

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update January 9, 2015



JERUSALEM ZOO BRACES FOR SNOWFALL OF BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS:

The keepers at the Jerusalem Biblical Zoo aren't monkeying around when it comes to preparing the animals for the snowstorm expected to hit Israel's capital on Wednesday. Having suffered the loss of six animals during a highly unusual snowstorm that walloped the city in December 2013, the keepers are determined not to leave any winter weather-sensitive creatures out in the cold this time. Since early this week, the staff at the Zoological Gardens in Jerusalem have been hard at work preparing the animals' habitats to protect them from freezing temperatures, high winds, pounding rain and possible snow. They have also been double-checking food stores and making plans for some of the keepers to stay at the zoo around the clock during the storm, as well as afterwards, in case road access is cut off. Meanwhile, PM Benjamin Netanyahu participated in a planning meeting Tuesday ahead of the storm. Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat and district police chief Chico Edri took part in the meeting, along with IDF, emergency services, and welfare services representatives. "We have three missions," said Netanyahu. "The first mission is saving lives, the second mission is continuing vital services, and the third mission is mutual help - residents helping residents." Meanwhile, blustery winds were gusting countrywide Tuesday morning. (Times of Israel)

THE FUNDAMENTAL BREACH BY THE PALESTINIANS OF THE OSLO ACCORDS:

Israel and the Palestinians agreed in the Oslo Accords not to initiate or take any steps that will change the status of the territories pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations. Yasser Arafat, in his September 9, 1993, letter to Yitzhak Rabin, declared that "all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations." By petitioning the UN, the International Criminal Court, and

international organizations to recognize them and accept them as a full member state, the Palestinians have knowingly and deliberately bypassed their contractual obligations pursuant to the Oslo Accords in an attempt to prejudge the main negotiating issues outside the negotiation. This, together with their attempts to delegitimize Israel among the international community, has served to frustrate any possibility of realization of the Oslo Accords, and as such the Palestinians are in material breach of their contractual obligations. By the same token those countries supporting them are in breach of their obligations and guarantees as witnesses. (Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs)

WASHINGTON REVIEWING FINANCIAL AID TO PA OVER ICC BID: The Obama administration said Monday it was reviewing its annual \$440 million aid package to the Palestinians because of their effort to join the International Criminal Court to pursue war-crimes charges against Israel. "We're deeply troubled by the Palestinian action," said State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki. Joining the court "is entirely counterproductive and does nothing to further the aspirations of the Palestinian people for a sovereign and independent state. It badly damages the atmosphere with the very people with whom they ultimately need to make peace." Under American law, any Palestinian case against Israel at the court would trigger an immediate cutoff of US financial support. Psaki also criticized Israel for withholding millions in tax revenues to the Palestinians, saying such a step "raises tensions." (Arutz-7)

FORMER US NEGOTIATOR: STOP GIVING PA A PASS: The European Union and others in the international community need to stop enabling the Palestinian Arabs to make demands without making concessions, Dennis Ross, US peace talks mediator from 1993 to 2001, stated Sunday. He noted that the PA has rejected three separate peace deals, in 2000, in 2008, and in 2014. He pointed out that "Palestinian political culture is rooted in a narrative of injustice. This and its deep sense of grievance treats concessions to Israel as illegitimate," Ross explained. "Compromise is portrayed as betrayal, and negotiations - which are by definition about mutual concessions - will inevitably force any Palestinian leader to challenge his people by making a politically costly decision." "But going to the United Nations does no such thing," he argued. "It puts pressure on Israel and requires nothing of the Palestinians. Resolutions are typically about what Israel must do and what Palestinians should get. If saying yes is costly and doing nothing isn't, why should we expect the Palestinians to change course?" Ross urged European leaders to "raise the cost of saying 'no' or doing nothing at all" for the PA in future negotiations - and, at the very least, to offer a "balanced" proposal for a peace deal which included land swaps, but also allowing "security arrangements that leave Israel able to defend itself by itself" and a resolution concretizing Israel's own character as a Jewish state. Ross added that he believes the PA would nonetheless reject such a proposal, and demanded that it bear consequences in terms of international support after so many failed attempts to bring peace. (Arutz-7)

