false mantras that circulate at IAW events. This includes no less an anti-Zionist than Norman Finkelstein (who has called Israel a “vandal state” that “relentlessly and brutally and inhumanly keeps these vicious, murderous wars”). Speaking to an interviewer earlier this month, he attacked the animating philosophy behind IAW — the movement for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel (BDS) — as a “cult,” and an unsuccessful one at that.

National Post editorial writers have attended BDS events here in Toronto, and they all contain the same rousing assurances that the BDS movement will bring Israel to its knees. The self-consciously enforced spirit of *viva la revolución* solidarity that permeates these rallies reminds one of communist rallies in the days before the fall of the Berlin Wall. Year after year, we hear the same clichés about how the BDS movement is on the cusp of victory. Yet the Israeli economy continues to prosper, and the only groups that have fallen into line with the boycott call are scattered NGOs and low-tier universities. “All [the BDS] claims about ‘victories’ [against Israel]: These 10 fingers more than suffice to count their victories,” Mr. Finkelstein said this month. “It’s a cult. The guru says: ‘We have all these victories,’ and everyone nods their head.”

Of greater concern to Mr. Finkelstein, a former university professor and the author

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of many controversial books, is the sheer dishonesty that permeates the BDS movement. “We have to be honest: They [BDS activists] don’t want Israel. They think they’re being clever. They call it their three tiers. ‘We want to end of the occupation,’ ‘We want the right of return [for Palestinian refugees],’ ‘And we want equal rights for Arab citizens.’ But they know the result of implementing all three is — what? You and I both know: There’s no Israel. [If you ask them about it, they say] ‘Oh we’re agnostic about Israel.’ No. You’re not agnostic. You don’t want it [to exist].”

In fairness to the IAW activists who will be assembling on campuses in coming days, not all of them seek the outright destruction of Israel — though many certainly do. Some are merely naive undergraduates who truly do believe in two secure, peaceful states living side by side. Others are bored veterans of other activist movements, such as anti-racism and gay rights, looking to the Middle East to recapture the sense of moral purpose once provided by the (successful) fight against discrimination here in Canada. But all of them should understand that IAW and BDS are not what they seem: As some of Israel’s own fiercest critics themselves now admit, these are dishonest cults meant to enlist ill-informed activists in a campaign to destroy the Jewish state.

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EGYPT BAN COULD PUSH HAMAS INTO NEW FIGHT WITH ISRAEL *Philippe Agret & Adel Zaanoun*

[Times of Israel](#), Mar. 6, 2014

An Egyptian court ban on Hamas activities could push the increasingly isolated Palestinian Islamist movement into another battle with Israel, analysts say. The latest move marked a further deterioration in ties between Egypt and Hamas, which has close links to the Muslim Brotherhood of deposed Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi and is now the target of a sweeping crackdown by the military-installed government.

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Since Morsi’s overthrow, the Egyptian authorities have destroyed hundreds of tunnels along the border with the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip which had been used to bring in fuel and construction materials, as well as weapons and ammunition. The loss of the tunnels has deepened the economic crisis in Gaza, which has been under an Israeli blockade since 2006, and a senior Hamas official warned the court’s move could prompt a new confrontation with Israel. “The situation between Egypt and Hamas has reached the point of no return,” said Mukhaimar Abu Saada, political science professor at Gaza’s Al-Azhar University. “For Hamas, the choices are extremely limited: reconciliation with (Western-backed Palestinian) president Mahmud Abbas, or open confrontation with Israel to embarrass Egypt and win the sympathy of the Arab world,” he said. “The latter option would be costly and risky.”

On Tuesday, the Egyptian court banned Hamas from operating in the country and moved to seize its assets after accusing it of colluding with the Muslim Brotherhood to carry out attacks...Bassem Naim, an adviser to Hamas prime minister Ismail Haniya, told AFP the court ruling was “shocking”, and said he hoped it would not translate into “restrictions on people’s movement.” Egypt has severely restricted access through the border town of Rafah — Gaza’s only gate to the world that is not controlled by Israel — ostensibly for security reasons. Ezzat al-Rishq, a Hamas official close to the movement’s exiled leader Khaled Meshaal, said the ruling “will open the door to new (Israeli) aggression and war against Gaza”.

