

A woman with blonde hair is speaking at a podium with a microphone. She is wearing a light blue blazer over a white top with a blue floral pattern. The background is dark with some text visible, including "EXPLORE" and "G".

GWIRE

WEEKLY DIGEST
SEPTEMBER 20, 2019

**CRITIC OF ISRAEL'S
TREATMENT OF PALESTINIANS
SPEAKS IN FRESNO »**

**NEWSOM ROCKS THE GIG ECONOMY,
SIGNS AB 5 LABOR BILL »**

**NANCY PELOSI UNVEILS
AMBITIOUS PLAN TO LOWER
DRUG PRICES »**



LOCAL

CRITIC OF ISRAEL'S TREATMENT OF PALESTINIANS SPEAKS IN FRESNO

September 18, 2019 | Nancy Price

America's foreign policy in Israel is being guided by neoconservatives whose plan is to build up Israel while destabilizing nearby countries — and American tax dollars are helping to pay for it, author Alison Weir said Wednesday evening at Clovis Community College.

**"They stole our house, and they didn't reimburse."
— Fresno resident Munzer Afifi, formerly of Palestine**

Weir, a longtime critic of Israel's treatment of Palestinians, said the U.S. spends more than \$10 million each day in support of Israel. Weir's appearance at a packed auditorium at the northeast Fresno college campus was hosted by GV Wire as part of an ongoing speaker series. She came to Fresno in May as the keynote speaker at a Fresno Center for Nonviolence event.

Related Story: Is U.S. News Media Covering Up Casualties Inflicted by Israel?

How Palestinians Became Refugees

Wednesday's audience ranged from 18-year-old Clovis College student Reem Bali and her friend, Sabreen Qass, 17, to 91-year-old Munzer Afifi of Fresno, whose Palestinian family was forced from their home in Jaffa during the formation of the state of Israel after World War II. Afifi said his family lost property when they were forced from their homeland in what Weir refers to as "ethnic cleansing." "They stole our house, and they didn't reimburse," he said. Asked if he had ever been back since, Afifi said, "I wouldn't go back and give them a cent of my money."

Bali said she and Qass came to hear Weir's speech to stand up for their homeland of Palestine. She said she thinks many people are unaware of what is happening there, "the killings, the settlements."

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Visit to Mideast Was a Life-Changer

Weir, a journalist and researcher, founded the research institute [If Americans Knew](#) after visiting Palestine and Israel 18 years ago and seeing what Palestinians are subjected to — and what's often not reported by the U.S. media. She became convinced that Americans' support for Israel would lessen once they were better educated about those conditions and the politics of the region.

Weir talked about how the deaths of Israelis get the bulk of mainstream news coverage, even though the numbers are small compared to the thousands of Palestinians whose deaths frequently go unreported by western media outlets. Weir provided a historical context for how the state of Israel was created in land once ruled by the Ottoman Empire and then later by the British Empire, and how U.S. Supreme Court justices and other high-ranking American officials worked behind the scenes to ensure U.S. support for a Jewish state.

Taking Away Their Land

Palestine was occupied predominantly by Muslims, with smaller percentages of Christians and Jews, prior to World War II, Weir said. In 1947 the United Nations voted for a partition plan that split Palestine between Arabs and Jews, which soon sparked the first in a series of wars between Israel and its Arab neighbors.

Weir, who authored ["Against Our Better Judgment: The Hidden History of How the U.S. Was Used to Create Israel,"](#) was asked in a question-and-answer session after her talk about the current prospects for a two-state solution to create an autonomous Palestinian homeland. "The two-state solution has never been a solution," she said. Under the proposal, Palestine would wind up with three non-contiguous...



BOXING CHAMP RAMIREZ EMOTIONAL AT STATUE UNVEILING

GV Wire/Janez Tello

September 17, 2019 | David Taub

Fresno County loves Jose Ramirez, and the champ feels the same way. The WBO/WBC super lightweight world champion watched as a statue of his likeness was unveiled at the Fresno County Historical Museum inside the Big Fresno Fair on Tuesday morning. For a man who said he was speechless, Ramirez followed with many emotional words.

