

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update June 28, 2018 ***(15th of Tamuz, 5778)***



PRINCE WILLIAM'S ROYAL VISIT TO ISRAEL KICKS OFF: In addition to Jordan and Israel, William will visit the Palestinian Authority. The trip is being widely characterized as William's most high-profile and politically sensitive trip yet. William, a 36-year-old grandson of Queen Elizabeth and second in line to the throne, will see religious sites, honor Holocaust victims and meet Jewish and Arab youths, and Israeli and Palestinian leaders. A spokesman for the prince, acknowledging the "well-known" and "complex challenges" in the Middle East, said William's tour, like other visits abroad by members of the British royal family, will be non-political. William was greeted at the airport by Tourism Minister Yariv Levin. He then traveled to Jerusalem's King David Hotel, where he will be staying during his visit. On Tues. 26 June 2018 he visited Yad Vashem, met separately with PM Benjamin Netanyahu and then with President Reuven Rivlin. The prince then traveled to Jaffa to watch a soccer game with the participation of Jewish and Arab children. In the evening, he attended a reception at the residence of the British ambassador, where he spoke briefly. On Wed. 27 June 2018 the prince has two events in Tel Aviv – one a meeting with youth and the other an as-yet-unannounced cultural event – before he goes to Ramallah and a meeting with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas. In the evening, he will attend a reception hosted by the British consulate-general, and speak there as well. On Thurs. 28 June, 2018 William is expected to visit the Mount of Olives as well as the Western Wall, before flying back to Britain. (J.Post)

NETANYAHU CALLS PRINCE WILLIAM'S VISIT 'HISTORIC': Israel's PM Netanyahu addressed the visit of Prince William to Israel on Monday 25 June 2018. "Today we will receive the Duke of Cambridge, Prince William, for the first historic visit to Israel by a representative of the British royal family," Netanyahu said. "I must say that is not exactly true because there is a representative here, and this is his great-grandmother, Princess Alice, one of the Righteous Among the Nations who saved Jews in Greece during the Second World War and asked to be buried here in Jerusalem. We, of course, welcome the Prince. My wife and I would invite all of you, but the space is a bit narrow in the Prime Minister's residence, so we'll wish him well on your behalf and on behalf of all the citizens of Israel - welcome!" (Arutz-7)

RIVLIN ASKS PRINCE WILLIAM TO TAKE ‘MESSAGE OF ‘PEACE’ TO ABBAS: President Reuven Rivlin on Tues. 26 June 2018 asked visiting Prince William to convey to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas a “a message of peace.” Hosting the Duke of Cambridge in his official Jerusalem residence, Rivlin said the Palestinians need to accept that Jews have returned to their ancestral homeland and that it was about time Israelis and Palestinians end their conflict. “I know that you’re going to meet President Abbas. I would like you to send him a message of peace,” Rivlin told his royal guest. “Tell him it is about time that we find together the way to build confidence. To build confidence is a first step to bring to an understanding that we must end the tragedy between us” that has been going on for 120 years, he said. Prince William — the first member of the British royal family to make an official visit to Israel since the state was founded in 1948 — also expressed the hope for peace in the Middle East, though his formulation was very vague, steering clear of endorsing any political position. (Times of Israel)

BULGARIA TO OPEN HONORARY CONSULATE IN JERUSALEM: Israeli PM Netanyahu said Sunday 24 June 2018 at the weekly Cabinet meeting that he spoke the previous night with his counterpart, Bulgarian PM Boyko Borisov, who informed him of the decision. Borisov visited Israel earlier this month, meeting with Netanyahu and Israeli President Reuven Rivlin in Jerusalem. Netanyahu reported that Borisov told him that the honorary consulate will not deal only with Bulgarian affairs in Jerusalem, but with Bulgarian affairs in the entire State of Israel. “I told him that this was a welcome step and that I hoped it will quickly lead to the opening of the official and complete Bulgarian Embassy in Jerusalem,” Netanyahu said. The United States opened its embassy in Jerusalem on 14 May 2018, and Guatemala opened its new embassy in the city two days later. The Czech Republic reopened its honorary consulate in Jerusalem at the end of last month. (Arutz-7)