A fragile Egypt-mediated ceasefire between Hamas and Israel that ended a bloody eight-day conflict in November 2012 has brought more than a year of relative calm, with Hamas policing its borders to prevent rocket fire by rogue militants. Gaza-based political analyst Hani Habib downplayed the court ruling as “a formality which will have little additional impact,” saying border restrictions are nothing new and that Hamas has no offices or major assets in Egypt. But Adnan Abu Amr, a politics professor at Gaza’s Ummah University, said: “A final, definitive break between Egypt and Hamas would mean increased pressure on Gaza, meaning that it could blow up in Egypt or Israel’s faces.”

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Political analyst Naji Sharab said the best option for Hamas would be to reconcile with Abbas’s Fatah party, its Palestinian rival based in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. But that would require Hamas to moderate its core belief that Israel must be destroyed and accept US-brokered peace negotiations – which it has staunchly refused to do. Hamas and Fatah, which dominates the Western-backed Palestinian Authority, signed a 2011 reconciliation agreement in Cairo that was meant to heal divisions that boiled over when Hamas seized Gaza in 2007. But the agreement has never been implemented.

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SISI’S GAS PAINS

Keith Johnson

[Foreign Policy](#), Feb. 21, 2014

Egypt faces plenty of threats, from a growing insurgency in the Sinai to a shaky and still unstable presidential regime. But the dramatic reversal in the country's energy fortunes in recent years, and the stark challenges that poses for the economy could end up proving the biggest headache for strongman Abdel Fattah al-Sisi. Before the Arab Spring, Egypt turned its abundant reserves of natural gas, the third largest in Africa, into lucrative exports shipped to Europe and Asia. It sent gas by pipeline to neighboring countries, including Jordan and Israel. It had ambitious plans to further develop offshore natural gas resources, and was expanding its creaky electricity system on the back of natural-gas fired power plants.

Today, Egypt is scrambling to import natural gas just to meet skyrocketing domestic demand. Exports have plummeted: One of the two terminals that liquefied natural gas and shipped it to southern Europe has been shuttered since

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2012; the other is wheezing, starved of gas for export by voracious domestic demand home. In a sign of just how quickly Egypt's once-advantageous position has changed, there are reportedly talks underway to import gas from Israel — less than two years after Cairo shut off exports headed there.

The abrupt reversal is a result of unsustainable economic policies, such as generously subsidized fuel prices at home that spur unbridled growth in gas consumption. And it's one big cause for concern about Sisi's ability to tackle the country's economic challenges. The energy crunch threatens the electric power sector and big portions of Egyptian industry. The IMF forecasts Egyptian growth of just 2.8 percent this year, among the lowest in the region, making it even tougher to cut into double-digit unemployment. Coupled with blackouts and energy shortages, that could conjure up a repeat of the tumult of 2011 and 2013, which led to the toppling of Hosni Mubarak and Mohamed Morsi. "The inevitable result is energy shortages and the concomitant social pressures that come with blackouts, lack of cooking gas, and fuel," Steven Cook, an Egypt expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, told *Foreign Policy*. "Sisi is going to have to confront these serious economic problems or he too will be confronted with people in the streets demanding change, and it won't just be the Muslim Brotherhood."

In 2009, Egypt exported 647 billion cubic feet of gas, mostly liquefied gas to satisfy demand in Europe, but also gas shipped by pipeline to Israel and Jordan. By 2012, gas exports had fallen to less than half, or 256 billion cubic feet; pipeline exports plummeted to one-tenth of their peak level. In 2013 exports continued to plunge. The latest government figures showed nearly a 50 percent decline in year-on-year exports in November. The impacts aren't limited to Egypt or its reeling fiscal situation. Spanish utility Gas Natural Fenosa, which started importing gas from an LNG terminal in Egypt a decade ago, has watched the terminal sit idle since 2012. British gas giant BG Group in January declared "force majeure" and took a \$1.2-billion-dollar write-down on its Egyptian LNG operations because natural gas is being diverted from exports for domestic use. The company warned investors that it doesn't know how much, if any, Egyptian gas it will be able to export this year. Consuming countries, including Japan and India, that once imported Egyptian gas have had to find alternative supplies on the spot market.

