

Assessing Israel Katz's First Year as Foreign Minister

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In February 2019, Israel Katz was named Israel's interim foreign minister, and three months later his appointment became permanent. This ended a period of almost four-years without a fulltime foreign minister, during which the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) significantly declined. A year into Katz's term, an assessment can be made as to whether his appointment has strengthened the MFA and left a policy imprint. This, while taking into consideration the turmoil in Israeli politics since early 2019 and the understanding that deeper change requires a ministerial tenure longer than a year. This article sums up Katz's first year on the job, based on media reports and information published by the MFA. It examines both intra-ministerial and policy aspects, and concludes that Katz is operating in Netanyahu's heavy shadow, has failed to address the deep budgetary crisis faced by the MFA, and has focused on developing ties with Gulf States and combatting anti-Semitism.

A. Introduction

Israel did not have a fulltime foreign minister for almost four years, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu also serving as foreign minister from May 14, 2015 to February 17, 2019. The period was marked by the MFA's gradual decline, with persistent challenges to Israeli diplomacy assuming graver dimensions: responsibilities were transferred from the MFA to other government ministries, chief among them the Ministry for Strategic Affairs; the MFA's budgetary shortfalls grew to the extent that they hampered daily operations and led to labor disputes; the exclusion of diplomats from key decision-making junctions increased, leading top diplomats to complain they lacked relevance and influence. At the same time, the prime minister (and acting foreign minister) took control of most diplomatic activity, or entrusted it to close associates, displaying energetic activism of which he is now boasting ahead of the elections.

Public figures have protested loudly over the decline in the MFA's stature over the years, underlining the damage this causes to Israel's national security. Members of Knesset spoke up on this issue in the plenary, in committees, in [caucuses](#), at [press conferences](#), in legislation proposals and in opinion pieces. Think tanks highlighted the need to empower Israeli democracy and suggested [possible ways](#) to achieve this goal; retired ambassadors began working together to raise public awareness of the MFA's troubled standing; ministry officials waged struggles and protests, behind closed doors and in the public arena; civil society and cultural activists pointed to the difficulties they faced in the international arena due to the ministry's weakness; and Israelis expressed dissatisfaction [in polls](#) over this state of affairs.

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The resulting damage wrought by the absence of a fulltime foreign minister was a key argument in the public discourse about the MFA's decline between 2015 and 2019. Experts on diplomacy and national security insisted that the ministry's position could only be strengthened under a minister wholly dedicated to dealing with its affairs, to advancing its standing vis-a-vis other government agencies (chief among them the Ministry of Finance and the security establishment), and guiding Israeli foreign policy. Appointment of a fulltime minister was perceived as a pre-requisite, albeit not sufficient in itself, to restoring Israeli diplomacy to its rightful place.

The opportunity presented itself in February 2019. Following a petition to the Supreme Court against Netanyahu's control of multiple ministerial positions, the Prime Minister [appointed](#) Transportation Minister Israel Katz as interim foreign minister. "This is an exciting moment for me. I'm starting today at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs feeling the greatness of the mission," Katz tweeted. The April 2019 elections were just around the corner, and the appointment appeared short-term. However, the persistent political logjam led to the extension of Katz's term, which became [a permanent appointment](#) on May 29, 2019, as per the requirements of the law. "As a son of Holocaust survivors, this is a special and an exciting moment for me," Katz said in response. And, indeed, Holocaust memory has played a prominent role in his term thus far.

Katz's first year in office provides us with an opportunity to examine the impact of his appointment on the MFA's stature and on Israeli foreign policy. This is also an opportunity to assess the conditions under which a fulltime foreign minister can empower Israeli diplomacy, and to propose effective steps for the next government to strengthen the MFA. This document sums up Katz's first year as foreign minister based on media reports and information posted on the MFA's website. It examines his effect both on both intra-ministerial and policy affairs, factoring in the limitations imposed by the relatively short period of his tenure and by the political chaos that has engendered three elections within a year.

B. In Netanyahu's Shadow

Katz's appointment did not change Netanyahu's domination of Israeli foreign policy. Netanyahu continued to lead Israel's diplomatic activity over the past year, not only in decision-making but also in implementation. Netanyahu traveled, Netanyahu met, Netanyahu gave speeches. All of the above against the backdrop of three back-to-back election campaigns during which he highlighted his performance on the international stage, and [scheduled](#) international meetings, events and visits. Foreign Minister Katz was noticeably absent in most cases, and he obviously accepted his exclusion with understanding and did not challenge it. The main exception was Netanyahu's decision, dictated by political circumstances, to sit out his annual appearance before the UN General Assembly in the fall of 2019, for the first time in nine years, and task Katz with representing Israel, instead.

