

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 14, 2019 ***(7th Adar-B, 5779)***

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RALLIES IN ISRAEL AND AROUND THE WORLD PROTEST SURGE IN ANTI-SEMITISM: Mass rallies were held both in Israel and around the world by the World Zionist Organization on Sunday, 10 March 2019 in the wake of recent anti-Semitic events. The ralliers called governments in each of their respective countries to raise the issue of anti-Semitic incidents to the top of their priorities. Rallies were held around the world, including in Jerusalem, Times Square in New York, the Great Synagogue Plaza in Paris, and many more. "We stand here today in these different locations around the world to say enough," said Deputy Chairman of the World Zionist Organization, Jacob Hagoel. "We are in a difficult and painful period that has deteriorated rapidly from the scrawling of caricatures and anti-Semitic graffiti, past the destruction of graves and reaching the point of physical harm to Jews in numerous countries. In the past, we could not do anything because we were a submissive, persecuted people," said Avraham Duvdevani, Chairman of the World Zionist Organization. Chief Rabbi of Israel Rabbi David Lau explained that "I do not hate a man even if his face is different from mine, even if his opinions are different from mine, even if his origins are different from mine."

POPE MEETS JEWISH GROUP, DECRIES 'DEPRAVED' ANTI-SEMITISM: Pope Francis is denouncing the "depraved hatred" behind a wave of anti-Semitic attacks in parts of the world and says interfaith dialogue can help counter it. Francis made the comments to a Friday 8 March 2019 audience with a delegation of the American Jewish Committee. He lamented that their meeting was taking place amid the spread of a "climate of wickedness and fury, in which an excessive and depraved hatred is taking root." And he warned that for Christians, any form of anti-Semitism is "a rejection of one's own origins, a complete contradiction."

PA CONTINUES TO TEACH THAT ISRAEL IS 'PALESTINE': Despite assurances from Palestinian Authority leaders that they support a two-state solution and want to live side by side with Israel, the PA continues to teach children that Israel will come to an end, Palestinian Media Watch reported. Showing a

drawing of a map of "Palestine" which included all of Israel together with the PA areas, the host on official PA TV stated that "all of Palestine will return to us." PA Minister of Education Sabri Saidam recently illustrated this same message - that all of Israel is "Palestine." Minister Saidam participated in the program In the Minister's Seat on official PA TV together with a young girl, Sidra Al-Shawamreh. The minister held a plaque of honor featuring the PA map of "Palestine" that includes all of Israel. Abbas' Fatah Movement also disseminated the message that all of Israel is "Palestine" in a drawing of a tattoo with the title "Jordan and Palestine." The cartoon shows an arm and wrist with a blue tattoo in the shape of Jordan and "Palestine" that includes Israel.

PERSECUTED CHRISTIAN WOMAN ASIA BIBI REMAINS TRAPPED IN PAKISTAN DESPITE ACQUITTAL: A Pakistani Catholic woman, acquitted in Jan. 2019 of a blasphemy charge by the Supreme Court of Pakistan, remains trapped in the country amid fears that her health is failing. Asia Bibi, 53, is living with her husband at a secret location in Karachi, Pakistan, where she is being denied medical care for her "low blood pressure." The source explained that Bibi is "very unwell" and expressed frustration that she is being kept by the Pakistani army from following her children to Canada, where PM Justin Trudeau has offered asylum. "Everyone is very worried," the source continued. "She won her appeal and was supposed to be out of Pakistan by now. Even though the government says she can leave, the army has all the power in this case. Bibi spent nearly a decade languishing in a Pakistani prison after being accused of blasphemy against Mohammed, a capital offense in the Islamic Republic.

On a sweltering day in June 2009, the illiterate field hand claimed to have been picking berries with women from her village when they demanded she fetch them a cup of water. When she returned, the women refused to drink after her because of her Christian faith. "I want the whole world to know that I'm going to be hanged for helping my neighbor," Bibi recounted to a French journalist in 2011 from her small prison cell. "We Christians have always stayed silent. We've been taught since we were babies never to say anything because we're a minority. But I'm stubborn too and now I want to react, I want to defend my faith. I take a deep breath and fill my lungs with courage. I'm not going to convert," Bibi told the women when they began to hurl curses at her and demanding her conversion. "I believe in my religion and in Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for the sins of mankind." Bibi was dragged before the village cleric for such comments and taken to a prison outside Lahore, Pakistan, near the Indian border. For nearly 10 years, she awaited a pending death sentence until being acquitted.