HISTORY IN SAUDI ARABIA AS WOMEN PERMITTED TO DRIVE: Saudi Arabian women are celebrating being able to drive for the first time in decades. At midnight on Sunday 24 June 2018, the kingdom overturned the world's only ban on female motorists as part of reforms being led by Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. Women in Riyadh and other cities began zipping around streets bathed in amber light soon after the ban was lifted at midnight, with some blasting music from behind the wheel. Television presenter Sabika al-Dosari said the end of the ban was "a historic moment for every Saudi woman" before driving a sedan across the border to the kingdom of Bahrain. The lifting of the ban, a glaring symbol of repression, is expected to be transformative for many women, freeing them from dependence on private chauffeurs or male relatives. Some three million women in Saudi Arabia could receive licenses and actively begin driving by 2020. The kingdom earlier this month began issuing its first driving licenses to women in decades, with some swapping their foreign permits for Saudi ones after a practical test. (Arutz-7)

IDF HITS GAZA TERRORISTS LAUNCHING ARSON BALLOONS: Israeli forces opened fire on Arab terrorists operating out of the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip Sunday afternoon, 24 June 2018 after the terrorists attempted to launch incendiary balloons towards Israeli territory. The incident occurred in the southern Gaza Strip near the Israeli border. “An IDF aircraft targeted a vehicle used by a group of Palestinians who attempted to launch arson balloons from the southern Gaza Strip into Israeli territory,” the spokesperson said. There were no reports of casualties. In recent weeks, terrorists in the Hamas-ruled enclave have launched thousands of incendiary and makeshift explosive devices attached to kites and balloons, using them to drop the weapons into Israeli territory. The attacks have caused millions of shekels in damage to Israelis living near the border, and have struck private homes. (Arutz-7)

IDF UNCOVERS HAMAS' OPERATING SYSTEM FOR KITE TERROR: The Hamas terrorist organization is responsible for kite terror and not a random terrorist activity by Gazan children and young adults, the IDF revealed on Sunday 24 June 2018. Arson terror, the phenomenon where firebombs are attached to kites and balloons and launched from the coastal enclave into Israeli territory and through which large areas of Israeli land around the Gaza Strip have been destroyed, is part of carefully planned acts of terror, the IDF

spokesperson explained. Specifying the mode of operation, the IDF spokesperson said that Hamas commanders order the launch of such kites and balloons, as well as oversee and direct the manufacturing. The Hamas operatives who receive the orders, produce the kites and balloons and then attach the firebombs which they receive from Hamas resources. Kite production is carried out serially and in large quantities. Once the production is completed, the kites and balloons are launched from strategic points in the Gaza Strip in order to afflict as much damage to Israeli land as possible. "This is terrorism directed against the population of Israel, against Israeli agriculture and nature. The IDF is acting intensively against these terror cells," an IDF statement read. Since 30 March 2018 some 1,000 hectares (over 2.5 thousand acres) of Israeli fields, forests and agricultural land have been ravaged by fires. They were caused by kites, balloons and inflated condoms lit and launched from the Gaza Strip. (J.Post)

CORBYN: LABOUR GOVERNMENT WILL RECOGNIZE STATE OF PALESTINE: Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the opposition Labour Party, said last weekend that a UK government under his leadership would recognize the state of Palestine. "The next Labour government will recognize Palestine as a state as one step towards a genuine two-state solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict," Corbyn wrote on Twitter during a visit to Jordan. Corbyn's support for the Palestinian cause, as well as his failure to address anti-Semitism within the Labour Party, has been roundly condemned by the Jewish community in the UK. "He issues empty statements about opposing anti-Semitism, but does nothing to understand or address it. We conclude that he cannot seriously contemplate anti-Semitism, because he is so ideologically fixed within a far-left worldview that is instinctively hostile to mainstream Jewish communities," said a letter sent to Corbyn by the leaders of Britain's Jewish community in March 2018. Labour narrowly lost to PM Theresa May's Conservative Party in elections in 2017, and current opinion polls show the two parties as neck and neck. (J.Post)