“When I was a kid, I wanted the belt, big houses, I wanted cars. The older I got, my only goal was to inspire. To motivate people,” Ramirez said, voice cracking. “To let them know that everything is possible. To work hard, stay in the right lane. This for me, honestly, it makes me feel like you guys are paying attention. It makes me feel like you guys are thankful for all the sacrifices I’ve done.” Ramirez said Oscar De La Hoya served as his professional inspiration. Like De La Hoya, Ramirez boxed

with the U.S. Olympic team in 2012, before turning professional and becoming a champion. Since he turned pro, Ramirez said inspiration has come from his son Matteo, and another set of children. “The times I went to Valley Children’s Hospital, I was able to go for a walk with the kids that were fighting for their lives. Six years old, 7 years old, 3 years old, and they are fighting for their lives. Being in those positions got me to be able to do what I did moving forward,” Ramirez said.

He also talked about how the farmworkers in his Kings County hometown of Avenal inspired him to fight for water and adopt his “Immigrant and Proud” mantra. Fresno artist Debbie Stevenson spent a year’s worth of weekends creating the life-sized statue. It started with photos of Ramirez. Fair CEO John Alkire joked she shot him in the nude. Stevenson said this...

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FRESNO CONSIDERS DOWNTOWN PROJECT. NEIGHBOR NOT SO SURE.

September 18, 2019 | David Taub

Developer Terance Frazier’s long-envisioned downtown Fresno entertainment and housing venture will be [presented to the city’s planning commission](#) for approval Wednesday (Sept. 18). The H Street Development is slated to include restaurants, bars, and other entertainment venues, such as a music stage and a bowling alley. The project will also feature 48 one – and two-bedroom apartments.

The property is located on the east side of H Street, between Inyo and Mono streets, across the street from Chukchansi Park. The project has at least one opponent. Clark Bros. [sent the city a letter](#), concerned with parking, trash, and allegations of illegal drug use among other complaints. In the official protest letter, Clark Bros., a contracting company with a nearby location, attached pictures taken at the Frazier-organized Alley Wave event, held earlier this year in buildings he owns adjacent to the proposed location. The company’s president, Lawrence Clark, alleges the photos show illegal marijuana use and underage...

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City of Fresno

CHILDREN’S HOSPITAL GOES ALL IN WITH 128-BED MENTAL HEALTH UNIT

September 18, 2019 | David Taub

A new hospital is coming to the Central Valley dedicated to behavioral health services. Valley Children’s Healthcare announced Wednesday morning a partnership with Universal Health Services creating more beds for behavioral health services for both children and adults. VCH officials say the new facility will increase pediatrician behavioral health access by 49%.

“That is a profound, profound investment and additional capability to take care of our kids, and keep more kids home in the Valley and have better access to behavioral mental health services right here. Not in the Bay Area, (not in) Southern California,” Valley Children’s President and CEO Todd Suntrapak said. During the announcement at Valley Children’s main hospital attended by hundreds of medical staff and local leaders, Suntrapak and others cited the need for more services. According to The Treatment Advocacy Center recommendations, the goal is to have one behavioral inpatient bed for every 2,000 people...

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GV Wire/David Taub



STATE

NEWSOM ROCKS THE GIG ECONOMY, SIGNS AB 5 LABOR BILL

Septmber 18, 2019 | AP News

SACRAMENTO — Gov. Gavin Newsom on Wednesday signed sweeping labor legislation that aims to give wage and benefit protections to California rideshare drivers at companies like Uber and Lyft and to workers across other industries. The closely watched proposal could

Uber, Lyft, and DoorDash are pushing Newsom to come up with a third option for gig companies and have threatened to spend \$90 million on a 2020 ballot measure if they are not successful.

have national implications as lawmakers, businesses and unions confront the changing nature of work and the rise of the so-called gig economy. “California is now setting the global standard for worker protections for other

states and countries to follow,” Democratic Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez, the author of Assembly Bill 5, said in a statement.

Related Story: Will New California Labor Bill Affect WWE Wrestlers?

