

# **Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update April 19, 2018** **(4<sup>th</sup> of Lyyar, 5778)**



**HAPPY 70TH BIRTHDAY, ISRAEL:** Minutes after honoring and remembering those who gave their lives in defense of the Jewish state, Israelis on Wed. evening 18 April 2018, will burst into celebration for the 70th anniversary of their ancient nation's modern rebirth. Fireworks will be on display across the country and young and old will gather to mark Israel's Independence Day. According to Jewish tradition, days start at sunset, so Independence Day will come into full swing Thurs. morning 19 April, when nearly every Israeli across the country will set out for the nation's numerous parks to enjoy cookouts and fellowship. Independence Day has been said to be "the day on which the nation of Israel's power is revealed." (JNN)

**ISRAEL'S POPULATION TOPS 8.8 MILLION ON EVE OF 70TH INDEPENDENCE DAY:** Israel's population stands at 8.84 million on the eve of the Jewish state's 70th Independence Day, the Central Bureau for Statistics announced. Jews make up approximately three quarters of the total population with 6.589 million residents, while the Arab minority has reached roughly 1.849 million, or 20.9%. The remainder of the population registry includes 404,000 people. Israel's population has increased by 1.9% — 163,000 people — in the past year, the CBS says. One hundred and seventy-seven thousand babies were born; roughly 41,000 people died. (Times of Israel)

**USA PRIORITY IS TO ENSURE IRAN DOES NOT 'TAKE OVER' SYRIA, HALEY SAYS:** Deterring Iran's entrenchment in Syria is one of USA's President Donald Trump's top three priorities there, guiding his policy-making on where to station troops in the war-torn country and for how long, USA envoy to the UN Nikki Haley asserted on Sunday 15 April 2018. Her statement comes amid reports of strains between the Trump administration and PM Benjamin Netanyahu's government over the USA role in providing a buffer between Iranian troops and Israel's border. Trump in recent weeks has vowed to pull USA troops out of Syria entirely; prompting alarm in Jerusalem that Israel's fight against Iran would be waged alone. In interviews with a series of Sunday morning shows, Haley touted the success of a joint strike conducted by USA, French

and British forces over the weekend that sought to punish Syrian President Bashar Assad for his use of chlorine and sarin gases against civilians in the town of Douma on 7 April, 2018. She said the strike was prompted by the president's commitment to prevent the normalization of chemical weapons use, calling it a top priority of his administration. A second priority, Haley said, was the complete defeat of ISIS forces that once held territory in Syria.

Then, thirdly, we want to make sure that the influence of Iran doesn't take over the area," she said on CBS's Face the Nation. "They continue to cause problems throughout the region, and we want to make sure that there is a hold." The ambassador ruled out direct USA talks with Assad over ending the conflict because of his "brutality" in targeting innocents throughout the course of the war. Meanwhile, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Sunday 15 April, 2018 that he has persuaded American counterpart Donald Trump not to remove the United States military from Syria. According to Macron, the combined attack by the United States, France and Britain in Syria has full international legitimacy. Netanyahu, for his part, welcomed the strike, while adding that Iran's march across Syria was of equal concern to Assad's use of chemical weapons – and equally warranted military action. Haley acknowledged regional concerns in her interviews and said, "We all know our work in Syria is not done." (J.Post)

**ISRAEL SETS RED LINE FOR RUSSIA:** Israel has sent a clear message to Russia over the weekend that the sale of the advanced S-300 missile defense system to the Syrian regime will cross a red line. A political source who revealed the message in a conversation with media sources stated that the communique was conveyed following a Russian Defense Ministry announcement that Moscow was reconsidering the sale of arms to the Syrians following the joint attack on Syria by the USA, Britain, and France Friday night 13 April 2018. The S-300 system could be a very significant upgrade to Syria's air defense, which is now based mainly on purchases from the former Soviet Union, since no country has ever agreed to sell an advanced system of that kind to the Assad regime before. It is not clear whether the Israeli message will affect the thinking of Russian Vladimir Putin and his administration. This more advanced system has not yet been sold to any international actor and remains solely in the hands of the Russian military. (Arutz-7)