TERRORIST ATTACKS ON ISRAELIS REACH 2.5. YEAR HIGH: May 2018 saw the highest number of terrorist attacks in 2.5 years against Israelis, following an increase of almost 40% from the 223 incidents recorded in April 2018. Of the 365 attacks recorded in May 2018, some 271 involved firebombs, the Israel Security Agency (Shabak) said in its monthly report. The increase occurred in Jerusalem, Judea & Samaria, as well as along Israel's border with Gaza. The tally for May is the highest on record since October 2015, when 620 attacks were recorded. One Israeli died as a result of attacks. Four more soldiers were injured, one in an explosion in Jerusalem and three others, as well as one civilian, from a rocket near Gaza. Hamas has organized a number of deadly riots weekly along the border with Israel, labeling them "nonviolent events" despite the fact they feature the hurling of firebombs at troops near the fence and attempts to breach it. Additionally, Gazan terrorists have now burned over two thousand acres of land near the border by sending over kites and helium balloons carrying firebombs and other explosives. (Arutz-7)

ISRAEL REDUCING ITS PARTICIPATION IN UNHRC: Israel has temporarily reduced its participation with the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) after the United States pulled out over the Council's anti-Israel bias, media source reported Friday 22 June 2018. Several diplomats in Geneva, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Israel had "lowered" its participation at the council to align its stance more with the USA position. Israel is not one of the council's 47 member states, but has participated like most other countries as an observer. Ambassador Nikki Haley, in a joint press conference with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, formally announced earlier this month that the United States is withdrawing from the UNHRC, which she described as "a protector of human rights abusers, and a cesspool of political bias". Haley pointed out the Council's blatant anti-Israel bias. "We are withdrawing from the UNHRC, an organization that is not worthy of its name," said Haley. Israel welcomed the USA decision, with PM Binyamin Netanyahu calling the UNHRC a "biased, hostile, anti-Israel organization." (INN)

HEZBOLLAH PULLING BACK FROM ISRAEL- SYRIAN BORDER: The UK-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, citing what it described as "reliable sources," said that terrorist group Hezbollah and its allied gunmen have begun withdrawing to positions 40 km. (25 miles) away from the Israeli

border, and a similar distance from the Jordanian-Syrian border. The redeployment comes in response to a request from Russia, but Iran is refusing to do the same with its forces in the area. The report said Iran is refusing to pull back its own military forces from southern Syria unless there is a corresponding evacuation of USA and international coalition forces from the al-Tanf base on the Syrian-Iraqi border. (Times of Israel)

MERKEL: SOLUTIONS NEEDED FOR IRAN'S 'AGGRESSIVE TENDENCIES': German Chancellor Angela Merkel after meeting Jordan's King Abdullah in Amman, said on 21 June 2018, "Iran's aggressive tendencies must not only be discussed, but rather we need solutions urgently." She announced 384 million euros (US\$445 million) of aid to Jordan this year. Merkel said that while European countries wanted to maintain the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, they shared concerns over Iran's ballistic missile program, its presence in Syria and its role in the war in Yemen. Iran's ballistic missile program and the agreement's failure to address it was one of the concerns cited by Trump in choosing to leave the nuclear deal. The Islamic Republic has several times test-fired ballistic missiles in recent months, raising the ire of the West. In Syria, meanwhile, Iran is a big military supporter of President Bashar Al-Assad, sending some of its own forces there and backing Shi'ite militias from Lebanon and Iraq who are fighting on the ground. Gulf and Western countries also accuse Tehran of arming the Houthi group in Yemen. Merkel voiced support for Jordanian concern about Iranian activity in southwestern Syria, near its border and that of Israel, where Syria is ramping up a military operation. "You live not just with the Syria conflict, but also we see Iran's activities with regard to Israel's security and with regard to Jordan's border," she said. (INN)

