

HAARETZ

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Don't appoint Hirsch top cop

Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan wanted to make a surprise appointment by selecting a daring and charismatic Israel Defense Forces officer for the post of police commissioner, to shake up a sick organization and restore its public image. Brig. Gen. (res.) Gal Hirsch impressed the minister with his passion and eloquence. Hirsch's indefatigable fight to clear his name from the failure in the Second Lebanon War and led to his resignation from the army seemed to Erdan to provide the candidate with added incentive to succeed in his new office.

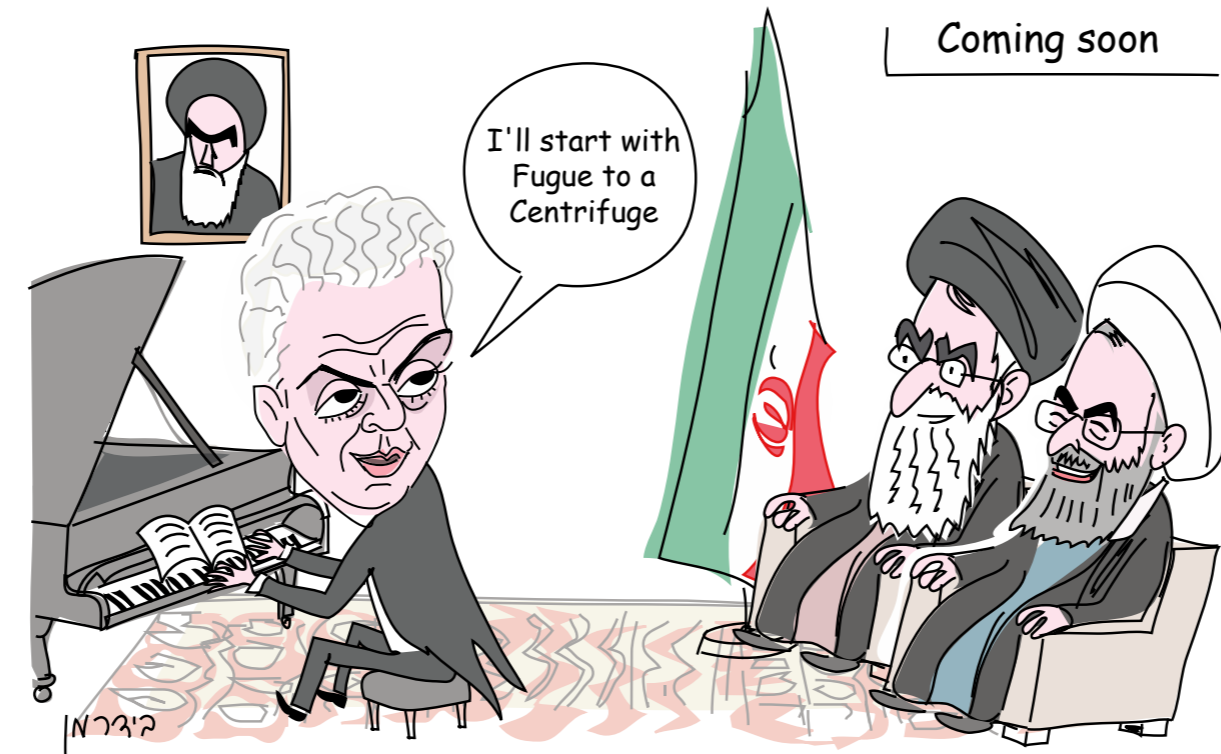
And finally, Erdan also saw the appointment of the police commissioner as a test of political power, in which he could demonstrate his independence from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and increase his future chances in the race for head of Likud.

But in Erdan's enthusiasm to appear as a decisive and courageous minister, who brings order to the ranks of the police, he exhibited the same faults that ended Hirsch's military career. He neglected the details. Instead of checking for possible skeletons in the past of the officer who has headed a security consulting business since leaving the army, Erdan made do with four lengthy conversations with Hirsch. The minister failed to conduct the essential clarifications with law enforcement authorities before announcing the appointment. The police and Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein had been looking into allegedly improper actions involving security-related deals by the companies headed by Hirsch even before his candidacy was proposed.

Hirsch did not know, of course, that a clandestine investigation was being conducted into his business affairs and Erdan, who wanted the announcement to come as a surprise, did not tell Weinstein beforehand. Erdan's political trick recalls the Netanyahu's failed attempt, in his first term, to push forward the appointment of Roni Bar-On as attorney general by placing the item on the cabinet's agenda under "miscellaneous."

The investigation of Hirsch is far from complete; clearly the presumption of innocence applies and it is possible that no criminal suspicions will be discovered. But the police can't continue to function without a commissioner until the probe is complete, and an individual who is not as pure as the driven snow cannot be placed at the head of the police force. For this reason, Erdan must come to his senses and announce as soon as possible that Hirsch is no longer a candidate.