**IRANIAN OFFICIALS THREATEN TO 'RAZE' TEL AVIV:** Iran wants Israel and her Western allies to understand that if they continue interfering in Syria, it is the Jewish state that will pay the heaviest price. "If Israel wants to survive a few more days, it has to stop this childish game," insisted Ali Shirazi, the liaison between Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei and the Iranian military's Quds Force. Shirazi stressed that "Iran has the capability to destroy Israel and given the excuse, Tel Aviv and Haifa will be razed to the ground." The threat comes just days after Israel bombed an Iranian-controlled air base in central Syria and USA, British and French aircraft hit eight other targets belonging to Iran's allies in the Syrian regime. The series of air strikes has raised significant fears of a full-scale war between Israel and the Western powers on one side, and Iran and Russia on the other. (Israel Today)

**SAUDI CONDEMNS IRAN AMID ARAB DIVISIONS OVER SYRIA STRIKES:** Saudi Arabia's King Salman opened a summit of Arab leaders on 15 April 2018 by condemning an old foe, Iran, without making any reference to missile strikes by Western powers on Syrian government targets over a suspected gas attack a week ago. Regional powerhouses Saudi Arabia and Iran have been locked in a decades-long struggle for supremacy that is being waged in proxy wars in several countries, including Yemen and Syria. "We renew our strong condemnation of terrorist acts carried out by Iran in the Arab region, and we reject its blatant interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries," King Salman said in the eastern Saudi city of Dhahran, without giving specifics. (J.Post)

**"WE WILL DESTROY ALL OF HAMAS' TUNNELS":** Eyal Zamir, head of the IDF's Southern Command, on 15 April 2018 spoke about the terror tunnel leading from Gaza into Israel which the IDF demolished over the weekend. "We foiled an offensive tunnel that was penetrating into our territory. This is the deepest tunnel we have discovered. This fact reflects the technological capabilities we have in the Gaza

Division,” Zamir said. "This is significant and reflects a chain of successes," Zamir continued. "There is still work ahead of us and we are continuing with it more forcefully. In the end we will destroy Hamas' entire offensive tunnel project." Zamir also said that the goal of Hamas' tunnel was to reach Israel and carry out terror attacks. "This campaign continues and takes shape and we must be prepared," concluded Zamir. (Arutz-7)

**USA PASTOR FACES TERROR, ESPIONAGE CHARGES IN TURKEY:** An American pastor imprisoned in Turkey is going on trial for alleged terror ties and spying in a case that has increased tensions between Washington and Ankara. Andrew Craig Brunson, a 50-year-old evangelical pastor from North Carolina, is facing up to 35 years in prison on charges of “committing crimes on behalf of terror groups without being a member” and “espionage.” The trial began on 16 April, in western Izmir province. Brunson was arrested in December 2016 for alleged links to both an outlawed Kurdish insurgent group and the network of the USA-based Muslim cleric who Turkey blames for a masterminding a failed military coup that year. The cleric, Fethullah Gulen, denies the claim. Brunson, who has lived in Turkey for 23 years, has denied all allegations, saying that he solely worked as a pastor. The Turkish government has clearly linked Brunson’s case with its determination to force the USA to extradite Gulen - and some see the pastor as a diplomatic pawn. The American Center for Law and Justice, a conservative Christian group in the USA has called Brunson a “hostage of the Turkish government.” A petition has garnered more than half a million signatures, claiming that the case was putting Christianity on trial. (Washington Post)

**RUSSIA WARNS OF ‘CONSEQUENCES’, AFTER SYRIA ATTACK:** Moscow lashed out at Washington, London and Paris in the wake of Allied airstrikes on military facilities connected to Syria’s chemical weapons stockpiles. “We are being threatened,” said a statement from the Kremlin. “We warned that such actions will not be left without consequences. All responsibility for them rests with Washington, London and Paris.” The Kremlin took personal offense that President Trump called out Russian strongman Vladimir Putin for failing to control Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad and his use of chemical weapons against his own people. “Insulting the President of Russia is unacceptable and inadmissible,” the Kremlin said. The USA didn’t notify Moscow of the 14 April 2018, Saturday morning attacks on Russia’s ally Syria. (J.Post)

