

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update August 9, 2018*** ***(28<sup>th</sup> of Av, 5778)***



## ***For the Yachad Report Newsletter For August 2018***

**JARED KUSHNER WORKING TO CLOSE UNWRA:** White House Adviser Jared Kushner is working to uncover the true number of Palestinian Authority (PA) refugees. The number given stands at several million, but this includes descendants of refugees, as well as those who have settled in other countries and those who still live in their homes. According to the American Foreign Policy magazine, Kushner has told senior White House officials that UNRWA is the central problem in correctly defining the refugees, and its activities should be limited. Foreign Policy also quoted an internal January 2018 email which stated that, "It is important to have an honest and sincere effort to disrupt UNRWA. This agency perpetuates a status quo, is corrupt, inefficient and doesn't help peace. Our goal can't be to keep things stable and as they are. Sometimes you have to strategically risk breaking things in order to get there." In a June 2018 meeting, Kushner demanded Jordan strip its PA refugees of their status, eliminating the need for UNRWA operations in Jordan, Foreign Policy noted. (Arutz-7)

**ISRAEL'S DEFENSE MINISTRY UNVEILS GAZA SEA BARRIER:** The border administration in the Ministry of Defense on Sunday 5 August 2018 unveiled initial pictures of the new sea barrier on the border with the Gaza Strip currently under construction. The barrier is 50 meters wide with a six-meter high fence on it. Construction of the barrier began two months ago. It is believed that work on it will be completed by the end of the year. Border Administration head Brig. Gen. Eran Ophir said, "The barrier is a kind of impenetrable breakwater composed of three layers: an underwater layer, a layer composed of reinforced stone, and a third layer of barbed wire fence. In addition to these layers, another fence will be built surrounding the area that will provide a response to the security threat." Commenting on the progress of the plan, Minister of Defense Avigdor Liberman said, "Work on building the land and sea barrier around the Gaza Strip is progressing rapidly and impressively. Every day that passes, our preventative capabilities around the Gaza Strip are growing stronger." In addition to work on building the sea barrier, work on the underground barrier surrounding the Gaza Strip designed to prevent the digging of attack tunnels leading to Israel is continuing, in addition to deployment of a technological system warning of the presence of tunnels. (Globes)

**EU REPORT DETAILS INTERNATIONAL WEB OF HEZBOLLAH TERROR FUNDING:** A newly released EU report on terrorism states that Lebanese nationals worked with organized crime organizations to finance Hezbollah's terrorist activities. The European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2018

wrote, “In 2017, member states carried out several investigations into financing of terrorism. One major investigation focused on a large network of Lebanese nationals offering money laundering services to organized crime groups in the EU and using a share of the profits to finance terrorism-related activities of the Lebanese Hezbollah’s military wing. The report added, “The cooperation of these money-launderers and Hezbollah was a clear example of a nexus between organized crime and terrorism.” Hezbollah has played a key role in aiding Syrian dictator Bashar Assad in the Syrian civil war that has resulted in the deaths of more than 500,000 people. The Iranian regime is the chief financial sponsor of Hezbollah, with an annual \$700 million supplied by Tehran to the Lebanese terrorists group, according to the USA government. In 2012, Hezbollah operatives blew up an Israeli tour bus in Bulgaria, murdering five Israelis and their Muslim bus driver. (J.Post)

**SENIOR SYRIAN SCIENTIST KILLED IN CAR BOMB:** A senior Syrian scientist was killed in a car bomb in Hama province on 5 August 2018. Dr. Aziz Asbar, one of the directors of the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center, was killed along with his personal driver as they left his home. Asbar was believed to be involved in the manufacturing of chemical weapons as well as the development of medium and long range missiles such as Iran’s Fateh missile program. He was the second most senior scientist at the Center and was reported to have close connections to Iranian and Korean scientists. According to Hezbollah’s al-Manar news site, Asbar headed Department 4 at the center, which focuses on the development of all of Syria’s ballistic missile and rocket programs. The department is also in charge of Institute 4000, which houses several chemical weapons programs. Syria agreed to dismantle its large chemical weapons stockpiles in a Russian brokered deal following the August 2013 sarin gas attack in a rebel-held outside Damascus which saw an estimated 1,400 people die, including 400 children. But Syria has since been accused of repeatedly using chemical weapons in the seven-year civil war. Israeli officials have raised concerns in the past about the transfer of advanced weaponry to the Lebanon-based Hezbollah terrorist organization. Israel is reported to have struck the Syrian Scientific Studies and Research Center several times. (J.Post)