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What's to blame for the sudden turnabout? Gas production has declined in recent years, but that's only partly responsible for the crunch. More important has been the jump in domestic consumption of natural gas, which rose 25 percent between 2009 and 2012 and which has essentially doubled over the last decade. More consumption at home leaves less gas for export, even though gas sold to Europe and especially to Asia is worth billions of dollars a year, while gas fed into the domestic market is kept artificially cheap. Demand is growing so fast because Egypt, like other countries in the Middle East, heavily subsidizes the cost of energy, including fuel for transportation and natural gas for power generation. Energy subsidies alone represent about 10 percent of Egypt's GDP, according to the most recent budget. Natural-gas prices in particular have been kept low for industrial users, the power sector, and especially for households.

The Egyptian government is trying to tackle the cost of energy subsidies, especially as it struggles to rein in a budget deficit approaching 14 percent of GDP. In recent years, Egypt has tweaked the prices that big energy consumers, such as cement manufacturing plants, pay for gas, but the reforms didn't affect the cost of gas used in power generation, the biggest source of domestic demand. This year, backed by a grant from the World Bank, the country started work on a comprehensive reform of energy pricing, but experts say the country will be hard-pressed to roll back subsidies and ease fiscal pressure any time soon. Raising domestic energy prices would threaten social unrest; but spending billions subsidizing energy aggravates the deficit and removes a source of substantial export earnings. "In its attempt to correct energy market structure and distortions, the Egyptian government is caught between a rock and a hard place," concluded one report prepared by the Arab Petroleum Investments Corporation.

Ultimately, Egypt hopes to pull itself out of the energy crisis by boosting production from the promising reserves found offshore; BP announced a major new gas discovery last fall, for example. But raising production requires getting those international energy firms to invest, something that's proven devilishly difficult thanks to the domestic unrest, unfavorable contract terms for exploration, and the fact that Egypt owes foreign energy firms about \$6 billion. Dwindling export

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revenues and increasing subsidies only add to that financial need, says the expert. In the meantime, to meet demand and bridge the supply shortfall in coming years, the Egyptian government is trying to import natural gas, a stark turnabout for a country that was a big supplier.

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EGYPTIAN FIELD MARSHAL ABD EL-FATTAH EL-SISI: A PROFILE

Col. (ret.) Dr. Jacques Neriah

[Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs](#), Feb. 27, 2014

When the last war between Egypt and Israel was fought in 1973, Abd El-Fattah El-Sisi was almost 19 years old. Four years later, he graduated from the Military Academy and began an astounding career that brought him in 2012, after 35 years of service, to the top position as Commander in Chief of the Egyptian army and Egypt’s Minister of Defense and Military Production.

Sisi was born on November 19, 1954, and grew up in Gamaliya, Cairo’s old Islamic district. Sisi has been very secretive about his childhood and his origins. His official history begins with his graduation from Egypt’s Military Academy on April 1, 1977.¹ His military career is a reflection of the strategic decision made by the late Egyptian President Anwar el-Sadat to change Egypt’s course from a Soviet-oriented country and become an ally of the United States and the West. Sisi underwent key training in the U.S. and the UK. He attended a basic infantry course in the U.S. and later attended the Joint Command and Staff College at Kimberly in the UK in 1992. He was sent to the U.S. Army War College in 2006. In Egypt, Sisi completed a Bachelor of Military Sciences and then a Master’s degree from the Egyptian Staff and Command College in 1987. He later went to the Nasser Higher Military Academy in 2003.

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Sisi's career began in the mechanized infantry, where he was ~~weakly~~ ~~villified~~ ~~democra-~~ commander of the 509th mechanized infantry battalion, chief-of-staff of the 134th mechanized infantry brigade, commander of the 16th mechanized infantry brigade, and finally chief-of-staff of the 2nd mechanized infantry division, before being nominated to the prestigious positions of chief-of-staff of the northern military zone in 2008 and afterwards as deputy director of the military intelligence and reconnaissance department (2011).

