

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update January 16, 2020*** ***(19<sup>th</sup> Tevet, 5780)***



## ***For the Yachad Report Newsletter For January 2020***

***Israel: It Hasn't Rained This Hard In 50 Years;*** Israel's northern region broke a more than 50-year record for the highest amount of rainfall as of last weekend. According to the Israel Meteorological Service, in the northern coastal plain some 350 to 400 millimeters have accumulated over the last two weeks, and more than 400 mm. fell in the Western and Upper Galilee. Since Israel began taking official rain measurements 80 years ago, such large quantities of rain have been recorded in northern Israel only twice; in December 1951 and January 1969. A record was also broken last week in southern Israel, where some 122 mm. fell, breaking a 76-year-old record. A number of intercity highways in the North and South were blocked due to flooding and throughout the day on Thur. 9 Jan. 2020, rescue workers labored around the clock to assist hundreds of people who became trapped by floods. Amidst the damage caused by the inclement weather, the good news is that the Sea of Galilee has jumped 26 centimeters since the start of the rainfall and, according to meteorologists, has only 2.07 meters lacking to be full. The Sea of Galilee at 209 meters below sea level, is the lowest freshwater lake on Earth, and the second-lowest lake in the world after the Dead Sea, a saltwater lake.

***Iran to Blame for Ukrainian Airline Crash;*** Tehran on Saturday 11 Jan. 2020 admitted that its air defenses were responsible for the crash of Ukrainian International Airlines 737 that took place on Wed. 8 Jan. 2020. The strike resulted in the deaths of all 176 people aboard. The victims include 82 Iranians, 63 Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans, and three British nationals. University graduates migrating to Canada were among those who perished in the crash. Iran denied for days after Wednesday's crash that it brought down the plane, although a top Revolutionary Guards commander said on Saturday that he had informed the authorities about the missile strike the same day it occurred. A military statement said the plane flew close to a sensitive Revolutionary Guards site at a time of high alert, although Ukraine said the plane was in a normal flight corridor. Ukraine International Airlines said Iran should have closed the airport. A USA official familiar with the intelligence said the aircraft was downed by two Russian-made SA-15 surface-to-air missiles. The USA saw Iranian radar signals lock onto the jetliner before it was shot down. A senior Trump administration official commented that "Iran's reckless actions have again had

devastating consequences.” Condemnation of Iran poured in from around the globe after Tehran finally admitted that its military shot down the Ukrainian passenger jet.

Angry crowds gathered on Saturday night in at least four locations in Tehran. Thousands of people assembled outside the gates of Amir Kabir University, near the former American embassy, to denounce the plane crash that the government blamed on human error and "USA adventurism." Protesters called for Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to step down and for those responsible for downing the plane to be prosecuted. "Death to the dictator," some chanted. Grief-stricken Iranians complained on social media that Iran's authorities had spent more time fending off criticism than sympathizing with victims' families. Tensions between the USA and Iran have escalated following a recent USA precision strike that killed Iranian Quid's commander Qassem Soleimani. Soleimani was plotting "imminent and sinister attacks" on Americans, Trump said, adding that the action was taken to stop a war.

***Honduras Deems Hezbollah A Terrorist Organization;*** On Monday 6 Jan. 2020 Honduras announced that it would join several other countries that have declared the Lebanon-based Hezbollah group as a terrorist organization. "Honduras joins Guatemala and other countries in announcing that Hezbollah will be declared an international terrorist organization nationwide," said Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández. With the move, Honduras joins several countries including the USA, the UK, Canada, Argentina, Paraguay, and Israel, as well as Bahrain, which have declared Hezbollah a terrorist entity. In 2013, the EU blacklisted Hezbollah's "military wing" as a terrorist organization, but failed to blacklist the group's political arm. However, EU members the Netherlands and the United Kingdom consider all of Hezbollah a terrorist organization. The British government formally announced last year that it intends to ban the political wing of the Hezbollah as well as the "military wing". The German Parliament recently approved a non-binding resolution calling on the German government to "decree an activity ban against Hezbollah in order not to tolerate any activity in Germany by representatives of the organization. Israel's Foreign Minister Yisrael Katz welcomed Honduras' decision saying, "I applaud the Honduran government for its important decision to declare Hezbollah as a terrorist organization and to take the necessary sanctions against it." Katz added, "This is an important step in the worldwide war against terrorism.