IDF SENTENCES HAMAS MASTERMIND IN KIDNAP, MURDER OF 3 TEENS TO 3 LIFE SENTENCES: The Judea Military Court on Tuesday sentenced the mastermind behind the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers in June to three life sentences. Hussam Hassan Kawasame was convicted last week based on his confession of planning and financing the attack, including receiving NIS 200,000 from Hamas in the Gaza Strip, purchasing and providing weapons for the other terrorists, hiding the bodies and destroying evidence. Kawasame said during the sentencing that he did not see the boys as human and killed them because they were Jews. Avraham Fraenkel, the father of victim Naftali Fraenkel spoke at the hearing, describing his 16-year-old son as a good student who had lots of interests and helped his siblings. He said that the crime was more than just a criminal murder. Kawasame had buried the three boys and nobody knew their fate for 18 days. Fraenkel said he deserved to be punished in accordance with the full severity of the law. (J. Post)

REPORT: QATAR EXPELS HAMAS LEADER TO TURKEY: The Qatari government expelled Hamas political leader Khaled Meshal to Turkey, after hosting him in exile since he left Syria at the start of the civil war, CNN reported on Tuesday. Aside from Meshal, members of the Muslim Brotherhood were also expelled, a move which followed a Saudi initiative to strengthen ties between Qatar and Egypt. Meshal reportedly discussed the possibility of relocating to Ankara in his recent meeting with Turkish PM Ahmad Davutoglu, after the Qatari government asked him to leave the country. The Israel Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem praised Qatar, saying in a statement: "We congratulate the Qatari decision, and expect the Turkish government will now do the same." Hamas, meanwhile, denied reports that Meshal had been expelled. (Ha'aretz)

SHARANSKY: 50,000 FRENCH JEWS INQUIRED ABOUT ALIYA IN 2014: Some 50,000 French Jews asked the Jewish Agency for information about immigrating to Israel in 2014, agency chairman Natan Sharansky said Monday. "They have a choice, to stay in France, where there is the biggest welfare basket ever, to travel to other EU nations, or to immigrate to Montreal, where there are few cultural adjustments to make and which was until recently their primary destination," he said. "The overwhelming majority" of Jewish émigrés from France, possibly up to 70%, choose to go to Israel. For the first time there is a massive exodus from a community in the free world, which has all the doors open to them, and they are choosing Israel." (Jerusalem Post)

THE NEW ANTISEMITISM: The growing support in Europe for a Palestinian state, alongside the sharp rise in anti-Semitic incidents in most of the continent's countries, present an alarming picture. What people euphemistically refer to as "anti-Israel activity," researchers are now defining as "new anti-Semitism." Three of the European Union's five main institutions are located in Brussels. In the city center, near commercial and tourist sites, are heard blatant statements against Israel and the Jews from Belgian citizens. It seems people are no longer afraid to express anti-Semitic sentiments. The situation is affecting the local Jewish community. "There is an atmosphere of fear," says Rabbi

Menachem Margolin, the general director of the European Jewish Association. The deadly shooting at the Jewish museum in Brussels last year, made it clear just how real the danger is. (Ynet)

ISRAEL PASSES JAPAN ALLIANCE PLAN, ASIAN COALITION TAKES SHAPE:

A roadmap plan to radically strengthen economic ties with Japan introduced by PM Netanyahu was approved by the Cabinet on Sunday, and paves the way for a strategic array of alliances with three Asian superpowers - Japan, China and India. The plan involves numerous government ministries and an investment of dozens of millions of shekels over three years. Particularly as ties with Europe cool amid a wide-spread move to recognize the Palestinian Authority as a state and threaten sanctions, and as the US continues to show antagonism even reaching the point of reports of American sanction threats, there appears to be a growing desire for stable alliances with economic superpowers in Asia. (Israel National News)

