

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 8, 2018 (21st of Adar, 5778)

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A gold menorah with seven branches and a silver metal bracelet with a Star of David. The menorah is ornate with a base and a central stem. The bracelet is made of metal links and features a prominent Star of David on the side.

NETANYAHU THANKS GUATEMALA FOR JERUSALEM RECOGNITION: PM Benjamin Netanyahu met Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales within hours of arriving in Washington early Sunday, 4 March 2018, and thanked him for recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Morales announced in Dec. 2017 that his country would follow the USA lead and move its embassy to Jerusalem. Guatemala was one of only nine countries to vote against a UN resolution slamming the USA for its recognition of Jerusalem. Morales is an evangelical Christian whose election in Oct. 2015 led to a strengthening of ties between Guatemala and Israel. He confirmed on Sunday night, 4 March 2018 that he will move his country's embassy to Jerusalem in May 2018, and that the relocation will take place two days after the USA moves its embassy to the holy city, to coincide with the 70th anniversary of Israel's founding. (Times of Israel/J.Post)

ISRAEL WINS 2 GOLD MEDALS AT ABU DHA-JITSU COMPETITION: The Israeli ju-jitsu team won two gold medals at the Abu Dhabi Ju-Jitsu World Championship Juniors and Aspirants 2018. Israel was the only country represented at the competition whose national anthem was not played and whose flag was not flown in the main competition hall. The Israeli team came home with two gold medals, four silver medals, and seven bronze medals. This event was the second international sports competition in Abu Dhabi in which the Israeli team was not allowed to wear or show the Israeli flag or to have Hatikva played. In Oct. 2017 the Israeli delegation to the Grand Slam Judo competition was forced to compete as part of the International Judo Federation instead of as Israelis. The jujitsu team was likewise forced to compete under the banner of the Ju-Jitsu International Federation. The event

organizers stated that the Israeli team could not be identified as Israeli due to "security concerns."
(Arutz-7)

NETANYAHU GOVERNMENT IN DANGER OF COLLAPSING: According to sources within the coalition, Israel might have early elections as soon as June of this year. The issue at hand is passing the national budget, which the ultra-Orthodox parties in Netanyahu's coalition are refusing to support unless the prime minister first pushes through legislation exempting Jewish seminary students from serving in the IDF. Secular Israelis have long balked at the status quo that enables the religious sector to skirt the obligations and responsibilities carried by every other Israeli Jew. The heads of the other parties in Netanyahu's coalition have vowed to never allow such "exemption" legislation to pass. If the ultra-Orthodox parties were to revolt, the Opposition would presumably call for a vote of no-confidence in Netanyahu, which would pass with the backing of the religious factions, necessitating either the formation of a new government coalition, or early elections. Complicating matters further is that Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon is threatening to pull his Kulanu Party out of the coalition if Netanyahu gives in to ultra-Orthodox "blackmail" and postpones the budget. Netanyahu said "there is no reason for us to go to early elections" over the question of ultra-Orthodox Jews doing military service. But, Israel has gone to early elections over less in the past. Netanyahu officially has another year-and-a-half on his current term. (Israel Today)

HAMAS SIPHONING OFF ELECTRIC POWER IN GAZA: Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories, Maj.-Gen. Yoav Mordechai uploaded footage to his Facebook page showing Hamas operatives hooking up illicitly to a Gaza power line on 3 March 2018 in order to siphon electricity. "The Hamas terror group continues stealing from the people of Gaza," Mordechai wrote. "This power was intended for hospitals and schools, but Hamas is uninterested in the populace and even exploits it. Watch the daylight robbery. Only a week ago it was published that Hamas is stealing fuel brought into the strip for the Palestinian public, and selling it on the private market to the highest bidder." (Ynet)

DANON DECRIES UN INACTION ON IRAN AT AIPAC: Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon urged the United Nations to prioritize its agenda and start taking concrete steps to curtail Iran's growing influence in the Middle East instead of passing resolutions against Israel. While speaking at the AIPAC Committee Policy Conference on 4 March 2018, Danon said it was crucial that the international community recognizes the threat Iran poses to regional stability. It is vital that the UN focus on the real problems of the world, like Iran, the ambassador said. We all know just how dangerous this threat is, but the UN is wasting time and energy on votes and reports against Israel. Despite the UN's current inaction, Danon expressed confidence that Israel and the United States will succeed in stopping the Iranians and halt the expansion of their regime from the Gulf to the Mediterranean.