Erdan could have avoided all this embarrassment if he had bothered to work according to the principles of good governance and checked the suitability of his candidate with the proper authorities – instead of acting hastily and superficially, launching a surprise that blew up in his face.



Amos Biderman | amosb@haaretz.co.il

Gideon Levy

What did you do at work today, Dad?

An Israeli returns from a day's work and his children ask him, "How was your day at work, Dad? What did you do today?" Most parents would give a light, nonchalant reply. But quite a few Israelis, whose number is rising alarmingly, may find it extremely difficult to answer. What will they say? How will they squirm? What excuse will they give and how will they get out of it, facing children who want to know and be proud of their parents?

What will the Arad municipal inspector tell his children, after standing last week at the entrance to the southern Israeli town and forcibly preventing asylum seekers who had just been freed from prison – after more than a year of detention without trial – from entering the town and finding shelter? How would the inspector describe that work to his children? Would he say, "I stood on the road and checked every car to make sure no black person was hiding in it"? "I pulled every black man out and sent him back to the desert"? I did it in the name of the law?

A law forbidding entrance to a city because of the color of one's skin has yet to be enacted in Israel. Security? That excuse, which always

justifies everything, doesn't hold water this time. "Did you carry out the mayor's instructions?" "Yes." "But Dad," the child will ask, "will you carry out every illegal order you get from the mayor? Is that what you're like? And what do you think of those who once treated the Jews like that?"

What will the Civil Administration inspector tell his

'But Dad,' the child will ask, 'will you carry out every illegal order you get? Is that what you're like? And what do you think of those who once treated the Jews like that?'

children, after destroying – in blistering temperatures – the tents and tin shacks of 127 people, 80 of them children, who were left without a roof over their head in the Jordan Rift and near Ma'aleh Adumim last week? How will he explain his malicious behavior to his children? His wickedness? His inhumanity? Clearly, without these qualities, there is no way to carry out this filthy, heinous work – destroying shabby homes and abandoning their inhabitants in this terrible heat.

If the inspector tries to explain to his children that he was enforcing the law, the

eldest child will ask, "Do you also treat the settlers like that? And where are those wretches, whose homes you've torn down, supposed to go? And what will become of Hudeifa, the 1-year-old baby, who has been crawling in the sand under the sun without shelter for two weeks already? Do you think about them, Dad, before you go to sleep?"

who kept mum and enabled all that to go on, tell their children?

What do Israeli border inspectors tell their children when they come home from work? That for seven hours they interrogated a renowned U.S.-Palestinian author, one who had come to visit her family and set up playgrounds for children in the West Bank? Did they tell them that, after interrogating her, they expelled her solely because of her Palestinian origin? Did they say that they also expelled an elderly U.S.-Palestinian man, a native of Jerusalem, who hadn't visited his homeland for 21 years, only because he landed at Ben-Gurion Airport?

What did the Binyamin Brigade commander Col. Yisrael Shomer tell his children the day he shot to death the teen Mohammad Kosba, whom he shot in the back as the boy fled? Did he say that because the boy threw a stone at his car, he deserved to die? That daddy killed a child because he can? That it's OK to kill children, as long as they're Palestinian? Did he tell them that Mohammad was the third son killed by Israel Defense Forces soldiers in his family?

Perhaps these questions are not being asked yet. Their day will come.

Chaskel Bennett

Nadler's support for a flawed deal

New York Congressman Jerry Nadler's decision to vote in favor of the controversial deal with Iran has been met by a vociferous response from his constituents. Rarely has a politician's pronouncement caused such an outcry in the Jewish community and beyond.

Nadler appropriately declares in his 5,200-word essay that the one overriding objective of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action is preventing Iran from obtaining a nuclear bomb.

However, there are other perilous issues that the deal astonishingly does not address or prevent including Iran's future ballistic arms capability, fomenting of worldwide terror and billions of dollars in immediate sanctions relief.

Nadler has expressed disappointment with the Obama administration's weak posture toward Iran and the Middle East and by its contentious approach to Israel.

With that backdrop in mind, Nadler emphasizes asking for and receiving presidential assurance that should Iran "seek to dash toward a nuclear weapon" the United States will take whatever means necessary including military means to prevent Iran from acquiring one. It is impossible to comprehend how Nadler suddenly became placated by the assurances of the same Obama administration that repeatedly and publicly

demanding "anytime – anywhere inspections" only to concede to a 24-day, international, committee-approved inspection process at unknown or suspected sights. That acquiescence together with ambiguous secret side agreements with the IAEA, leaves even the president's closest allies uncomfortable.