**UN SECRETARY-GENERAL: SYRIA IS 'MOST SERIOUS THREAT TO INT'L PEACE AND SECURITY':** Speaking at an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said Saturday 14 April, 2018 that Syria represents the "most serious threat to international peace and security" of our time. He called on member states to "show restraint" and to act "consistently with the United Nations Charter and international law in general." USA Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley said at the same UN meeting on Saturday that the USA had acted with its allies France and Britain only after they had exhausted their diplomatic tools. "The Syrian regime has forced us to take action," she said, denying Russian and Syrian claims that the Assad regime bears no responsibility for the various chemical weapons attacks. She also shot down Russian claims that the alleged chemical weapons attack in Douma was fake news. “The United States is ‘locked and loaded’ to strike again if Syria's President Bashar al-Assad's government again uses chemical weapons, Haley warned. Meanwhile USA President Donald Trump hailed what he calls the “perfectly executed” strike on Syria, and has declared “Mission Accomplished”. (J. Post/Fox)

**HUNDREDS OF PALESTINIANS TREATED FOR WOUNDS, TEAR GAS INHALATION DURING THIRD WEEK OF PROTESTS:** Gaza health officials said 363 people were wounded by Israeli fire or treated for tear gas inhalation on Friday 13 April 2018 in the latest round of protests and riots on Israel’s border with the Gaza Strip. Ten thousand protesters amassed at the border for the third Friday in a row. The Israeli army reported that there were several attempts to breach the border, and that protesters threw bottles, rocks, Molotov Cocktails and in one case an explosive device at security personnel. Rioters also burned tires,

Israeli flags and attempted to launch a burning kite into Israel's territory. Israel dismissed criticism of its use of live fire, saying its rules of engagement were necessary and would not change. (JTA)

**THE NUMBERS BEHIND THE MURDEROUS ATTACKS:** Terror attacks in Israel have left 3,175 orphans, 822 widows, and 926 bereaved parents who live among us today. Ahead of the Memorial Day for the Fallen Soldiers of Israel and Victims of Terrorism, which will be marked on Wed. 18 April, 2018 the National Insurance Institute said the number of civilians killed in terrorist attacks since the declaration of the State of Israel in 1948 stands at 3,134. This figure also includes 122 foreign nationals killed in terrorist attacks in Israel and 100 Israelis who died abroad. In the past year, from the last Independence Day, 12 Israelis have been murdered, with the last one being Adiel Kolman, who was stabbed to death in Jerusalem on his way to the Western Wall last month. The terrorist attacks have left 3,175 orphans, including 114 who lost both their parents, 822 widows, and 926 bereaved parents who live among us today. (INN)

**ISRAEL REMEMBERS 6 MILLION VICTIMS ON HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY:** Israel came to a standstill at 10 a.m. Thurs. 12 April 2018 as sirens wailed throughout the country in memory of the six million Jews murdered by the Nazis during World War II. Buses and cars halted on streets and highways as Israelis stepped out of their vehicles and stood with heads bowed. Holocaust Remembrance Day in Israel is held on the day marking the beginning of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943. The UN set International Holocaust Remembrance Day as 27 January, the day the Red Army liberated the Auschwitz-Birkenau death camp in 1945. (Times of Israel)

**THE HOLOCAUST:** The "Holocaust" refers to the period from 30 January, 1933, when Hitler became Chancellor of Germany, to 8 May 1945 - the end of the war in Europe. Millions of Jewish men, women and children were murdered by Hitler and his brutal cohorts during this time. While it is impossible to ascertain the exact number of Jewish victims six million is the round figure. Auschwitz concentration camp was a network of concentration and death camps built and operated by the Third Reich in Polish areas annexed by Nazi Germany during World War II. Buchenwald was a German Nazi concentration camp established near Weimar, Germany, in July 1937, one of the first and largest of the concentration camps on German soil. It was in holes such as these that Jewish victims were starved, tortured, subjected to slave labor, beatings, inhumane medical experiments and murdered in gas chambers by the millions. Elderly Holocaust survivors in Israel suffer mental and physical torments to this day. Their children in many cases bear traumatic scars as a result of being raised by such emotionally and physically shattered parents. (JNN)