**ELIE WIESEL’S CHILDHOOD HOME IN ROMANIA VANDALIZED WITH ANTI- SEMITIC GRAFFITI:** Unidentified individuals spray painted offensive graffiti on the external walls of a museum for Elie Wiesel in Romania, where he was also born. The florescent pink graffiti that was painted on the Memorial House Elie Wiesel in Sighet in eastern Romania read “public toilet” and “Nazi Jew lying in hell with Hitler” as well as “Anti-Semite pedophile.” Wiesel was one of the world’s most famous Holocaust survivors before he passed away in 2016 at the age of 87. A Nobel Prize laureate for literature, he was honored last year by locals in his hometown. They marched from the museum, which was built where Wiesel was born and grew up, to the train station where in 1944 he boarded with his family a train to the Auschwitz death camp in Poland. “What was done is unforgivable,” said Chaim Chesler, co-founder of Limmud FSU. Chesler’s group sets up cultural events for Jews across the former Soviet Union and other places where many Russian-speaking Jews live. “Elie is a symbol for all Holocaust survivors and that makes this incident especially painful. Everything must be done so that such cases not repeat themselves.” (JTA)

**AFTER COMPLAINTS, AMAZON REMOVES SWASTIKA PENDANTS, ONESIES WITH BURNING CROSSES:** Amazon says it has removed items with Nazi or white supremacist symbols from its website after criticism from advocacy groups. An Amazon executive said the company blocked the accounts of some retailers and might suspend them. Such items, however, were still listed and displayed on Amazon.com as of 5 August 2018. Democratic USA Rep. Keith Ellison of Minnesota complained to Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos last month. The company’s vice president of public policy, Brian Huseman, responded to Ellison, telling him that Amazon prohibits listing products that promote or glorify hatred, violence or intolerance. In early July 2018, the Partnership for Working Families and the Action Center on Race and the Economy highlighted Amazon listings including swastika pendants and baby onesies with a burning cross logos. The groups said that Amazon’s “weak and inadequately enforced” policies allowed racist and anti-Semitic groups to generate money and spread their ideas. (Times of Israel)

**SOON: ISRAELI SYMBOLS IN ABU DHABI:** Two weeks after Arab countries were banned from hosting Grand Slam tournaments due to their boycott of the Jewish state, the Arabs may be giving in. In light of the many past incidents in which Israeli athletes were banned from competing under Israeli symbols in various tournaments hosted by United Arab Emirates, it appears that soon Israelis will be able to appear for the first time in history under the Israeli flag and, in the event of winning a gold medal, to have Israel's national anthem, Hatikvah, played. The historic decision comes after a great deal of Israeli and international pressure on the heads of the Arab state. According to Israeli media sources, it appears that a compromise is underway and the Emirates will be able to host large tournaments again, subject to the appearance of the Israeli flag and anthem. This means that the Israeli flag will be present in every official place: on the competition website, on the scoreboard and of course on the robes of the fighters. Such a development will be a breakthrough in the relations between the countries and for Israeli sports in general. While Israelis had been allowed to participate in competitions in the country, their Israeli identity had been completely erased, whether in judo, sailing, or tennis. (Arutz-7)

