

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update August 20, 2020*** **(30<sup>th</sup> Av, 5780)**



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

***After Explosion: Entire Lebanese Cabinet Resigns;*** The entire government of Lebanon resigned Monday following the massive explosion, which left over 200 people dead and 7,000 injured in Beirut last week. The country's Health Minister, Hamad Hassan, confirmed the Cabinet had resigned in a conversation with reporters following Monday's Cabinet meeting. Hassan said that Prime Minister Hassan Diab will go to the presidential palace to "hand over the resignation in the name of all the ministers." Earlier Monday, Justice Minister Marie-Claude Najm announced her resignation. On Sunday, Information Minister Manal Abdel Samad and Minister Damianos Kattar also resigned in response to the public uproar which followed the deadly blast. Prime Minister Hassan Diab may also resign. Thousands of Lebanese citizens have demonstrated in the streets over the last week, blaming the government for failing to properly deal with the nearly 3,000 tons of ammonium nitrate which had been stored at the Beirut port for six years and which was responsible for the massive explosion.

***Suspicious Tunnels Discovered Near Beirut Port;*** Videos circulating online, as well as rumors and reports, indicate that "tunnels" have been found in the wake of the Beirut explosions. Some have asserted that this is evidence of Hezbollah "tunnels" storing weapons at the Port of Beirut, while others think they were used for human trafficking. Both SkyNews and Russia's Sputnik News claimed there was a "labyrinth network of tunnels." The Lebanese Armed Forces have denied the existence of tunnels, just as Hezbollah has denied doing anything at Beirut Port. It's unclear how the army could refute the claims without investigating the images and videos already circulating online. Nevertheless, the army denied the existence of tunnels. Yet Sky News did show a ceiling of a subterranean chamber and noted that people had hope that loved ones might have survived the blast in the tunnels. The Sky News report, which was posted online on Sunday, said the people excavating the site and searching for survivors "know there is a labyrinth of subterranean chambers here; they have discovered the opening of one of them."

***Houthi Rebel Shames UAE for 'Building Synagogues';*** The United Arab Emirates is "building synagogues for Jews," Houthi rebel leader Mohammed Ali al-Houthi said in a statement published over the weekend in Iranian media. Iran is a major backer of the Houthi rebels, who have been fighting a civil war in Yemen. The official slogan of the Houthis contains the statement: "Death to Israel, curse the Jews, victory to

Islam.” The movement is one of the few in the region that is officially and openly anti-Semitic. While the rebels are called Houthis, the movement’s official name is Ansar Allah. “The UAE authorities are looking to improve their image by building a synagogue for the Jews,” Houthi said. The UAE is involved in the Saudi-led war in Yemen, which is waged against the Houthis and has “displaced millions of Yemenis,” he said. Houthi’s latest statement was posted at Tasnim News in Iran on Sunday. Iran transfers missiles and drones to the Houthis, and the group has used them to target Saudi Arabia. The US Navy has intercepted several weapons shipments from Iran to Yemen.

***Coronavirus: Israeli Company Close to Releasing Promising New Drug;*** A new anti-viral, anti-inflammatory drug against coronavirus might be soon offered to patients all over the world by Israeli pharmaceutical company RedHill. The treatment, based on a chemical compound called Opaganib, has already shown very promising results in compassionate use carried out at the Shaarei Zedek Medical Center in Jerusalem, as Gilead Raday, RedHill's Chief Operating Officer, said. Now, two new studies carried out in the US and several countries in the world might be able to soon provide the additional data required for emergency authorization – the same received by the renowned Remdesivir. Headquartered in Israel, Redhill Biopharma was established in 2009 and is listed in the NASDAQ. Most of its activities are US-focused and specialized in gastro-intestinal drugs, both developed in-house and acquired. However, among the pipeline of products the company features, Opaganib presented anti-viral effects long before COVID-19 appeared. Research on the potential of the compound was carried out in connection with the Ebola pandemic.