ISRAELI BUSINESSMAN RUNNING FOR PRESIDENT OF GUATEMALA: A Guatemalan-born Israeli businessman is running for president of his native country. Yitzhak Farhi, 58, moved to Israel at the age 46 after heading the Central American country's 1,200-strong Jewish community. In June 2019, the dual citizen will run for president thanks to a Guatemalan television interview aired two months ago, in which he was asked about the secret of Israel's success. He replied that "ideals and unity" were behind the reasons and suggested that Guatemala could also benefit from adopting these principles. Farhi received an offer from the ViVa party and announced his candidacy last week. Farhi entered politics at an early age. He was among the founders of Guatemala's National Advancement Party, which became one of the largest in the country. Farhi is a resident of Ra'anana, the Israeli central city that serves as a magnet to wealthy immigrants for its high standards and international suburban atmosphere, but is returning to Guatemala to run in the June 2019 elections. He currently serves as CEO of a company that specializes in providing health services. Last year, Guatemala followed the United States and moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem.

WOMEN HOLD 13% OF LATIN AMERICAN JEWISH INSTITUTIONS LEADERSHIP POSITIONS: The representation of women is low on boards of directors of Jewish organizations all across Latin America and the Caribbean, and it is even lower in posts of top responsibility and influence in decision-making. Women hold a little more than one-fifth of board positions, or 22.3%, and hold executive committee roles as president, vice-president, executive director or dean at 13% of Jewish organizations, according to the

first regional study on gender equality. The Jewish community is starting to tackle the issue. An ongoing initiative is to address women's issues in the Jewish political umbrella organization of Argentina DAIA. The effort to raise the issue of gender equality has been promoted in recent years by DAIA, which has organized a meeting about women leaders annually for the last three years. "We are working on a new ethics code in our organization which will introduce integrity and gender perspective issues," said Patricia Manusovich, secretary of DAIA. The survey, titled "Gender and Leadership in the Jewish Communities of Latin America and the Caribbean," suggests measures such as fixed quotas for women's participation with an aim to achieving parity, or 50%, or proportional participation depending on the gender makeup of the organization in question. "We aim to promote actions for change and increase the presence of women on the boards of Jewish organizations and in the communities of the region," said Sergio Widder, JDC director in Latin America and the Caribbean.

AN OUTSTANDING YEAR FOR ISRAEL'S ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE TECHNOLOGIES: Artificial Intelligence technologies in Israel saw significant growth in 2018, in the number of companies raising funding, the amounts invested, as well as new products released, a new report by Start-Up Nation Central shows. Israel is home to a vibrant AI ecosystem that grew from 512 companies in 2014 to 1,150 by the end of 2018 (120% increase in 4 years). These include companies that develop core AI technologies as well as companies that utilize AI-technologies for their services, such as healthcare, cybersecurity, autonomous driving, among others. Start-Up Nation Central's report shows that in 2018, AI-related companies accounted for 17% of the total number of 6,673 active Israeli tech companies in Israel. Strikingly, 32% of all funding rounds and 37% of the total capital raised went to AI-related companies, representing a 94% increase from the number of funding rounds raised by AI-related companies in 2014, and an 85% increase in the amount of capital raised. The total capital raised by AI companies in 2018 (\$2.25B) more than tripled from the amount raised in 2014 (\$516M); a peak year in terms of capital raised by Israeli AI companies.

WHAT'S THE MOST POPULAR DOG IN ISRAEL? There are nearly 500,000 dogs registered in Israel – 235,929 female dogs and 240,933 male dogs. The average Israeli dog is 6.5 years old. Some 56,219 new dogs were born and added to the Ministry of Agriculture database in the past year. The Shih Tzu is the most popular dog in Israel (up from third place last year). Last year's most popular pup, the Pekingese – an ancient breed of toy dog - was dropped to second place after three consecutive years. And No. 3 is the German Shepherd a breed of medium to large-sized working dog. The name given to more dogs born in Israel last year than any other is Toy, likely named after the song by 2018 Eurovision winner Neta Barzilai. Other popular names: Louis was among the most popular for male dogs, and Luna and Bell were popular for females. The Ministry of Agriculture promotes dog adoption and proper care of animals.

