

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update August 21, 2015

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NEVER TOO LATE: HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS MAKE ALIYAH IN THEIR 90's: They met in the Bergen-Belsen death camp, got married - and immediately after World War II, they were able to escape the clutches of the Nazis and emigrated to Sweden, where they lived for five years before moving to the United States. Now, decades later, and at the ages of 90 and 94, Feige and Felix Bandos realized their dream and immigrated to Israel. They made their home in the local council of Efrat in Gush Etzion, Judea. Marilyn Broder, the couple's daughter who has been living in Israel for over 25 years, says that at first she couldn't believe her parents were making the move. "We are very pleased to immigrate to Israel," the Bandoses said this week. "We want to live near our daughter and grandchildren while we have time left." (Israel National News)

ISIS BEHEADS 82-YEAR-OLD ARCHAEOLOGIST IN PALMYRA: ISIS has beheaded the 82-year old archaeologist, Khaled al-As'ad who headed Palmyra (Syria) antiquities for the past 50 years and hung his body in the main square of the historic site on Tuesday, 18 August, 2015. His crime? Refusing to pledge allegiance to ISIS - and refusing, under ISIS interrogation, to reveal the location of archaeological treasures and two chests of gold the terrorists thought were in the city. The archaeologist was interrogated by ISIS fighters for more than a month before his execution. ISIS posted a photo of his body on social media sites on Wednesday, 19 August, 2015 . It was tied to a pole with the head between the legs. On the body was a white poster with red letters spelling out in Arabic the word "Heretic." Syria's former deputy minister in charge of cultural heritage, Abdalrazzaq Moaz, called al-As'ad's death a catastrophe. "He was a great figure, one of the most senior scholars alive in Syria." As'ad' was an internationally-known scholar whose work was published in international journals. Palmyra, northeast of Damascus, is known as the "bride of the desert" for its exquisite collection of ruins along a historical trade route that once linked Persia, India and China with the Roman Empire. (Media Line)

CHRISTIANS USED AS ‘FORM OF CURRENCY’ BY ISIS AS MASS KIDNAPPINGS CONTINUE: Christians in the Middle East live in fear as ISIS remains unchallenged in Iraq and Syria. Christian organizations are attempting to help Christians, but for many, it is too late. “Christians have become a form of currency in this tragedy,” explained John Newton, spokesman for Aid to the Church in Need. “I know of one priest who was kidnapped for two months. They asked for a ransom of \$120,000, which the family managed to raise and deliver. But hours later, the priest was killed and his body cut up, with pieces of him sent in a box to the family.” Newton said it is hard for his charity and the others to keep track of the kidnapped priests. Terrorists abducted archbishops throughout 2013 as they tried to rescue two other kidnapped priests. The terrorist group has kidnapped at least eight clergymen in the past year.

Father Douglas Bazi described his experience to media sources: Terrorists “struck his back, broke one of his legs, shot him, punched his teeth out, and deprived him of water for four days until a ransom was paid.” However, it did not keep him down, and he remained in Iraq. He opened the Mar Elias Centre in north Iraq where he now cares for around 135 Christian families. “We are Christian, so we are used to having our luggage always prepared. We have to run away, escape from place to place,” he said. Mosul, Iraq, housed one of the largest Christian communities in the world. But due to ISIS, Iraq’s second largest city is without Christians for the first time in 2,000 years. ISIS told Christians to convert to Islam, pay a protection tax, or die. Witnesses described how the terrorists slaughtered the males in front of everyone while they kidnapped the females for sex slavery. Andrew White, the vicar of the only Anglican Church in Iraq, told BBC Radio that Christianity is coming to an end in the Middle Eastern country. (Christian Post)

