

Exclusive to Haaretz-NYTI subscribers
FREE ACCESS
 to **NYTimes.com & Haaretz.com**
 For more information:
 03-5121222
 nyti@haaretz.co.il



The challenges making Turkey's Erdogan sweat
Zvi Bar'el, Page 13



A tough week for the Netanyahu's
Yossi Verter, Page 5



Twelve hours of jaw-dropping suspense
The Guide, Page 4



Iran's scoring at World Cup, losing in Mideast
Amos Harel, Page 2

Established 1919

HAARETZ

ENGLISH EDITION
 הארץ

Friday, June 22, 2018 | Tamuz 9, 5778. Vol 99/30148

ISRAEL'S LEADING DAILY NEWSPAPER

www.haaretz.com

Analysis **Gidi Weitz**

Sara Netanyahu indicted for systematic fraud

Revital Hovel

Sara Netanyahu, the wife of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, was indicted Thursday on charges of "systematic fraud" in the allegedly improper and deceitful spending of hundreds of thousands of shekels in public funds on gourmet meals at the Prime Minister's Residence.

Sara Netanyahu was charged along with Ezra Saidoff, a former deputy director general of the Prime Minister's Office. The two are charged in an indictment filed at the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court with aggravated fraudulent receipt of items, fraud and breach of trust. Saidoff was also charged with falsification by a public servant.

According to the indictment, the prime minister's wife instructed staff at the

Prime Minister's Residence in Jerusalem to order meals eaten at the residence worth a total of 350,000 shekels (\$96,000) from gourmet restaurants between 2010 and 2013 - in violation of rules barring the residence from ordering out meals when there is a cook on staff.

Investigators gathered evidence that purportedly shows Sara Netanyahu instructed that the employment of the cook be concealed, and also showed she was aware that ordering out meals for the residence when it employed a cook was a violation of the rules.

According to the indictment, she directed staff at the residence, including the chief maintenance superintendent at the time, Meni Naftali, and another employee, Meir Cohen, to hide the fact that cooks were em-

ployed in the residence "so that this won't be found out by the treasury and the office manager." The indictment states that in accordance with her instructions, Naftali passed the message on to other residence staff. The prosecution alleges that the prime minister's wife ordered that the cook be listed at the residence as a maintenance staffer.

In July 2015, a probe was initiated after the State Comptroller's Office issued a report on the Netanyahu family households. Its findings were turned over for criminal investigation by the national fraud squad at the Israel Police.

The investigation looked into a series of alleged irregularities, including public funding for at least 15

See SARA, Page 2



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and wife Sara at the premier's residence in March.

Olivier Fitoussi

AG hoped Sara would bring a doctor's note

Three years have passed since police began investigating the esoteric case of suspected fraud by the prime minister's wife, Sara Netanyahu.

This case could have been solved by three novice investigators, but the ones who actually followed the tracks of the illegal chef's dinners, the waiters posing as cleaners and the masses of candles purchased with public funds, were an experienced team from the police's national fraud squad. A mid-level prosecutor could have translated the evidence into a fairly quick decision, but for years, all the prosecution's most senior officials were dealing with it, first and foremost Attorney General Avichai Mendelblit.

Some people warned him, "Don't go there. This isn't a case of a magnitude that requires the attorney general's active involvement; leave these trivialities for State Prosecutor Shai Nitzan."

But Mendelblit insisted. His argument was that the investigation was launched with approval from his predecessor, Yehuda Weinstein, and therefore he was obligated to pick up the baton.

In recent months, it seemed as if Mendelblit were trying to end the saga without putting Sara Netanyahu on trial. The fact that the hearing was held in installments, the frequent correspondence with the battery of attorneys representing the prime minister's wife, and the discussion about

See NOTE, Page 2

State says Hamas paid Gaza family to blame Israel for infant's death

Almog Ben Zikri

The state says the Hamas leader in the Gaza Strip, Yahya Sinwar, paid the family of a baby who died last month to falsely claim that she died from inhaling tear gas fired by Israeli troops during demonstrations along the border with Israel. The allegation appears in an indictment issued Thursday in a court in Be'er Sheva against a relative of the family.