HOUSE APPROVES RESOLUTION AGAINST ANTI-SEMITISM ABROAD: A resolution on anti-Semitism sparked by a freshman Democrat's jibes about "allegiance" to Israel and then expanded to address Islamophobia suffered by the same congresswoman, Ilhan Omar of Minnesota, passed the House overwhelmingly. The USA House of Representatives voted 407-23 on Thur. 7 March 2019 to approve the resolution, which did not name Omar, but which emphasized the dangers of accusing groups of Americans of dual loyalties. After days of debate, the final resolution condemned "hateful expressions of intolerance" against "African-Americans, Native Americans, and other people of color, Jews, Muslims, Hindus, Sikhs, immigrants, and others" affected by bigotry. All 23 nays were Republicans, some of whom objected that the resolution did not go far enough in censuring Ilhan Omar. Jewish Democrats led the push for the resolution last week after Omar said she felt pressure to pledge "allegiance" to Israel. Omar had previously accused Israel of "hypnotizing" the world and had said that lawmakers support Israel only in exchange for funding for their campaigns. The Democratic leadership also faced criticism from Jewish lawmakers who felt the resolution should have focused exclusively on the anti-Semitism issue. Omar, a refugee from Somalia, is one of the first two Muslim women elected to Congress.

TRUMP: DEMOCRATS HAVE BECOME AN ANTI-JEWISH PARTY: USA President Donald Trump on Friday 8 March 2019 blasted Democrats and accused them of becoming an “anti-Israel” and “anti-Jewish” party, after the House of Representatives passed a broad resolution that called out bigotry of all kinds without directly condemning Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) over her anti-Semitic remarks. Speaking from the White House lawn, the president called Thursday’s 7 March 2019 House vote a disgrace. “Democrats have become an anti-Israel party. They’ve become an anti-Jewish party,” Trump said. Trump added that most lawmakers would also agree that the resolution, which did not mention Omar's name, was a disgrace. The final vote on the resolution was 407 to 23—with 23 Republicans voting no, and all Democrats, including Omar, voting yes. The resolution originally condemned anti-Semitism but was rewritten and its final draft was expanded Thur. afternoon 7 March 2019 to condemn all forms of bigotry, including white supremacy. Republicans characterized the watering down of the resolution as a ploy to distract from Omar’s remarks which had prompted the resolution in the first place.

REP. TED DEUTCH: WHY CAN’T HOUSE RESOLUTION “SINGULARLY CONDEMN” ANTI-SEMITISM: Rep. Ted Deutch (D-Fla.) called on the House on Thur. 7 March 2019 to pass a resolution that would “singularly condemn” anti-Semitism in the wake of Rep. Ilhan Omar's recent comments. “We are having this debate because of the language of one of our colleagues, language that suggests Jews like me who serve in the United States Congress and whose father earned a purple heart fighting the Nazis in the Battle of the Bulge, are not loyal Americans?” said Deutch. “Why are we unable to singularly condemn anti-Semitism? Why can’t we call it anti-Semitism and show we've learned the lessons of history? It feels like we're only able to call out the use of anti-Semitic language by a colleague of ours, if we're addressing all forms of hatred. And it feels like we can't say it's anti-Semitism unless everyone agrees that it's anti-Semitism. Jews control the world? Jews care only about money? Jews have dual loyalty and can't be patriotic members of the country in which they live? Words matter. For generations, they have had dangerous consequences for me, for my family and for my people. This shouldn't be so hard.”

CHICAGO MAYOR: OMAR IS CROSSING THE LINE: Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel on Thur. 7 March 2019 criticized Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) and said she is crossing the line with anti-Semitic remarks in “casting Jewish Americans as the other”. Omar recently came under fire after she suggested on Twitter that Republicans were attacking her at the behest of the pro-Israel lobby AIPAC. She subsequently issued a half-hearted apology before ultimately deleting the controversial tweets. Days ago she caused another uproar when, at a public event, she appeared to refer to domestic support for Israel as “allegiance to a foreign country”, leading the Democratic leadership in the House of Representatives to work on a new resolution condemning anti-Semitism. In a piece for The Atlantic, Emanuel wrote that Omar “is suggesting a dual loyalty that calls our devotion to America into question” over support for Israel. Emanuel, the first Jewish mayor of Chicago and like Omar a Democrat, said he is “sensitive” to the charge of dual loyalty because he has been accused of being a citizen of Israel (his father immigrated to the United States from Israel) and he had to make public his USA birth certificate during his first campaign for Congress “to disprove false assertions about my background and loyalties.” He said questions of dual loyalty have dogged Jews around the world for centuries. “In embracing it, Omar is associating herself with calamities from the Spanish Inquisition to the Russian pogroms to the Holocaust. That’s not historical company that any American should want to keep,” he wrote.