**ISRAEL'S CREDIT RATING UPGRADED:** Financial services company S&P last week upgraded Israel's credit rating to AA- from A+ with a stable outlook. The company said that the upgrade was due to an improvement in the Israeli government's fiscal policy. S&P predicted that the Israeli economy will grow by an average of 3.3% between 2018 and 2021. The main growth factors in these years are expected to be private consumption, continued investment by corporations, and strong performance in the export of services. The company also pointed out that despite divided local politics, the coalition successfully approved the two-year budget for 2017-2018 and then also approved the budget for 2019. In addition, analysts have in recent years seen a growing commitment to fiscal discipline, together with the government's compliance with its budget targets. Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon (Kulanu) welcomed the announcement. "The confidence in us expressed by the strongest economic bodies in the world allows us to continue to grow the economy and, using the fruits of the growth, to maintain a policy of narrowing social gaps and strengthening the middle class and the weaker sectors of society," he said in a statement. (Arutz-7)

**AMERICAN EMBASSY IN JERUSALEM TO EXPAND:** A subcommittee of the Jerusalem Municipality has approved plans to expand the American embassy in the city. According to the report, the expansion plan includes the addition of office space and the addition of service areas, and in effect includes changes that will expand the work area and activity of the embassy and thus allow more employees to operate from Jerusalem. Mayor Nir Barkat said that "this is another stage in establishing the status of the embassy in the capital of Israel, which will strengthen the connection between Israel and the USA and, in particular, provide a tailwind to President Trump's historic decision." President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017 and relocated the embassy to the city on 14 May 2018 - the date in 1948 on which the State of Israel was established. Guatemala and Paraguay followed suit and also relocated their embassies to the Israeli capital. The Czech Republic has likewise pledged to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem. A report at the end of July 2018 indicated that Moldova will do so as well. (Arutz-7)

**SENATE PASSES ISRAEL AID IN OMNIBUS DEFENSE BILL:** The Senate has once again included generous security aid to Israel in its annual defense authorization package. The omnibus bill includes \$500 million in anti-missile defense aid and \$50 million in anti-tunnel assistance. It also authorizes a joint USA-Israeli assessment of the types of precision-guided munitions necessary for Israel to defend itself against terrorist groups, Hezbollah and Hamas, mandating rapid acquisition and deployment for such arms. The American Israel Public Affairs Committee praised passage of the legislation. "This bipartisan legislation authorizes increases in USA security assistance to Israel, and it encourages expanded weapons stockpiles and new USA-Israel cooperation in anti-drone technologies, cybersecurity and space," AIPAC said in a statement. The bill also calls for increased cooperation between NASA and Israel's Space Agency, extends the USA War Reserve Stockpile in Israel by five years and authorizes a joint USA-Israeli counter-drone program. (Arutz-7)

**RUSSIAN FORCES JOIN UN PEACEKEEPERS ON GOLAN HEIGHTS FRONTIER:** UN peacekeepers returned on Thursday 2 August 2018 to patrol the frontier between Syria and Israel in the Golan Heights. For the first time, Russian forces joined the peacekeepers. Col. Gen. Sergei Rudskoy of the Russian General Staff said that Russian military police accompanied the UN peacekeepers on patrol. He said Russia's military police would establish eight of its own monitoring posts at the edge of the UN disengagement zone at the frontier. Also on Thursday, Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman said the Syrian side of the border had returned to its pre-2011 state. He said Israel will have "no cause to intervene or operate in Syrian territory" if Damascus respects a 1974 disengagement agreement between the two sides - and as long as Syria doesn't become a staging ground for Iranian forces to attack Israel or transfer arms to Hezbollah in Lebanon. (Washington Post)

**ISRAEL, DANON, ACCUSE UN OF IGNORING ATTACKS BY 'FLAMING SWASTIKAS KITES':** For months, Palestinians have been sending balloons and kites rigged with incendiary devices (some bearing swastikas) over the border from the Gaza Strip to Israel -- causing devastation to land, crops and livelihoods. Now Israel is calling out the United Nations for ignoring such attacks as it focuses on Israel instead. As part of a broader effort to bring attention to the attacks, Israel's Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon opened up an exhibit at UN headquarters showing the devastation from recent attacks. "We follow very carefully what's happening in Israel, and unfortunately people don't get it at the UN when we speak about the fact they have more than 7,000 acres that have been set on fire -- that's half the size of Manhattan," Danon told Fox News on Thurs. 2 August, 2018.