EUROPE: THREAT 'ACUTE' AS ISLAMIC ATTACKS DOUBLE IN 2017: Islamic terror attacks in Europe are on the rise, and authorities are warning the danger from ISIS and ISIS-tied terrorists is not on subsiding. In fact, Europe's law enforcement say the number of Islamic terror attacks doubled between 2016 and 2017. Last year, a total of 33 terror attacks were reported on the continent and Britain, 10 of which were successful – killing 62 people – while the rest were foiled. That figure compared with 13 reported attacks in 2016, of which 10 were successful leading to 135 deaths. This included the attack on London's Westminster Bridge in March 2017 and a similar assault on London Bridge two months later when attackers simply drove vehicles into pedestrians and stabbed bystanders with knives, killing 13 people and wounding some 98 others. "As ISIS gets weaker, it has been urging its followers to carry out lone actor type attacks in their home countries", Europol said. It also warned: "The threat of jihadist attacks in the EU remains acute, as demonstrated by the attacks which took place in 2017." France, Germany, Spain and Belgium last week launched an initiative seeking to set up a European register to share vital counter-terrorism information, the judicial cooperation agency Euro just said. The new register would allow information about current investigations to be passed between EU states to help build up a complete picture. (Geller report)

FRUSTRATED BY LACK OF ECONOMIC GUARANTEES, IRAN REGIME LIKELY TO EXIT NUCLEAR DEAL: A senior Iranian official said on Friday 22 June, 2018 that the Tehran regime was likely to exit the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the JCPOA, in the coming weeks. Abbas Araghchi, Iran's deputy foreign minister, was speaking in Vienna following talks convened at Tehran's request with the remaining parties to the deal — China, Russia, France, the UK and Germany. The USA recently withdrew from the deal when President Donald Trump refused to renew sanctions waivers on Iran and imposed tough new sanctions instead. "I told the conference today that the JCPOA is in the intensive care unit because it has lost its balance as a result of USA withdrawal from the deal," Araghchi said in the Austrian capital. For several weeks, Iran has been demanding that the powers that remain committed to the JCPOA compensate Tehran for the new USA sanctions. Because of the American measures, a number of major European corporations, including German engineering company Siemens and French oil giant Total, have abruptly pulled out of business deals with Iran that were agreed after the majority of the sanctions were lifted in 2015.

Araghchi said that Friday's talks were intended to establish whether the remaining signatories "can provide us with a package which can give Iran the benefits of sanctions lifting." He remarked that if the other signatories

of JCPOA wanted to stabilize the deal, they had to “sacrifice more” in this respect. Separately, the head of Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization (AEOI) told a prestigious gathering of diplomats in Oslo that a bleak future lay in store for their countries if they failed to offset Iranian losses under the sanctions. “If the European Union and other countries supporting the JCPOA do not demonstrate their practical opposition to the USA policies in due time, they will face a dreadful future and unprecedented insecurity in the region and the world because of the JCPOA’s collapse,” the AEOI’s head, Ali Akbar Salehi, remarked at the 2018 Oslo Forum. (Algemeiner)

ISRAEL DEPLOYS ELECTRONIC EYE TO TRACK FIREKITES AND BALLOONS FROM GAZA:

Israel has deployed a system that can spot fire-starting balloons and kites in the sky, track their progress, and then direct firefighters to their landing spots, enabling them to more rapidly extinguish the flames and reduce damage. The Sky Spotter system, built by Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, has been in operation along the Gaza border for several days, Israel’s Hadashot TV reported Thur. 21 June 2018. Originally developed to counter small drones, Sky Spotter can track the balloons or kites and pinpoint their location, where they are heading, and where they are likely to land. Sky Spotter can also be used to direct defensive drones that collide in midair with the kites or balloons, bringing them down. Until now such drones have been flown by army reservists, experts in drone operation, but the system will soon be able to control the drones automatically, directing them to the threats. Testing has continued on a laser system that could be used to shoot down the kites in flight. Development is advancing and this system is expected to soon be deployed around Gaza. (Times of Israel)

CYBER WEEK SHOWCASES ISRAEL AS LEADING CYBERPOWER: The Israel Cyber Week conference hosted 8,000 delegates from more than 66 countries. Israeli PM Netanyahu told the delegates last week: "Israel now receives 20% of the total global private investment in cybersecurity. Given that we are about one-tenth of 1% of the world's population, we are punching at about 200 times our weight here. My goal eight years ago was to make Israel one of the five leading cyberpowers in the world, and I think we've reached that." Israel's cybersecurity industry saw exports of \$3.8 billion last year and investments of \$815 million. Israel has 420 native cybersecurity companies as well as 50 international research and development centers, according to figures cited by Netanyahu. (UK-Register)

