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BREAKING NEWS:

Israel's Attorney-General announces hearings to indict FM Lieberman

Israel's Attorney-General Yehuda Weinstein has announced that he is considering indicting Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, and will hold hearings in which Lieberman's lawyers can defend him before the indictment. The reported charges against Lieberman include fraud, breach of trust, money-laundering and harassing a witness. Sources close to Lieberman said he would not instigate a coalition crisis prior to the hearings and that the government would not topple. (*Jerusalem Post*, April 13.)

Weekly Quotes

"The president will be speaking in greater detail about America's policy in the Middle East and North Africa in the coming weeks. America's core interests and values have not changed.... This includes renewed pursuit of comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace. The status quo between Palestinians and Israelis is no more sustainable than the political systems that have crumbled in recent months. And while it is a truism that only the parties themselves can make the hard choices for peace, there is no substitute for continued, active American leadership — and the president and I are committed to that."—US Secretary of State *Hillary Clinton*, in a speech at the *US-Islamic World Forum*, describing the U.S.' ongoing drive to promote comprehensive Arab-Israeli peace, which will include a reinvigorated US role in trying to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Last week, U.S. president Obama confided to visiting Israeli President Shimon Peres, "that with the winds of change blowing through the Arab world, it's more urgent than ever that we try to seize the opportunity to create a peaceful solution between the Palestinians and the Israelis." Reports suggest that US president Obama will shortly propose a new "peace" initiative, in order to deter the Palestinian Authority from seeking UN-recognition of a Palestinian state at the

General Assembly in September. (*Jerusalem Post*, April 13.)

"Today Robert Serry, the 'UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process,' present[ed] his report on Palestinian state-building efforts...[and] Serry thinks the efforts are 'clearly on track....' Serry's report is designed to assist the social promotion of the Palestinians in September, through a resolution by a body [the UN General Assembly] that lacks the authority to confer statehood on anyone, much less anyone as patently unprepared as the Palestinians.... Not to put too fine a point on it: if you can't finish drafting your constitution; if your 'president' is in the seventh year of his four-year term; if you have no functioning legislature and cannot hold parliamentary elections; if half your putative state is occupied by terrorists; if your education system is a cesspool of anti-Semitism; if you insist upon dedicating public squares to those who massacred civilians; if your ruling party is corroded by corruption; if you have no free press or independent judiciary; if you cannot implement anything in negotiations that you refuse to conduct in any event; and if you haven't finished Phase I of the Roadmap...well, you might not be ready for a state."—Excerpts from *Rick Richman's Commentary* article, entitled *All Set to Be a Failed State*, denouncing the notion that the Palestinians are prepared for statehood, by pointing out the blatant deficiencies that plague Palestinian society.

" Hamas is fighting a war of attrition against us. We won't come to terms with a situation in which they decide when there's quiet and when the area heats up.... There was quiet, and Hamas took advantage of the quiet in order to smuggle more and more weapons. We remember when Kassams only had a range of 20 km; today they reach Beersheba and Ashdod and in the end they'll reach Tel Aviv.... We are going to do what was agreed upon. We know how to get what was in the agreement and what we signed with Likud, without threats and without crises"—Israeli Foreign Minister *Avigdor Lieberman*, in an interview with *Israel Radio*, denouncing the prospect of a ceasefire with Hamas, as this would not serve Israel's national interests. Lieberman added that he is currently working towards implementing a coalition agreement, which calls for

Israel to overthrow Hamas. (*Jerusalem Post*, April 11.)

"With Goldstone's admission that 'our fact-finding mission had no evidence' and that 'civilians were not intentionally targeted as a matter of policy,' the politicized NGOs that supplied these allegations have been exposed again as biased and lacking credibility. Goldstone was [part of] an orchestrated campaign led by powerful NGOs, including *Human Rights Watch*, *Amnesty International*, *B'Tselem*, *Breaking the Silence*, *Adalah*, *Palestinian Center for Human Rights*, and *Al Haq*.... Israeli NGOs funded by European governments and the *New Israel Fund* have also played a central role in advancing the one-sided agenda of repressive regimes at the UN Human Rights Council. They have continued to lobby at the U.S. Congress, European Parliament, and the Knesset. Goldstone's *Washington Post* article has exposed these campaigns as nothing more than anti-Israel propaganda."—Professor *Gerald Steinberg*, president of *NGO Monitor*, in response to Richard Goldstone's landmark *Washington Post* editorial, calling on the anti-Israel NGOs that contributed erroneous information to Goldstone's report to withdraw their discredited claims. (*Independent Media Review and Analysis*, April 3.)