One recent balloon landed in the yard of a kindergarten, though there were no injuries. The images on display at the UN, captured by local photographers, include one of a tractor surrounded by flames as a farmer watches his crops go up in smoke. But while the UN waxes lyrical about environmental protection and the importance of conservation, food security and non-violence, Danon says key bodies have been silent on this issue. "No one will speak about it. That's what I feel in the Security Council, in the General Assembly, so we set up this exhibition here to allow ambassadors to understand it," Danon said. He added that he asks ambassadors who visit what they would do if 7,000 acres of their homeland were set on fire by terrorists. "I ask them, 'What would you do if this happened in your country?'" (Fox)

**REPORT: IRAN LAUNCHES MAJOR NAVAL EXERCISE IN PERSIAN GULF:** Iran last week carried out a major naval exercise in the Persian Gulf, a USA defense official has confirmed. According to the source, who is familiar with the latest intelligence, the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps launched dozens of small vessels in the first stage of the exercise. USA officials expressed concern over the exercise before it took place; as such exercises are usually conducted later in the year. The official speculated that the exercise was held in response to recent heated rhetoric between Iran's leadership and USA President Donald Trump, and that its purpose is to demonstrate Iran's ability to disrupt international shipping routes. Captain William Urban, chief spokesman for USA Central Command, said days ago that "we are aware of the increase in Iranian naval operations within the Arabian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz and Gulf of Oman. We are monitoring it closely, and will continue to work with our partners to ensure freedom of navigation and free flow of commerce in international waterways". The Strait of Hormuz is a strategically critical passageway linking the Persian Gulf to the Arabian Sea that is crucial to international shipping and particularly for global energy supplies. Iran has threatened more than once to close the Strait of Hormuz, with the United States warning Iran in response that any attempt to close the strait would be viewed as a "red line" -- grounds for USA military action. The latest such threat came last month, when the IRGC warned it could block the Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf should the USA prevent its oil exports. (INN)

**PROTESTS LARGELY FUELED BY ECONOMIC FRUSTRATION TAKING PLACE ACROSS IRAN:** Iran on 3 August 2018 wrapped up two days of naval exercises in the Persian Gulf -- a show of force aimed at the USA just as the Trump administration is reimposing sanctions. At the same time, protests are

popping up in cities all over Iran, only this time, the anger is not directed at America. The protests are largely fueled by frustration with a failing economy. The size of the crowds in social media videos has been hard to confirm, but their chants are clear. In one clip, demonstrators in the city of Isfahan shout "death to the dictator," daring to openly defy Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. They appear to set fire to police cars and throw rocks. The rallies follow larger ones that started in Dec. 2017 and flared up again in June 2018 when protesters demonstrated outside parliament and shut down Tehran's Grand Bazaar. Iranians are grappling with spiraling inflation. As economic pressure intensifies, many wealthy Iranians are leaving the country. Some Iranians say the economy is so vulnerable to USA sanctions because it's corrupt and poorly managed. In a highly unusual move, Iranian lawmakers have summoned moderate President Hassan Rouhani to account for the crisis. (CBS)

**ISRAELI HI-TECH COMPANIES RAISE AT LEAST \$650 MILLION IN JULY:** Israeli startups raised over \$650 million in July 2018. This sum can be added to the more than \$3.1 billion that Israeli startups raised in the first half of 2018. The country's startups have raised over \$3.7 billion in the first seven months of 2018 and are on course to beat last year's record of \$5.24 billion. The largest amount raised in July was \$125 million by Trax Image Recognition. There were other large financing rounds including \$83 million raised by insurtech company Next Insurance. \$55 million was raised by advanced 3D content capture and sharing technologies Mantis Vision, and \$50 million was raised by team management software provider Monday. Other major financing rounds in July included \$33 million raised by cybersecurity company ObserveIT, \$30 million raised by big data company Thetaray and \$28 million raised by facial recognition company AnyVision. (J.Post)

