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**Subject:** Fw: The Media Line MidEast Daily

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## Donor Nations Deem Palestinian Authority "Above Threshold of State"

An independent Palestinian state came closer to fruition in Brussels on Wednesday when representatives of donor nations deemed the Palestinian Authority to be "above the threshold of a functioning state." The declaration was made by the session's chairman, Norwegian Foreign Minister Jonas Gare Stor. In response, Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad said it amounts to "a birth certificate for the reality of Palestinian statehood." With peace talks with Israel deadlocked, the Palestinians have been threatening to abandon the American-led process and move to the United Nations General Assembly for a resolution recognizing a Palestinian state. Although Israel vehemently opposes such a move, the thumbs-up from the Ad Hoc Liaison Committee gives increased credibility to the threat. Efforts by the Quartet – the international sponsors of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process including the U.S.; [REDACTED]; European Union; and Russia – meanwhile have ground to a virtual halt, the latest indication being the cancellation of a scheduled meeting in Berlin. Despite the latest boost, mixed signals have come from Palestinian leadership. Fayyad continues to say the Palestinians "don't need another declaration of statehood" and has cited the importance of Israeli recognition of statehood. [REDACTED] head Mahmoud 'Abbas, on the other hand, more frequently speaks of plans for declaring a state. Ghassan Khatib, director of the Government Media Center, told The Media Line on Thursday that there are no plans for a unilateral declaration of statehood. Both the United States and the Quartet are on record stressing the importance of statehood coming through a negotiated

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solution. Fayyad is reportedly seeking to raise \$5 billion over three years in anticipation of launching a state.

### **Israeli Foreign Minister Step Closer to Indictment, Removal**

Israel's controversial foreign minister will have an opportunity to meet with the attorney general in a last-ditch effort to prevent an indictment from being issued for a series of graft charges dating back a number of years. Avigdor Lieberman, who has been at the center of a number of controversies since the Netanyahu government came to power two years ago, is accused of fraud, money laundering and witness tampering. Although Lieberman insists he is innocent of the charges, he would nevertheless be forced to relinquish his post if an indictment is handed down. It is not clear what the effect would be on the Netanyahu government, but his party, Yisrael Beiteinu, is the largest coalition partner and the nation's third-largest party, so if the party leaves the government along with Lieberman, new elections could result. Lieberman has often served as foil for Prime Minister Netanyahu, airing ideas that would be imprudent for the prime minister himself to suggest.

### **Egyptian Revisions to Gas Contracts Threatens Israeli Supply**

A deal to provide Israel with 40% of its gas needs that was a controversial move for former Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak is now threatened with major revisions by Egypt's successor government. The state-run MENA news agency reported on Wednesday that the prime minister has ordered a review of all gas contracts, "Including Jordan and Israel." The agency said the anticipated revisions would make the gas more expensive, resulting in an extra \$3 billion – \$4 billion. Four Israeli companies import Egyptian gas under a 20-year contract that has only recently begun. Since the unrest that resulted in Mubarak's ouster began there has been talk of reviewing and re-working the Israeli contract.

### **Two Soldiers Dead in Sana'a as Unrest Widens; Mubarak Detained**

Two died as troops loyal to embattled President Ali Abdullah Saleh fought against former comrades under the command of General Ali Moshen Al-Ahmar in the Yemeni capital Sana'a on Wednesday. Al-Ahmar, who controlled half of the Yemeni army before his recent defection from Saleh, has a history of arms smuggling, black marketing and ties to Al-Qa'ida according to sources in Yemen. Fighting also raged in the southern city of Aden where one death was reported. The two rival military factions battled each other with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. In Sharm A-Sheikh, Egypt, ousted President Hosni Mubarak has been placed under a 15-day detention order

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although he remains hospitalized for a heart condition. His two sons have been detained and are imprisoned. The arrests staved-off plans for a massive demonstration that was to be held in Cairo on Friday, the chief demand being the prosecution of the three Mubaraks.

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