STANDING WITH CHRISTIANS CAUGHT IN THE MIDST OF PERSECUTION AND TERROR IN THE MIDDLE EAST: A wave of Islamic beheadings – many videotaped and posted online - has reminded the world that ISIS and other ultra-violent Islamist groups are not going away. In 2014 ISIS warriors beheaded Syrian and Lebanese soldiers, American journalists, Japanese Christian journalist Kenji Goto, humanitarian aid workers and even children of Christian families. And now their terror has spread far beyond Syria. Pray that the global Christian community will work for peace and justice in the Middle East. We must be in solidarity with them, not only in prayer but also in action. We should actively support government and church leaders who are working behind the scenes for reconciliation, humanitarian aid and protection for the victims of injustice. Intercede for a bold witness of the gospel in the midst of persecution. Pray for angelic protection and intervention and against the enemies of dread and fear. Ask God to unleash in the Middle East a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit. (JNN/ Charisma)

MENENDEZ BECOMES SECOND DEMOCRAT TO REJECT IRAN DEAL: Senator Robert Menendez (D-NJ) on Tuesday, 18 August 2015 announced he will oppose the Iran nuclear deal. He has become the second Democrat to announce his rejection of the agreement after Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) previously did so. Menendez announced that the deal would allow Iran to become "flush with money," that it could use "to further pursue their destabilizing hegemonic goals in the region. We want the right deal and a deal that does nothing more than delay the inevitable is not a deal we are willing to make," he stressed. The announcement is significant given that USA President Barack Obama is relying on Democrats to prevent a 2/3 majority in Congress from being able to block his veto, as he tries to force the nuclear agreement through despite strong opposition. Congress has until September 17, 2015 to vote on the deal. If all Senate Republicans oppose the deal, 13 Democrats will also be required to override the veto - now with Menendez, only 11 more are needed. Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has been holding off on announcing his stance on the deal, after indicating he intends to talk with influential Jewish backers before deciding. Reid is among seven Democrat leaning toward supporting the Iran deal, but it is possible that in talks with the prominent Jewish backers he could be convinced to oppose the agreement, which would have great impact given his prominent position. Another 21 out of the total of 44 Democratic senators now publicly support the deal, while 17 are "undecided" and would probably be influenced by Reid's position. (Arutz-7)

IRANIAN PROPAGANDA ENVISIONS 'CONQUEST OF JERUSALEM': The Iran nuclear deal brokered by the Obama Administration is going to provide the Islamic Republic with a financial windfall, and fail to prevent it from developing atomic weapons. Just what is Iran going to do with all that new money once sanctions are lifted? Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei suggested that the first item on his spending list is to bolster the terrorist forces operating against Israel. "We spare no opportunity to support anyone "Fighting The Zionists," Khamenei wrote on his Twitter account this week. Soon after, a propaganda video produced by the Islamic Revolution Design House, was posted to the Internet: The animated film begins by showing terrorists preparing for battle, while bearing the insignia of a range of Iranian-sponsored terrorist groups - including Iran's own Revolutionary Guards Corp, the Iraqi Badr Organization, Hezbollah and Hamas. The camera then pans out and shows thousands of Islamist fighters amassed on a hill overlooking the Israeli capital, before a message in Persian quotes Iran's former Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini saying that Israel should be "obliterated from the annals of history." The intention is clear: In Iran's view, it will be its terrorist proxies who ultimately carry out the regime's deep ideological commitment to Israel's destruction. That intention was further clarified days ago by Iran's current Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Khamenei, who declared on his official Twitter account that Iran would "spare no opportunity to support anyone fighting the Zionists." Earlier this month, USA Secretary of State John Kerry said he wasn't sure Iran really wanted to wipe Israel off the map, as its leaders have so often publicly threatened to do. The above video would seem to indicate that Kerry has his head in the sand. (Israel Today/INN)

UN UNDERSECRETARY-GENERAL WARNS OF ESCALATION IN ISRAEL:

UN Undersecretary-General Jeffrey Feltman has warned the Security Council that the risk of escalation in Israel "is palpable." Feltman explained that there have recently been "unconscionable crimes of hatred by extremist elements, reprehensible retaliatory violence, provocations at Jerusalem's holy sites, and a worrying increase in rockets launched from Gaza towards Israel." (Arutz-7)