Netanyahu's continued predominance in the foreign relations arena even under a fulltime foreign minister was most obvious on the MFA's web site, of all places. The English-language site's [Press Room](#) is a repository of ministry and government press statements, declarations and news updates on diplomatic issues. Of the over 350 press releases issued since Katz was appointed, approximately 250 (70%) focus on Netanyahu, and only some 20 (6%) on Katz. President Reuven Rivlin was also featured on the site more prominently (in some 80 items) than Katz.

Most of the statements featuring Katz were issued over the past three months, pointing to a recent effort to boost his public positioning. Nonetheless, a review of the statements indicates that Katz conducted a relatively small number of diplomatic meetings and visits during his first year. Most of the information on the web site regarding his activity dealt with his reactions – positive and negative – to measures adopted by other countries with relevance to Israel or the Jewish people, with an emphasis on combatting anti-Semitism.

Generally speaking, Katz appears to have assumed Netanyahu's diplomatic style – aggressive reactions to criticism, especially by the EU and other multilateral organizations – and adopted Netanyahu's policy agenda. Such compatibility of agendas is not a foregone conclusion – Israeli history is rife with examples of prime ministers and foreign ministers representing rival political parties and pursuing competing interests and positions.

Katz only deviated once from the line dictated by Netanyahu, just hours after his appointment, when [he accused](#) Poland of having collaborated with the Nazis. His harsh comments resulted in [the cancellation](#) of the planned Visegrad Group (the Czech Republic, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia) summit in Israel, to which Netanyahu attributed much importance on the eve of elections. "Katz was immediately excluded by the prime minister from dealing with this issue, and Netanyahu appears to have distanced him on other issues, too," Israeli media reported. Instead, Netanyahu entrusted National Security Advisor Meir Ben-Shabbat and Mossad chief Yossi Cohen with various diplomatic missions.

C. Declarations of National Initiatives

As transportation minister, Katz promoted two regional initiatives that came to be identified with him and attracted media attention – one to build an artificial island across from the Gaza coast, and the other a "Tracks of Peace" project intended to link Gulf States to the Port of Haifa by rail. As foreign minister, Katz also tried to make his mark by declaring ambitious projects and reforms.

In July 2019, for example, media reported that Katz was advancing [a reform](#) to "shift the MFA to economic matters". According to these reports, under the reform, the Foreign Service would focus mainly on advancing Israel's economic relations with the world, and Israeli missions abroad would be evaluated according to their foreign trade performance. Concern was expressed within the MFA and by [experts](#) that such a move would further distance the MFA from the nexus of diplomatic decision-making.

In the same month, reports surfaced that Katz was formulating [a national plan](#) to relocate foreign embassies to Jerusalem, which he intended to present to the government and which was supposed to include a package of incentives encouraging states to relocate. "Bolstering Jerusalem's status in the world is the most important objective I've set for myself as foreign minister," he said, echoing the policy espoused by Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely, who often emphasized the ministry's focus on this issue. In October 2019, Katz [instructed](#) the MFA to prepare a plan to block "Turkey's incitement and subversion in Jerusalem". The plan was to be presented to the security cabinet given the diplomatic sensitivity of the issue.

Katz also issued ambitious proclamations regarding Israeli relations with Arab states. On a July 2019 visit to Abu Dhabi, he [declared](#) that he would be happy "to advance, together with the prime ministers, a 'normalization through strength policy'". On his [Twitter account](#), Katz went further and called for forging "peace through strength" with Gulf States. Three months

later, he [confirmed reports](#) that with Netanyahu's backing, he was promoting non-aggression pacts with Arab states, especially in the Gulf, to end the conflict with them.

Most of the above-mentioned initiatives emerged a little over a month after Katz's appointment became permanent. They appeared to be an attempt by the new minister to create a varied agenda and generate public discourse within a short time, but it is unclear whether they followed any in-depth preparation or policy planning. The ideas for an "economic diplomacy" reform and a halt to Turkish activity in Jerusalem failed to mature into planned, wide-ranging measures and appear to have been buried. Attempts to persuade other countries to relocate their embassies to Jerusalem continued unabated, but without approval of a national plan or allocation of resources, and measures to promote non-aggression pacts with Arab states were conducted behind the scenes and appear to have made some progress, but have not yielded the hoped for results, yet.

