

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 20, 2015

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WITH THE FINAL VOTES COUNTED FROM ISRAEL'S ELECTIONS, THE RESULTS SHOW THAT THE ISRAELI ELECTORATE SHIFTED TO THE CENTER CASTING MORE VOTES FOR ISRAEL'S LARGER, CENTER-LEFT AND CENTER-RIGHT PARTIES. This election eliminated the presence of some smaller parties in the Knesset, leaving ten parties, the fewest number of parties in the Knesset since 1992, partially a result of the raised electoral threshold. Additionally, the Ultra-Orthodox parties lost considerably, while the Joint List Party, the combination of four Arab political parties, gained significantly. In an interview on Thursday, newly re-elected Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his position on the two-state solution telling, MSNBC's Andrea Mitchell that "I haven't changed my policy. I never retracted my speech at Bar Ilan University six years ago calling for a demilitarized Palestinian state that recognizes the Jewish State. What has changed is the reality. Abu Mazen, the Palestinian leader, refuses to recognize the Jewish state, has made a pact with Hamas that calls for the destruction of the Jewish state." He continued, "I don't want a one-state solution. I want a sustainable, peaceful two-state solution." The Prime Minister clarified his position on the Palestinian issue after he incurred criticism resulting from an interview that he gave on Monday, the day before the Israeli elections. Following Netanyahu and the Likud Party's victory, world leaders sent their congratulations. British Prime Minister David Cameron tweeted out: "As one of Israel's firmest friends, the UK looks forward to working with the new government," while Indian Prime Minister Modi

tweeted in Hebrew writing, “Mazel tov, my friend Bibi Netanyahu. I remember our meeting in New York last September warmly.” U.S. President Barack Obama called the Israeli leader on Thursday and “emphasized the importance the United States places on our close military, intelligence, and security cooperation with Israel, which reflects the deep and abiding partnership between both countries.”

A DRAFT OF A NUCLEAR DEAL THAT WOULD REMOVE ECONOMIC SANCTIONS AND ALL RESTRICTIONS ON IRAN’S NUCLEAR ACTIVITIES IN AS LITTLE AS TEN YEARS, while allowing the country to continue operating thousands of centrifuges, has been circulating in Lausanne, Switzerland, where the negotiations between the P5+1 nation and Iran are continuing, the Associated Press (AP) reported today. The very existence of a draft in circulation provided perhaps the clearest indication the sides were nearing a written agreement as they raced to meet a March 31 deadline for a framework pact. The deadline for a full agreement is the end of June. Officials said the tentative deal imposes new limits on the number of centrifuges Iran can operate to enrich uranium, a process that can lead to nuclear weapons-grade material. The sides are zeroing in on a cap of 6,000 centrifuges, officials said, down from the 6,500 they spoke of in recent weeks. ... But U.S. officials insist the focus on centrifuge numbers alone misses the point. Combined with other restrictions on enrichment levels and the types of centrifuges Iran can use, Washington believes it can extend the time Tehran would need to produce a nuclear weapon to at least a year for the 10 years it is under the moratorium. Right now, Iran would require only two to three months to amass enough material if it covertly seeks to “break out” toward the bomb. The United States originally insisted that Iran maintain no more than 1,500 centrifuges, and last year raised the limit to 4,000. 6,000 centrifuges would be sufficient if Iran plans to build a nuclear bomb, but not enough for a civilian nuclear power generation program.

NETANYAHU SCORES DECISIVE VICTORY: With 99 percent of the ballots counted by Wednesday morning, 18 March, 2015 it was clear that Benjamin Netanyahu had for the fourth time been elected as Israel’s prime minister. Netanyahu’s Likud Party ended up winning 30 out of 120 Knesset seats. The opposition “Zionist Union” made a good showing with 24 seats, but it wasn’t enough to propel party leader Isaac “Buji” Herzog to the premiership. As expected, and to the great concern of some, the newly forged United Arab List became the Knesset’s third largest faction with 14 seats. While there were few surprises with the smaller parties, the most recent pre-election surveys had shown Herzog unseating Netanyahu. Even preliminary results late Tuesday night had Likud and the Zionist Union neck-and-neck with 27 seats each, making it entirely unclear who would be tapped by Israel’s President Reuven Rivlin to form the next government. But hours later as the final ballots were tallied, there was no question that not only had Netanyahu won, he had effectively laid the groundwork facilitating the formation of a stable right-wing coalition. Gone was the need to rely on the center-left factions that had caused Netanyahu so many headaches in the previous government. (Israel Today)