**STUDY: 22% OF USA MILLENNIALS NEVER HEARD OF THE HOLOCAUST:** Over a fifth of millennials in the United States have not heard of the Holocaust, a study found. The survey, which was commissioned by the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany found that many Americans were unaware of basic facts about the Holocaust. The results were released Thurs. 12 April 2018, which marks Yom Hashoah, or Holocaust Remembrance Day. The study included 1,350 interviews with Americans aged 18 and over. While 6 million Jews are estimated killed in the Holocaust, 31% of all respondents and 41% of millennials, aged 18 to 34, believe that number is 2 million or less, according to the survey. Forty-five percent of all respondents could not name a concentration camp or ghetto from World War II, and 41% could not identify Auschwitz; a network of Nazi concentration and extermination camps. Claims Conference President Julius Berman expressed concern about the lack of knowledge about the Holocaust among millennials. "We are alarmed that today's generation lacks some of the basic knowledge about these atrocities," he said in a statement. (Arutz-7)

**HONDURAS VOTES TO MOVE EMBASSY TO JERUSALEM:** Honduran lawmakers passed a measure calling on the government to move the nation's embassy in Israel from its present location in Tel Aviv to the Israeli capital city of Jerusalem. Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon hailed the vote in a tweet Friday, 13 April 2018 adding that PM Binyamin Netanyahu was scheduled to speak with Honduran

President Juan Orlando Hernandez later in the day. Neighboring Guatemala also announced its plans to relocate its embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. Guatemala is expected to unveil its new embassy in Jerusalem on 16 May 2018 two days after the USA opens its new embassy. (INN)

**WESTERN ALLIES STRIKE SYRIA IN RESPONSE TO CHEMICAL ATTACKS:** Nations across the globe are presently releasing breaking news of the USA, France and UK predawn attacks on Syria. These strikes that began early Saturday 14 April 2018, (Israel time), are in response to chemical weapons attacks ordered by the Syrian regime on its own people last weekend. The government of Bashar al-Assad has been accused of using poison gas on civilians at least 50 times during the country's ongoing civil war. Syria and its allies at Israel's northern border have also posed an increasing threat to the Jewish State. Syrian hostility towards Israel is coupled with Iran's deepening military foothold in this civil war-torn country. In addition, a strong Russian presence in Syria, its protection of the Assad regime and alliance with Iran makes this a highly volatile situation for the Jewish state. We are sending a brief JNN update from several news sources reporting on the USA strikes against Syria and urgently asking our readers to pray against any retaliatory strikes from Russia, especially against American ships. Pray also for the safety of Israel during these times of intense conflict and multiple threats at her doorstep. (JNN)

**TRUMP: USA, FRANCE AND UK LAUNCH STRIKES ON SYRIA:** President Donald Trump announced on Friday, 13 April 2018, that he had ordered strikes on the Syrian regime in response to a chemical weapons attack last weekend. "I ordered the United States armed forces to launch precision strikes on targets associated with the chemical weapon capabilities of Syrian dictator of Bashar al-Assad," Trump said from the White House Diplomatic Reception Room. Witnesses reported that they heard explosions in the capital city of Damascus and that they began while Trump was making his address. USA aircraft including B-1 bombers and ships were used in the strikes, according to multiple USA defense officials. Trump said that he decided to take action because last weekend's action by Bashar Al-Assad "was a significant attack against his own people," and "not the actions of a man, they are crimes of a monster instead."