**UNITED TO LAUNCH TEL AVIV-WASHINGTON DC FLIGHTS:** The flight to Dulles Airport will be United's fourth daily direct flight from Tel Aviv to the USA. It already flies twice a day between Tel Aviv and New York/Newark and daily between Tel Aviv and San Francisco. A roundtrip flight costs \$1,000. "On the occasion of the 20th anniversary of beginning our operations in Israel, I wish to thank all our customers and employees who helped us make United the leading USA airline serving the route to Israel," said United senior country director for Israel Avi Friedman. "We expect to continue serving Israel with this new route for the benefit of our customers flying on the route between Israel and the USA capital."

Minister of Tourism Yariv Levin said, "I congratulate United on the launching of another route between Israel and the USA - a direct route to the White House. The announcement of the route from Washington to Tel Aviv in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism is a wonderful way of marking 20 years of United's activity in Israel. Opening the route will further increase incoming tourism to Israel and be in addition to the extraordinary marketing effort we are making - an effort that will bring new records in incoming tourism to Israel." United Airlines' new route between Tel Aviv and Washington will generate connection flights to 70 destinations in the USA, such as Atlanta, Boston, Chicago, Cleveland, Houston, Dallas, and Fort Lauderdale. (Globes)

**ISRAEL UNCOVERS 1,700 YEAR-OLD MOSAIC IN LOD:** According to Dr. Amir Gorzalczany, the director of the current excavation, the diggings at the site exposed a villa that included a large luxurious mosaic-paved reception room, known as a triclinium. An internal columned courtyard, also with mosaics, and a water system were also uncovered. "We found evidence for Mediterranean luxury that characterized the Roman Empire, including attributes such as fresco wall paintings," said Gorzalczany. The mosaics depict realistic and fantastic animals, complex geometric designs and marine scenes that incorporate a multitude of fish and two ships. "The archaeological excavation that we carried out this month has contributed significantly to our understanding of the villa building" said Gorzalczany. (J.Post)

**CHRISTIAN-ERA POTTERY FACTORY UNVEILED IN ISRAEL:** Israeli archaeologists on Tues. 31 July 2018 unveiled a major pottery plant which produced wine storage jars continuously from Roman to Byzantine times. The Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) said that excavations near the town of Gedera, south of Tel Aviv, revealed the factory and an adjacent leisure complex of 20 bathing pools and a room used for board games. Excavation director Alla Nagorsky said that from the third century AD the plant produced vessels of a type known to historians as "Gaza" jars for an unbroken period of 600 years. "This kind of a place is not built in an instant," she said. "An engineer worked on it. The site is exceptionally designed." "The continuous production of these jars probably indicates that the business was a family one, which passed from generation to generation," the IAA said in a statement. It said the remains of around 100,000 jars found buried at the site were probably discarded rejects.

Alongside the factory, it added, were two Byzantine bathhouses, at least one with a heating boiler and 20 "finely constructed" pools, connected to one another by channels and pipes. The archaeologists consider that the water complex served both the local population and the many travelers along the ancient main road connecting the port of Gaza with the Centre of the country. At Gedera, the IAA said, the games room was "a rare and surprising discovery". In it were boards used for playing backgammon and "mancala", games which are still popular in the area. The Gedera pottery works may have built the leisure Centre for its employees, just as today's hi-tech companies provide recreation facilities for their workers. (AFP)

**TRUMP WARNS UN FOR HYPOCRISY ON PLO, HAMAS AND ISRAEL:** Last year, Iran's contribution to UNRWA was zero. Algeria's contribution to UNRWA was zero. Tunisia's contribution to UNRWA was zero. USA Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley said days ago that "Last year the United States gave 364 million dollars. And that's on top of what the American people give annually to the Palestinians in bilateral assistance. That is another 300 million dollars just last year, and it averages to more than a quarter of a billion dollars every year since 1993." Haley delivered this stern warning: "But we are not fools. If we extend a hand in friendship and generosity, we do not expect our hand to be bitten. And as we extend our hand, we also expect others to extend their hands as well."