TURKEY'S TOP DIPLOMAT ON WEDNESDAY SAID THAT HAMAS CHIEF KHALED MESHAAL WAS FREE TO COME TO TURKEY,

following conflicting reports earlier this week that Meshaal was forced out of Qatar, where he has lived for several years. The reports, first published Monday, indicated that the Hamas leader, along with several members of the Muslim Brotherhood, was expelled from Doha and had discussed with Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu the possibility of relocating to Turkey. The Jerusalem Post on Wednesday conveyed an Arab-language report to the effect that "Qatar has asked Mashaal and Hamas to refrain from conducting any public political activities in the country" as Doha "does not want to be seen as if it continues to support the Muslim Brotherhood," of which Hamas is an offshoot. FOX News Channel's James Rosen on Thursday pressed State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki on whether the terror group's relations with Turkey could potentially place Ankara on a U.S. list of state sponsors of terror. Associated Press diplomatic correspondent Matt Lee pressed further, noting that Turkey "welcoming the leader of a group that [the U.S. has] designated a foreign terrorist organization would certainly seem to be supporting it." Psaki's answer was limited to reaffirming Hamas's position as a designated terrorist organization and noting that Foggy Bottom had expressed concerns over Ankara's relationship with Hamas. Psaki had last month said that those concerns had also been conveyed to top Turkish officials following a trip that Meshaal had taken to Turkey. A bipartisan group of lawmakers had in mid-December urged the Treasury Department take additional measures to sanction both Qatar and Turkey if they continued to provide financial and material support to Hamas. Turkey has come under heavy criticism in recent months for harboring Hamas leaders as those leaders actively plot terror attacks in the Jewish state.

A BILL INTRODUCED IN CONGRESS ON TUESDAY THREATENS TO CUT OFF U.S. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY (PA) until Ramallah withdraws a bid announced in late December to join the International Criminal Court (ICC). The legislation, introduced by Senator Rand Paul (R-Ky.), stipulates that no money be given to the PA “until the Palestinian Authority withdraws its request to join the International Criminal Court.” The bill comes a week after Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas engaged in several moves in the international body that would elevate Ramallah’s status – a Palestinian statehood bid last Monday failed to reach the necessary nine votes for passage, and two days later, Abbas announced that the PA would apply for membership in the International Criminal Court. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon announced on Tuesday evening that Ramallah is expected to officially join the ICC on April 1, having submitted the necessary documents late last week to move forward with the bid. Sen. Paul, speaking Monday on Fox News, said it “hardly seems to me a good idea to give American taxpayer money to a country or an entity that is now saying that an ally of ours—that their soldiers need to be investigated for war crimes.” The State Department had on Monday told reporters that Congress would take the lead in any decision to cut some \$400 million in annual aid to the PA, which is contingent on Ramallah meeting long-standing treaty requirements forbidding unilateral moves that upgrade the PA’s international status outside of negotiations with Israel. Following Abbas’s announcement last week, several Democratic and Republican legislators announced that the PA would face repercussions for the move, with Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) releasing a statement that she was “deeply frustrated” by the gambit. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.) released a similar statement, pledging that Congress would “do everything in its power to block funds to the PA.”

WAL-MART, SUNPACIFIC, PEPSICO, FRITOLAY AND BASF ARE TESTING PIMI AGRO CLEANTECH’S TECHNOLOGY TO KEEP FOOD FROM ROTTING BEFORE REACHING THE MARKET. Nimrod Ben-Yehuda is on a mission: to feed millions of starving children worldwide. Not, the lifelong farmer explains, by producing more food, but by dramatically cutting wastage on route to the consumer. The company he founded 15 years ago, Pimi Agro CleanTech, has a unique, environmentally friendly line of products to keep fruits and vegetables fresh for as long as 10 weeks, drastically reducing deterioration during transport. About one-third of food never makes it to the marketplace; in developing countries the figure is usually higher. Spoilage, disease and transportation issues whittle away producers’ and marketers’ profits – and raise consumer prices. “Before being sold, all produce is sorted. Thirty percent gets thrown away, and what’s left hardly lasts a day before being replaced,” says Ben-Yehuda, who dates his concern back to his days as a teenaged kibbutznik working in the fields. “I was amazed at the amount of fruit and vegetables thrown away in the packing stations. I saw piles of rotting peppers and tomatoes — meanwhile children are going hungry. It’s crazy!” Already his young mind was working on a solution. “The critical period is from the time the fruit is picked to when it begins to rot,” Ben-Yehuda tells ISRAEL21c. “Take a single eggplant, for example. We cut it from its lifeline when we pick it. It’s all alone, and has