Higher Standard for Independent Contractors

The legislation makes it harder for companies to classify workers as independent contractors instead of employees, who are entitled to minimum wage and benefits like workers compensation. While it affects up to a million workers, according to Gonzalez, its effect on ridesharing and meal delivery companies has seized the spotlight. Uber, Lyft, and DoorDash are pushing Newsom to come up with a third option for gig companies and have threatened to spend \$90 million on a 2020 ballot measure if they are not successful.

Newsom Wants Gig Workers to Have Collective Bargaining

Newsom, for his part, said he wants to keep negotiating with labor and business leaders to ensure that gig workers can collectively bargain. There’s been a dispute over whether giving them employee status in California

would allow them to form a union, because the National Labor Relations Board still considers gig workers to be independent contractors. “I will convene leaders from the Legislature, the labor movement, and the business community to support innovation and a more inclusive economy by stepping in where the federal government has fallen short,” Newsom wrote in his signing statement.

Uber Says It’s Prepared to Defend Its Model

Uber general counsel Tony West has suggested Uber will not automatically start treating its drivers as employees come Jan. 1 and defend its current model if it faces legal challenges. Uber and Lyft have offered to give employees a base hourly wage, access to benefits and a right to bargain across the industry. “We’ve engaged in good faith with the Legislature, the Newsom administration and labor leaders for nearly a year on this issue, and we believe California is missing a real opportunity to lead the nation by improving the quality, security, and dignity of independent work,” Uber spokesman Davis White said in a statement.

“I will convene leaders from the Legislature, the labor movement, and the business community to support innovation and a more inclusive economy by stepping in where the federal government has fallen short.” — Gov. Gavin Newsom

Related Story: Did California Just Kill the Gig Economy?

Patterson Criticizes Signing

Assemblyman Jim Patterson (R-Fresno) criticized Newsom signing the bill. “He just sentenced millions of Californians, stripping away from them, the opportunity to use their labor, to work in circumstances and situations that suit their time and their desires. It is, honestly, an attack on freedom,” Patterson said. He also is...

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UC PRESIDENT JANET NAPOLITANO ANNOUNCES PLANS TO STEP DOWN

AP File

September 18, 2019 | AP News

SAN FRANCISCO — University of California President Janet Napolitano announced Wednesday she will step down in August 2020. Napolitano made the announcement at a meeting of the university's Board of Regents in Los Angeles. "My time at UC has been deeply gratifying and rewarding.

I have been honored and inspired every day to serve this institution alongside incredibly dedicated, passionate people," Napolitano said in a statement. "The decision was tough – and this moment, bittersweet – but the time is right." Her statement did not elaborate on reasons for her departure. A former U.S. secretary of homeland security and Democratic

governor of Arizona, Napolitano became the first woman to lead the 10-campus University of California system in September 2013. Napolitano, 61, has battled a recurrence of breast cancer over the years. During her tenure as UC president, Napolitano has overseen an expansion of the university system, enrolling historic numbers of students, supporting the rights of immigrant students and reforming policies on sexual misconduct.

She also faced criticism after a state audit found problems with her office's financial management and said that Napolitano had improperly interfered in the audit to tone down...

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AP File

TRUMP BARS CALIFORNIA FROM SETTING STRICTER FUEL STANDARDS

September 18, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump announced Wednesday that his administration is revoking California's authority to set auto mileage standards stricter than those issued by federal regulators. In a tweet, Trump said his move would result in less expensive and safer cars. He insisted that new cars would be cleaner, even as they burn more gasoline than they would have under the Obama-era fuel efficiency standards.

"Many more cars will be produced under the new and uniform standard, meaning significantly more JOBS, JOBS, JOBS! Automakers should seize this opportunity because without this alternative to California, you will be out of business," Trump tweeted. However, U.S. automakers contend that without a substantial increase in fuel efficiency, their vehicles will be less competitive globally, which could potentially result in job losses. "Automakers support year...

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COUGAR GOES INSIDE CALIFORNIA HOUSE, LIES DOWN IN BATHROOM

September 18, 2019 | AP News

SONORA — Officials say a mountain lion wandered inside a California house and was captured in a photo lying on a bathroom floor.

The Tuolumne County Sheriff's office said in a Facebook post that family members and the mountain lion ran away from each other Sunday after the cougar entered the home when the door was opened to let in cool air.