D. Failing to Address the MFA's Financial Crisis

In August 2019, the Knesset's Interim Committee on Foreign Affairs and Defense convened for a special session with Minister Katz, MFA Director General Yuval Rotem (who has been serving in this post since October 2016, becoming the longest-serving MFA Director General since 2000), and senior Ministry officials. In referring to the MFA's budgetary troubles, Katz [noted](#) that when he was named interim foreign minister six months previously, "I entered an existing crisis [...] There were two main issues: The issue of the overseas wages that has already been resolved, and the issue of the ministry's budget, which I am confident will be resolved".

Six months on, the budget crunch had still not been resolved; it had only deepened, partly due to the ongoing political crisis, the absence of an elected government and lack of an approved state budget. The MFA, which had already been mired in a budgetary crisis, used up its 2019 budget allocation early on, hoping for an enlarged appropriation after the April 2019 elections. However, that did not pan out. The MFA was left without the necessary resources for basic daily operations and was also hit with additional cuts.

Media coverage of this budgetary crisis highlighted its various repercussions. In July 2019, for example, heads of Israeli missions abroad reportedly [complained](#) that they did not have money to cover daily expenses related to work-related meetings, such as train or bus fare or a cup of coffee. A month later, it was reported that the MFA did not have money to buy 15 NIS (4.25 USD) diaries for its diplomats and [to host](#) foreign delegation visits and Israeli guests. Business trips and meetings in Israel and overseas were cancelled. The annual ambassadors' conference, attended by heads of missions who come to Israel for a week of discussions and briefings, [was cancelled](#) for the first time in a decade due to the budgetary deficit.

The budget crisis also affected the working conditions of the diplomatic staff and the demands made on Israeli missions abroad. During Katz's first year in office, specific crises emerged over an order to freeze overtime pay and to [tax expense accounts](#) with which diplomats cover work-related outlays, and over instructions that missions [raise funds](#) and receive donations to pay for Independence Day celebrations and other official events.

In September 2019, the dire budget crisis led the MFA's Accountant General to de facto freeze virtually all ministry activity. Staff appointments at the Jerusalem headquarters

were also suspended, and ambassadors whose terms expired were not replaced, inter alia because of limitations imposed on the interim government and claims that Netanyahu was seeking to ensure vacant positions with which to reward political loyalists in the future. Israel was thus left [without ambassadors](#) in key foreign capitals, such as [Cairo](#), Moscow, Paris and Ottawa.

Katz was unable to provide a response to the budgetary crisis other than interim solutions to specific problems. In June 2019, after agreement was reached between the finance and foreign ministries that averted a strike at all Israeli missions abroad over the expense account dispute, Katz said, "This is an important step on the road to strengthening the Foreign Service". Katz justified the instruction that Israeli diplomats raise funds for national day events by saying, "Many enlightened democratic states, such as the US, UK and Germany, rely on donations and sponsorships to fund their countries' events". However, given the intensity of the objections to the move, Katz instructed Director General Rotem to find a different solution for funding the ceremonies. "I have agreed with the head of the Budget Department Meridor that funds will be allocated for essential activities, and this agreement is binding," he said.

In light of the deepening crisis, the MFA staff ramped up their protest. They threatened to strike and stop work related to Netanyahu's travels abroad; they issued statements underlining the severity of the ministry's situation and the grave damage caused to Israel's national security and foreign relations; they warned against the "moral bankruptcy" entailed in the demand that embassies raise funds for national ceremonies, warning that they would [refuse to comply](#) with the directive. Some 90 heads of missions and deputy heads of mission sent a protest letter, some 70 retired diplomats also issued a letter protesting the MFA's decline, and a [protest message](#) was posted on the social media pages of Israel's embassy in Athens ahead of Netanyahu's visit there.

Most criticism by MFA staff was directed against the prime minister and Ministry of Finance, but Katz was not spared, either. Senior MFA officials complained to reporters that the minister had failed to provide a response to the budget crisis, was not involved in many areas in which the ministry operates, and was essentially [a "puppet"](#) in the service of Netanyahu who continued to conduct foreign policy. The MFA's labor union even staged a protest outside Katz's office. The minister's request that his wife be allowed to accompany him on official visits abroad at government expense, and his delay in backing Ambassador Rada Mansour who was detained at Ben Gurion Airport (because his Arabic accent aroused suspicion) did not improve the staff's attitude to Katz. "Beyond the budgetary incompetence, Minister Katz also did nothing to restore the functions taken away from the Ministry, such as dealing with BDS," added retired Ambassador Barukh Binah, formerly a Deputy Director General at the MFA.