to survive. Inside, its body systems weaken; it uses up all its sugars and goes into stress, with telltale signs. The fruit rots because it's weak inside." (via Israel21c)

MONDAY AND TUESDAY SAW CONFLICTING REPORTS THAT HAMAS HEAD KHALED MSHAAL, who has for the past several years been based in Qatar, was expelled from the country and preparing to take up residence in Turkey. Speculation began Monday night in Turkish media and continued into Tuesday afternoon, with both Doha and the terror group denying the report. The Washington Post on Tuesday noted that even though Doha has "lavished support on Hamas" in recent years, the Gulf state "has recently been trying to reconcile with Egypt, which asked that Qatar limit its support for the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood group, including its offshoot, Hamas." Turkey is already home to several top Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood leaders – notably Saleh al-Arouri, the architect of Hamas's West Bank infrastructure and the believed to be behind several Hamas plots including the June kidnappings and murders of three Israeli boys, and Imad al-Alami, described by experts as a "founding father" of Hamas. MSHAAL himself had made a surprise appearance at a rally in Turkey last month, during which he praised Ankara's leadership and called for close Turkish-Palestinian ties to what Haaretz at the time described as a "fawning crowd" of demonstrators. Turkish backing of the terror group is nothing new – a 2012 report in Today's Zaman suggested that Ankara was poised to become Hamas's top financier – but Washington has begun to face increasing criticism over the NATO ally's sponsoring of a terror group. Reporters at a State Department press briefing last month pressed Deputy Spokesperson Marie Harf on whether Turkey could "continue to be a close partner and NATO ally if, in fact, it is supporting a designated terrorist organization?"

BGU RESEARCHERS DISCOVER ALPHA1-ANTI TRYPSIN COMBATS INFECTIONS AND ERADICATES BACTERIA. A research team at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev has discovered that Alpha1-antitrypsin does a surprisingly good job killing bacteria as well as combating infections. The researchers sought the answer for what would be the consequence of treating individuals with immune-compromised conditions using alpha1 in so far as susceptibility to infections. Lead by Kaner Ziv and Shahaf Galit of the Lewis Lab at BGU, mice were directly infected with various strains of live bacteria at different infection sites, including lungs and gut. The initial aim was to exclude the possibility of worsening infection progression in treated mice. Yet the group stumbled upon highly unexpected outcomes: not only did the treated mice combat the infections better, but the bacteria that were directly introduced into the various compartments were practically eradicated by alpha1 therapy before the end of the first 24 hours; there were barely bacteria left to grow colonies on a plate. The team says the clinical implications of these findings are immense. (viaIsrael21c)

THE STATE DEPARTMENT TOLD REPORTERS THAT CONGRESS WOULD TAKE THE LEAD IN ANY DECISION ON CUTTING AID TO THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY (PA) in the wake of a string of decisions - ranging from an effort to secure recognition from the United Nations Security Council to signing papers to ascend to the International Criminal Court (ICC) - that likely trigger U.S. aid conditions prohibiting such moves. Statements from lawmakers blasting the moves last week underscored a bipartisan consensus that Ramallah is likely to face repercussions for the gambits. The Palestinian moves have been criticized by Foggy Bottom in recent days – following a failed statehood bid last Monday, a State Department spokesperson blasted the resolution for “set[ting] arbitrary deadlines for reaching a peace agreement and for Israel's withdrawal from the West Bank.” A statement released by the State Department days later warned that Palestinian moves at the ICC “will badly damage the atmosphere with the very people with whom they ultimately need to make peace.” The New York Times had last week quoted Khalil Shikaki, director of the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, noting that in the aftermath of the ICC move, “There is no question mark as to what are the consequences, that there will be immediate American and Israeli financial sanctions” and that “[t]hose sanctions will gradually become more and more crippling, and this could indeed be the beginning of the end of the P.A.” The discussion revolves around some \$400 million in aid in to Ramallah that congressional law conditions on the Palestinians not seeking to leverage ICC membership.

