

Netanyahu vows to renegotiate deal with Jordan

After Jordan's King Abdullah announces nullification of land lease to Israel, Netanyahu vows to negotiate their restoration.

David Rosenberg, 10/21/2018, י"ב בחשוון תשע"ט



Yonatan Sindel/Flash 90

Israel will push the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to reinstate an agreement between the two countries leasing two areas under Jordanian control to Israel, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu said Sunday.

Earlier on Sunday, Jordan's King Abdullah II announced that his country would be terminating the lease of land in the Arava in southern Jordan and the Island of Peace in Naharayim.

As part of the 1994 Israel-Jordan peace deal reached by then-Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Abdullah's father, King Hussein, Jordan leased the land to Israel for a renewable 25-year period.

Jordan retained the right, under the agreement, to nix the lease after 25 years, but is required to give Israel a one-year notification.

"We have informed Israel (that we are putting) an end to the application of the peace treaty annexes regarding Baqura [Naharayim] and Ghumar [area of the Arava]," Abdullah was quoted as saying according to the *Petra* news agency.

"Baqura and Ghumar are Jordanian land and will remain Jordanian. Baqura and Ghumar have always been at the top of our priorities, and we have decided to put an end to the application of the peace treaty annexes regarding Baqura and Ghumar."

The leased land totals less than four square miles (10 square kilometers), including 2.32 square miles (6 square kilometers) in Naharayim, and 1.55 square miles (4 square kilometers) in the Tzofar (Ghumar) area of the Arava. Israeli farmers have cultivated the leased land, which lies along the Israeli-Jordanian border.

Abdullah made the announcement following massive protests in the Jordanian capital city of Amman demanding the government scrap the agreement with Israel.

Prime Minister Netanyahu said Sunday that while he acknowledges Jordan's right not to extend the lease, his government will open negotiations with the kingdom to secure an extension of the lease, which is slated to end in October 2019.

"Jordan reserves the right to reclaim the [leased] area in Naharayim near the Jordan River, and the Tzofar enclave in the Arava," Netanyahu said Sunday.

"We were told today that [Jordan] plans on exercising this option [at the end] of the 25th year [of the lease]. We will enter into negotiations with [Jordan] to option an extension of the existing lease agreement."