E. Striving for a Breakthrough with the Gulf

In the diplomatic arena, Katz's most significant impact has been in relations with the Gulf States. As mentioned, developing ties with the Gulf (through the "Tracks to Peace" initiative) was already on his agenda as transportation minister. He continued to publicly advance that goal at the MFA, in coordination with measures led by Netanyahu and in parallel to the growing willingness on the part of several Arab states to advance relations with Israel.

In early July, following the workshop in Bahrain at which the US administration unveiled the economic component of the Trump peace plan (without official Israeli or Palestinian participation), Katz [visited the UAE](#). He took part there in a UN conference on climate change, posted a video clip calling for normalized security, economic and civilian relations with Gulf States, and met with a senior UAE official whom he did not identify. He reportedly flew to the UAE on a private jet that overflew Saudi Arabia, with the authorities' consent.

Two weeks later, on a visit to Washington for a conference on religious freedom organized by the State Department, Katz met with his Bahraini counterpart Al-Khalifa (who had granted a historic television interview several weeks earlier to Israel's Channel 13 diplomatic correspondent Barak Ravid). The meeting, arranged with the help of the US administration, also yielded a joint photo-op.

Perhaps having a fulltime foreign minister allows senior Arab officials who are reluctant to meet with Netanyahu to do so more freely with Katz. In August 2019, a month after his Washington meetings, Katz [revealed](#) that Israel was involved in the international effort to secure shipping lanes in the Gulf against Iranian activity there. And in October, MFA official Dana Benvenisti [took part](#) in an international conference in Bahrain devoted to that issue.

Meanwhile, on the sidelines of the September 2019 UN General Assembly, Katz met in New York with an unidentified Arab foreign minister. The meeting was probably intended to promote the initiative for non-aggression agreements with several Arab states, which the US administration is helping advance. Katz [confirmed](#) the existence of the initiative in October, saying it would end the conflict with these states, enable civilian cooperation with them until peace is established, and promote a joint front against Iran. Katz stressed the need for an Arab-Western [alliance](#) against Iran on other occasions, too. At the same time he [tweeted](#) in Farsi and included a sentence in Farsi in his UN speech intended for the ears of the Iranian people and their leadership.

Katz used Twitter often to appeal to residents of the region in their language. He tweeted a number of times in Arabic, whether as a way of [threatening](#) Hezbollah or conveying [positive messages](#) to Gulf States. This activity meshed with the increased emphasis placed by Israeli diplomats in recent years on appealing in Arabic on social media to regional audiences, especially in the Gulf States and Iraq. [Designated pages](#) created by the MFA on Facebook and Twitter have amassed a large number of followers and an increase in positive responses, and opened new channels for discourse with the Arab world. The MFA asserted a more significant role in shaping relations with Arab states with which Israel does not have diplomatic ties, as manifested in the hosting of [delegations](#) from Arab states and preparations for participation in the Expo 2020 Dubai, which will feature an [Israeli pavilion](#). Katz himself had planned to visit Dubai in January 2020 within the framework of preparations for [the visit](#) and as a follow-up to the visit there by the Director General Rotem, but the visit was postponed.

While Katz was engaged with the Gulf States, he was noticeably absent from Israel's relations with other arenas in the Middle East. For example, Energy Minister [Yuval Steinitz](#) [visited Egypt](#) several times in the past year for meetings of the Mediterranean Gas Forum, but the Foreign Minister did not. Katz did not play a significant role in ties with Jordan, either. When the rift and tensions between Netanyahu and King Abdullah peaked last year, it was [President Rivlin](#) who met with a palace representative and not the foreign minister. Finance Minister [Moshe Kahlon](#) was the one who engaged with the Palestinian Authority, not Katz.

As for Turkey, Katz conveyed contradictory messages. On the one hand, he [attacked](#) Erdoğan at the UN (“You are the last one that can lecture Israel. You are not the Sultan and Turkey is not the Ottoman Empire. Shame on you”). On the other hand, he called for expanded trade with Turkey. Katz also expressed [opposition](#) to the Turkish-Libyan maritime border agreement, in keeping with the positions of Greece and Cyprus, but stressed that this would not generate a confrontation with Turkey.