A SWEEP OF ARRESTS OF TURKISH POLICE OFFICERS CONDUCTED Monday – Turkish news outlets reported the detained officers were arrested on charges of illegal wiretapping – is set to deepen concerns that Ankara is again cracking down on government workers it fears are aligned with U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen. The arrests are the latest in a series of anti-judiciary purges being conducted by Turkey’s ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) – in January 2014, approximately 800 police officers were fired or reassigned, just weeks after the purge of some 350 Ankara officers who had taken part in a critical December 17 anti-corruption operation. The AKP has for more than a year been locked in an open political war with police officers and prosecutors linked to Gulen, after Gulenists in December 2013 launched a series of graft probes that ensnared AKP elites, including now-President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who was at the time the country’s prime minister, and members of his family. Last month Turkish police arrested dozens of journalists and media executives, including the editor-in-chief of Turkey’s most widely circulated newspaper. Turkish media had in December reported on American concerns over recent Turkish behaviors, noting that lawmakers on Capitol Hill had declined to include Ankara on a list of recipients of decommissioned U.S. warships. Today’s Zaman noted that “Members of Congress have been critical of the ruling Justice and Development Party's (AK Party) policies such as limiting press freedoms, freedom of assembly and access to social media and increasing the executive branch of government's grip on the judiciary, as well as anti-Semitic rhetoric by Turkish officials.”

QUIET THERAPEUTICS' SPECIALLY COATED NANOPARTICLES ACT LIKE TROJAN HORSES ENTERING CANCER CELLS UNDETECTED AND THEN KILLING THEM. An Israeli breakthrough in the treatment of cancer has the international medical community taking notice. Developed by Tel Aviv University Professors Rimona Margalit and Dan Peer, this novel drug-delivery platform involves the use of “GAGomers,” a new class of nanoparticles (coated with glycosaminoglycan, or GAGs, a polysugar) that specifically target tumors and blood cancers based on a biomarker expressed on malignant tissue. For their groundbreaking work, Margalit and Peer were granted the prestigious Untold News Award in New York City in November. But it was already back in 2010 that leading Israeli venture capital firm Pontifax established the bio-pharmaceutical company Quiet Therapeutics, to make Margalit’s and Peer’s innovative platform accessible and marketable to oncology patients and their doctors. Currently funded by Pontifax and Arkin Holdings, the biotech startup initially operated within the incubators program of the Office of the Chief Scientist, the arm of the Economy Ministry charged with fostering industrial research and development in Israel. Quiet Therapeutics General Manager and Chief Operations Officer Dr. Ron Lahav explains why GAGomers are what he calls “game-changers” in the field of cancer-treatment technology. “A hallmark of cancer is cell replication,” he tells ISRAEL21c at the company’s office in the Weizmann Science Park in Ness Ziona, south of Tel Aviv. “The aim of most chemotherapeutic drugs is to thwart the replication machinery in cancer cells. The problem is that these drugs are not targeted, and therefore are not delivered efficiently to the tumors. “Due to this inefficient delivery, and the accompanying unwanted side effects, oncologists face the problem of administering sufficient chemo to kill the cancer, while limiting its dose so as not to cause irrevocable harm to healthy tissues. Our drug-delivery system has the potential to greatly minimize that dilemma, since it transports the drugs directly and specifically to the cancer cell.” (via Israel21c)