***2019 Anti-Semitic Crimes Increased 25% in NY City;*** The upsurge in anti-Semitic crimes in New York City was addressed days ago at a press conference at the Police Academy in Queens. The alarming rise in hate crimes across the five boroughs shot up 20 percent in 2019 and was topped by a 26% spike in anti-Semitic incidents alone. There were 234 anti-Semitic crimes reported for the year compared to 186 in 2018, officials said. The city has been shaken in the past month by a spate of anti-Semitic attacks, including one in Brooklyn on 27 Dec. 2019 that was allegedly committed by Tiffany Harris, who was then released without bail thanks to the state's new criminal-justice reforms. Earlier this month, thousands of people, some covered in Israeli flags and others singing Hebrew songs, poured into Lower Manhattan in a show of solidarity for New York's Jewish community in the wake of a spate of anti-Semitic attacks in the region. New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo joined the crowd and announced \$45 million in additional state funding to increase security around houses of worships, schools and other religious institutions, days after a man wielding a machete stormed into a rabbi's home in Monsey, New York, sending five people to the hospital. The incident that took place on 28 Dec. 2019 followed an early December shooting rampage at a kosher supermarket in Jersey City. The assault left three civilians, one police officer, and the two shooters dead after an hours-long gun battle. Both Cuomo and NY City Mayor Bill de Blasio have increased police patrols in Brooklyn neighborhoods with large Orthodox Jewish communities.

***Israeli Debate Team Brings Home the Crown;*** An Israeli debate team has won the World Universities Debate Championship for the third time. The contest took place in Bangkok, Thailand during the last week of 2019. The winning duo, Hadar Goldberg and Maya Saveliev of the Open University Debate Team, made history as the first Israeli team of women to win the competition. They defeated 750 contestants from around

the world in the English Second Language (ESL) category. It had numerous subjects for the nine debate rounds that the team went through, including democracy, ethics, geopolitics, and law. The accomplishment of a team comprised of only women is considered a significant step for the advancement of women in the Israeli debate scene.

***Ilhan Omar Crowned ‘Anti-Semite of the Year’;*** Freshman congresswoman Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-MN) has been crowned 2019 “Anti-Semite of the Year,” according to a poll hosted by StopAntisemitism.org. The organization invited the American public to nominate and vote on who they believe has shown the most hatred towards the Jewish people in 2019. Last November, voters narrowed down the finalists to notorious anti-Semite and Nation of Islam leader Louis Farrakhan, neo-Nazi Richard Spencer, and Congresswoman Omar. After thousands voted, the NGO announced on Mon. 6 Jan. 2020 that Omar would be awarded the title of biggest anti-Semite of the year along with a video listing her achievements in the field of Jew-hatred. This list included: 1. Accusing American Jewry of possessing dual loyalty. 2. Alleging that Jews buy their influence with money, infamously stating “It’s all about the Benjamins.” 3. Accusing Israel of having hypnotized the world. 4. Supporting the anti-Semitic Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israel. 5. Submitting a resolution in the House of Representatives comparing boycotting Israel to boycotting the Nazis. 6. Having her anti-Semitic statements endorsed by infamous neo-Nazi David Duke. The organization also mentioned Omar’s refusal to take back or regret many of her anti-Semitic comments, as well as the backing she receives from the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), which is connected to the Muslim Brotherhood. StopAntisemitism.org’s Liora Rez says it is important to expose anti-Semites especially at a time when bigotry against Jews is on the rise in the United States. “Anti-Semitism is plaguing our nation, and it’s about time we create real consequences for those spreading it,” Rez said. “By exposing bigots like Rep. Ilhan Omar, we are ensuring that the public is alert and able to take action.”