JNN READERS, MEET ANN (AMERICAN NEWS NETWORK): ANN, meaning grace, favor and prayer in Hebrew, is a new informative venture of the part of Vision for Israel and the JNN team. In addition to our thrice weekly Jerusalem News Report, (JNN) we are presenting our readers with a monthly news update on what we see as vital issues and developing trends in the USA needing intercession and change. Maybe in the future we will have a once a month global edition. Even as America has supported Israel, we want to support the USA by making vital issues in the USA further known. If the news seems discouraging at times, we positively know it can be changed by exposure and prayer. We hope for intercessors and individuals with a public voice to further the trend towards a resurgence of godly morality, belief in the constitution and love for Israel to be ever on the increase. Please share these reports with your prayer groups, churches and make your voice heard on social media and in high places. With love and blessing to our readers and intercessors, from JNN editors, writers and the entire Vision for Israel team.

A TICKING TIME BOMB: MS-13 THREATENS A MIDDLE SCHOOL, WARN TEACHERS, PARENTS, STUDENTS:

A media report released on 11 June 2018, revealed that Gang-related fights are now a near-daily occurrence at William Wirt Middle School in Riverdale, Maryland where a group of suspected MS-13 members at the overwhelmingly Hispanic school throw gang signs, sell drugs, draw gang graffiti and aggressively recruit students recently arrived from Central America, according to more than two dozen teachers, parents and students. Most of those interviewed asked not to be identified for fear of losing their jobs or being targeted by MS-13. Although administrators deny Wirt has a gang problem, the situation inside the aging, overcrowded building has left some teachers so afraid that they refuse to be alone with their

students. Many said they had repeatedly reported incidents involving suspected gang members to administrators, only to be ignored — claims supported by documents obtained by media sources. “Teachers feel threatened but aren’t backed up. Students feel threatened but aren’t protected,” one educator said. “The school is a ticking time bomb.” The gang’s presence at Wirt comes at a time when the Trump administration has declared war on MS-13, and communities throughout the country are confronting a surge in MS-13-related violence. Nearly a dozen parents reported that they were worried about gang activity at the school. Many said they were intent on transferring their kids. Several said they were scared their children would be killed. (Washington Post)

POLL: 72% OF AMERICANS BELIEVE EUTHANASIA SHOULD BE LEGAL: According to a recent Gallup poll, 72% of Americans believe that euthanasia should be legal. In addition, the survey found that “Democrats and liberals are especially likely to favor it.” The poll also shows a correlation between religious piety and support for euthanasia. Only 37% of weekly churchgoers said yes to euthanasia. The poll also reveals that as age increases, support for euthanasia decreases, as 85% of people between the ages of 18 and 29 support euthanasia, while only 65% of people above the age of 65 support it. (CNS)

SUPREME COURT RULING IS A WIN FOR RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: The USA Supreme Court ruled this month in favor of a Colorado baker who objected to making a cake for a gay couple’s wedding due to his religious opposition to gay marriage. The justices ruled 7-2 against the Colorado Civil Rights Commission, reversing a ruling from the Colorado Court of Appeals in one of the court’s most high-profile cases of the term. The court’s decision focused narrowly on the Colorado Civil Rights Commission’s actions toward baker Jack Phillips, saying the commission was hostile to his faith and failed to act neutrally toward his religion. Writing for the majority, Justice Anthony Kennedy, argued the “commission’s treatment of Phillips’ case violated the state’s duty under the First Amendment not to base laws or regulations on hostility to a religion or religious viewpoint. The record here demonstrates that the commission’s consideration of Phillips’ case was neither tolerant nor respectful of Phillips’ religious beliefs,” Kennedy wrote. In his majority opinion, Kennedy honed in on the blatant bias of Colorado’s bias police, who apparently blanch at anything that doesn’t accord with their blinkered, thoughtless progressivism. Phillips was on the wrong side of history, and so his rights could be disregarded and trampled. The arc of the moral universe bends toward crushing all resistance said the 81-year-old justice. (NY Post)