ISRAEL BRACES FOR GATHERING GALES, SNOWSTORM: Israel geared up Sunday for more snow, rain and heavy winds later in the week as a wet weekend gave way to a short respite of sunny skies before the expected return of wild weather. Tuesday is expected to see high winds whip across much of the country. By Wednesday, with temperatures plummeting, snow is anticipated on Mount Hermon in the Golan Heights and could also fall in the northern city of Safed as well as in Jerusalem and surrounding hills. The Israel Meteorological Service predicted precipitation across the north and center of the country with heavy winds, isolated sandstorms and flash flooding throughout the south. Some forecasts predicted as much as a foot of snow for higher elevations in northern Israel and in the high-altitude Etzion Bloc, south of Jerusalem. The snowstorm would be the first serious flurry in Jerusalem since the capital was slammed with one of the heaviest winter storms on record in December 2013. (Times of Israel)

ISRAELI HIGH-TECH SECTOR BOOMING: 2014 was a peak year for Israeli high-tech in almost every parameter: financing, stock exchange offerings, exits, and demand for programmers. High-tech accounted for a third of Israel's economic growth. A comparison of high-tech salaries in Israel with overseas salaries shows the average salary difference for most jobs was insignificant. (Globes)

ISRAEL MAY FIGHT CRIMES SUITS AGAINST PA: Israel is considering filing war crimes suits overseas against Palestinian Arab leaders in response to their application to join the International Criminal Court (ICC) and press such charges against the Jewish state, a government official source said Saturday. Legal proceedings at courts in the US and elsewhere are being weighed against PA Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, his Palestinian Authority (PA) and other senior officials according to the source. He said the basis of the complaints would be that Abbas' partnership in a Palestinian consensus government with Hamas makes him complicit in the Islamist terror group's rocket attacks from Gaza against civilians inside Israel. "In recent days officials in Israel stressed that those who should be wary of legal proceedings are the heads of the PA who cooperate within the unity government with Hamas, a declared terrorist organization which like the Islamic State jihadist group carries out war crimes - it fires at civilians from within population centers." The PA has formally presented a request to the United Nations to join the ICC, a move firmly opposed by Israel and the United States. But even if the PA files charges against Israel, legal rights experts say that having the ICC enter the fray of the Israeli-Arab conflict will ultimately harm the PA, Hamas, and the ICC itself - not Israel. (Arutz-7)

NETANYAHU VOWS TO 'PROTECT IDF SOLDIERS FROM PALESTINIAN ATTEMPTS TO DRAG THEM TO THE HAGUE': PM Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday vowed to deny the Palestinians in their efforts to drag IDF soldiers and commanders to the International Criminal Court in The Hague. "The Palestinian Authority has chosen confrontation with the State of Israel, and we will not sit with folded hands," Netanyahu said at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting in Jerusalem. "Those who need to answer before a criminal court are the heads of the Palestinian Authority, who have forged an alliance with the war criminals of Hamas. IDF soldiers will continue to defend the State of Israel with determination and might," the premier said. "Just as they defend us, we will protect them with that same determination and the same might." Netanyahu's comments at the start of the weekly cabinet meeting was his first comment on Jerusalem's decision to freeze the transfer of NIS 500 million to the Palestinian Authority in response to the PA's decision to join the International Criminal Court. (Jerusalem Post)

ISRAEL FREEZES \$127M IN FUNDS TO THE PA FOR ICC BID: Israel froze the transfer of about half a billion shekels (127 million USD) to the Palestinian Authority (PA) Saturday night in retaliation for the PA's official request to join the International Criminal Court (ICC). The PA regularly fails to stand by its agreements, and owes Israel

staggering sums, including over 1.4 billion shekels (over \$360 million) in unpaid electric bills. Energy and Water Minister Silvan Shalom on Saturday called on Israel to use the Palestinian Authority's (PA) tax money it froze to pay off the PA's enormous debt to the Israel Electric Corporation. "It is inconceivable that the people of Israel will pay the Palestinian debt and we will ensure that the Palestinians will pay their debt to the last shekel," he declared. The PA acquires 95% of its electricity in Judea & Samaria and 75% of its electricity in Gaza from Israel. The Israeli supply to the PA-assigned has continued despite the huge debt and despite the fact that Hamas continues to carry out terror attacks aimed at Israeli forces and civilians alike. (Aurtz-7)