Trump said the strikes were in coordination with France and the United Kingdom, adding that the purpose of the campaign is to "establish a strong deterrent against the production, spread and use of chemical weapons. The combined American, British and French response to these atrocities will integrate all instruments of our national power: military, economic and diplomatic," Trump said. UK PM Theresa May announced that she had "authorized British armed forces to conduct coordinated and targeted strikes to degrade the Syrian Regime's chemical weapons capability and deter their use." Trump indicated the strikes would continue until the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons ends. Two USA officials said attacks could continue, with a senior administration official saying "this isn't over." (CNN)

**USA SHIPS AND PLANES FIRE CRUISE MISSILES AT SYRIA IN RETALIATION FOR POISON GAS ATTACK:** Warships and warplanes in the eastern Mediterranean have launched a fiery barrage of missiles at military targets in Syria to punish the Russian-backed government in Damascus for its use of poison gas against civilians last weekend. USA President Donald Trump authorized the punitive hit against President Bashar Assad's government and sought to cripple its chemical weapons facilities with what he called precision airstrikes. French and British forces joined the assault. Trump said in a televised address Friday night. "We are prepared to sustain this response until the Syrian regime stops its use of prohibited chemical agents." Leaders in Britain, France and Saudi Arabia have pledged to support a strong response, and French warships armed with cruise missiles were near the Syrian coast. The USA Navy had at least two guided-missile destroyers in the eastern Mediterranean. Trump called on Russia and Iran, which he said are the chief enablers of the Syrian government, to relinquish their support. The predawn air assault Saturday raised concerns of a direct confrontation with Russia, which has an extensive network of ground-to-air missiles in Syria, as well as hundreds of troops and warplanes, and threatened to shoot down any USA missiles or planes that it saw as a threat. (L.A. Times)

**WESTERN ALLIES STRIKE IN SYRIA, EXPLOSIONS REPORTED NEAR DAMASCUS:** The United States, together with France and the UK, is carrying out precision air strikes against targets in Syria related to the Bashar Assad regime's ability to use chemical weapons. At least six loud explosions were heard in Damascus very early Saturday morning and smoke was seen rising over the Syrian capital, a Reuters witness said. Syrian state TV said the army's air defenses were confronting an attack by the United States, France and Britain. A second witness said the Barzah district of Damascus had been hit in the strikes. Barzah is the location of a major Syrian scientific research center. Syrian air defenses shot down 13 missiles fired in a USA-led attack, Syrian state TV said. The missiles were reportedly shot down in the Kiswah area south of Damascus, the capital. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said a total of three scientific research centers had been hit in the attacks - two in Damascus and one in the Homs area - in addition to military bases in Damascus.

Secretary of Defense James Mattis said shortly after the strikes began that "the Assad regime didn't get the message" after last year's USA strikes, and that this time the strikes are broader. He emphasized that the aim is to prevent Damascus from again using chemical weapons. He said he felt "confident" about the evidence implicating the Syrian government in the chemical attack on Douma. Trump has said the USA is "prepared to sustain" military pressure on Assad "until the Syrian regime stops its use of chemical weapons". Blaming Russia directly for the situation in Syria, Trump stated that "Assad's recent attack and today's response are the direct result of Russia's failure to keep their promise to guarantee the elimination of Syria's chemical weapons. Russia must decide if it will continue down this dark path." (Ha'aretz)

**HALEY: ASSAD USED CHEMICAL WEAPONS 50 TIMES:** USA Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley on Friday 13 April said that Syria had used chemical weapons at least 50 times during that country's civil war. "Let's be clear: Assad's most recent use of poison gas against the people of Douma was not his first, second, third, or even 49th use of chemical weapons. The United States estimates that Assad has used chemical weapons in the Syrian war at least 50 times. Public estimates are as high as 200," she said at an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council. "The United States and our allies will continue to stand up for truth, accountability, justice, and an end to the use of chemical weapons," she added. Haley also blasted Moscow for continuing to prevent UN action against its ally, Syria. Russia days ago vetoed a USA-drafted Security Council resolution that would have set up an investigation into chemical weapons use in Syria following a toxic gas attack in rebel-held Douma. It was the 12th time that Russia has used its veto power at the council to block action targeting its Syrian ally. Earlier on Friday, the Russian Defense Ministry claimed that Britain staged the chemical attack in Douma, though it did not provide evidence of this. (Arutz-7)