***Glamdemic: Israeli Jewelry Company Designs Most Expensive COVID Mask in the World;*** Yvel, the luxury jewelry brand based in Jerusalem, is currently working on what is likely the world’s most expensive COVID19 protective mask. The mask, designed by Orna and Isaac Levy, Yvel’s owners and designers, is valued at \$1.5 million and is made of 250 grams of pure 18k gold, and set with no less than 3,608 natural diamonds, with a total weight of about 210 carats. It is being custom made for an anonymous Chinese billionaire from Shanghai. The mask provides the highest level of filtration (N-99) and meets the most stringent standards. With the outbreak of the COVID19 epidemic, Yvel’s visitors’ center and jewelry factory has closed, but the Levys carefully selected 25 jewelers and diamond setters from the company’s staff, working in shifts, to carry out the special order. Surprisingly, the customer conditioned the purchase of the mask on the fact that the mask would be the most expensive in the world. “It was quite easy for us to overcome this challenge,” says Isaac.

***Netanyahu Leverages Annexation Plans to Ink Peace Deal with UAE;*** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday addressed the historic deal between his country and the United Arab Emirates, calling it "the greatest advancement towards peace between Israel and the Arab world in the last 26 years." The announcement in Washington that the United Arab Emirates had agreed to a “full normalization of relations” with Israel in exchange for Mr. Netanyahu’s agreement to “suspend” his controversial annexation push amounted to a breathtaking turnabout for the veteran Israeli premier. His drive for sovereignty on the West Bank had pushed Mr. Netanyahu into a corner: He was hectored by European leaders, rebuffed by his coalition partners, and distracted from a pandemic that was rapidly spiraling out of his control, even as the goal of annexation seemed ever more elusive. But the agreement with the Emiratis allowed Mr. Netanyahu, who has craved a historic achievement to cap his tenure as Israel’s longest-serving leader, to rank himself alongside Menachem Begin and Yitzhak Rabin, forerunners who struck peace accords with the nation’s former bitter enemies, Egypt and Jordan.

***Palestinians Fume over Israel-UAE Deal;*** Palestinians from across the political spectrum on Thursday strongly condemned the normalization agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, dubbing it a betrayal of Arabs and Palestinians. Many Palestinians and Arabs took to social media to express outrage over the agreement, with some calling it a “new nakba,” or catastrophe. They also used a variety of pejoratives against the Gulf state and its leaders, including the “United Zionist Emirate” and “dogs” and “traitors.” Others

referred to the announcement as a “black Thursday for Arabs and Palestinians.” Palestinian officials said they did not have prior knowledge of the agreement. The agreement violated the 2002 Arab Peace Initiative, which states that the Arab countries would establish normal relations with Israel only “in the context of a comprehensive peace and a full Israeli withdrawal from all the territories occupied since 1967,” the officials said. The Palestinian Authority announced on Wednesday night that it has decided to recall its ambassador to the United Arab Emirates in protest of the normalization agreement with Israel.

***Iran Threatens UAE over New Israel Ties;*** United Arab Emirates leaders should expect punishment for normalizing relations with Israel, according to Iranian officials seething over the breakthrough accord. "The UAE government and other accompanying governments must accept responsibility for all the consequences of this action," the Iranian Foreign Ministry said Friday in a statement carried by state-run and regional media. UAE officials justified the historic agreement by emphasizing that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu agreed to suspend plans to annex territory regarded by many observers as essential for a future Palestinian state. Palestinian leaders rejected the deal as “a betrayal” of their cause, which Iranian leaders also argued. “W/ that strategic mistake, #UAE will be engulfed in Zionism fire,” Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, a foreign policy adviser to the speaker of Iran’s parliament, tweeted late Thursday. “It will contribute toward stability in the region and advance the cause of peace,” House Foreign Affairs Chairman Eliot Engel, said Thursday. “I hope that this new breakthrough will give courage to other countries to move forward toward normalization and motivate Palestinians to give peace a chance.”

***Turkey: Erdogan Threatens to Suspend Ties with UAE;*** Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday that Turkey could suspend diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates in the wake of the deal between Israel and the Gulf state. "I gave an order to the foreign minister. I said we could suspend diplomatic relations with the Abu Dhabi administration or withdraw our ambassador," Erdogan told reporters. "History will not forget those who betray the Palestinian people and sell out the Palestinian cause," Erdogan's spokesman, Ibrahim Kalin, tweeted earlier on Friday. "Turkey will continue to stand by the Palestinian people," he added. The Turkish foreign ministry earlier described the UAE-Israel deal as a hypocritical betrayal of the Palestinian cause. While Israel and Turkey have diplomatic relations, those relations have been strained in recent years as Erdogan, who is a strong advocate of Palestinian Arab rights, has frequently criticized Israel. The two countries signed a comprehensive reconciliation deal in 2016, ending a six-year diplomatic standoff following a violent encounter between Israeli soldiers and Islamist radicals on a ship attempting to break through the security blockade on Gaza.