The Israeli envoy also touched on the UN Human Rights Council's blacklist of Israeli and international companies operating in Jerusalem, Judea & Samaria and the Golan Heights. Danon noted Israel's cooperation with the USA against the initiative, and implied there could be far-reaching implications if the list is made public. I only speak for Israel, but if this list is published, I believe that the USA will

withdraw from the Human Rights Council, Danon said. The so-called blacklist is a database compiled by the council and includes American companies such as Caterpillar, TripAdvisor, Priceline.com and Airbnb. Danon has repeatedly lashed out against the international body for its continued efforts to publish the full contents of the database, which Israel fears will repel companies from doing business with the country. In Jan. 2018 Danon condemned the United Nations for making a partial portion of the blacklist public just hours before the UN was set to commemorate International Holocaust Remembrance Day at UN headquarters in Manhattan. (J.Post)

IRAN CALLS ON USA, EUROPE TO SCRAP NUCLEAR ARMS, and MISSILES: Iran will not negotiate over its ballistic missiles until the United States and Europe dismantle their nuclear weapons, a top Iranian military official said on 4 March 2018 keeping up the Islamic republic's tough stance on the issue. While Iran has accepted curbs on its nuclear work - which it says is for purely peaceful purposes - it has repeatedly refused to discuss its missile program, something the United States and the Europeans have called for. European powers and Iran have started talks over Tehran's role in the Middle East and will meet again this month in Italy as part of efforts to prove to USA President Trump that they are meeting his concerns over the 2015 nuclear deal. (J.Post)

USA SLAMS RUSSIA, IRAN OVER BRUTAL ASSAULT ON SYRIA' S EASTERN GHOUTA: The United States on 4 March 2018 condemned the Assad regime's "brutal" Russian-backed assault on the Eastern Ghouta rebel enclave that has left hundreds of civilians dead. Washington also accused Moscow of ignoring a UN Security Council resolution calling for a 30-day cessation of hostilities, saying Russia has killed innocent civilians under the false auspices of counterterrorism operations.

This is the same combination of lies and indiscriminate force that Russia and the Syrian regime used to isolate and destroy Aleppo in 2016, where thousands of civilians were killed, it said, referring to Syria's one-time economic hub, which was devastated by the country's civil war. The White House also called on pro-regime forces to immediately cease targeting medical infrastructure and civilians in Eastern Ghouta. Assad's forces have seized over a quarter of the enclave on Damascus's eastern edges after two weeks of devastating bombardment, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The advance on the back of air strikes, artillery fire and rocket attacks that are reported to have killed more than 650 civilians, and sent hundreds into flight to western parts of the enclave. (Times of Israel)

MISSISSIPPI LOOKING TO INVEST IN ISRAEL BONDS: The Mississippi Legislature might authorize the state treasury to invest in Israel bonds. The House passed Senate Bill 2051 last week by a 118-2 vote. If enacted, the law would allow the state to use excess general funds to invest in bonds issued by Israel. The bill says these investments must be made in USA currency and are capped at \$20 million. State treasury Chief of Staff Michelle Williams says the treasury invests most of its excess funds into state banks, then into the USA Treasury. The bill would give the treasury another option for investment one that Williams said is safe, but with a higher rate of return. The bill is now heading back to the Senate for debate.

PUTIN UNVEILS NEW NUCLEAR WEAPONS: President Vladimir Putin unveiled an array of new nuclear weapons late last week, saying they could hit almost any point in the world and not be

intercepted. Putin also said that a nuclear attack on any of Moscow's allies would be regarded as an attack on Russia itself and draw an immediate response. Putin backed his tough rhetoric with video clips of some of the new missiles, which were projected on a giant screen behind him at the conference hall in central Moscow where he was addressing Russia's political elite. "They have not succeeded in holding Russia back," said Putin, referring to the West. "Now they need to take into account a new reality and understand that everything I have said today is not a bluff." Among the new weapons that Putin said were either in development or ready: a new intercontinental ballistic missile, a small nuclear warhead that could be attached to cruise missiles, underwater nuclear drones, a supersonic weapon and a laser weapon. USA President Donald Trump spoke in separate phone calls with French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the leaders "shared their serious concerns" over Putin's comments on his country's nuclear weapons. (J.Post)

IRAN HAS BUILT A MILITARY BASE OUTSIDE SYRIA'S CAPITAL: The base has existed since 2013, but early this year saw a flurry of activity with new hangars added. The hangars, which measure around 30 yards by 20 yards, are being used to store short and medium-range missiles capable of hitting all of Israel. A base similar to the one revealed in these new satellite photos was built last year south of Damascus, before being destroyed in Dec. 2017 by Israeli surface-to-surface missiles. The images emerged just weeks after Israel's UN ambassador warned that Iran is trying to turn Syria into the largest military base in the world. Danny Danon told the Security Council that classified information he was releasing showed that 82,000 fighters are currently under Iranian authority in Syria. He said in addition, that Iran is investing "hundreds of millions of dollars" in Syria including on land and factories. (Fox)

IRAN LAUNCHES FESTIVAL TO CELEBRATE ISRAEL'S IMMINENT COLLAPSE: The Islamic Republic of Iran is gearing up for its first ever International Hourglass Festival, celebrating what organizers call the imminent collapse of the Jewish state. The symbol chosen to represent the event features an hourglass with a Star of David disintegrating above the words 25 Years an apparent reference to the predictions made by Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in 2016 and reiterated by Major General Abdolrahim Mousavi in 2017. Organizers announced that the festival would be held in Tehran in April 2018. Some 2,400 anti-Israel NGOs around the world have agreed to promote the event globally. The festival not only targets Israel, but also the USA over its support of Israel, and even the Saudi government. (INN)