NETANYAHU ADDRESSES SUPPORTERS: Netanyahu addressed supporters of the Likud Party Tuesday night, 17 March, 2015: "Against all odds we have achieved a great victory for the Likud-led nationalist camp and our people," he said. "I am proud of the people of Israel who, at the moment of truth, knew how to separate between the important and the secondary issues and focus on the important ones," said Netanyahu, who mentioned concerns such as "real security, a responsible economy, as well as social welfare. These are the things that are important to each family - every father and mother, every young couple, every soldier, every citizen. And all Israeli citizens, Jews and non-Jews alike. All of you are important, and all of you are important to me." (Israel National News)

MILLIONS OF ISRAELIS TURN OUT TO VOTE: Millions of Israelis turned out to vote on Tuesday, 17 March, 2015 in a tightly-fought election, with PM Benjamin Netanyahu facing an uphill battle to defeat a strong campaign by the center-left opposition to deny him a fourth term in office. In spite of heavy media opposition and US money reportedly being poured into leftist factions, Netanyahu and his Likud party clearly won the battle as of Wednesday morning, 18 March, 2015. Netanyahu is on track to become Israel's longest-serving prime minister, but will probably also prolong a prickly relationship with the country's main ally, the United States, at least as long as Barack Obama is in the White House. Netanyahu has focused on the threat from Iran's nuclear program and militant Islam. (Reuters)

WE'LL KNOW THE FINAL RESULTS OF A NEW ISRAELI GOVERNMENT ONLY A FEW WEEKS FROM NOW: Unlike USA elections, in which a clear candidate (usually) emerges victorious, Tuesday, 17 March, 2015 is just one phase of a drawn-out process in Israel. After the final votes have been counted, parties will unite behind their preferred prime minister no matter who came in first. Israel's president will then select the party leader with the largest supporting bloc to form a government. In this case, it will be PM Netanyahu and his Likud party. The chosen leader has up to two months to form a majority coalition, an often unpredictable process in which deals are cut and ministries and other influential posts doled out. In 2013, elections in late January yielded a coalition only in mid-March, even though Netanyahu won by a wide margin. (JTA)

HAMAS TELLS ABBAS ELECTIONS SPELL END OF PEACE TALKS: As elections results finalize and signify a resounding victory for Likud, the Hamas terrorist organization that rules Gaza commented on the process. Hamas called on Palestinian Authority (PA) chairman Mahmoud Abbas to abandon peace talks with Israel, after the latter previously indicated he would be willing to resume negotiations after the elections. "The results are enough to convince the Palestinian Authority to forget a continuation of the absurd peace talks," Hamas stated. The last round of talks, which were prodded onward by US Secretary of State John Kerry, collapsed last April when the PA torpedoed

them in sealing a unity deal with Hamas, after previously taking unilateral steps for international recognition in breach of the 1993 Oslo Accords. (INN)

EVEN DEMOCRATS WON'T BACK OBAMA'S IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL: Democratic senators remain irritated with their GOP colleagues who last week sent a letter to Iranian leaders undercutting President Barack Obama, but they will still back bipartisan legislation that would give Congress final say over a nuclear deal. Enough members of the president's party have signaled support for that bill and another that would impose new sanctions on Iran if it doesn't make an agreement with negotiators that the White House would be powerless to stop the measures from going into effect once passed. The Obama administration and its international partners now have until March 24 to set up the framework for a deal. After that, a dozen Democratic senators, including Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut, Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota and Robert Menendez of New Jersey, the highest-ranking Democrat on the Senate Foreign Affairs committee, have said they will join with the GOP majority to pass bills inserting themselves into the process. (Jihad Watch)