***US Seizes Iranian Fuel in Sanctions Violation;*** The U.S. government reportedly seized four vessels loaded with Iranian fuel that allegedly violated the sanctions on the country imposed by the Trump administration. The four vessels were recently seized on the high seas and are on their way to Houston, Texas, the Wall Street Journal reported, citing U.S. officials. Senior administration officials are expected to meet the tankers at a scheduled event to mark the docking. Military force was not used to take the vessels, according to the report. The tankers allegedly were part of a scheme set up by an Iranian businessman affiliated with the Revolutionary Guard Corps, which is designated by the United States as a terrorist organization. U.S. prosecutors filed a lawsuit in July to seize the gas on four tankers Iran was allegedly trying to ship to Venezuela. The seizure comes as tensions between Iran and the U.S. remain from a U.S. strike that killed top Iranian general Qassem Soleimani earlier in 2020. Iran responded with a retaliatory strike targeting a base housing U.S. soldier.

***Hezbollah: Response to Israeli Assassination Will Come;*** Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah said the terrorist organization would respond for Israel's assassination of one of its operatives in Syria last month, according to a translation by Lebanon and Hezbollah analyst David A. Daoud. "On July 20, the Israelis killed Hezbollah fighter Ali Kamel Mohsen," Nasrallah said. "They knew Hezbollah would respond. We did not need to say anything, and they implemented all security precautions to protect their soldiers' lives and prevent

a Hezbollah response," he continued. "Hezbollah will respond, but it will be to re-establish rules of engagement. So the response will be studied and measured. Only serious, calculated action -- not media stunts -- re-establish rules of engagement." Everything that happened since the assassination is part of Hezbollah's "punishment," Nasrallah said. "If you kill us - it means across the border - you must await our response," he added. "This decision remains standing. Nothing changed; it is a matter of time."

***Iran Transferring Advanced Centrifuges to Main Production Center;*** Iran is engaged in transferring new generations of advanced centrifuges used to enrich uranium from a warehouse to the main production center at Natanz, according to a classified document compiled by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). The materials, transferred from a pilot facility, will be placed in the new Hall B at Natanz. The document, circulated to diplomats last month, shows that Iranian engineers recently installed special pipes in the reactor that are reinforced in order to withstand the high pressure of uranium production created when using advanced centrifuges. This transfer of the three new centrifuge cascades takes place about a month after the explosion at the Natanz reactor, which is estimated to have caused a delay of one to two years to the Iranian nuclear program. Each cascade is equipped with 164 machines spinning at supersonic speeds to separate uranium isotopes. The transfer is in violation of the 2015 agreement. In June, the IAEA said that Iran violates of all aspects of the agreement.

***Holocaust-Denying Facebook Groups Run Rampant;*** The UK-based Institute for Strategic Dialogue, an anti-extremist organization, scoured the social-media site and discovered at least 36 groups with a combined 366,068 followers hosting content denying the Nazi genocide. The ISD also found that searching for "Holocaust" on Facebook returned suggestions for groups denying the atrocity, which in turn linked to publishers peddling revisionist history literature. "Facebook's decision to allow Holocaust denial content to remain on its platform is framed under the guise of protecting legitimate historical debate, but this misses the reason why people engage in Holocaust denial in the first place," Jacob Davey, ISD's senior research manager, said. "Denial of the Holocaust is a deliberate tool used to delegitimize the suffering of the Jewish people and perpetuate long-standing antisemitic tropes, and when people explicitly do this it should be seen as an act of hatred," he added. Facebook and other social media sites have been increasingly scrutinized for their policies over misinformation spread on their platforms. Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg has been particularly outspoken on his reservations about policing content, saying that social media sites should not "be arbiters of truth."



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