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'Dubai ban on Israelis hits relations'

By YAAKOV
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Former top cop: UK, Australian probes into hit have "zero chance" of success.

A decision by Dubai on Sunday to ban Israelis is a serious blow to long-standing efforts aimed at building up relations with the Gulf region, an Israeli diplomatic source told *The Jerusalem Post* on Monday.

After announcing the ban on Israelis with dual nationality, Dubai's police chief, Lt.-Gen. Dahi Khalfan Tamim, said on Monday that authorities in the Gulf emirate would be on the lookout for "Jews."

A Channel 2 News broadcast Monday night showed Tamim pointing at his own face and saying, "We know how to recognize them." The United Arab Emirates will "deny entry to anyone suspected of having Israeli citizenship," he said, adding that Israelis with dual nationality would be denied entry.

"We will not allow those who hold Israeli passports into the UAE no matter what other passport they have," Tamim said. Police will "develop skills" to recognize Israelis by "physical features and the way they speak," he claimed.

Responding to the decision, the Israeli diplomatic source said, "Of course this is very unfortunate. We were in the process of getting closer to the Gulf, a region which forms an antithesis to the extreme regime of Iran. We had a dialogue going, so this is a negative development."

"While Israelis are not supposed to go to Dubai," he added, "this will affect businesspeople who travel there."

Dubai has become a popular destination for Israeli business travelers with dual nationality who specialize in the fields of agriculture, trade and shipping, among other sectors.

Last month, Israeli tennis player Shahar Peer played in a Dubai tennis tournament, a year after the event's organizers were fined \$300,000 for denying her a visa to participate in the international tournament, citing security concerns.

Senior Hamas terrorist Mahmoud al-Mabhouh was found dead in his hotel room on January 19. Dubai Police says he was killed in a Mossad assassination involving at least 27 suspects who entered the emirate on a variety of passports.

Meanwhile, British and Australian police investigators in Israel have "zero chance" of making significant progress in their investigations into the alleged use of false passports in the killing of senior Hamas terrorist Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai last month, a former senior police officer told *The Jerusalem Post* on Monday.

Former National Fraud Unit investigator Dep.-Cmdr. (ret.) Boaz Guttman, who served on the police force for 21 years and who has worked with Interpol and police forces from Britain, spoke hours after Australia announced that it would send Federal Police agents to Israel this week to investigate the use of forged Australian passports in Mabhouh's slaying.

Britain's Serious and Organized Crime Agency (SOCA) has two officers in Israel already waiting to interview British Israelis who will arrive at the British Consulate in Tel Aviv in the coming days to collect new biometric passports.

"They are very able and they have common sense. But this is a matter that cannot be resolved on a police level," Guttman said, adding that the Israel Police and SOCA have enjoyed good levels of cooperation in the past.

"Without belittling their capabilities, all of this is a show put on for domestic consumption by Britain and Australia, to show that they are doing something," Guttman said. "It is a waste of Australian and British taxpayers' money," he added.

"Dubai police does not have serious evidence that can be presented to a court [linking Israel to Mabhouh's

death],” Guttman continued.

“Investigators can’t march into the office of the Israel Police inspector-general and show him a copy of the *Sunday Times* newspaper.

“Rumors don’t count as evidence,” he said.

“If Britain and Australia are sending a few officers to Israel, it shows that this is not a serious investigation. I can’t see how they will make any progress,” he added.

Based on his past experience in working with Interpol, Guttman said, Interpol members investigating the assassination likely have access to one another’s case material.

Guttman added that foreign police officers could interview citizens of their countries within their embassies without obtaining permission from Israel’s Ministry of Interior, but said that if they wished to conduct the questioning on Israeli soil, they would require approval as well as an Israel Police escort.

Meanwhile, the *Wall Street Journal* reported on Monday that Dubai Police believe at least two suspected Mossad agents travelled to the US using a British and an Irish passport.

“All of them [are in Israel]... These are agents for the Mossad, we know this,” Dubai Police chief Lt.-Gen. Tamim said, according to the *London Times*. “They travelled to European countries and to the US using the same documents they used to enter here,” he added.

Also on Monday, Dubai Police revised its list of suspected assassins once again, adding a 27th suspect, though it did not name the latest addition.



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