SOLDIER WOUNDED IN EXPLOSIVES ATTACK OUTSIDE JERUSALEM:

The IDF reported on Wednesday night, 19 August, 2015 that an explosives attack took place on a military post on the tunnel road leading out from Jerusalem to the south, towards Gush Etzion in Judea. An explosive was hurled by Arab terrorists at a lookout post, with the shrapnel moderately wounding a soldier in the eye. The soldier was evacuated to a hospital in the capital and is conscious. The Arab terrorist fled the scene, and large forces have been deployed to track him down, with the searches extending as far as Bethlehem. The attack follows several others, as just hours earlier a two-year-old girl was lightly wounded in a rock attack as was another man. The attack took place on Highway 443 to the northwest of Jerusalem. Just a few hours before the rock attack Arab terrorists in the neighborhood of Isawiya in eastern Jerusalem threw firebombs and rocks at police officers, wounding one officer lightly with a firebomb. (Arutz-7)

USA DEMOCRAT TO PROPOSE WAR AUTHORIZATION AGAINST IRAN:

Alcee Hastings, a member of the USA House of Representatives from Florida, has joined the growing list of Democrats who are opposing the recent nuclear deal with Iran. Hastings announced that he considers Iran to be a significant enough threat that he is preparing an authorization to go to war in order to prevent the Islamic Republic from obtaining nuclear weapons. He says that he will introduce his bill on September 8, 2015 in Congress' first session following the summer break. Even though Congress still has to vote in order to accept the nuclear agreement, Hastings says that it is an "absolute necessity" to make the use of military force a possibility "regardless of how Congress votes." While it is unlikely that President Obama would look to use military force against Iran, there will be a new president in January 2017. The war authorizations would be largely for his use. (INN)

ISRAELI THINK TANK SAYS IRANIAN DESIRE TO DESTROY JEWISH STATE IS PART OF REGIME'S 'FOUNDING VISION':

Israeli think tank, the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs, published a report on Sunday, 16 August, 2015 that extensively details Iran's threats to destroy Israel. In the report, the author, Lt. Col. (ret.) Michael Segall, calls Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei the "chief agitator for the extermination of Israel." He says this position is a continuation of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's "founding vision" that "the eradication of Zionism is an inevitable precondition for redeeming contemporary Islam." According to the report, this fight to destroy the Jewish state has been an axiomatic directive of the Islamic Republic of Iran from the founding of the theocracy in 1979, which could never be "questioned or strayed from," and was an "objective to be perpetually and actively pursued."

The Iranian armed forces, Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) and the IRGC's Quds Force have declared their readiness to attempt to destroy Israel once the order is given, says Segall, and have thrown their weight behind international anti-Israel activities and terrorist attacks. This hostility towards Israel, he asserts, allows Iran to fulfill two main aspects of Khomeini's ideology: exporting the worldview of the ruling mullahs by posing as a champion of the Palestinian cause, expanding its regional influence in the process, and ultimately gaining enough power to pose a significant threat to Israel. Therefore, Segall concludes, Iran keeps fanning the flames of anti-Israel hatred through supplying terrorist organizations and organizing rallies like the International Quds Day rallies calling for Israel's destruction. (Algemeiner)

TERRORIST ASKED POLICE FOR HELP – THEN TRIED TO STAB THEM: A terrorist stabbing attack was thwarted Monday afternoon 17 August, 2015 near the town of Tapuach in Samaria. The terrorist approached Border Patrol officers standing at Tapuach Junction, and attempted to attack him with a large knife but was shot. The officer was lightly wounded by the stabbing, while the terrorist died of his wounds shortly after. Official sources said "a Palestinian arrived at Tapuach Junction and approached Border Patrol fighters manning the checkpoint and addressed them, saying that he didn't feel well. They ordered him to approach, and when he arrived in close-range he drew a knife and tried to stab one of the fighters." The chilling tactic is often used by Palestinian terrorists against Israeli civilians as well as security forces. In June, 2015, 25-year-old Israeli hiker Danny Gonen was murdered by an Arab terrorist, who gunned him down at point-blank range after luring him closer by asking for some water. This latest incident on Monday follows two separate stabbings by terrorists on Saturday, 15 August, 2015 - in those cases targeting security forces. (Arutz-7)