F. Few Policy Meetings, Many Greetings and Condemnations

During his first year in office, Katz made relatively few foreign trips and held few meetings with senior foreign officials. He and his wife did pose for a [photo](#) with the Trumps during the US President's reception for delegations to the UN. However, when Katz visited the US for the conference on religious freedom and asked to meet with Mike Pompeo, having already announced the meeting with his counterpart, he was told the Secretary of State's schedule was full. Pompeo did meet during the conference with the foreign ministers of Greece, Bahrain, Tunisia and Colombia. In August 2019, Katz signed a memorandum of understanding between USAID and the MFA's foreign aid arm (Mashav), and in November he met with the US National Security Advisor.

Katz did meet with Russian Foreign Minister Lavrov on the sidelines of two international events – [the UN General Assembly](#) in New York in September 2019 and the annual [Mediterranean Dialogues](#) conference in Rome in December 2019 (where he meet other senior officials, too). The discussions between them reportedly centered on the Iranian threat and on the plight of Naama Issachar (the young Israeli woman jailed in Russia on drug charges). Katz also visited the UK (August 2019), [Switzerland](#) (September 2019) and [Greece](#) (October 2019), meeting with is counterparts for talks focusing on Iran, Hezbollah and Swiss legislation that allows the detention of Israeli officers and officials (suspected of war crimes). The January 2020 International Holocaust Forum in Jerusalem, which Katz defined as “the most momentous diplomatic event since the establishment of the State”, provided him with opportunities to meet additional world leaders, mostly while greeting them at the airport. Among others he met Russian President Putin, French President Macron and US Vice President Pence.

At his airport meeting with Putin, Katz [implied](#) that he accepted the Russian narrative regarding the liberation of the Nazi concentration camps at the end of World War II and not the Polish one, further exacerbating the crisis with Poland on issues related to Holocaust commemoration. Tensions between the sides were also manifested in [criticism](#) of Katz by Polish President Andrzej Duda (who boycotted the Jerusalem event in the context of Russian-Polish tensions over their respective parts in World War II). Previously, Duda [claimed](#) Katz's February 2019 accusation that Poles “suckle antisemitism with their mother's milk” had resulted in increased anti-Semitic incidents in Poland (a report Duda denied).

The Holocaust issue is close to Katz's heart, and on three occasions he congratulated countries that took measures in that regard – [the US](#) on a Presidential order designed to combat anti-Semitism, [Portugal](#) for joining the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), and [France](#) for adopting the IHRA definition of anti-Semitism. At his July 2019 [meeting](#) with visiting Croatian President Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic (who also met with Netanyahu and Rivlin), Katz also raised the issue of combatting anti-Semitism and thanked the president for her activity on this matter. Katz also issued congratulatory messages to countries on measures that pleased the Israeli government. In addition to declarations linked

to the fight against anti-Semitism, the MFA under Katz congratulated [Hungary](#) for its criticism of the decision by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court (ICC), [Bolivia](#) for its decision to renew ties with Israel, [Brazil](#) for opening a trade office in Jerusalem, [Boris Johnson](#) for his election victory (after previously expressing [his hope](#) that Corbyn would lose), [the US](#) for its statement on the legality of Israeli settlements, the [UN Secretary General](#) for his report on implementation of UNSC Resolution 1710 on Lebanon, and [the states](#) that voted at the UN against an anti-Israel resolution (including European states that deviated from their traditional stand).

Along with these positive reinforcements, Katz also dedicated a fair amount of time to issuing condemnations, often using aggressive and harsh rhetoric. Katz [berated](#) Chile's ambassador over his visit to the al-Aqsa Mosque accompanied by senior Palestinian officials, expressed concern over the findings of an investigation of [UNRWA](#) that determined the agency was part of the problem and not of the solution, warned the Lebanese government that unless it curtailed Hezbollah activity, all of [Lebanon](#) would suffer the consequences, and delegitimized the announcement by the ICC prosecutor who determined that there was cause for a war crimes investigation against Israel. Katz also revealed that fear of the ICC was the reason for Netanyahu's decision [to avoid](#) evicting the residents of the West Bank village of Khan al-Ahmar.