***56 Deaths, 213 Injuries Occur at Soleimani’s Funeral;*** Hundreds of thousands of Iranians gathered in Qassem Soleimani’s hometown of Kerman in southeastern Iran on Tues. 7 Jan. 2020 for the burial of the slain commander of the Revolutionary Guards Quds Force. Kerman is the city of Soleimani’s birth and burial. Local media outlets reported at least 56 deaths in a stampede that took place at the beginning of the funeral, with another 213 injured. The reason for the crush is still unknown. It is estimated that some 1 million people turned out in the streets of Tehran earlier in the day to witness just one of several other funeral processions held around the country. Iranian leaders vowed that the legacy of Soleimani – who was considered one of Iran’s most powerful figures after the Grand Ayatollah – would only be strengthened by his death.

***Nikki Haley: No One Mourning Soleimani Except The Democrats;*** Congressional Democrats and 2020 presidential candidates have slammed USA President Donald Trump for the drone strike on Friday 3 Jan. 2020 that killed the Iranian military leader responsible for hundreds of American deaths in the Middle East. Among the political and military leaders in the USA and across the globe who have highly endorsed Trump’s move to eliminate Soleimani is former USA Ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley. Haley said this week that the Democratic leadership and 2020 presidential candidates are “the only ones mourning” the death of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani. “I’ll tell you this: You don’t see anyone standing up for Iran. You’re not hearing any of the Gulf members, you’re not hearing China, you’re not hearing Russia,” said Haley. “The only ones mourning the loss of Soleimani are our Democrat leadership and our Democrat presidential candidates. You go tell that to the 608 American families who lost a loved one,” continued the former South Carolina governor. “Go tell that to the military members who lost a limb. This was something that needed to be done, and should be celebrated.” Democrats have argued that the strike will lead to war in the Middle East and that Trump should have sought congressional authorization, but Haley said that Soleimani’s death “should be celebrated.”

***Eliminating Soleimani Was Entirely Legal;*** Leading American legal scholar, Alan M. Dershowitz, said this week, “There can be no serious debate about USA President Trump’s constitutional authority to order a

single attack on an enemy combatant who has killed and is planning to kill American citizens. Presidents Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, and Barack Obama issued such orders,” said Dershowitz, who is a professor emeritus at Harvard Law School. “The targeting of Soleimani was more justified, as a matter of law, than the targeting of Osama bin Laden in 2011. The killing of Soleimani was in large part an act of prevention, whereas the killing of bin Laden was primarily an act of retaliation.” The killing of Soleimani, he continued, “was also entirely legal under international law. The Quds Force commander was a combatant in uniform who was actively engaged in continuing military and terrorist activities against Americans. The rocket that killed him, and a handful of others, was carefully calibrated to minimize collateral damage, and the resulting death toll was proportionate to the deaths it may have prevented.”

***Soleimani’s Death Weakens Iran’s Mid-East Agenda;*** The death of Iranian Quds gen. Qassem Soleimani, as a result of a USA targeted-drone attack last week, is expected to severely impair Iran’s attempts to further expand its influence in the Middle-East. In fact, the removal of Soleimani could prove to be the most significant USA killing of an enemy operative in recent times. His elimination came at a time when the project he had directed- to create an Iranian hegemony in the region - is facing unprecedented challenges in Iraq and Lebanon. Additionally, Esmail Ghaani, the Iranian general appointed to fill Soleimani’s post is considered to be a weak replacement for the purposes of carrying out Soleimani’s agenda or curtailing the increasingly explosive events in countries where months ago the Islamic Republic declared major victories.

***Will Israel Reconsider Possible Iran Strike?*** Iran vowed on Sunday 5 Jan. 2020 to defy the limits placed on its nuclear enrichment by the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action and completely abandon the deal, in a response to the recent USA killing of Gen. Qassem Soleimani. Iran’s announcement that it no longer intends to keep its commitments under the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers could soon renew discussions in Israel over a possible military strike on Iranian targets. While Israel has maintained a low profile since the USA killed top Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani it will be difficult to remain on the sidelines if Iran follows through on its pledge to toss out the nuclear accord. Israel has repeatedly said it will not allow Iran to develop a nuclear weapon, even if that requires a risky military strike. The USA-led nuclear deal, which restricted Iran’s atomic activities in exchange for relief from sanctions, put off talk of Israeli military action against Iran. But that all changed when Iran, protesting Soleimani’s killing, said it would no longer honor the limits on uranium enrichment and other nuclear research spelled out in the deal.

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