EUROPEAN MINISTERS REPORT LITTLE PROGRESS IN TALKS WITH IRAN: European powers and Iran made little progress on Monday, 16 March, 2015 toward reaching an agreement to end the standoff over Tehran's nuclear program as an end-of-March deadline closes in. "We're still making progress but there is a long way to go if we're going to get there," British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said after talks in Brussels with his French, German and Iranian counterparts plus European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini. Negotiations to reach a permanent deal have continuously stalled and two deadlines for a final deal have been missed. "It's always useful to talk but we, the French, want a solid deal," French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said after Monday's talks. (Arutz-7)

ISIS DEFACTS CHURCHES IN IRAQ AS ASSAULTS ON CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES CONTINUE: As ISIS continues their violent assault on the Christians in the Middle East, the terrorist group released a series of images showing militants vandalizing churches in Ninawa, Iraq this week. The men are shown removing crosses from Iraqi churches and replacing the religious symbol with the black ISIS flag. The men are also seen destroy church relics, paintings statues and gravestones. This vandalizing occurs among a series of assaults against Christians in the Middle East. In February ISIS terrorists decapitated 21 Egyptian Christians on the shores of Libya, and last month, the group kidnapped over 220 Assyrian Christians. Due to ISIS violence in both Iraq and Syria, thousands of Christians have fled their homes in fear and are now living as displaced persons in the surrounding region. (Jerusalem Post)

SYRIAN, IRAQI CHRISTIANS PLEAD FOR INTERNATIONAL ASSISTANCE: Syrian and Iraqi Christians are pleading for more international assistance after fleeing attack by terrorists from the ISIS group. They spoke Tuesday, 17 March in two Beirut

churches where they lined up to receive food baskets and other humanitarian assistance from a non-profit organization. ISIS overran a cluster of Assyrian Christian villages in Syria's Hassakeh province last month, taking at least 220 Christians hostage. (Ynet)

PAKISTANIS MOURN IN WAKE OF TALIBAN CHURCH ATTACKS: Christians across Pakistan observed a day of mourning on Monday, 16 March, 2015 - a day after blasts at two churches in Lahore killed at least 15 people and injured scores of others. The attacks took place during Sunday services. A Pakistani Taliban splinter group claimed responsibility for the attacks. The blasts went off minutes apart in a majority Christian suburb of the eastern city. Police said they targeted two churches, one Catholic and one Protestant, which are very close to each other. Among the dead was nine-year-old Sajid Umar, a third-grade student in a local school. Relatives and neighbors gathered around his body as his distraught mother wailed. Shocked residents of the teeming city scanned newspapers laid out on roadside stalls. Many blamed the government for its inability to stop the spiraling violence in the country. (Jerusalem Post) *ISIS, the Taliban, Al Qaeda, the PLO and Hamas are destroying Christianity in all its forms across the Middle East. It is important to note that all of these major terrorist groups are tied to Islam and not just thugs or misguided Muslims that have nothing to do with their jihadist fostering religion. Look at what happened days ago in Lahore, Pakistan with scores of Christians wounded and killed – also at the hands of organized Muslims, committing murder and mayhem on behalf of Islam.*

THE UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN IRAN ASSERTED THAT EXECUTIONS AND HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS HAVE ACTUALLY INCREASED UNDER PRESIDENT HASSAN ROUHANI. UN Special Rapporteur Ahmed Shaheed asserted that executions have increased to “753 known executions last year, the highest annual figure since 2002.” Iran has one of the highest rates of execution in the world and this year, more than 200 people have been executed. At a House hearing last month, experts and representatives on both sides of the aisle aimed to bring attention to Iran’s systematic human rights violations including the suppression of freedom of speech, oppression of women’s and gay rights, government-sanctioned discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities, and the imprisonment and torture of dissidents. All three experts testified that contrary to the popular perception of President Hassan Rouhani as a moderate, Iran’s human rights violations have actually increased under Rouhani’s presidency. Shayan Arya of the Constitutionalist Party of Iran lamented that Iran’s human rights abuses have “unfortunately been overlooked by the international community in light of current negotiations between Iran and the P5+1.” Insisting that the “regime’s actions speak louder than words,” Arya explained that Rouhani should not be seen as a moderate because as a former representative of the Ayatollah Khamenei in the Supreme National Security Council and as head of its Political, Defense, and Security Committee, Rouhani “has been an integral part of every aggressive move the Islamic Republic has made since 1982.” Arya argued that it’s a mistake to think of Rouhani as separate from the regime. President of the