DAVID DUKE CALLS ILHAN OMAR, ‘THE MOST IMPORTANT’ MEMBER OF CONGRESS: Former Grand Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan David Duke called Democratic Minnesota Rep. Ilhan Omar “The Most Important Member Of The USA Congress” because of her “defiance to Z.O.G” (Zionist Occupation Government) in a Thur. 7 March 2019 tweet. Duke tweeted, “By Defiance to Z.O.G. Ilhan Omar is NOW the most important Member of the USA Congress!” with an edited picture of Rep. Omar with a smiling heart emoji next to her face. Duke posted a podcast on his website Thur. 8 March 2019, in

which he discussed his reasons for praising Omar. The podcast had a description that read, "In particular, they heaped praise on Ilhan Omar for being the one person in Congress willing to notice AIPAC and the 'dual' loyalty of many (((members of Congress)))." According to USA Today, the three parentheses around "members of Congress in the description is an anti-Semitic symbol used subliminally to refer to Jewish people. Duke's praise comes about while Omar faces heavy criticism for her most recent anti-Israel comments.

REPUBLICAN SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL DROPS SIGNIFICANTLY BUT NOT AS RAPIDLY AS AMONG DEMS: Against the crescendo of the growing media debate over whether the arrival in Congress of anti-Israel Democrats is opening the door to a new wave of anti-Semitism, a recent Gallup poll shows a significant drop in support for Israel among USA Republicans. Significantly, the survey was taken before the outcry over comments by Democratic freshman Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) propelled the debate from support for Israel to accusations of basic anti-Semitism. While polls have, for some time, demonstrated a growing discrepancy in support for Israel between the two parties, the new figures potentially alter the debate to a matter of degree rather than of support or opposition, undermining what has been emerging as a plank in the Republican platform. Overall, support for Israel among the American people has sunk to its lowest point in a decade (59%) after dropping five points in the past year; a loss of six percentage points (43%) among Democrats and a hefty 13 points (76%) among Republicans recorded during the same period. Also alarming to Israel's supporters is the 21% support registered for the Palestinians among Americans, the highest level ever recorded.

AL-AQSA TV: 'DEATH TO ISRAEL, TURN THEM INTO BODY PARTS, ROAST THEM': "Declaring Al-Aqsa TV a terror organization is a precise labeling," said Itamar Marcus, director of Palestinian Media Watch (PMW), a media watchdog group, commenting on Netanyahu's decision to declare the Hamas-affiliated Al-Aqsa TV channel a terrorist organization on Wed. 6 March 2019. "Al-Aqsa TV promotes all the components of Palestinian terror, including murder of Jews, suicide bombings, kidnapping of soldiers, bombing our cities and destruction of Israel," Marcus continued. "It uses all the means available on TV to make its messages compelling to the Palestinian population, including religious sermons, children's programs and even music celebrating murder." PMW recorded the words of a Hamas music video aired on the channel: "Strap on an explosive belt. O Martyrdom seeker, respond to Al-Aqsa's call. Send them to Hell. Let fire burn them, turn them into body parts, roast them." The Al-Aqsa TV station was attacked by IDF forces in an airstrike in Nov. 2018 and its studios were destroyed. The airstrike took place during a flare-up of violence in which Hamas fired hundreds of rockets at Israel.