**ISRAELI MILITARY ON HIGH ALERT AMID IRAN THREATS:** Israel's military was put on high alert amid heightened tensions along the northern border and with Iran threatening to avenge an airstrike on a Syrian air base believed to have killed 14 people, including 7 Iranian military personnel. Russia, Syria and Iran have all said Israel carried out the Monday 9 April 2018 missile barrage on the T-4 Air Base near Palmyra in central Syria. American sources also confirmed that Israel had conducted the strike and that they were notified of it in advance. Israeli officials refused to comment on the strike. Following the assault a top adviser to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei threatened Israel: "The crimes will not remain unanswered," Ali Akbar Velayati said during a visit to Syria. Iran's Foreign Ministry also accused Israel of "flagrant" aggression in Syria following the attack. Israeli officials did not appear to be taking the threat of a retaliatory attack lightly — either by Iran, or its proxy, the Hezbollah terrorist group. On Tues. 10 April 2018, Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman appeared to allude to the strike, saying, "Accepting Iranian entrenchment in Syria would be to accept Iranians putting a chokehold on us. We cannot allow that". (Times of Israel)

**EGYPT, SAUDI ARABIA URGE HAMAS TO END 'GREAT MARCH OF RETURN' PROTESTS:** Both Saudi Arabia and Egypt have called on terrorist organization Hamas to end the annual weekly protests it is holding for the "Great March of Return," according to an Egyptian source. An Egyptian Foreign Ministry official was quoted as saying that, in exchange for halting the protests, Egypt would ensure that the Rafah

border crossing, which Egypt controls, would be regularly opened. The source said that the agreement had come under the direction of the Saudis. "The situation in Gaza is nearing an explosion towards anyone blockading the Strip," the source said, "and therefore there is a fear that Palestinian anger will turn toward Egypt in the coming weeks." Last Friday's protests marked the second week of the "Great March of Return" in Gaza. Crowds of approximately 20,000 turned out to protest on the border between Gaza and Israel. Ten Gazans were killed in the clashes, while estimates of the number of protesters injured vary. The protests are expected to continue each Friday for the next several weeks. (J.Post)

**HAMAS TRAINING FIGHTERS TO KIDNAP IDF SOLDIERS:** The IDF is busily preparing for further Hamas-organized disturbances on the border in coming weeks, including this Friday 13 April 2018. The past two Fridays have seen violent encounters on the border between Israeli troops and Palestinian rioters. Many of the several dozen rioters killed in recent weeks were members of terrorist organizations. Based on social media monitoring, the IDF believes the main focus of rioters this Friday 13 April 2018 will be to hurl Molotov cocktails into Israeli territory. This has raised the concern that wheat fields on the Israeli side of the border fence could be set ablaze. To prevent this, the IDF plans to use force to keep rioters out of throwing range of the border fence. (Walla)

**ARABS ON SOCIAL MEDIA SUPPORT ISRAEL AGAINST GAZA BORDER RIOTS:** Hamas knew that by sending tens of thousands of Palestinians to violently attempt to breach the Gaza security fence it would score mainstream media points against Israel, which had no choice but to defend its border with deadly force. But, while much of the Western press is apparently too thick read between the lines (or, too eager to bash Israel), many in the Arab world have put the blame precisely where it belongs, at Hamas' feet. Hamas' cynical exploitation of Palestinian civilians plays well in the Western media, but has long been reviled in the Arab world, even among those who hold little sympathy for Israel. The Israel Foreign Ministry reported that its Arabic-language social media accounts had received a surprisingly high number of messages of support following clashes between Israeli forces and the Hamas-led mobs in Gaza last Friday 6 April 2018.