CANADA CONDEMNS 'DANGEROUS' PA ICC BID: Canadian Foreign Minister John Baird condemned the Palestinian Authority's application to the International Criminal Court (ICC) Thursday, calling the decision "dangerous" and urging the PA to return to bilateral negotiations. Baird said, "Such a provocative decision only furthers the divide between Palestinians and Israelis, and will carry unfortunate consequences. Canada has expressed these concerns directly to the Palestinian Authority for nearly four years now. The path chosen can be reversed, and instead, the Palestinian Authority can recommit to a negotiated solution," he continued. The Palestinian Authority formally presented a request to the United Nations on Friday to join the ICC, a move firmly opposed by Israel and the United States as well. (Arutz-7)

LIBERMAN: THE EU IS ISRAEL'S BIGGEST CHALLENGE: The number one challenge facing Israel in 2015 is not the Palestinians, Iran or Hezbollah, but rather Western Europe. Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman spoke with Israel's ambassadors in Europe on Sunday, and clarified that working with the European Union is Israel's main challenge today. "The Oslo Accords have collapsed," Liberman noted, referring to the series of unilateral moves the Palestinian Authority has taken against Israel. These include forming a pact with the Hamas terrorist group in April, and since applying to the UN, submitting a failed draft resolution for a Palestinian state, and applying to the International Criminal Court (ICC). "Our biggest challenge, however, is not the Palestinian Authority and the Arab states, but Western countries," Liberman said. "The best example here is the UN Security Council vote. Of its members, three EU countries participated in the vote - and two voted with the Palestinians, France and Luxembourg, and one country, Britain, had abstained." Liberman stressed that Europe's views are also important for Israel's economic interests. "In terms of Israeli exports, Western Europe has a big market," he said. "We will have to deal with Western Europe, with the EU." He said that Europe was mistakenly linking bilateral ties with Israel to the Palestinian issue, and that Israel needed to point out that this was leading to an unprecedented rise in anti-Semitism in Europe. The Foreign Minister added that the EU's attitudes toward Israel are a great injustice. "Is that right? It's not," he said. "There's a lot of injustice. Syria has killed thousands. But we need to use the saying, 'do not just be right - be smart.' The fact that we are right is no doubt, the question is how we deal with it." (Israel National News/Jerusalem Post)

TIBI HOISTS PLO FLAG ON TEMPLE MOUNT: Arab Knesset Member Ahmed Tibi raised the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) terror group's flag on the Temple Mount Saturday, after he arrived there along with Muslim leaders to celebrate the birth of the Muslim prophet, Mohammed. "Al-Quds (Jerusalem) is the capital of Arab Palestine and Al-Aqsa mosque is a place of worship for Muslims," declared Tibi during the event. Tibi then hoisted the PLO flag. "The parade here is a message of freedom and Arabs will be released from the 'Occupation'. The procession ended at the Al-Aqsa Mosque which is the crown jewel of Jerusalem, the capital of Palestine," he declared. (Arutz-7)

AT LEAST 20 EGYPTIAN CHRISTIANS KIDNAPPED IN LIBYA: Masked gunmen in central Libya kidnapped 13 Coptic Christians on Saturday after seven were abducted days earlier, said a witness and a priest, in a new wave of assaults against Egypt's Christians working in the war-torn North African nation plagued with Islamic extremists. Witness Hanna Aziz said the gunmen in the Libyan city of Sirte went room to room in their residence at 2:30 a.m. Saturday and asked for identification papers to separate Muslim workers from Christians. The gunmen then handcuffed the Christians and drove away with them. Abu Makar, a Coptic priest in the workers' hometown of Samalout in southern Egypt, confirmed the abduction took place. Sirte has become a safe haven for extremist Islamist groups like Ansar al-Shariah, blamed for the September 2013 attack on the US Consulate in Benghazi that killed US Ambassador Chris Stevens. The abduction came on the heels of the killing of a Coptic couple who worked as doctors in Sirte and their daughter. (ABC)

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