Mahmoud Omar, 20, was

arrested after allegedly attempting to cross into Israel illegally in order to set fire to an unmanned Israeli army position. In addition to charges relating to that incident, he was charged with membership in an offshoot of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades terror organization and of disturbing the peace during demonstrations along the Israeli border. The indictment does not provide details regarding his involvement in the protests.

According to the charge sheet, Omar - a cousin of the baby who died, Layla al-Ghandour - told his Israeli interrogators that Sinwar paid Ghandour's family 8,000 shekels (\$2,200) to blame her death on Israel. The accusation against Israel was made despite the fact that family members had previously said that the 8-month-old infant apparently died of the same heart condition that had killed her 6-month-old brother last year.

When news surfaced of the claim that Layla had died from inhaling tear gas, Israeli army officials cast doubt on the allegation, saying that the army had evidence that called the family's claim into question.

According to the indictment against Omar, the day Layla died Omar's mother called him while he was participating in a demonstration near the border fence and told him about the

See BLAME, Page 4

Isaac Herzog to head Jewish Agency

Judy Maltz, Jonathan Lis and Chaim Levinson

Opposition leader Isaac Herzog is slated to replace Natan Sharansky as the head of the Jewish Agency, after a search committee decided to back him and reject Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's candidate.

This is the first time in 23 years that the prime minister's choice for the position was rejected. Sources said Netanyahu has decided not to contest the appointment, and would instead nominate a candidate from his Likud party for the post of Jewish National Fund chairman.

The Jewish Agency's Board of Governors is convening in Jerusalem Sunday and is expected to give the nomination its final approval, in which case Herzog would start his four-year term on August 1, 2018.

"In light of an appeal by Jewish leaders in the Diaspora, I agreed to take on the role of chairman of the Jewish Agency," Herzog tweeted after the nomination was declared. "These are days of significant challenges concerning the relations

See HERZOG, Page 2



Israelis protesting in Afula against the sale of a house to an Arab family in the city last week.

Gili Eliahu

'More Israelis are coming out as anti-Arab'

Judy Maltz

Last week, hundreds of Jewish residents of the northern Israeli city of Afula took to the streets to protest the sale of a home to an Arab family. On Saturday, members of a Bedouin family were barred entry to a public swimming pool in southern Israel because they had arrived during the afternoon hours unofficially designated for Jews. That was how they learned that Bedouin are meant to swim

separately from Jews. It wasn't the first time Jewish residents had tried to block Arabs from moving into their city. Nor would it be the first time that non-Jews were denied access to a public swimming pool.

Yet those who track such incidents say something has changed in Israeli society.

"There's always been racism against Arabs in this country - both at the grassroots level and the establishment level," says Raghad Jaraisy, director of

Arab minority rights at the Association for Civil Rights in Israel. "What's different is that it's out there now," she adds. "What was once whispered about behind closed doors, people are no longer ashamed to say out in the open."

Among those participating in the Afula protests, Jaraisy notes, were two prominent politicians: the city's former mayor, Avi Elkabetz, and its current

See ANTI, Page 13

TEL AVIV NONSTOP CITY

White Night

June 28

Follow The Stars
 Performance Art and Street Shows from Europe
Bialik Complex, 7:30pm

World Food Market
 Music, Street Bands, World Cup Screening & Art from "Midburn"
 (The Israeli "Burning Man")
Neve Sha'anani, 10 Salomon St.

The White Picnic
 A Huge Picnic in a Secret Location
Wednesday, June 27, 6pm

Huge Headphone Silent Party
Rabin Square, 8:00pm

Shakatak
 Dance Performance
Suzanne Dellal Center, 8pm

Israeli Folk Dancing
Gordon Beach

And many more events & parties around the city.
 For a full list of events visit www.tel-aviv.gov.il

Design: Yossi Madar & Ran Sabag
 יועץ: יוסי מדר וארן סבג

©&OE | The right to changes is reserved