Research Institute on Contemporary Iran, Mohsen Sazegara, echoed Arya's points, stating that "human rights abuses have not only continued, but also increased in many respects." In particular, he noted the "persistent and pervasive assault on women on a continued basis on the pretext of disrespecting Hejab, education and employment segregation." The experts also remarked that Rouhani appointed a man responsible for the "extrajudicial executions of thousands of political prisoners," as his Minister of Justice. Responding to a question about whether Rouhani had the power to change the situation in Iran, Sazegara stated that "he can do many things by the tools that he is in executive power... and support at least the basic freedoms of the people of Iran but he has not done anything." Regarding discrimination against Baha'is, a religious minority heavily persecuted in Iran, Director of the U.S. Baha'i Office of Public Affairs Anthony Vance stated that "the situation has worsened during the year and a half since Iran's new and self-described reformist President, Hassan Rouhani, took office."

SENATE PLANS MARCH 22, 2015 ACTION ON IRAN DEAL: Senate Foreign Relations Committee leadership, both Democrat and Republican, will move forward on March 24, 2015 with legislation that would provide Congress with oversight powers on any future nuclear deal with Iran. "That's the window the world was given, and Congress is acting within that window," one Senate aide close to the matter said this weekend. "Post March 24 and absent an agreement, there is no mechanism left to further delay the legislative process from moving forward." The committee will mark up the Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act of 2015 at that time without delay. Ten Democratic senators agreed to join their Republican colleagues in support of the legislation on 24, March 2015. The Nuclear Weapon Free Iran Act of 2015 - which would trigger new sanctions on Iran should negotiators fail to reach a deal - will also be revisited on March 24, the aide continued, unless a deal is reached. The intention of that bill, triggering sanctions upon diplomatic failure, is to strengthen Washington's negotiating position, according to its authors Senator Robert Menendez (D-New Jersey) and Mark Kirk (R-Illinois). The Obama administration contends that its passage would have the opposite effect. The second bill, introduced with bipartisan support, would grant Congress the ability to vote on whether to participate in any future agreement. Such a vote might have the ultimate effect of undermining enforcement of the deal. USA President Barack Obama has threatened to veto both bills if they reach his desk. "After two negotiating extensions and over a year-and-a-half of talks, with a steady stream of reports detailing that the Iranians have won numerous concessions, I wouldn't bet on congressional inaction," the aide continued. "Ultimately, the onus is not on USA legislators, nor should the pressure fall on Congress, but rather, on the Iranian leadership to make the right determination about dismantling its illicit nuclear weapons program." The Iran Nuclear Agreement Review Act has 64 senators on record in support of the bill after March 24, 2015 but Corker says he seeks a "veto-proof" majority of 67 votes. Negotiations continue on Sunday in Lausanne between USA Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. (Jerusalem Post)

SENATE LAUNCHES PROBE: IS OBAMA FUNDING AN ANTI- NETANYAHU NGO? The Senate Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations has launched a bipartisan probe into an American nonprofit's funding of efforts to oust Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu, after the Obama administration's State Department gave the nonprofit taxpayer-funded grants. The source was described as having "knowledge of the panel's activities." Both the Democratic and the Republican sides of the subcommittee have signed off on the probe, in what could be seen as a rebuke to USA President Obama. Netanyahu has repeatedly claimed in the last few days that foreign governments were funneling millions of dollars, and possibly tens of millions, into the "Anyone But Bibi" campaign that is flooding advertising space. The Senate probe follows a media report on claims the Obama administration has been meddling in the Israeli election on behalf of groups hostile to Netanyahu. A source familiar with the matter confirmed that the probe was indeed underway, and that it was bipartisan. (Fox/INN)