GOVERNMENT AIRSTRIKES ON SYRIAN MARKET KILL 82: Government airstrikes on a rebel-held suburb of the Syrian capital, Damascus, killed more than 80 people and wounded about 200 on Sunday, 16 August, 2015 according to local activists and monitoring organizations. Residents said Sunday's attack struck a crowded market area in the city of Douma, northeast of the capital, leaving streets strewn with rubble, scattered merchandise and destroyed cars. Anti-government activists in the area posted videos online of blood-covered victims being raced to local clinics and rows of dead bodies lined up for burial. The death toll in Douma puts the episode among the deadliest air attacks during more than four years of conflict in Syria, in which more than a quarter-million people have been killed and about half the population has been displaced, according to the United Nations. (N.Y. Times)

ISRAEL ARMY PREPARING FOR POSSIBLE LIMITED GROUND INVASION OF SYRIA: The Israel Defense Forces is preparing for the possibility of a limited ground incursion into Syria in the case of massive rocket fire from the country falling on Israeli territory, Israel's Channel 2 reported on Sunday, 16 August, 2015. The IDF carried out a large division-scale exercise this past week in the Golan Heights which included the scenario. The preparations are being made in response to the rise in power of radical Islamists in Syria and an understanding that the current calm on Israel's northern front is more fluid than it appears to be and could change at any moment. According to recent reports, some extremist elements in Syria may have gained control of chemical weapons stockpiles, and the IDF exercise included preparations for this possibility as well. Israel is

also continuing its preparations for a possible wide-scale confrontation with Hezbollah. In recent years, the Iranian terror proxy's plans have centered on carrying a future war into Israeli territory, and in response the IDF has practiced the evacuation of citizens and communities located near Israel's borders with Syria and Lebanon. (Algemeiner)

ISRAELI SCIENTIST CLAIMS BREAKTHROUGH IN HIV RESEARCH: A researcher at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev has found similarities between leukemia and HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. Dr. Ran Taube of the department of microbiology, immunology and genetics at the Beersheba university maintains that his team's discovery will lead to a "revolutionary diagnosis and the key to the clinical solution that will prevent infection with HIV and will destroy the deadly virus." Taube found similarities between the two diseases as part of a study aiming to eradicate AIDS and hinder the development of leukemia. Until the research was carried out, medical researchers had only limited information on the existence of a connection between AIDS and a rare blood cancer called mixed-lineage leukemia, which hinders the development of cells in the blood system and occurs mostly in children. (Jerusalem Post)

HOLOCAUST SURVIVOR, 91, WINS INTERNATIONAL LONG-DISTANCE RACE: A 91-year-old Israeli Holocaust survivor won a world championship for senior runners of his age category in France. Semion Simkin, who is legally blind, became world champion last week in Lyon after running 10 kilometers in 80 minutes. His impaired vision means he cannot make out object that are farther away than nine feet. "This is a scenario I never even dreamed of. I hope that in the future I will still have the strength to continue and to bring honor to Israel," Simkin told reporters. Originally from what is today Belarus, Simkin has two children, four grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, and lives near Jerusalem. The day before the 10 kilometer race, Simkin won the silver medal in the five kilometers race for men of his age group, with a time of 39 minutes and 47 seconds four minutes behind the winner, 90-year-old Jose Canelo from Portugal. (JTA)