"The governments and peoples of the region must be vigilant and aware, not to fall prey to the conspiracy and the deception of the U.S., its allies and the Zionist regime.... The time of pillaging and imposition on the peoples of the world is over and these forms of crimes and subterfuge will not save the day anymore.... I can safely say that they will simply not be able to do anything and that this is the end of the road. With the Lord's mercy, the people of the region will be victorious and the business of cruelty and malevolence will be shut down forever, and where the just and humane leadership will replace the inhumane and uncivilized authoritarians."—Iranian president *Mahmoud Ahmadinejad*, in his first press conference following the Iranian new year (March 21), asserting that a new Middle East, without the specter of Israel and the U.S., is taking shape. (*Pajamas Media*, April 7.)

"I was hurt very much, and I am still hurting—my family and I—from the unjust campaigns against us and false allegations that aim to smear my reputation, my integrity, my (political) stances and my military history. I agree to authorize the prosecutor-general in writing to allow him to contact, through the Foreign Ministry, all countries in the world to prove to them that I and my wife agree to show any accounts or properties I have possessed starting from my military and political career until now to prove to the people that their former president only owns domestically according to previous financial disclosure."—Former Egyptian President *Hosni Mubarak*, in his first remarks since his ouster more than two months ago, denying allegations that he abused his presidential authority to amass wealth and property. Egypt's public prosecutor has ordered that Mubarak be detained for 15 days, while an investigation takes place into his purported ownership of property abroad and foreign bank accounts; Mubarak will also be confronted about his role in the killing of protesters during Egypt's uprising. Mubarak is currently being treated in a Cairo hospital for a "heart crisis" (*Associated Press, April 10 & Jerusalem Post, April 13.*)

"There are indications that some of Obama's advisors are aware of the need for change in Syria. However, some argue that the problem is not President Bashar al-Assad, but rather the 'old guard' who were put in place by his father, [former Syrian President] Hafez al-Assad, and who he [Bashar al-Assad] is surrounded by. However President Bashar al-Assad's statements, and his policies, contradict those who say that."—Former director for Middle East affairs at the US National Security Council, *Michael Singh*, describing the internal division in the White House over Obama's policy of engagement towards Syria, and criticizing Obama's "courting of al-Assad to achieve regional objectives, whilst ignoring what is happening inside Syria". According to reports, Syrian forces loyal to al-Assad have killed more than 200 protesters in their attempt to suppress the intensifying civil unrest throughout the country. This reality last week prompted U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton to inexplicably refer to Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad as a "reformer." (*Independent Media Review and Analysis, April 11 & Jerusalem Post, April 12.*)

Short Takes

GAZA MISSILE HITS ISRAELI SCHOOL BUS—(*Jerusalem*) An antitank missile fired from the Gaza Strip has hit a school bus in southern Israel, critically wounding a teenage boy. The Izzedine al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the militant group Hamas, asserted responsibility for the attack, claiming it was an act of “self-defense to protect Palestinian civilians and citizens.” In response, the IDF released a statement affirming that “[Israel] will not allow communities...to continue living under constant threat. Any attempt to terrorize...any of Israel’s citizens will be met with a response.” (*Washington Post & IDF Website, April 7.*)

ARAB LEAGUE TO ASK UN TO IMPOSE NO-FLY ZONE OVER GAZA—(*Jerusalem*)

The Arab League has announced that it plans to press the UN to impose a no-fly zone over Gaza, amidst an escalation in violence in the area. The announcement comes following reports that UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East, Robert Serry, has successfully brokered a ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian factions in the Gaza Strip, including Hamas. The purported deal stipulates that the IDF stop its air and artillery strikes against Palestinian terrorist groups, who, in turn, would halt their rocket and mortar fire at civilian population centers. (*Jerusalem Post, April 10.*)

A PALESTINIAN ‘GIFT’ FOR PASSOVER—(*Jerusalem*) The Palestinian Authority has honored the terrorist mastermind of the “Passover Massacre”, an atrocity which claimed the lives of 30 innocent Israeli citizens attending a Seder at Netanya’s Park Hotel on March 27, 2002. In recent weeks, the Palestinian leadership has also named a youth soccer competition in Ramallah after Wafa Idris, the first female suicide bomber, and named a square in El Bireh, as well as two schools and a summer camp, in honor of Dalal Mughrabi, commander of the March 11, 1978 massacre of 38 bus passengers on Israel’s coastal road.