From Saudi Arabia to Iraq to Jordan, many Arabs said they backed Israel in this present conflagration, while slamming Hamas for putting civilians in harm's way. One commenter posted: "My heart is with my Jewish cousins. There is no escaping the fact that Hamas' Palestinian terrorism will inevitably end." Another from Iraq urged his "Palestinian brothers to not be dragged by Hamas' terror plots, which will only harm the Palestinians." At least one Arab social media user from Jordan criticized Hamas for burning thousands of tires and creating devastating air pollution for the children of Gaza. A commenter from Saudi Arabia echoed Israel's own explanations for why peace with the Palestinians has yet to be achieved: "The war on terrorism begins with the removal of it from a conceptual point of view. There is no doubt that the Hamas terror organization is blocking any option for peace and is working to spread hatred and violence. Israel has internationally recognized sovereignty." The Palestinians are losing the support of the wider Arab world as they continue to engage in pointless and destructive confrontations with Israel. (Israel Today)

**ISRAEL: UN IGNORES CHEMICAL ATTACK ON CIVILIANS IN SYRIA:** Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman told media sources this week, "I operate out of the assumption that ultimately Israel will have to deal alone, both with the threat in the North and with the threat in the South. The USA is Israel's main strategic ally, but it has its own considerations and we live here in the Middle East." Speaking after scores of civilians were killed in a chemical attack in Syria on 7 April 2018, he noted that the UN had not condemned these deaths. "I have not heard the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres speak of it. Last weekend hundreds were also killed in Yemen, but that doesn't interest anyone, while when Israel kills Palestinians in self-defense there is an immediate outcry." (J. Post)

**RUSSIA VETOES UN RESOLUTION ON SYRIA CHEMICAL ATTACK:** Russia on Tues. 10 April vetoed a USA drafted UN resolution that would have condemned last weekend's suspected gas attack near Damascus and established a new body to determine responsibility for Syrian chemical weapons attacks. The

vote Tuesday afternoon in the 15-member Security Council was 12 in favor, Bolivia joining Russia in voting "no," and China abstaining. USA Ambassador Nikki Haley said the United States "went the extra mile" to get Russian support for the resolution to ensure that a new investigative body would be impartial, independent and professional — things she said would not be guaranteed by a rival Russian resolution." Russia's UN Ambassador Vassily Nebenzia accused the United States of wanting the resolution to fail "to justify the use of force against Syria." (Politico)

**ISRAELI LABOR PARTY BREAKS OFF RELATIONS WITH BRITAIN'S CORBYN:** Israel's Labor party said on 10 April 2018 it had suspended relations with British Labour party leader Jeremy Corbyn, accusing him of sanctioning anti-Semitism and showing hatred towards Israeli policies. "It is my responsibility to acknowledge the hostility you have shown to the Jewish community and the anti-Semitic statements and actions you have allowed as leader of the Labour party UK," Israeli Labor Party leader Avi Gabbay wrote in a letter to Corbyn, distributed to the media. Corbyn, the British opposition leader who unexpectedly became party head in 2015, is a supporter of Palestinian rights and a critic of Israel. He has repeatedly faced accusations of turning a blind eye to anti-Semitic comments in the party and among groups he supports. As Israel approaches Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day this week, we are reminded of the horrors of anti-Semitism in Europe and our commitment to combating anti-Semitism of all forms and in all places," Gabbay's letter said. As such, I write to inform you of the temporary suspension of all formal relations between the Israel Labor party and the leader of the Labor Party UK." Gabbay said Corbyn had shown "very public hatred" towards Israeli government policies including those where the opposition and the ruling coalition are aligned. (Algemeiner)

**ISRAEL TO OFFSET FIVE-YEAR DROUGHT WITH TWO NEW DESALINATION PLANTS:** Israel's Ministry of Energy and Water announced this week that two new desalination plants will be built to offset the deficits of an extended five-year drought that has left Israel's sensitive water sources at their lowest levels in nearly a hundred years. Currently Israel has five active desalination plants, built over the last 13 years, to extract water suitable for drinking from the Mediterranean Sea, and distribute the desalinated water through Israel's national water carrier. Each facility is expected to cost approximately \$400 million. The plan will include the expansion of pipelines for use in agriculture, and is intended to help Israel to rehabilitate dried-up rivers. The plans may include pumping fresh water into Israel's primary source for drinking water, the Kinneret—also known as the Sea of Galilee—which has continued to suffer receding levels. The Kinneret is also the primary feeder of Israel's Jordan River, which runs south to the Dead Sea and is another body of water suffering severe ecological damage due to receding water levels. (Jewish News Syndicate)



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