

Danny Ayalon: Israel welcomes changes in Arab countries but remains very cautious

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BRUSSELS (EJP)---Deputy Foreign Minister Danny Ayalon said Israel "welcomes" the changes towards democracy in Arab countries but it remains "cautious" because "we do see an attempt by Iran's agents, Hezbollah and Hamas to interfere and to legitimize extremist elements in the region."

"In democracy it's not just a matter of pluralism but also of the rule of law. And just like in Europe you don't allow racist or Nazi parties, we have to make sure that racist extremist elements will not hijack the situation and fill up the vacuum," he said in an interview with EJP in Brussels on Tuesday.

"Some elements within the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt could be very dangerous and we have to look very carefully and not to be kind by euphemism and games."

"In Israel also, a party, Kach, was at the time barred by the Supreme Court to run for elections because it was racist," he said.

According to Ayalon, with these events the world finally realizes that the central issue in the Middle East is not the Palestinian issue but rather the dysfunctions of Arab societies, illiteracy and poverty.

Ayalon, who is on a visit here to discuss recent developments in the Middle East with senior EU officials and address a European think-tank, said he doesn't agree with EU's view that current events make it more important to renew Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations.

"I think this is not true. Anything shows the contrary. The one that is taking all the risks is Israel. It's concerning our security, our future. So we have to look at things very carefully because a peace treaty is not just a piece a paper. We want to make sure it's for the long run, for generations, for centuries," he said.

"With what you see in the region, you have to be extra cautious and especially with the Palestinians in order to make sure that we sign a treaty with the true representatives of the Palestinian people," he added, stressing the Palestinians "didn't had elections for six years now."

"When the Europeans tell us: move ahead, they should tell the Palestinians to move ahead. We are waiting for the Palestinians."