The big cat dashed to the second-story bathroom of the home in the Sierra Nevada foothill town of Sonora and the family ran away from it. The mountain lion was coaxed out of the bathroom window by sheriffs' deputies and state wildlife officers. Then it jumped to the ground.

Authorities said the mountain lion didn't threaten anybody. They released a photo of the cougar resting on the...

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Tuolumne County Sheriff's Office



AP/J. Scott Applewhite

NANCY PELOSI UNVEILS AMBITIOUS PLAN TO LOWER DRUG PRICES

September 19, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Putting her stamp on the health care issue that worries consumers the most, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi on Thursday unveiled an ambitious plan to lower drug prices for seniors on Medicare and younger people with private insurance. Pelosi, D-Calif., would empower Medicare to negotiate prices for up to 250 of

The plan would limit copays for seniors covered by Medicare’s “Part D” prescription drug program to \$2,000. And Medicare-negotiated prices would be available to other buyers, such as employer health plans.

the costliest drugs, including insulin. Pharmaceutical companies that refuse to negotiate could face steep penalties.

Additionally, drugmakers that hike prices beyond inflation would have to pay rebates to Medicare. The

plan would limit copays for seniors covered by Medicare’s “Part D” prescription drug program to \$2,000. And Medicare-negotiated prices would be available to other buyers, such as employer health plans. The plan is Pelosi’s marker in what’s shaping up as a high-stakes negotiation to determine if a drug pricing compromise can pass Congress this year or if Democrats and Republicans will take their differences into the 2020 elections. The sweeping legislation leans left politically and appears to be tailor-made for Pelosi’s Democratic majority in the House. But in a signal that Pelosi wants a deal, it also incorporates ideas from the Trump administration and from Republican and Democratic senators.

As a Candidate, Trump Backed Medicare Negotiations
A group of House Republicans led by Rep. Greg Walden, R-Ore., quickly accused Pelosi of putting “politics over progress,” calling her plan “a socialist proposal to appease her most extreme members.” Nonetheless, Americans across party lines say lowering prescription drug costs should be a top priority for Congress this year. Overall, 70 percent deemed that a top priority in a poll earlier this month from the nonpartisan Kaiser Fami-

ly Foundation. President Donald Trump appears eager to sign prescription drug legislation and lower costs, but most Republicans oppose the Medicare negotiations that are the centerpiece of Pelosi’s plan. The 2003 law that created Medicare’s prescription drug benefit barred the program from negotiating prices, a restriction Democrats have long opposed.

As a candidate, Trump backed Medicare negotiations. But after Trump was elected president, he seemed to revert to the traditional Republican position that price negotiations are best left to private players like insurance companies. With tens of billions of dollars in profits at stake, drugmakers are determined to block any major changes to payment policies. But the industry’s powerful lobbying group, the Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, has been taking fire from all sides, from liberal Democrats to pro-business Republicans. Trump once accused drug companies of “getting away with murder.”

Pelosi’s Proposal Would:
— Authorize Medicare to negotiate prices for up to 250 drugs with the greatest total cost to the program and the U.S. health care system. That includes pharmacy drugs covered through the popular “Part D” prescription benefit, along with “Part B” medications dispensed in doctors’ offices, which covers many cancer drugs. Medicare would negotiate for as many drugs as possible, but no fewer than 25 annually. The maximum price would be determined using a blend of international prices, similar to a more limited proposal from the Trump administration. Insulin would be included. Drug companies that balk at making a deal would face...

Movement in Congress comes at a time when criticism of the industry — from Trump and lawmakers of both parties — appears to be having an effect on prices.

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September 19, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — Most Americans are at least somewhat confident that the world will step up in its fight against global warming — but there are limits to their optimism. That's according to a new poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research that also shows most think their own actions can make a difference.

About 7 in 10 Americans think it is at least moderately likely the world will take action in the next decade to reduce emissions of heat-trapping carbon dioxide and other gases, but only about 3 in 10 think that's very likely to happen, accord-

ing to the August poll. Two-thirds of those polled said they think pollution reduction would have at least some impact in preventing future warming, but only about a quarter think it would do a lot to keep climate change at bay. About 3 in 10 Americans overall think even if emissions are cut back significantly it will do little or nothing to stop climate change.