RUBIO BLASTS OBAMA, VOWS TO UNDO IRAN DEAL: Florida Senator Marco Rubio, who is seeking the Republican presidential nomination, on Friday, 14 August, 2015 vowed to undo the nuclear deal with Iran if he is elected president. Speaking to the Foreign Policy Initiative in New York, Rubio linked the White House's diplomatic efforts in Iran to its warming of relations with Cuba, saying that President Barack Obama's outreach to the two countries were examples of "weakness and concession." The deal in Iran and the normalized relations with Cuba "represent the convergence of nearly every flawed strategic, moral, and economic notion that has driven President Obama's foreign policy," Rubio said. He argued that new unilateral sanctions would convince the regime on Tehran to not only dismantle their entire nuclear program, but also recognize Israel, drop their support for regional terrorist groups, and end human rights abuses against their people. "Some will say there would be no room for negotiations, but history proves otherwise," he said. "Iran may not return to the table immediately, but it will return when its national interests require it to do so. I will give the mullahs a choice: either you have an economy or you have a nuclear program, but you cannot have both," added Rubio. "I will undertake a plan to roll back President Obama's deal with Iran and repair the damage done to America's standing in the Middle East," he said. (Arutz-7)

IRAN: WE LAUGH WHEN AMERICA THREATENS TO ATTACK: Revolutionary Guards Brig.-Gen. Mohammad Ali Asoudi said days ago that Washington officials' boastful remarks about their ability to attack Iran has become a joke among Iranian commanders. "We should thank Obama for refreshing us by referring to his 'options on the table,' including the military one; we just relax and laugh at such ridiculous words." In May, 2015 the Guards' top commander, Maj.-Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari, said, "Iran's pride and strength has made the world's biggest materialistic and military powers kneel down before the Islamic Republic's might. The military option that the Westerners speak of constantly is ridiculous and they know that if the military option could have produced any result, they would have already used it many times."

KUWAITI COLUMNIST CALLS FOR ISRAELI-GULF 'FRIENDSHIP SOCIETY' WITH THE 'FRIENDLY STATE OF ISRAEL': Now is the time to launch an Israeli-Gulf alliance that will act as a counterbalance to the growing regional threat from Iran, a columnist for a Kuwait government newspaper has declared. "I repeat my call to form an Israel-Gulf friendship society, as a first step towards developing and strengthening our ties with the friendly state of Israel in the domains of politics, diplomacy, trade, education and military and civilian cooperation," wrote Abdallah Al-Hadlaq in Al Watan. Hadlaq said that an Israeli-Gulf rapprochement should occur amid a severing of all ties with regional foe Iran, especially as the Persian country has been linked to attacks in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait, as well as backing aggressive anti-government Houthi rebels in Yemen. He said improved communications have allowed Arab Muslims to see that their true "bitter" enemy lies in the "Persian Iranians." Hadlaq repeatedly called the Iranian regime "fascist" that hides behind a "religious guise," and warned that the Islamic Republic would have no qualms about using nuclear weapons - should it come to possess them - in a future conflict with the Gulf Arab states. Hadlaq's article was published shortly after a red-carpet visit by Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif to oil-rich Kuwait meant to deepen ties with the highly suspicious Gulf Arab states. (Algemeiner)

REPORT: ISRAELI FUEL TANKERS ESCORTED JORDANIAN FIGHTER JETS EN ROUTE TO USA: Israeli air force fuel tankers escorted Jordanian fighter jets across the Atlantic Ocean earlier this week to take part in exercises in the western United States. Sources noticed a group of five Royal Jordanian Air Force F-16 flying alongside Israel Air Force KC-707 fuel tankers heading west toward Lajes Field, a common transit point in the mid-Atlantic Ocean for military aircraft. The fleet of aircraft were heading to Nellis Air Force base in Nevada, where they were scheduled to take part in Red Flag. The USA Air Force considers Red Flag the "premier air-to-air combat training exercise that often includes both USA and allied nations' combat air forces." The rare sight of Israeli and Jordanian aircraft flying in tandem appears to indicate a new, stepped-up level of military and defense cooperation between Jerusalem and Amman. Last month, Israel gave retired USA supplied Cobra combat helicopters to Jordan to help the Hashemite kingdom fend off insurgent threats on the Syrian and Iraqi borders. (J. Post)