'ISRAEL FOILS 20-30 TERROR ATTACKS EACH WEEK': Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said last week that the IDF has been carrying out massive operations in Judea & Samaria to thwart planned terrorist attacks, particularly in and around Hebron. "We are thwarting 20 to 30 terrorist attacks each week, facing ever-increasing terrorist efforts," he said. He attributed the successful anti-terror operations to "quality intelligence and a combination of smart deployment of forces and advanced technology," and emphasized that the IDF had prevented "the vast majority of terrorist activity." (Israel Hayom)

FRENCH JEWISH TEEN ASSAULTED WHILE LEAVING SYNAGOGUE: A 14-year old French boy was attacked on Wed. 28 Feb. 2018 while leaving a synagogue in Montmagny, north of

Paris. Three fourteen year-old youths and one fifteen-year-old surrounded the boy and began punching him at the exit of the synagogue. They broke his glasses and stole his kippa while shouting anti-Semitic remarks at him. The assault took place during Purim, when the synagogue would have been filled with congregants. The boy's brother and sister were reportedly with him at the time, though he had left the building alone. The suspects were taken into custody following the attack. The assault marks at least the third time a Jewish minor has been violently attacked in France since the beginning of 2018. In Jan. 2018 an 8-year-old boy was beaten in his Paris suburb. He had been wearing a kippa at the time of the assault. Earlier in January, a 15-year-old Parisian girl's face was slashed while she was walking down the street. She had been wearing the uniform of her Jewish high school at the time. (J.Post)

FRANCE CRACKS DOWN ON ISLAMIC RADICALIZATION IN SCHOOLS, PRISONS, ONLINE: Rocked by a string of Islamist terror attacks capped by a deadly rampage in the heart of Paris in late 2015, French President Emmanuel Macrons administration last week set out tough new measures to crack down on Islamic radicalization in schools, prisons and online. It's the third such plan French officials have floated in the past four years. Amid fears that French-born recruits to ISIS may be making their way home after the terror groups battlefield defeats, the state's multiple plans are seen as symbolic of Frances struggles to deal with the largest Muslim population in Western Europe and to assimilate disaffected young Muslims into French society and culture. Since the first anti-radicalization plan was floated in 2014, terrorists have been blamed for the deaths of some 240 people in attacks in Paris and elsewhere.

The government will invest in training teachers to detect the early signs of radicalization among students and debunk conspiracy theories and fake news spread through social media, said PM Edouard Philippe when he announced the new policies. The new measures will also introduce tighter regulations for private and religious schools, including Islamic schools whose number has grown rapidly in the last few years. For the first time, the government is also taking new steps to reform prisons that have become hotbeds of Islamist radicalization. Radicalized inmates were previously dispersed among other prisoners. Now they will be housed in separate, sealed-off areas to prevent the exchange of radical ideas. French prisons currently hold 512 people charged with acts of terrorism, as well as over 1,100 inmates who have been identified as radicalized. (Washington Times)

HUNGARY IS LAST FRONT AGAINST' ISLAMIZATION OF EUROPE: Hungarian PM Viktor Orban has warned that pro-migration European governments have "opened the way to the decline of Christian culture and the advance of Islam." Orban conjured up the image of a Western Europe overtaken by Muslims, saying that "born Germans are being forced back from most large German cities, as migrants always occupy big cities first. We are those who think that Europe's last hope is Christianity," Orban said. "If hundreds of millions of young people are allowed to move north, there will be enormous pressure on Europe. If all this continues, in the big cities of Europe there will be a Muslim majority." Orban claimed that his government had "prevented the Islamic world from flooding us from the south". In 2015, Orban's government ordered the construction of fences along Hungary's borders with Serbia and Croatia in an effort to divert the flow of people seeking to reach Western Europe. Since then, the country's refugee camps have been closed, the support system for

refugees greatly weakened and now only one or two asylum-seekers a day are processed in border transit zones. (Fox)

PRINCE WILLIAM TO MAKE 1ST OFFICIAL UK ROYAL VISIT TO ISRAEL: For the first time since British Mandatory rule ended seven decades ago, a member of the royal family Prince William is scheduled to make a visit to Israel. The prince will also visit Palestinian areas and Jordan during the trip this summer. Israeli PM Netanyahu said that "this is a historic visit" and William "will be received here with great affection." Other Israelis reacted more wryly. It only took 70 years, but finally the British royal family has gotten over the end of the Mandate, Amit Segal, the political affairs commentator for Israel's Channel 2 News, wrote on Twitter. He was referring to the quarter-century of British rule over the area, known as the British Mandate for Palestine, which ended in 1948, on the eve of Israeli independence. While members of the royal family have never made state visits to Israel, they have traveled widely in the Arab world. Prince Charles was in Israel twice, but only to attend funerals: Yitzhak Rabins in 1995 and Shimon Peress in 2016. (Washington Post/NY Times)