SUICIDE RATES ON RISE IN USA, CDC REPORTS: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on 7 June 2018 released a harrowing study on the rising suicide rates in the USA. According to the CDC, nearly 45,000 Americans age 10 or older died by suicide in 2016, making it the 10th leading cause of death. The study noted that suicide is rarely caused by a single factor, and found more than half of cases involved a person who did not have a known mental health condition. “This is a major public health problem but we know that prevention programs work and can be effective in reducing this tragedy,” said Dr. Anne Schuchat, CDC principal deputy director. Schuchat said the data analyzed revealed a number of factors leading up to death by suicide, including economic woes, relationship issues, substance misuse, physical health problems and others. The highest rise was seen in western states, with an over 57% increase in North Dakota. “We do see increases in suicide associated with economic downturns, and it can take a long time for the recovery to kick in. (Fox)

TRUMP POUNCES ON JUSTICE DEPARTMENT REPORT FINDINGS: USA President Donald Trump on Friday 15 June 2018 offered his first reaction to a 500-page internal watchdog report issued by the Justice Department, decrying messages exchanged between two FBI employees expressing a desire to “stop” him from becoming president. “Doesn’t get any lower than that!” Trump tweeted, a day after the highly anticipated inspector general’s report was released. FBI Agent Peter Strzok, who headed the Clinton & Russia investigations, texted to his lover Lisa Page, in the IG Report, that “we’ll stop” candidate Trump from

becoming President. The report chastised FBI officials Peter Strzok and Lisa Page for exchanging a series of anti-Trump text messages, asserting they "cast a cloud" over the FBI's actions.

In one instance the report said the Inspector General was troubled by the FBI's month-long delay in obtaining a search warrant to review emails possibly related to the investigation on former Rep. Anthony Weiner's laptop in the fall of 2016. The report specifically calls out Strzok's decision to "prioritize" the Russia investigation over following-up on the laptop issue, leading the report unable to conclude it was "free from bias." Strzok worked briefly for special counsel Robert Mueller, who is investigating possible Russian interference in the 2016 election. But he was removed from that office after other politically charged texts came to light. Thursday's 14 June report did not address whether Strzok's political views affected the Russia investigation -- that is for another report still to come. Trump has lambasted the investigation, saying it amounts to a "witch hunt." (CNN/Fox)

COMEY USED PERSONAL EMAIL FOR GOVERNMENT BUSINESS: The inspector general's report on the FBI and Justice Department's probe of Hillary Clinton's private email server found that several FBI agents — including former director James Comey — used “personal email accounts for official government business,” a violation of bureau protocol. IG Michael Horowitz discovered five instances in which Comey either drafted official messages or forwarded emails to his personal account. His investigation also found that controversial agent Peter Strzok, who had texted his FBI colleague and lover Lisa Page that “we’ll stop” Trump from being elected, used his personal email for official business. The IG said the “most troubling” instance was when Strzok forwarded “an email about the proposed search warrant the midyear team was seeking on the Weiner laptop” on Oct. 29, 2016, from his FBI account to his personal email, a reference to a laptop shared by Anthony Weiner and his wife, Huma Abedin, which had Clinton's emails on it. The FBI at the time was exploring Clinton's own use of a private email account on a personal server while she was secretary of state. (NY Post)

PRESIDENT TRUMP: IG REPORT WAS A ‘HORROR SHOW’: President Trump broke his silence on the scathing inspector general's report with a vengeance Friday 15 June 2018, first tweeting that the FBI boss he fired was the "worst" in the bureau's history, then crashing "Fox & Friends" for an impromptu interview where he ripped the "scum on top" of the Obama-era bureau and said the IG "blew it." The president's comments came a day after the release of the report, which was the result of an 18-month-long investigation by DOJ Inspector General Michael Horowitz. Trump said the report, which found ex-FBI Director James Comey was insubordinate, showed Trump was justified in firing him. “The IG Report is a total disaster for Comey, his minions and sadly, the FBI,” Trump tweeted early Friday. "Comey will now officially go down as the worst leader, by far, in the history of the FBI. I did a great service to the people in firing him. Good Instincts. Christopher Wray will bring it proudly back! Trump said Horowitz's finding of no evidence the FBI probe of Hillary Clinton's secret email server was influenced by rampant liberal bias showed the inspector general "blew it." Horowitz's report faulted Comey for going over the heads of his superiors, including former Attorney General Loretta Lynch, by holding a press conference to announce the FBI's decision not to press criminal charges against Clinton. At that July, 2016 news conference, Comey called the then-presidential candidate's actions “extremely careless,” rather than “grossly negligent,” as drafted in the initial exoneration statement. Critics have suggested that Trump's firing of Comey amounted to obstruction of justice, though Deputy Attorney General wrote a recommendation that Comey be fired. (Fox)