(Independent Media Review and Analysis, April 8.)

IRAN TOUTS MAJOR ADVANCES IN NUCLEAR PROGRAM—(Washington) Scientists from Iran's atomic energy program have successfully tested advanced centrifuges for enriching uranium and are less than a month away from starting the country's first commercial nuclear reactor, progress that Western officials say could shorten the timeline for acquiring nuclear weapons. These announcements, linked to the observance of "nuclear technology day" in Tehran, underscore recent assessments by nuclear experts that Iran is preparing to speed up its production of enriched uranium. Iran, which began enriching uranium on an industrial scale in 2007, is now thought to possess enough low-enriched fuel to make at least two bombs if the material were processed further. *(Washington Post, April 11.)*

HEZBOLLAH PREPARED TO SEND 100 MISSILES DAILY AT TEL AVIV—(Jerusalem) According to a recent WikiLeaks cable, revealed to the Israeli press by WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, Hezbollah is capable of striking Tel Aviv directly, from an arsenal of more than 20,000 missiles. The cable describes a Joint Political Military Group meeting in November 2009, in which Israeli intelligence officials told their US counterparts that "Hezbollah was preparing for a long conflict with Israel in which it hopes to launch...400-600 rockets and missiles...per day, 100 of which will be aimed at Tel Aviv." *(Jerusalem Post, April 8.)*

GOLDSTONE TO FACE LIBEL SUIT—(Jerusalem) Israeli MK Danny Danon has enlisted the help of Jewish-American lawyers to file a libel lawsuit against South African judge Richard Goldstone, following his retraction of his Operation Cast Lead report, which accused Israel of war crimes. A petition will be filed with a New York District Court next week, in which the plaintiffs will demand a formal apology and a symbolic financial compensation for the State of Israel. A second lawsuit may be filed in an Israeli court. *(Ynet News, April 7.)*

MERKEL: WE WILL OPPOSE 'UNILATERAL' PALESTINIAN STATEHOOD—(Berlin) German Chancellor Angela Merkel has voiced her government's opposition to a possible United Nations resolution creating an independent Palestinian state. "The Federal Republic of Germany is championing a two-state solution.... Any kind of unilateral recognition does not promote this goal," she said, during a joint press conference with Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. Merkel added that the purported conflict between her and Netanyahu reported in the media in February is "not a realistic portrayal of what happened" and noted that the German-Israeli relationship is "very intense and close." (*Jerusalem Post*, April 7.)

LIBYAN OPPOSITION PROTESTS CEASE-FIRE MOVE RETAINING GADHAFI—(Benghazi) Libyan opposition supporters have held protests against a delegation of African Union mediators, who arrived in Benghazi following meetings with Col. Moammar Gadhafi in Tripoli, in which Ghaddafi reportedly accepted a "road map" for a cease-fire that would leave the regime in power. Opposition officials said they have little faith in the visiting African Union mediators, most of them allies of Col. Gadhafi, who preach democracy for Libya but don't practice it at home. Rebel forces in Benghazi are demanding that Col. Gadhafi step down immediately. (*Wall Street Journal*, April 11.)

GATES PRESSES IRAQ TO DECIDE ON EXTENSION OF U.S. PRESENCE—(Mosul, Iraq) U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates is pressing senior Iraqi officials to decide whether they want U.S. troops to remain in the country beyond their scheduled departure at year's end. During the course of his trip, Mr. Gates met with Iraq's top leaders, including Prime Minister Nouri al-Maliki, and Deputy Prime Minister Saleh al-Mutlaq, to reiterate the U.S.' willingness to stay in Iraq beyond 2011, if invited. It is not known whether the Iraqi government will move to alter or extend the December 2008 security pact that set 2011 as the deadline for full U.S. withdrawal. (*Wall Street Journal*, April 8.)