HAMAS ADMITS ISRAEL NOT GUILTY OF GAZA WATER CRISIS: Israel is often blamed for all woes befalling the Palestinian Arabs. One of the favorite accusations is that Israel takes most of the region's water for its Jewish citizens, while leaving the Arabs with far too little of this precious resource. But a Hamas-run newspaper recently featured an investigative report revealing that the water crisis in Gaza, at least, cannot be blamed on the Jewish state, after all. In surveying the agricultural lands abandoned in the wake of Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza, the Al-Risalah newspaper found that today's Palestinian farmers were using up to six times more water than the previous Jewish tenants. In the areas encompassing the former Gaza Jewish communities, a total of 20 wells had been dug up until 2005 to tap into the area's water table. These wells pumped an average of 20–30 cubic meters of water per hour for use by the Jewish farmers and their villages. The Hamas publication reported that there are now, since the departure of the Jews, no fewer than 110 wells in the area pumping anywhere between 120–200 cubic meters of water per hour. Considering these figures, is it any wonder Gaza's water table is in serious danger of becoming unusable? (Israel Today)

TWO STABBING ATTACKS OVER SHABBAT: Palestinians stabbed a border guard and an IDF soldier in separate incidents on Saturday, 15 August, 2015. These were the second and third stabbings this week. The border guard was stabbed in the back late Saturday afternoon in northern Samaria. Other guards quickly responded by opening fire on the terrorist. Lance Corporal B. who ultimately killed the terrorist, stated, "Suddenly a Palestinian appeared and began stabbing one of the guards in my team. Within a moment we realized that it was an attack and I understood that I needed to act quickly. I opened fire in order to take out the terrorist." Earlier, around 11:30 am, another Palestinian stabbed a soldier near a checkpoint in central Samaria, the army said. The soldier, who was slightly injured, managed to draw his gun and wound the terrorist in the shoulder. Reports indicate that the terrorist was 19 years old and carried out his attack while the soldier was attempting to give him water. (INN)

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS RELEASED THE TEXT OF THE IAEA-IRAN SIDE DEAL CONCERNING THE PARCHIN MILITARY BASE ON THURSDAY, confirming concerns about how verifiable the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) will be. The Associated Press revealed on Wednesday that the Iranians would be able to carry out their own inspections at the site, where Iran is believed to have conducted tests related to the detonation of a nuclear weapon. Rep. Ed Royce (R-Calif.), Chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said in a press release, "International inspections should be done by international inspectors. Period. The standard of 'anywhere, anytime' inspections – so critical for a verifiable agreement – had dropped to 'when Iran wants, where Iran wants, on Iran's terms... This is a dangerous farce.'" Sen. Bob Menendez (D-N.J.), who came out against the JCPOA on Tuesday, declared in a speech announcing that decision that having the Iranians provide the samples "would be the equivalent of having an athlete accused of using performance enhancing drugs submit an unsupervised urine sample to the appropriate authority. Chain of custody doesn't matter when the evidence given to you is prepared by the perpetrator." Sen. Ben Cardin (D-Md.), who has not yet made a decision on the deal, has previously expressed unease about the IAEA-Iran side agreements and requested, along with Sen. Bob Corker (R-Tenn.) that Congress see the documents.