ISRAEL WELCOMES USA ANNOUNCEMENT OF WITHDRAWAL FROM UN HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL: PM Benjamin Netanyahu said Wed. 20 June 2018: "Israel thanks President Trump, Secretary Pompeo and Ambassador Haley for their courageous decision against the hypocrisy and the lies of the so-called UN Human Rights Council. For years, the UNHRC has proven to be a biased, hostile, anti-Israel organization that has betrayed its mission of protecting human rights. Instead of dealing with regimes that systematically violate human rights, the UNHRC obsessively focuses on Israel, the one genuine democracy in

the Middle East. The USA decision to leave this prejudiced body is an unequivocal statement that enough is enough. Israel welcomes the American announcement." (Prime Minister's Office)

PM NETANYAHU: WE ARE PREPARED FOR WAR WITH HAMAS-RULED GAZA STRIP: Israeli PM Netanyahu has reiterated that the military is prepared for any eventuality in the Gaza Strip and warned that Jerusalem's response to months of protests along the border will escalate "as necessary." The comments come amid reports of discord within the Israeli security cabinet over how to deal with the growing incidence of "Terror Kites" being launched from the Palestinian enclave into Israel. Along with the flaming kites, incendiary objects ranging from helium balloons—some containing explosive devices—to rigged condoms have wreaked havoc on southern Israel, destroying thousands of acres of fields, crops and nature reserves. According to media accounts, more hardline ministers are advocating for a policy of targeting those launching the primitive weapons, effectively blurring any distinction between them and terrorists firing rockets; whereas others are arguing that such an approach would result in tremendous international fall-out, especially in cases involving Palestinian youths. Meanwhile, tensions with Hamas-ruled Gaza continue to soar to the highest levels since the 2014 war, as more than 45 mortars and rockets were fired from the enclave into Israel overnight Tues. 19 June, 2018. In response, the IDF struck more than two dozen Hamas targets. (Medialine)

'IDF READY FOR GROUND WAR IN GAZA IF HAMAS CONTINUES ATTACKS': Israel is prepared for a major ground operation in the Gaza Strip, security officials said Wed. 20 June, 2018 if Hamas continues to escalate tensions along the border. Overnight, Tuesday, terrorists operating out of the Strip fired 45 rockets and mortars at Israeli towns in the western Negev. At least three of the rockets exploded in Israeli towns near the border. While there were no reports of injuries, several buildings sustained damage in the attacks. One of the rockets landed next to an Israeli kindergarten. The attacks escalated an already tense situation along the Israel-Gaza border. From March 30th through early June 2018, thousands of rioters gathered almost daily opposite the Israeli security fence, clashing with Israeli soldiers and attempting to breach the border. In recent weeks, the rioters have shifted from direct clashes with IDF personnel to arson attacks using "terror kites" and incendiary balloons armed with improvised explosive devices and firebombs. Terrorists in the Gaza Strip have launched thousands of the balloons and kites into Israeli territory, causing millions of dollars in property damage. Overnight, Israel Air Force fighter jets struck Hamas targets across the Gaza Strip in retaliation for the recent attacks and wave of arsons. Senior IDF officials say Israel is prepared for further escalations, including a possible ground operation inside of Gaza, if Hamas continues the attacks. (INN)