As such, Sisi was part of the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF) headed by Field Marshal Mohammad Hussein Tantawi, who ruled Egypt after President Mubarak's resignation in January 2011 until the elections which were won by the Muslim Brotherhood, the best organized but least qualified party. This led to the election of Muslim Brother Mohammad Morsi as president. Morsi took advantage of a surprise terrorist attack that killed 16 Egyptian soldiers in the Sinai Peninsula, and replaced the aging Tantawi with Sisi on August 12, 2012, in an unprecedented reshuffle of the military that was meant to signal the takeover of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt as a whole. Sisi was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant-General (Fariq Awwal) and also took the post of Minister of Defense and Military Production.

Eleven months later, in response to mass demonstrations calling for Morsi's overthrow that took place in Tahrir Square in Cairo, as well as in other big Egyptian cities such as Alexandria, Suez, and Port-Said, Sisi presented an ultimatum that the demands of the anti-Morsi demonstrators be met by July 3, 2013. Morsi's refusal to deal with the issue led to his replacement by a transitional government headed by Hazem el-Beblawi and an interim president, the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, Mansour el-Adly. Sisi became the strong man, keeping his previous positions as head of the armed forces and Minister of Defense and Military Production. On January 27, 2014, Sisi was promoted to the highest rank in the Egyptian army - Field Marshal (Mushir in Arabic) - on the same day in which the Arab press leaked that Sisi had finally decided to run for the office of President of Egypt in the elections to be held in 2014.

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Sisi enjoys unprecedented popularity in Egypt. He is viewed as a savior who saved Egypt from anarchy, civil war, and the despotism of the Muslim Brotherhood. Between TV commercials used to advertise food products, groups on social networking sites, and posters in the street, Egypt has been witnessing “Sisi fever.” Talk shows and newspaper columns have been advocating the idea of the general running for president in order to fight the terrorist threat that they say the country is facing. Local media are also buzzing about the widespread support for a Sisi presidency.

In fact, Sisi has no real competitor. Most of the other potential candidates - Amr Moussa, Ahmad Shafik, Hamdeen Sabahi, Abd el Muneim Aboul Foutouh - have declared that if Sisi would run for president, they would retract their candidacies. Recently, a number of campaigns have been launched calling on the general to run for president. The campaigns are called “Complete Your Favor,” “A Nation’s Demand,” and “Al-Sisi for President.” Their aim is to circulate petitions with the hope that 30 million signatures will convince Sisi to run, just as millions of signatures convinced him to act against Morsi. However, now that he will probably be Egypt’s next president, the question remains: Who in fact is Sisi?...

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On Topic

**[The Big Boycott Bluff](#): David M. Weinberg, *Jerusalem Post*, Feb. 13, 2014
—Isolation. Delegitimization. Economic squeeze. Boycott. Boycott. Boycott. Did someone say “boycott”?**

[The Bottom Line on Israeli Apartheid Week](#): *Canadian Jewish News*, Mar. 4, 2014—Israeli Apartheid Week is marking its 10-year anniversary this week across

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Canada, and as IAW organizers and supporters look back on the known events of the first decade, there's no doubt it has fundamentally shifted the Israel conversation on campuses across this country and the world.

[Timeline of Turmoil in Egypt After Mubarak and Morsi: *New York Times*, Jan. 27, 2014](#) —More than two years after the Egyptian uprising that ushered in Mohamed Morsi as the country's first elected leader, he was deposed by the military. Explore key moments of his rule and the aftermath.

[Egypt to Revoke Citizenship of Nearly 14,000 Palestinians Affiliated With Hamas: Ariel Ben Solomon](#)

[*Jerusalem Post*, Mar. 7, 2014](#) —Egyptian security services began investigating Palestinians in order to revoke their Egyptian citizenship that was granted during the reign of former president Mohamed Morsi.

[Disbelief After Egypt Announces Cures For Aids and Hepatitis C: Kareem Fahim & Mayy El Sheikh](#)

[*New York Times*, Feb. 26, 2014](#) —At a news conference late last week, an Egyptian Army doctor confidently announced that the country's military had developed a cure for the virus that causes AIDS, as well as hepatitis C, one of Egypt's gravest public health threats.



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