**The Netanyahu government is endangering the peace treaty with Jordan Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, October 25, 2018**

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Many of the media outlets chose to define Jordanian King Abdullah II's decision not to extend the validity of two appendices to the peace treaty with Israel, with regard to Israeli use of the land of the Tzofar enclave in the Arava (2,000 dunams), and the "island" area of ​​Naharayim (about 800 dunams), as "canceling part of the agreement". The surprise soon turned into an accusation against the Jordanians' "ingratitude" and furious calls against the kingdom.

In practice, however, this move complies with the peace treaty signed between Israel and Jordan in 1994. More importantly, it reiterates the Israeli moves that created the need for these appendices, and the generosity, understanding and patience shown by King Hussein who agreed to them. This process also shows the close connection between the Jordanian and Palestinian issues, and reveals how the Netanyahu government's political freeze on the process with the Palestinians could threaten the agreement with Jordan that has been beneficial to us for a quarter of a century.

Following the signing of the 1949 armistice agreement, in which the border was re-established in this area as was determined in 1922 by the British, approved by the League of Nations in 1923 and became international in 1946, upon the independence of Transjordan, Israel began to establish agricultural settlements in the Arava (such as Yotvata in 1952). Due to the fact that the land and water reservoirs were located on the Jordanian side of the border, Israel opted for a policy of "creeping annexation" and took over land in Jordan's sovereign territory, which it allocated to settlements such as Yotvata, Lotan, Ketura and Grofit. In addition, 2,000 dunams were allocated to the settlement of Tzofar, which was established in 1976, far from the border.

In addition, Israel drilled 22 water wells in the territory of Jordan, which supplied about 15 cubic meters of water per year. In order to complete the "invasion", Israel has further blurred its intentions in building the security fence to protect these settlements within Jordanian territory. In practice, Israel annexed a Jordanian area of ​​almost 400,000 dunams - larger than the Gaza Strip.

The armistice agreement left the "island" in Naharayim, 830 dunams, on the Israeli side, created as a result of the construction of the Rutenberg electricity plant in 1927, east of the Jordan River, which was defined as a boundary in 1922. Immediately after that, the kibbutz farmers began farming the land. Jordan's complaints to the UN that Israel had taken control of the territories did not produce any action.

The cancellation of the annexation of the West Bank by King Hussein in 1988 and the signing of the Oslo Accords between Israel and the PLO in 1993 paved the way for negotiations on a peace agreement between Israel and Jordan.

In the course of the negotiations, the Jordanians demanded the return of "every grain of land" in the Egyptian model, and clung to the 1949 armistice line, which in this area resembled the line set in 1922. Israel, which was burned in the arbitration case with Egypt on the Taba issue, feared a similar result. After the Jordanians rejected the legal maneuvers that were presented by it, such as the claims that it is not clear what is the "Wadi Arava" and what is "the middle of Wadi Arava", terms that appeared in the British declaration from 1922, Israel moved to seek creative solutions that would prevent its return of the land.

In order to bridge the gaps between the sides, there was an idea of ​​an exchange of territory, which would later be used more widely in negotiations between Israel and the PLO. King Hussein agreed, and the lands cultivated by the Arava settlements east of the border remained in Israel's hands, and Jordan received in return rocky lands in Israeli territory, on the back of the Arava, west of the border. Approximately 16.5 square kilometers were replaced by a one-to-one ratio, and the rest of the area was adapted to the Mandate line by returning to Jordan 300 square kilometers that Israel took over between the 1960s and the 1980s. The question of the exchange of territories is not mentioned in the peace treaty, but it contains references to aerial photographs that were attached to it.

As for the area of ​​the "island" in the Naharayim in the north, a "special regime" was established there for 25 years, in which Jordan's sovereignty over the area was recognized, as well as the development of land and the tourism from Israel in the "island" area by the residents of Kibbutz Ashdot Yaakov, according to special legal arrangements, with an option to extend an additional 25 years. In the area of ​​Moshav Zofar in the Arava, whose cultivated land was east of the established line, a similar special regime was agreed upon, in order to enable further agricultural cultivation.

In both cases, it is not a lease, and Israel or the settlements do not pay Jordan for the use of these areas. It was also agreed that Israel would transfer to Jordan 50 million cubic meters of water per year from the Sea of ​​Galilee, in exchange for the possibility of pumping water from drillings carried out in Jordanian territory.

It is sad to discover that new residents who joined Tzofar, such as Erez Gibori, did not know of these agreements. Gibori, who has been cultivating 80 dunams of the Tzofar enclave for 10 years, explained in a conversation with Haaretz that he believed that these territories had been moved to Israel in according to the peace agreement. "Today I understand that this is not true," he said.

Even if Netanyahu succeeds with American aid to remove this evil decree, it is sadder to discover that Israeli governments have not bothered to prepare in advance for this possibility, which they signed to in the agreement. Just as the Netanyahu government rejected the central recommendation of the state's commission of inquiry into the disengagement plan, which stated in its report in 2010 that "the most important lesson of the commission of inquiry is to instruct the Prime Minister to plan today a comprehensive national plan for a possible future evacuation of 100,000 people from the West Bank in order to reduce the personal, collective and national trauma and in order to save costs and to absorb people in the responsible and proper manner, as this country absorbed a million immigrants in the 1990s".

The Netanyahu government had cast its faith on Jordan's goodwill. This "strategy" had a better chance in the Rabin-Hussein relationship, or when Israel sought a permanent agreement with the Palestinians in the days of Barak and Olmert. The voices in the Israeli Knesset and the government calling for "Jordan as the Palestinian homeland" to grant Jordanian citizenship to residents of the West Bank and even mass expulsion in the heat of the next war are perceived in Jordan as an infringement on the Peace agreement and a threat to its future, and as a result, as undermining the stability of the kingdom and its shaky economy.

The Netanyahu government's policy of strengthening the "creeping annexation" on its way to annexations in the West Bank unproved by law, will force the king to suspend and even cancel the peace treaty with Israel, which provides it with strategic depth against threats from the east and preserves Israel's eastern border against radical terrorist movements of political Islam on the border of Iraq and Jordan.