Haley emphasized that Arab countries' giving more money was not the only issue confronting them: "Too often, the Arab countries give just enough money and mouth just enough uncompromising words to stay out of the crosshairs of Palestinian representatives. But if they really cared about the Palestinian people, they would not do that. Instead, they would condemn extremism and they would put forth serious ideas for compromises that could end this struggle and lead to a better life for the Palestinian people. They would tell the Palestinian leadership how foolish they look for condemning a peace proposal they haven't even seen yet." Haley called out both aberrant PLO and Hamas leaderships: "The Palestinian leadership has been allowed to live a false reality for too long because Arab leaders are afraid to tell them the truth. It is time for the regional states in particular to step up and really help the Palestinian people, instead of just making speeches thousands of miles away. Those regional States - Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon - can really help by sitting down with Israel and negotiating an end to the 100-years old Arab-Jewish conflict as formulated 51 years ago by UN Security Council Resolution 242. Delivering this message to the UN has been long overdue." (Arutz-7)

**ISRAEL TRYING TO PREVENT A MASSACRE OF SYRIANS ON GOLAN HEIGHTS BORDER:** Israel has asked Russia to ensure that Syrian government forces do not harm or massacre civilians in the south of the war-torn country as they complete their takeover of the area bordering Israel's Golan Heights from rebel groups. Israeli officials passed on the message to the Kremlin via diplomatic channels on Monday night, 30 July 2019 as the Syrian government regained control of the frontier for the first time in seven years, after ISIS-linked groups gave up their last pocket of territory in the area. In recent years Israel has been engaged in a massive multi-faceted humanitarian relief operation to keep thousands of Syrians along the border from starving or falling ill due to the lack of food and basic medical care. The Jewish state has also treated thousands of people in field hospitals on the border and in public hospitals, mostly in northern Israel, since

2013. Since 2016, as part of Operation Good Neighbor, more than 600 Syrian children, accompanied by their mothers, have come to Israel for treatment. Hundreds of tons of food, medical equipment and clothing have also been sent across the border to Syria. (Koenig)

**RUSSIA: DEAL REACHED TO KEEP IRAN 85 KM FROM ISRAELI-SYRIAN BORDER:** After Israel rejected an offer to keep Iranian forces 100 km from border, Russian Presidential Special Envoy for Syria Alexander Lavrentyev claims "As we took into account the Israeli concerns, we managed to attain the pullout of Iranian units 85 kilometers (some 53 miles) from the Israeli border." Last month, Israel rejected a Russian offer to keep Iranian forces in Syria 100 km (62 miles) from the border, with PM Benjamin Netanyahu telling Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov that it was not enough. "We will not allow the Iranians to establish themselves even 100 kilometers from the border," Netanyahu told Lavrov, according to an Israeli official who spoke on condition of anonymity. He further clarified that Israel will maintain full freedom of operations for the IDF, and detailed what the removal of Iran from Syria should entail: "First of all, all the long-range weapons must be removed from Syria; precise weapons production must be stopped; other strategic weapons, such as air defense, must be removed as well; the border crossings that allow the smuggling of these weapons must be closed, including on the Syrian-Lebanese border where weapons are smuggled into Lebanon, and the Iraqi-Syrian border through which weapons are smuggled from Iran into Syria itself." Russia has warned it would be unrealistic to expect Iran to fully withdraw from the country. However, Moscow has said it wants to see the separation of forces on the frontier preserved. (Ynet)



*Robert I. Solomon: Messianic Rabbi, [rabbisolomon@yachad.com](mailto:rabbisolomon@yachad.com)*

*Jeffery Blalock: Ministries Coordinator, [jeffery@yachad.com](mailto:jeffery@yachad.com)*

*Yachad Ministries, 950 Pine Grove Road, Roswell, Georgia 30075*

*E-mail: [info@yachad.com](mailto:info@yachad.com), Web Page: [www.yachad.com](http://www.yachad.com)*

*Phone: 770-641-3000 (ext. 6)*

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