Omri Ceren, Managing Director of The Israel Project, said that, in light of the revelation, he expected a “public backlash, which is exactly what the administration was hoping to avoid. Even lawmakers who have expressed support for the deal may have to reconsider, given how insane it is to let the Iranians police their own nuclear violations.” Olli Heinonen, former Deputy Director-General for Safeguards of the IAEA, stated that he knew of no other instance in which a country under scrutiny was allowed to conduct its own investigation. The president of the Institute for Science and International Security, David Albright, has similarly called this arrangement “unprecedented and risky.” Mark Dubowitz, the executive director of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, referred to the Iranian self-inspection as “a dangerous precedent and consistent with Iran’s repeated claims that no weapons inspectors will ever get into its military sites.”

ISRAEL STRUCK SEVERAL TARGETS INSIDE SYRIA IN RETALIATION FOR FOUR ROCKETS THAT HIT THE NORTHERN GALILEE AND GOLAN HEIGHTS LATE THURSDAY AFTERNOON, The Times of Israel reported today. The Israeli military said it fired artillery shells at several Syrian targets Thursday evening, hours after four rockets were fired into Israel from across the border, hitting northern Israel and sparking several fires. Media reports in Syria said at least four Israeli shells were fired at Syrian military positions in the Quneitra area in the Syrian Golan. ...

The army had earlier blamed Syrian operatives of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group for the rocket attack and said they were receiving orders and finances from Iran. Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which threatened Israel earlier this week over the detention of Mohammed Allaan, a suspected member of the group who recently ended a two-month hunger strike, denies the charge. Arab media reported that a number of casualties, including fatalities, resulted from the Israeli retaliation. According to the Times, if the rockets had been fired from Syria, it would be the first time since 1973 that there was deliberate fire from the country into Israeli territory.

This Tuesday, during a visit to Israel’s northern border with top military officials, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that Iran is sending money to terrorist organizations along Israel’s borders, which “will be used for one stated purpose — to destroy Israel.” Netanyahu cautioned that this funding will only increase as the nuclear deal negotiated between Tehran and the P5+1 powers is implemented and Iran receives billions in sanctions relief.

In April, the IDF struck and killed four infiltrators from Syria who were attempting to plant a bomb at the Israel-Syria border. In January, Israel reportedly hit a convoy carrying high-ranking Hezbollah and Iranian military officials, killing Hezbollah commander Jihad Mughniyeh and Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps General Mohammad Ali Allahdadi. A Hezbollah cross-border attack killed two IDF soldiers patrolling the Israel-Lebanon border a week and a half later.

HYPERBARIC OXYGEN CHAMBERS ARE USED IN MANY COUNTRIES TO TREAT PATIENTS WITH EMBOLISMS, BURNS, CARBON MONOXIDE POISONING AND DECOMPRESSION SICKNESS. Now, an Israeli study shows that the high-pressure pure oxygen treatments are also helpful for people who suffer from fibromyalgia, a chronic pain syndrome affecting an estimated one in 70 Americans, most of them women. The study, published recently in the journal PLoS ONE, describes how the researchers were able to map the malfunctioning brain regions responsible for the

syndrome, and used hyperbaric oxygen treatment to drastically reduce, or even eliminate, the need for pain medication. “As a physician, the most important finding for me is that 70 percent of the patients could recover from their fibromyalgia symptoms,” said Dr. Shai Efrati, director of the Sagol Center for Hyperbaric Medicine and Research and head of R&D at Assaf Harofeh Medical Center in Tzrifin, and a faculty member at the Sagol School of Neuroscience at Tel Aviv University (TAU). Fibromyalgia can be triggered by head trauma, a neurological infection or severe emotional stress, and causes symptoms such as musculoskeletal pain, fatigue, memory loss and mood swings. Few therapies have been found to be effective in assuaging its symptoms.

IN AN OP-ED IN THE THE DAILY BEAST ON FRIDAY, MORE THAN 50 IRANIAN DISSIDENTS WARNED AGAINST THE DEAL WITH IRAN, WHICH THEY BELIEVE WILL ENRICH “TYRANTS AND THEOCRATS” AND RELIEVE PRESSURE ON THE REGIME. The group of dissidents lamented that “the world has not demanded real improvements in human rights” and that the release of human rights activists was not included in the deal. They wrote that “more pressure should be applied to the regime, not less” and that people “should help restore focus to the Iranian regime’s brutal human rights records, its support for global terror and role in destabilizing the Middle East.”