Katz also adopted an oppositional stand to the EU's criticism of Israel on the Palestinian issue. Responding to the European Court's decision mandating the labeling of goods made in the settlements, Katz [said](#) in November 2019 that the decision was "gravely flawed" both morally and in principle, and pledged to fight its implementation. In January 2020, Katz [attacked](#) the EU's foreign policy chief Borrell in distinctly undiplomatic language for warning Israel against annexing territories. "Borrell is not the paritz (a derogatory Jewish term for local Eastern European noblemen) and we are not the Jews of the Diaspora who bow their heads. His style is inappropriate," said Katz. "Gone are the days that anybody can threaten the Jews and the Jewish state." Katz kept up with Netanyahu's [aggressive](#) tone against Brussels, portraying the EU as a foe to Israel rather than a friend (despite Israel's wide-ranging cooperation with the EU). Katz has not met EU leaders, but did emphasize in a radio interview the importance of his meeting with Italian opposition leader Salvini, one of the EU's most outspoken critics.

G. Summary

Israel has had a fulltime foreign minister for the past year, but that did not boost the MFA's stature. The new minister kept the ministry weak. The MFA's budgetary crisis continues, many of its functions and much of its authority continue to rest in the hands of other ministries and agencies, and its influence over decision-making is still minor. The unusual political circumstances clearly hampered Katz's ability to effectuate change, but that is clearly not the only problem. The new minister chose not to challenge the manner in which Netanyahu treats the MFA, leaving it enfeebled and depleted.

Katz operated in Netanyahu's shadow in the diplomatic arena, where the prime minister continued to set the tone as he had been doing for the previous four years when he himself served as foreign minister. Netanyahu revved up his foreign trips and meetings ahead of the back-to-back election campaigns in his quest to bolster his campaign image as an arch-diplomat. With Netanyahu monopolizing much of the state's diplomacy, Katz was left with limited room to act. He tried to position himself through media reports of planned reforms

and national projects, but it is unclear to what extent these were thoroughly studied before they were presented, and most did not progress.

One arena in which Katz was prominently active was in relations with Gulf States, which he had already sought to promote during his tenure as transportation minister. His public visit to Abu Dhabi, photo-op with his Bahraini counterpart, and mobilization of the US to advance non-aggression pacts with Gulf States were his most pronounced moves in this arena. They fit in well with moves being led by MFA professionals on ties with the Gulf (such as Israel's participation in Expo 2020 Dubai and the designated Arabic-language social media pages). However, Katz did not play a significant role in relations with Israel's immediate neighbors – Egypt, Jordan and the Palestinian Authority. Others in government set the tone for those relationships. The strengthening Israeli alliance with Greece and Cyprus in the Eastern Mediterranean is also being led by other government officials.

Katz conducted relatively few meetings of diplomatic substance and few foreign visits. While he got to address the UN General Assembly – where he met with foreign counterparts – and was invited to several international events, his activities did not seem to have significant diplomatic impact. Relations with the US continued to be conducted through Netanyahu-led channels, and Katz's request for a meeting with Secretary of State Pompeo was rejected. As for Europe, Katz continued the aggressive tone set by Netanyahu vis-à-vis the EU as well as the attempt to boost relations with European states and leaders sympathetic to Israel. In his international doings, Katz highlighted the fight against anti-Semitism, with particularly harsh comments regarding Poland's involvement in the Holocaust, which led to the cancellation of the Visegrad Group summit scheduled to take place in Israel.

Ministerial terms are supposed to last four years, with good reason. One year is not enough to make a mark and effectuate change, especially not when three elections are held that same year. However, Katz's term did not yield the hope for change in Israeli foreign policy. The next Israeli government will have to appoint a fulltime foreign minister right from the start, although an appointment in itself is not enough. The foreign minister must have political power and must be capable of and motivated to carry out change. A new minister must adopt rapid measures to strengthen the MFA, chief among them restoring its authority and increasing its budget, lead a reform of its structure and operations, improve the interface between the ministry, the public and decision-makers, and advance a new approach to Israel's foreign policy. The new minister will have to examine Israel's achievements and failures in the foreign policy arena in recent years; pay attention to missed opportunities, to the peace that has grown distant, to the threats that have intensified, to the values eroded and the relationships that were undermined. He or she will have to formulate a new national foreign policy paradigm and to ensure its support by the government, and to embark on a diplomatic voyage that will propel Israel to a future of peace, prosperity and security; a future in which Israel will find its rightful place in the region and in the family of nations.