A half hour before the TV station was bombed by IDF forces, the channel broadcast a music video declaring "Death to Israel," while scenes from terror attacks and funerals of Israeli terror victims played on the screen. "DEATH TO ISRAEL" flashed across the screen in Hebrew as an Arabic song blared from the speakers, "Expel the thieving occupier from the enraged land of Jerusalem. Rid your house of that one, that Zionist. Write 'death, death, death to Israel' with flowing blood. And with the bleeding body cause death, death, death to Israel." When the funeral of the Israeli terror victims appeared on the screen, another song blared with the words, "Be red death. Have no mercy on the army of aggression that wears the clothes of the soldier and the settler." Following the IDF airstrike, the channel was forced to go off the air but this proved short-lived and they quickly began broadcasting from a new location, leading to Netanyahu's decision last week to declare it a terrorist organization.

HUNGARY TO OPEN JERUSALEM DIPLOMATIC OFFICE IN TWO WEEKS: Hungary will open a trade office in Jerusalem on 19 March 2019 Israeli media sources have reported. The trade office will be located in the center of Jerusalem, and will have "diplomatic status." Its dedication ceremony will include Hungarian Foreign Minister Péter Szijjártó, who will launch Israel's Hungarian Culture Month. Hungarian PM Viktor Orbán announced his decision to open the office in Jerusalem after several bilateral meetings with

Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu. The initial announcement did not include a timeline for the move. The United States relocated its embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv last May, five months after President Donald Trump announced that the USA would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. Guatemala moved its embassy to Jerusalem two days later.

USA MISSILE DEFENSE SYSTEM DEPLOYS TO ISRAEL: At the direction of the Secretary of Defense, USA European Command deployed a Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system to Israel in early March 2019 as a demonstration of the United States' continued commitment to Israel's regional security under the Department of Defense's Dynamic Force Employment concept. THAAD is the most advanced integrated air and missile defense system in the world, and this deployment readiness exercise demonstrates that USA forces are agile, and can respond quickly and unpredictably to any threat, anywhere, at any time. This deployment incorporates key capabilities, systems and people stationed in the continental United States and Europe, and with our partners in the Israel Defense Force. During the deployment, USA service members will work in various locations throughout Israel and will practice operational procedures for augmenting Israel's existing air and missile defense architecture. "Deployment of the American anti-missile system in Israel is additional testimony to the commitment of the USA to the security of Israel," Israeli PM Netanyahu said. "The bond between the USA and Israel has never been stronger. I welcome the holding of this joint exercise."

A SYNAGOGUE ON THE TEMPLE MOUNT? A large group of Israeli activists are calling on the government to establish a synagogue on the Temple Mount and open it for Jewish prayer. On Sunday, 3 March 2019, Religious Zionists leaders gathered to discuss the situation on the Temple Mount. Jews believe the site - venerated as holy in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam alike - is where the Beit Hamikdash (the Temple that was first built by King Solomon) used to sit. Late last month, riots erupted on the Temple Mount as thousands of Palestinians stormed the Golden Gate, which had been closed by a court order since 2003. The Israeli activists said that based on the violation of the status quo on the Temple Mount, they wanted to establish a synagogue in the Golden Gate area, which Jews refer to as "Sha'ar HaRachamim" (Gate of Mercy). The Israeli activists also said that Jewish prayer on the mount should be a precondition for any future coalition agreement. Currently, the Jerusalem Waqf Islamic religious trust controls and manages the Islamic edifices on and around the Temple Mount. The east Jerusalem Waqf is controlled by Jordan. No Jewish or Christian prayer is allowed on the mountain and such prayer is subject to arrest. Since last month, the Golden Gate remains open despite Israeli attempts to close it and in violation of a court order. The Muslims have threatened violence if Israel attempts to re-shut the area.

REP. ILHAN OMAR ACCUSES JEWISH CONGRESS WOMAN OF WANTING HER TO HAVE DUAL LOYALTY TO ISRAEL: Muslim Rep. Ilhan Omar just can't seem to stop making anti-Semitic statements. She is a devout believer in Islam, and the Qur'an demonizes the Jews in numerous ways. It depicts the Jews as inveterately evil and bent on destroying the well-being of the Muslims. The chances that Ilhan Omar will continue to make anti-Semitic statements are 100%. So will she be removed from the Foreign Affairs Committee and repudiated in other ways? Or will Democrats circle the wagons, defend her, and thereby continue to normalize anti-Semitism? The latter is more likely. Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) ignited another firestorm on Sunday 3 March 2019 when she made anti-Semitic comments to a Jewish member of Congress, accusing the congresswoman of wanting her to have dual loyalties to Israel. Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY), who is Jewish and the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, condemned Omar on Friday, 1 March 2019 for anti-Semitic remarks she made last week, calling her comments "vile," "anti-Semitic," "outrageous," and "deeply hurtful." On Sunday, 3 March 2019, Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY), who is also Jewish, called out Omar for her anti-Semitic remarks from last week, tweeting: "Lawmakers must be able to debate w/o prejudice or bigotry. I am saddened that Rep. Omar continues to mischaracterize support for Israel. I urge her to retract this statement and engage in further dialogue with the Jewish community on why these comments are so hurtful."