15 FIRES SWEEP SOUTH AS KITE TERROR CONTINUES: Fifteen fires broke out in the western Negev on Thursday afternoon, 21 June 2018 after a group in Gaza flew across the border incendiary kites and balloons, setting ablaze trees in the Shokeda Forest and the Be'eri Forest as firefighters scrambled to contain the flames. The IDF confirmed Palestinian media reports earlier in the afternoon that Israeli jets shot at a group of incendiary kite and balloon flyers east of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. No one was injured in attack. The latest fires add to the hundreds that have already swept through thousands of acres of Israeli landscape as tensions between the Hamas-ruled enclave and the IDF show little sign of waning. (Ynet)

TRUMPS MIDEAST TEAM GETS CLOSE-UP VIEW OF PEACE OBSTACLES: On their current Mideast tour, senior Trump administration officials are getting a close-up view of some of the towering obstacles to their yet-to-be-released blueprint for an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal. Blockaded Gaza - a likely focal point of any future USA-endorsed Palestinian entity - has been sinking deeper into a humanitarian crisis in recent months, while cross-border violence between Gaza's Hamas rulers and Israel flared again this week. Meanwhile, Hamas rival Mahmoud Abbas, the Judea & Samaria-based Palestinian leader, has hardened his rejection of any USA proposals, including large-scale Gaza aid projects meant to stabilize the territory. Jared Kushner and envoy Jason Greenblatt issued vague statements, saying they are talking about the "humanitarian situation in Gaza" and USA efforts to "facilitate peace between Israelis and Palestinians," but didn't even re

lease an itinerary. In the meantime, the envoys are trying to raise up to \$1 billion from Gulf countries for economic projects in Gaza. PA chief Abbas fears that any investments pouring into Gaza will inadvertently help Hamas stay in power. He has stepped up financial pressure against Hamas in recent months, sharply reducing salary and welfare payments that had helped sustain Gaza's economy. For years, Hamas' tight grip on Gaza has vexed Mideast mediators. Abbas couldn't really claim to represent all Palestinians while terrorists controlled a large area sought for a Palestinian state. (Fox)

HAMAS LEADER PAID GAZAN FAMILY TO LIE ABOUT BABY'S DEATH: Hamas leader Yahya Sinwar paid a Gazan family to lie about eight-month-old Leila al-Ghandour dying from tear gas inhalation rather than from a pre-existing medical condition during the border riots last month, according to an indictment filed with the Beersheba District Court on Thurs. 21 June 2018. Ghandour's death sparked global criticism, but the Hamas Health Ministry in Gaza later crossed the baby's name off the official list of people killed during deadly border riots, pending further investigation. A 20-year-old Gaza resident Mahmoud Omar, who was arrested during the "March of Return" riots last month, said he had arrived at the border fence with other al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigades and tried to vandalize one of the border crossing's gates. At some point, he received a phone call from his mother, informing him that his niece had died. When Omar got home, the indictment says, he found out that the baby had died from a blood disease, which was similar to a disease that caused the death of her brother, Salim al-Ghandour, who had died in 2017 when he was only a few months old. He then discovered that the baby's parents had told the media that Leila had died after inhaling tear gas fired by the IDF during the border protests. Omar told his investigators that Yahya Sinwar, the Hamas leader in Gaza, had paid the family about \$2,200 to lie and say that Leila had died of tear gas inhalation. (Ynet)

ISRAELI RESEARCHERS DISCOVER BREAKTHROUGH IN FINDING ALS TREATMENT: Researchers at Tel Aviv University recently conducted a study that led to the discovery of a previously unknown mechanism involved in the development of amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS). It is believed that this discovery could lead to a treatment for the fatal disease. The team of researchers found that the motor neurons of ALS patients are destroyed due to toxins excreted from the muscle. The study's results led the team to conclude that the foundation for a future treatment for the disease could be a specific microRNA molecule that blocks the genes that cause the toxin dissemination. "We believe that our discovery constitutes a genuine breakthrough on the path to developing effective treatments for ALS and maybe also for other neurodegenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's, which destroy different nerves," a research source explained. ALS, also known as motor neuron disease or Lou Gehrig's disease, is a disease that destroys the neurons that control the voluntary muscles in the patient's body, which leads to permanent disabilities. At the moment, there is no cure for the disease. (Koenig)



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