"I worry for my children and my grandchildren and for the future and what they have in store for them," said Vickie Jackson, of Aydtlett, North Carolina. "I don't think it's going to get any better, unfortunately. It would take everybody to really...

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AP File

TRUMP NAMES HOSTAGE ENVOY O'BRIEN NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER

September 18, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump on Wednesday named Robert O'Brien, his chief hostage negotiator and an established figure in Republican policy circles, as his new national security adviser. O'Brien, the fourth person in two years to hold the job, becomes the administration's point person on national security amid rising tensions with Iran following the weekend attack on Saudi oil installations and fresh uncertainty in Afghanistan after the halt in peace talks with the Taliban.

The announcement of O'Brien's selection comes a week after Trump ousted John Bolton from the post, citing policy disagreements. O'Brien, who made headlines in July when he was dispatched to Sweden to monitor the assault trial of American rapper A\$AP Rocky, was among five candidates Trump said Tuesday were under consideration. "I am..."

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A DIVIDED FED CUTS KEY INTEREST RATE FOR 2ND TIME THIS YEAR

September 18, 2019 | AP News

WASHINGTON — A sharply divided Federal Reserve cut its key benchmark interest rate for a second time this year while saying Wednesday that it's prepared to continue doing what it deems necessary to sustain the U.S. economic expansion. The Fed's move will reduce its benchmark rate by an additional quarter-point to a range of 1.75% to 2%. The Fed's key rate influences many consumer and business loans.

Two Officials Wanted Interest Rate to Stay Put

The action was approved on a 7-3 vote, with two officials wanting to keep rates unchanged and one arguing for a bigger half-point cut. It was the largest number of Fed dissents in three years. The economy appears durable in its 11th year of growth, with a still-solid job market and steady consumer spending. But the Fed is trying to combat threats including uncertainties caused by President Donald Trump's trade war with China, slower global growth and a slump in American...

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WORLD

IRAN ENVOY: 'ALL-OUT WAR' TO RESULT IF HIT FOR SAUDI ATTACK

September 19, 2019 | AP News

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Any attack on Iran by the U.S. or Saudi Arabia will spark an “all-out war,” Tehran’s top diplomat warned Thursday, raising the stakes as Washington and Riyadh weigh a response to a drone-and-missile strike on the kingdom’s oil industry

“I think it is important for the Saudi government to understand what they’re trying to achieve. Do they want to fight Iran until the last American soldier? Is that their aim? They can be assured that this won’t be the case ... because Iran will defend itself.”

— Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif

that shook global energy markets. The comments by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif represented the starkest warning yet by Iran in a long summer of mysterious attacks and incidents following the collapse of Iran’s 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, more than a year after President Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew the

U.S. from the accord. They appeared to be aimed directly at U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who while on a trip to the region earlier referred to Saturday’s attack in Saudi Arabia as an “act of war.”

Along with the sharp language, however, there also were signals from both sides of wanting to avoid a confrontation. In his comments, Zarif sought to expose current strains between the Americans and the Saudis under Trump, who long has criticized U.S. wars in the Middle East. Trump’s close relationship with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has been challenged by opponents following the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi last year in the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul and the kingdom’s long, bloody war in Yemen. That country’s Houthi rebels claimed the oil field attack Saturday in Saudi Arabia, although the U.S. alleges Iran carried it out.

Pompeo Hoped Iran Would Choose Peace

“I think it is important for the Saudi government to un-

derstand what they’re trying to achieve. Do they want to fight Iran until the last American soldier? Is that their aim?” Zarif asked in a CNN interview. “They can be assured that this won’t be the case ... because Iran will defend itself.” Asked by the broadcaster what would be the consequence of a U.S. or Saudi strike, Zarif bluntly said: “An all-out war.” “I’m making a very serious statement that we don’t want war. We don’t want to engage in a military confrontation,” he said. “We believe that a military confrontation based on deception is awful.”