Omar responded: "Our democracy is built on debate, Congresswoman! I should not be expected to have allegiance/pledge support to a foreign country in order to serve my country in Congress or serve on a committee." In essence, what Omar is saying is that she believes Jewish people expect her to have dual loyalties to Israel. "I have not mischaracterized our relationship with Israel, I have questioned it and that has been clear from my end," Omar falsely claimed. "I have not said anything about the loyalty of others, but spoke about the loyalty expected of me. There is the difference." Omar's latest round of anti-Semitic remarks drew a lot of criticism from notable figures in the media and in politics: "Someone please write 'Anti-Semitism for Dummies,'" Bret Stephens, - journalist, editor, and political commentator - tweeted. "Nobody expects @IlhanMN to pledge 'allegiance' to Israel. But her attacks on pro-Israel Americans of doing so is a charge of dual loyalty. That is classic anti-Semitism." Despite only being in Congress since Jan. 2019, Omar has been the center of controversy over numerous remarks she's made that have been labeled anti-Semitic.

TRUMP ON REP. OMAR'S STATEMENTS: A DARK DAY FOR ISRAEL: USA President Donald Trump blasted Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) for her anti-Israel statements, after Jewish groups in the USA sent a petition to House Speaker Nancy Pelosi demanding that Omar be removed from the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "Representative Ilhan Omar is again under fire for her terrible comments concerning Israel. Jewish groups have just sent a petition to Speaker Pelosi asking her to remove Omar from Foreign Relations Committee. A dark day for Israel!" he wrote.

BELGIAN CARNIVAL FLOAT FEATURES PUPPETS OF GRINNING JEWS, A RAT AND MONEY BAGS: Dutch Chief Rabbi Binyomin Jacobs condemned the float on Sunday 3 March 2019 at the annual Aalst Carnival street celebration as "shocking." It contains "typical, anti-Semitic caricatures from 1939," he said. The umbrella groups representing Flemish and French-speaking Jews in Belgium, FJO and CCOJB respectively, complained to the federal UNIA watchdog on racism about the display. "In a democracy like Belgium, there is no room for such things, carnival or not," they wrote. The Vismooil'n group, a veteran participant that specializes in hyper-realistic puppets, created the display featuring two giant puppets with streimels, hats favored by some Orthodox Jews, in pink suits. They both have sidelocks. One of the puppets is grinning while smoking a cigar and extending a hand, presumably to collect money. That puppet has a white rat on his right shoulder. Both puppets are standing on gold coins and have money bags at their feet. In 2013, a different group designed for the Aalst carnival a float resembling a Nazi railway wagon used to transport Jews to death camps. The people who designed the float, known as the FTP Group, marched near the float dressed as Nazi SS officers and haredi Orthodox Jews. A poster on the wagon showed Flemish Belgian politicians dressed as Nazis and holding canisters labeled as containing Zyklon B, the poison used by the Nazis to exterminate Jews in gas chambers in the Holocaust.

PUTIN PROMISES NETANYAHU TO STOP DELIVERY OF S-300 TO SYRIAN REGIME: Russian President Vladimir Putin has informed Israeli PM Netanyahu that Moscow would stop the transfer of the S-300 surface-to-air missile system to the Syrian army. During the recent meeting in Moscow, Putin also pledged to allow Israel to operate freely in Syria. Russia has dispatched advanced S-300 air defense batteries to Syria, but they have yet to be deployed, according to intelligence assessments. On Sunday 3 March 2019 media sources reported that the deal struck between the Russian and Israeli leaders means that the Syrian army would not control the S-300 air defense system, already installed in northern Syria, and would be banned from using it unilaterally against Israeli jets. However, military analyst Tal Lev-Ram said that the "Russians would not exert pressure to force the pullout of Iranian forces from Syria."

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