The JCPOA is predicated on the trust that when Iran violates the agreement (as they will), the Obama or future administrations and international stakeholders will immediately "snap back" sanctions. There are many fundamental problems with such an assumption. The most grievous is that while U.S. President Barack Obama will be long out of office, vast financial investments in Iran by countries like China, Russia and EU members will negate any motivation by these parties to impose sanctions on lucrative business partnerships.

Mr. Nadler joins other Democratic supporters of the deal by noting the strength of "snap back" sanctions as a powerful deterrent. After years of strengthening sanctions both at home and abroad, members of Congress know better than anyone how arduous it was to implement and enforce sanctions that currently prevent Iran from creating nuclear weaponry. It seems incomprehensible that seasoned veterans like Nadler and Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, among other Democrats, are

willing to assert their faith in "snap back" sanctions.

Director of National Intelligence James Clapper recently testified before Congress stating that the U.S. intelligence community still sees Tehran as the "foremost state sponsor of terrorism." Many billions of dollars in unfrozen funds will no doubt find their way to Hamas, Hezbollah and Islamic Jihad, well established terror proxies of Iran.

Obama's personal assurances of increased aid and arms to Israel, while genuinely appreciated and necessary, will not be nearly enough to protect Israelis in harm's way.

The president frames the debate as "this deal, or war with Iran." What he deliberately omits though is that this deal almost guarantees Israel's next war with Hezbollah and Hamas. That alone should be reason enough for stalwart supporters of Israel to reject it, as Democratic Senator Charles Schumer did. While many constituents are angered by Mr. Nadler's decision to support the JCPOA, Americans of all faiths should share his "outrage" that some on the left hurl anti-Semitic accusations of dual loyalty when someone, particularly a Jewish member of Congress, decides to oppose the agreement.

Nadler's decision as a Jewish member of Congress, representing the largest Jewish district in the country, likely opens the door for other un-

decided members to follow his lead. He has been severely criticized with accusations of betrayal by many of his Jewish constituents. Nadler has been offended by those charges. He might better focus his umbrage at U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and the Obama administration who shockingly moved the goal posts from "a bad deal is worse than no deal" to "this deal or war" and put Congress in an untenable position to approve a drastically deficient deal.

Stated supporters of the U.S.-Israel relationship like Senators Ben Cardin, Cory Booker as well as Representatives Hakeem Jeffries, Yvette Clarke, Carolyn Maloney, Joe Crowley and other "undecideds" should be looking in the mirror and asking: Does the deal put the United States, Israel and the world in a more dangerous position than before the negotiations started? The answer is unequivocally yes, and leaves conscientious Americans questioning how Congress can endorse this fatally flawed deal.

Approving or disapproving the JCPOA may be the most consequential vote any member of Congress makes in their career. Each member was elected and took an oath to represent their constituents and country – not their party or president.

The writer is a New York-based activist and co-founder of the Flatbush Jewish Community Coalition.

Joel Braunold

Getting used to Israel's new face

My Twitter timeline was awash with sad and exasperated tweets last week when Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decided in his wisdom to pick Danny "Deportation Now" Danon as the new face of Israel to the world, by appointing him Israel's ambassador to the United Nations.

His rejection of the two-state solution and his want to deport all refugees make him the poster boy for the far-right members of Likud. His close relationship with Glenn Beck and his friendly on-camera appearance with Mike Huckabee suggest he could soon become Israel's own representative to the Tea Party.

And if that weren't enough, despite being fired as deputy defense minister for not being able to have the self-restraint to withhold attacking the government during a time of war, Bibi apparently felt that this was the best person to build global partnerships and prevent diplomatic upsets.

Analysts rushed in to show the internal political reasons for the Danon pick: Bibi's wish to remove him from the Likud Central Committee, to free up a cabinet seat and the like. Some, like veteran Israeli journalist David Horovitz, despaired, writing that this move showed Bibi's true face and that of Israel.

Personally, I think this appointment demonstrates the

utter disregard that Bibi has for diplomacy and his desire to control everything from the Prime Minister's Office. Let the diplomats do public relations, anything of importance comes directly to him.

Ignoring the "why" of the appointment, the sad reality of this move is that the firestorm will simmer down and the U.S. Jewish community will get used to having Israel's own version of Ted Cruz in their backyard, and will invite him to the usual functions and honors.

When Avigdor Lieberman was first appointed foreign minister in 2009, there was an equal cry of anguish from the global Diaspora community. For his first term, it was then-Defense Minister Ehud Barak, not Lieberman, who handled the U.S. relationship.

Yet, when Lieberman was reappointed as Foreign Minister in the following Knesset, he was often seen as the grown up in the U.S.-Israel relationship, particularly during the peace negotiations led by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. His obnoxious policy positions toward Israel's Arab minority, which he had always held, did not change, though, and on the eve of the most recent election, while still foreign minister, Lieberman threatened some 20 percent of Israel's population, on live television, saying that they were citizens "for now."