ARAB GULF STATES INCREASINGLY ALIGN WITH ISRAEL ON IRANIAN NUCLEAR THREAT: With the nuclear negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 powers (USA, UK, France, Russia, China, and Germany) approaching a March 24, 2015 deadline for a "political framework agreement," Israel's objections to the parameters of the emerging deal have been highly publicized. But lesser known is the growing unease about the negotiations among many leading Arab states. For nations such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Egypt, which all have Sunni Muslim-majority populations, Iran - which is a Shi'a Muslim and ethnically Persian country - has long been viewed as a regional rival. Lying on the strategic crossroads between Central Asia and the Middle East, Iran is one of the world's top oil producers and the main regional competitor for the oil-rich Arab Gulf states, which are vying for power in regional conflicts such as those inside Syria, Iraq, and Yemen. Recent media reports said that in closed talks with European lawmakers, Saudi diplomats expressed their willingness to lend Saudi Arabia's airspace to Israel for a possible attack against Iran's nuclear facilities. "Saudi Arabia and Israel both feel betrayed by the current negotiations underway with Iran, and both feel they need to make alternative plans to cope with what both view as an existential threat to its existence," said one official source. (Breaking Israel News)

ZOABI'S NEPHEW ENDORSES NETANYAHU AT RALLY: Mohammed Zoabi, the fearless Zionist Arab youth from Nazareth who received death threats and had to go underground after criticizing his radical pro-Hamas aunt MK Hanin Zoabi, gave an impassioned speech of support for PM Netanyahu at a Likud rally last week. In a video clip posted to Netanyahu's Facebook page, the young Zoabi is seen at the podium declaring forcefully "I'm a proud Israeli Arab Zionist. I came to support a leader of every single citizen of Israel. I came to support a leader who will never give up or concede; the time of the Jewish people giving up and conceding on Israel is over," stated Zoabi. Referencing Netanyahu's recent Congress address warning against a nuclear Iran, he said "Mr. Binyamin Netanayhu stood, stands and will stand before the entire world when

needed on issues of the security of Israeli citizens, the security of the state of Israel, and of course for the future of the Jewish people that suffered enough and deserves to live in quiet and peace in Israel, the land of the Jewish people. You will be the next prime minister with G-d's help," concluded Zoabi, addressing Netanyahu. After embracing Zoabi, Netanyahu pledged that "he will represent the Likud in the Knesset," indicating that Netanyahu recognized the potential of the youth to be an MK and public representative. (Arutz-7)

26-YEAR-OLD FROM ETHIOPIA WINS 5TH ANNUAL JERUSALEM MARATHON: Tadesse Dabi, 26, from Ethiopia won the 5th annual Jerusalem Marathon on Friday, 13 March finishing in a time of two hours, eighteen minutes and 20 seconds. Some 25,000 runners from 60 different countries participated in the race around the capital. The race began at 6:45 a.m. in Sderot Ruppin and continued for various distances -- the full marathon of 42.2 kilometers, the half marathon at 21.2 kilometers and shorter races of 10, five 1.7 and 0.8 kilometers. The Jerusalem Marathon is considered more difficult than in usually hotter Tel Aviv because of the hilly topography of the capital that requires more exertion than in flat Tel Aviv. (J. Post)

TIBERIAS WASTE WATER HEADS TO NEW TREATMENT PLANT, CURBING RAW SEWAGE FLOW IN JORDAN RIVER: As part of an ongoing project to rehabilitate the once heavily contaminated Jordan River, Tiberias sewage will soon flow to a new treatment facility, the Water Authority announced last week. Construction of both a pumping station and a 12-kilometer, 710-millimeter wide pipeline has concluded, allowing for the conveyance of waste water from Tiberias to the new Bitanya treatment plant at the southernmost tip of the Sea of Galilee. The project brings an end to a situation in which raw sewage was endangering the vitality of the Jordan River. "This is one of the key projects in the water sector in the last decade, a project that combines supply of quality water to agriculture and nature with the advantages of rehabilitating and protecting the environment," a statement from the Water Authority said. The many advantages of the Bitanya waste water treatment plant and the new pipeline from Tiberias, involve the prevention of raw sewage flow, provision of desalinated brackish water and treated waste water for regional agriculture, and increasing supplies of clean water to restore the flow of the Jordan River. (Jerusalem Post)

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