Zarif added: “We’ll have a lot of casualties, but we won’t blink to defend our territory.” Pompeo, who was in the United Arab Emirates, dismissed Zarif’s remarks, saying: “I was here (doing) active diplomacy while the foreign minister of Iran is threatening all-out war to fight to the last American.” Pompeo said he hoped Iran would choose a path toward peace, but he remained doubtful. He described “an enormous consensus in the region” that Iran carried out the attack. “There are still those today who think, ‘Boy, if we just give Iran just a little bit more money they’ll become a peaceful nation,’” he said.

“We can see that that does not work.” Pompeo met Abu Dhabi’s powerful crown prince, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. The UAE is a close ally of Saudi Arabia and joined the kingdom in its war with the Houthi rebels in Yemen. The

4-year-old war has killed tens of thousands of people and destroyed much of the country, with millions more driven from their

homes and thrown into near starvation. On Wednesday, Pompeo met with the Saudi crown prince in Jiddah about the attack on the kingdom’s crucial oil processing facility and oil field, which cut its oil production in half...

“This is not very credible, relatively speaking. But we sent our experts to have our own vision of things.”

— French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian

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CANADA'S TRUDEAU FACES FUROR OVER BROWNFACE PHOTO FROM 2001

Sean Kilpatrick/The Canadian Press via AP

September 19, 2019 | AP News

TORONTO — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s campaign moved to contain a growing scandal Thursday after a yearbook photo surfaced of him in brownface at a 2001 “Arabian Nights” costume party and two other similar incidents came to light. With the election a month away, he apologized and begged Canadians to forgive him.

Time magazine published the photo on Wednesday, saying it was taken from the yearbook from the West Point Grey Academy, a private school in British Columbia where Trudeau worked as a teacher before entering politics. It shows the then-29-year-old Trudeau in a turban and robe with dark

makeup on his hands, face and neck. Trudeau, who launched his re-election campaign a week ago, said he should have known better. “I’m pissed off at myself. I’m disappointed in myself,” he told reporters on his campaign plane. Trudeau is scheduled to take questions from the press later Thursday.

Trudeau is the latest in a string of politicians to get in trouble over racially offensive photos and actions from their younger days. Earlier this year, Virginia Gov. Ralph Northam faced intense pressure to resign after a racist picture surfaced from his 1984 medical school yearbook page. He denied being in the picture but admitted wearing blackface as a young man...

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Ben Stansall/Pool Photo via AP

UK TOP COURT AIMS TO RULE NEXT WEEK ON PARLIAMENT SHUTDOWN

September 19, 2019 | AP News

LONDON — British Prime Minister Boris Johnson was accused by one of the country’s former leaders of obstructing Parliament by shutting down the legislature for five weeks, as a landmark Brexit case at the U.K. Supreme Court came to a head on Thursday. Meanwhile, the European Union and Britain announced new talks on an elusive divorce deal, even as they squabbled over whether or not the U.K. had brought any new ideas to the table.

The U.K.’s top court must decide whether Johnson broke the law by sending lawmakers home just weeks before the country is due to leave the EU on Oct. 31. At the end of a three-day hearing the court’s president, Brenda Hale, said the 11 judges would give their ruling early next week. Opponents of the government claim Johnson shut Parliament until Oct. 14 to prevent lawmakers scrutinizing his plan to take Britain out of the EU at the end of next month, with or without a divorce deal. They also accuse the prime minister of...

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RIVALS JOCKEY OVER FORMING NEXT ISRAELI GOVERNMENT

September 19, 2019 | AP News




JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu invited his political rival Benny Gantz to join a unity government with him and his religious allies on Thursday, an offer that was greeted coolly amid continued deadlock following this week’s election. The deadlock has already raised speculation about a possible third election in the coming months, just two days after an unprecedented repeat vote left the country’s two main political parties with no clear path to a coalition government.

While weeks of negotiations to form a coalition government lay ahead, conditions set by the parties could hobble the task within the allotted time, forcing another election. With nearly all votes counted Thursday, the centrist Blue and White party stood at 33 seats in Israel’s 120-seat parliament. Netanyahu’s conservative Likud stood at 31 seats. Neither party, however, can muster a majority coalition of 61 seats with...

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