We just got used to having a brutal pragmatist

who saw a fifth of Israel's population as disposable. So too will be the case with Danny Danon: We will get used to him. There will be some awkward moments for sure, maybe the Anti-Defamation League will issue a condemnation or two, but nothing serious.

Danon will get the same invites to the same receptions as his predecessor did. Jewish Americans have set their expectations so low for him that if he manages to get through a speech without a racial slur, it will be seen as a diplomatic masterpiece.

All the while his appointment makes an utter mockery of the work that the Jewish community – led by the American Jewish Committee – has been doing in the United Nations. The AJC, nicknamed the "State Department of the Jewish People," sees its role as being the representatives of mainstream Jewish opinion to the diplomatic community in the United States and to foreign governments around the world.

The AJC took on preventing the United Nations from recognizing Palestinian statehood when the General Assembly voted on it in November 2011, as one of its major calls for action. Its rubric was: Support peace and oppose the UN "gambit." It feels odd, then, that the AJC lobbied the world to vote against recognizing Palestine as a state on the grounds that

doing so would go against a viable two-state solution, but went silent when the Israel announced its new ambassador to the United Nations is a decisive opponent to the two-state solution and supports annexation in the West Bank.

I wonder what the atmosphere was like within the AJC when Danon's appointment was announced. How does appointing a man who spent the past few years embarrassing Bibi – including in the pages of the New York Times – in his desire to destroy any hopes of two states for two peoples play with the AJC policy position and advocacy for a two-state solution?

By tolerating the appointment and adding Danon into the fold of the U.S. Jewish communal architecture, the American Jewish community will show once again that there is no right-wing flap in the communal tent: While we brutally and viciously police the lines on the left regarding who is in and who is out, we are starting to understand that one can say whatever one wants on the right and still be welcomed with open arms.

Israeli commentators worry about what Danon's appointment says about Israel. I worry about what his reception in America will say about us.

The writer is the U.S. Director for the Alliance for Middle East Peace. All views expressed are personal.

Rogel Alpher

A nation of news addicts

Until Channel 2 was established in 1993, Israelis made do with a half-hour news program called "Mabat," and didn't feel like they didn't know what was going on in their world.

When Channel 2 came along, it began broadcasting its own 30-minute news program, which included commercials. And still, there was no public outcry, clamoring for more.

Then, in 2003, Channel 10 established its own news program with a nightly broadcast of 60 minutes – double what viewers were used to – and so Channel 2 followed suit.

That's how the news became a program that takes up no less than one-third of prime time (from 8-11 P.M.), or even later. In recent months, the news sometimes goes on until 9:20 P.M., or even later. Once again, Channel 10 is the catalyst: Since March, Channel 10's news program has been 80-85 minutes long.

According to TheMarker's analysis, one reason for this trend is the commercial interests of the largest media-buying company in Israel, Universal, which needs prime time to extend beyond 11 P.M. in order to increase its profits.

If that's the case, Israelis are apparently watching more news to meet the needs of Universal, which buys advertising for its clients.

But the truth is, every minute of news beyond the minimal half hour stems from commercial considerations. Prime time on Channel 10 and Channel 2 is money time. They broadcast only what is worth their while, what brings the money in, what maximizes profit.

Providing information to the public is not a charity. News is cheap to produce, and brings in ratings. In terms of cost effectiveness, news is the most profitable content in Israel. Money comes from ratings. Ratings come from viewers.

It's hard to believe that in the late summer of 2015, in an age where people can find out the latest news at any time on the Internet, viewing is at its peak during the news every night –

almost half the peak viewing time.

Of course, there's no connection to the news, to reality, to events or to existential issues. It's about a patently irrational national cult. We aren't at war, but viewer habits act like we are. It's like a mass-conditioned response that persists long after the stimulus that created it; a collective psychosis.

There's no doubt that Universal profits from extending the news program, just as Channel 2 and Channel 10 always make money on their extended format. But no one is forcing the viewers to consume 80 minutes of news on these commercial channels. They do it of their own volition, about 900,000 of them.

For comparison's sake, during last summer's Op-

Is there a limit to the amount of news they can watch? Would they draw the line at 2 hours? All signs indicate that they would not.

eration Protective Edge – when a real war was raging outside – about 1 million people watched the extended news broadcast every evening. Most of them, therefore, continue to do so devotedly, without an obvious reason. Add to them the approximately 100,000 viewers who watch "Mabat" for an hour, and you've got a million again. They have nothing better to do.

Is there a limit to the amount of news they can watch? Would they change the channel after 90 minutes? Draw the line at two hours? All signs indicate that, apparently, they would not.

They are part of a revolutionary social experiment. At the end, they will be able to sit in front of a news broadcast for 24 hours, without the need for sleep, food or a bathroom break. A million addicts, for whom the news (intentionally dramatic, nurturing Israeli victimization) provides constant existential angst.