Although Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has often been perceived as a moderate, the UN and several Iranian experts have reported that human rights violations including the repression of women and political activists have worsened under Rouhani’s Presidency. According to the US Commission on International Religious Freedom, “since President Hassan Rouhani assumed office in August 2013, the number of individuals from religious minority communities who are in prison because of their beliefs has increased.” The Iranian regime continues to severely restrict civil liberties, systematically oppress women, persecute gays, and repress ethnic minorities including Baha’is. Iran also has the highest rate of executions per capita in the world.

The Obama administration has argued that the deal could moderate the Iranian regime. However, the Iranian dissidents argue that those in favor of the deal “distance the likelihood of positive change and undercut the hopes of the Iranian people.” Former State Department official and Iran expert at the Council on Foreign Relations, Ray Takeyh, has similarly asserted that Iran’s massive financial gains under the deal would allow “a repressive regime that was on the brink of collapse in 2009 to consolidate power.” Senator Chuck Schumer’s (D-NY) belief that Iran will not become more moderate in the next 10-15 years played a role in his decision to vote against the deal. In his op-ed against the deal, Schumer wrote, “To me, the very real risk that Iran will not moderate and will, instead, use the agreement to pursue its nefarious goals is too great.” Indeed Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei stated on Monday that although Western countries believe the deal “will open up Iran to their influence... We won't allow American political, economic or cultural influence in Iran.”

A CONGRESSIONAL REJECTION OF THE JOINT COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF ACTION (JCPOA) WOULD NOT LEAD TO WAR OR DIPLOMATIC ISOLATION OF THE UNITED STATES, as the Obama administration has warned, just as similar warnings proved incorrect about stronger sanctions, former Democratic Senator Joseph Lieberman wrote in an op-ed published Friday in The Washington Post. I was a member of the Senate when, between 2009 and 2012, Congress developed a series of bills that dramatically increased pressure on Tehran for its illicit nuclear activities, including adopting a measure in late 2011 that effectively banned Iran from selling oil — its economic lifeblood — on international markets. In every case, senior Obama administration officials worked to block congressional efforts, warning that they were unnecessary, counterproductive and even dangerous.

Much like today, the White House repeatedly argued that sanctions would isolate the United States and alienate our allies whose help we needed. In the case of the oil ban, a Cabinet member bluntly told members that adopting the measure risked torpedoing the global economic recovery. These predictions proved false. In fact, it was only because of the sanctions adopted by Congress, and ultimately signed by President Obama, that sufficient economic pressure was put on the Iranian government that its leaders came to the negotiating table — a truth the Obama administration now accepts and asserts. Our allies and partners did not always welcome new restrictions on doing business in Tehran, but in the end, they decided it was more important to do business in the United States.

Lieberman argued that, if confronted by a bipartisan super-majority of lawmakers opposed to the JCPOA, the administration will be forced to address the “undeniable loopholes and inadequacies” of the nuclear deal. Iran would not walk away from such a renegotiation, as Tehran’s previous willingness to adjust to “new political realities” has demonstrated, especially at a time when its sanctions-damaged economy “needs an agreement much more than we do.” Lieberman adds that, rather than isolating the United States, a congressional rejection of the JCPOA would have the support of America’s Arab allies and Israel, as well as the tacit support of “even some of our European allies.” Lieberman’s argument that congressional rejection of the JCPOA could lead to its renegotiation on better terms echoes that of legal scholar Orde Kittrie, who wrote last week that, historically, over 200 treaties have been renegotiated because of congressional objections, and that the JCPOA, which isn’t a treaty, should certainly be able to be similarly amended. (via TheTower.org)



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