IHH TO SEND 'MARMARA' BACK TO GAZA IN JUNE—(Jerusalem) The President of the Turkish group IHH, Bulent Yildrim, has confirmed his organization will again send the *Mavi Marmara* flotilla to Gaza in June. Speaking at an event called the "Mavi Marmara Support and Solidarity Memorial Night," Yildrim stated that this time his organization would be "more prepared" than it was last year, when IDF soldiers, who boarded the ship for a routine inspection, were viciously assaulted by a mob of "humanitarians." The IHH President added that "Zionism has spread like a virus to humanity." (*Jerusalem Post*, April 7.)

APPROVAL OF J'LEM BUILDING PLANS DELAYED—(Jerusalem) Four construction plans in Jewish neighborhoods located beyond the "Green Line" in Jerusalem have been removed from the agenda of the District Planning and Construction Committee following the Prime Minister Netanyahu's direct intervention. According to reports, the move is aimed at preventing an "embarrassment" before a meeting of the Quartet on the Middle East, scheduled for April 15, a day after the committee was slated to discuss and approve the building plans. The Prime Minister's Office declined comment. (*Ynet News*, April 11.)

RUSSIAN BILLIONAIRE PLANS 'JEWISH AL-JAZEERA'—(New York) A Russian-Jewish billionaire is planning to create an international news network that will present "real information" about Israel. Alexander Mashkevich announced his intention to found a Jewish Al-Jazeera during an address at the Keren Hayasod—United Israel Appeal conference in Washington D.C. "Every day and every hour people get negative information about Israel," Mashkevich told the conference. "Therefore, the most important thing is to represent Israel on an international level, with real information." Mashkevich is ranked 297 on Forbes magazine's billionaire list with an estimated fortune of \$3.7 billion. (*JTA*, April 7.)

EGYPT SENDS BLOGGER TO PRISON FOR CRITICIZING ARMY—(Cairo) An Egyptian military tribunal has convicted a blogger of insulting the army, and sentenced him to three years in prison. The military court issued the sentence against Maikel Nabil Sanad, 26, without the presence of his lawyers, according to a statement by seven Cairo-based rights groups. Rights lawyers say the sentence has wide implications for freedom of expression in post-Mubarak Egypt, and could set a precedent for anyone seeking to expose abuses by the military. According to reports, more than 10,000 civilians have been convicted and sentenced by military tribunals since the army took over two months ago. (*Wall Street Journal, April 11, 2011*)

MONTREAL GROCERY STORE REMOVES, PUTS BACK STAR OF DAVID—(Montreal) A grocery store in Montreal has agreed to replace a single Star of David over a display of Passover products, after removing three large Stars following a customer's complaint that they constituted religious "propaganda." The Metro grocery store in Westmount was ordered by the chain's head office to remove the Stars; however, the decision was reversed two days later after phone calls from angry local customers. Marie-Claude Bacon, director of corporate affairs for Metro, apologized for the "misunderstanding," and suggested that "[Metro stores] are here for all [its] customers so we decided to put back the Star of David realizing we made a mistake." (*Montreal Gazette, April 7.*)

ISRAEL EMBASSY STAFF EVACUATED FROM ABIDJAN—(Jerusalem) The staff of the Israeli Embassy in Abidjan, Ivory Coast, has been evacuated after having been trapped in the ambassador's residence for days due to the ongoing civil war raging in the country. The evacuation took place under heavy fire between rival forces, and the acting ambassador was wounded. The injured diplomat received medical treatment at a local hospital, and has since safely arrived in Israel along with the rest of the diplomats. (*Independent Media Review and Analysis, April 9.*)

YAD VASHEM PUTS EICHMANN TRIAL ON YOUTUBE—(*Jerusalem*) Israel's Yad Vashem museum has uploaded footage to YouTube of the entire trial of Holocaust architect Adolf Eichmann, to mark 50 years since the groundbreaking court case. Eichmann, who was captured by Israeli agents in Argentina in 1960, was brought to Israel and put on trial on April 11, 1961 for his central role in the genocide of some six million Jews. The initiative is part of a larger project launched earlier this year by Yad Vashem and Google to post all of the museum's Holocaust documents on the Internet. The English version of the trial can be viewed at: <http://www.youtube.com/EichmannTrialEN>. (*Ynet News, April 11.*)