

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update October 15, 2020 (27th Tishrei, 5781)

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For the Yachad Report Newsletter For October 2020

Olympics Under Fire for Failure to Condemn Murder of Iranian Wrestler; The organization Global Athlete issued a scathing indictment of the International Olympic Committee on Wednesday for its refusal to act against Iran's regime in response to the execution of Iranian champion Greco-Roman wrestler Navid Afkari. "The IOC's failure to stand up for athletes' human rights – their willingness to stand by while athletes are jailed, tortured and executed – is a gross abdication of duty," said two-time Olympian Noah Hoffman, a Global Athlete member. "Navid was targeted because he was an athlete. Any semblance of due process or the rule of law was nothing more than a sham. And the IOC turned away, claiming that Navid is not their problem," he said. "In doing so, they have sent a message to all athletes that they do not have our backs; they don't care what happens to us as long as the Games go on and the farce of global unity is preserved." Global Athlete, a sports advocacy organization that seeks to advance the rights of athletes, said the IOC has neglected its "duty to care for athletes by failing to take action against Iran."

We Must Ban Iran from the Olympics; On Saturday, Sept. 12, Iranian authorities announced that 27-year-old wrestler Navid Afkari had been executed. Although officials claimed that he had been hanged, BBC Persia reported that the wrestling champion's family was only permitted to see his face and that his nose was broken, raising suspicions that he had been tortured to death. Afkari's sham trial and execution are a stark reminder that Iran's abuse of its own citizens extends to all segments of Iranian society — even to its athletic community. Whereas other countries view their sportsmen and women as the embodiment of national values and ideals, Iran's maltreatment of its athletes represents a distillation of the very worst elements of life under the ayatollahs. Iran's abuses against its own athletes represent clear violations of basic human rights. They also contravene the Olympic Charter, the set of rules and principles to which every country that participates in the world's largest sports event must commit. Iran's outrageous conduct puts it squarely at odds with both the letter and the spirit of the rules governing the Olympic movement.

Fmr. Saudi Amb. to US Slams PA for Badmouthing Gulf Leaders; Former Saudi Ambassador to the U.S. Prince Bandar Bin Sultan Al-Saud chastised Palestinian Authority leadership for its conduct following Israel's peace and normalization agreements with the UAE and Bahrain, reports the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI). Prince Bandar said that the Palestinian leaders had "the audacity to say

despicable things” about the Gulf countries and their leaders. He added that while the Palestinian cause is just, the Palestinian leaders have failed at garnering support for this cause. Prince Bandar further said that the Palestinian leaders have historically placed their bets on the losing party - from Haj Amin Al-Husseini’s support for the Nazis during WWII to siding with Saddam Hussein in his occupation of Kuwait in 1990 and subsequently, his missile attacks against Saudi Arabia. He said that the Palestinians would repeatedly come to Saudi Arabia for financial aid and advice, and then they would take the aid and ignore the advice.

Israeli Company Building Recharging Roads in Europe; Israeli company ElectReon announced Tuesday that it has entered into a strategic memorandum of understanding with a large European infrastructure company, Eurovia, to promote and build wireless electric road systems in Germany, France, and Belgium. The Tel Aviv-Jaffa Municipality recently contracted with ElectReon to pilot a smart road that can recharge an electric bus as it drives along. Eurovia is a road construction company operating under the French concessions and construction firm, Vinci S.A. The news came via a company notice to the Israel Stock Exchange. ElectReon, based in the northern Israeli community of Beit Yannai, has already installed a 1.6 kilometer (1 mile) electric stretch used by a bus and a truck on the 4.1 kilometers (2.5 miles) route between the airport and town center of Visby on Gotland Island in Sweden. At the end of this year, the company is set to install the first wireless electric road system in Germany, in Karlsruhe in the country’s southwest.

Israel and Jordan Sign Airspace Agreement; Israel and Jordan reached an agreement allowing flights to cross over both countries’ airspace, the Transportation Ministry announced on Thursday. The deal allows flights crossing over one country to also fly over the other. The agreement will significantly shorten the length of flights from Israel to the Gulf and East Asia, cutting the time it takes to travel between countries and cutting gas costs and pollution. It will also allow the UAE and Bahrain, which recently made peace with Israel, along with other countries in the region, to fly over Israeli airspace. Jerusalem and Amman reached the deal after several years, but peace between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia allowing Israeli flights to the UAE over its airspace hastened the process.

US Targets 18 Iranian Banks with Sanctions; The United States on Thursday slapped fresh sanctions on Iran's financial sector, targeting 18 Iranian banks in an effort to further shut Iran out of the global banking system. However, the US Treasury Department said in a statement that the prohibitions did not apply to transactions for the provision of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, or medical devices to Iran. Washington's move affected what the Treasury said were 18 major Iranian banks, most of which were targeted under US Executive Order 13902, which allows the Treasury Department to target entire sectors of the Iranian economy. The move freezes any US assets of those blacklisted and generally bars Americans from doing business with them.

Eli Rozenberg, NY-Born Yeshiva Student, Takes Control of El Al; Eli Rozenberg, the 26-year-old son of millionaire U.S. businessman Kenny Rozenberg, has taken control of El Al Airlines, after a tumultuous debate over who should manage Israel’s flagship airline. Eli Rozenberg’s \$75 million bid to buy control of the airline offered a lifeline, but some in Israel argued that selling to him would amount to a circumvention of the law prohibiting non-Israelis from owning the airline. Eli Rozenberg is a resident of Israel and an Israeli citizen, but his father, who owns a nursing home chain in the United States, is not. The source of the financing for the deal is a 25-year loan from Kenny Rozenberg, Eli Rozenberg confirmed in a meeting with the El Al board of directors, the Israeli business daily Globes reported. Critics of the deal argued that such a loan amounts to a gift and might mean that Kenny Rozenberg effectively controls the airline. But Eli Rozenberg pledged that his father had not been given any El Al shares as collateral for the loan.

India-Israel 30-Second Coronavirus Test Should Be 'Ready in Days'; A 30-second coronavirus detection test being developed by India and Israel should be ready in “a matter of days,” Israeli Ambassador to India Ron Malka said on Friday. “All the thresholds have been passed.” The operation has been dubbed “Open

Skies,” and Malka said he believes the testing kit will enable the world to begin opening the skies, since the technology simply requires a person to blow into a tube and the results become available in less than a minute. It is also very cheap to carry out, as the results are delivered locally without the logistics and cost of sending the sample to a lab. “It will be good news for the entire world,” he said. Malka said that India would likely serve as the manufacturing headquarters for this rapid-test kit. Israel sent a senior-level delegation from the country’s Directorate of Defense Research and Development to India in July to develop the new and rapid coronavirus tests in cooperation with their Indian counterparts, while treating Indian patients with coronavirus.

Gamzu: 40% of New Virus Cases are Ultra-Orthodox; Forty percent of all new coronavirus infections are coming from the ultra-Orthodox, coronavirus czar Ronni Gamzu said Thursday, amid increasing concern over morbidity rates in the community. Gamzu told a press conference that 40 percent of those recently diagnosed with the coronavirus were ultra-Orthodox, or Haredi, though the community constitutes only approximately 12 percent of the population. He noted that cases among the older members of that community were on the rise. “It is disturbing that the proportion of patients over the age of 60 in ultra-Orthodox society is rising,” Gamzu said, in comments that appeared to support a statement from Health Ministry director-general Chezy Levy on Wednesday that there was a “steep increase” in the death rate from COVID-19 within that community. Gamzu also said the surge in cases on Wednesday was due to a lag from the weekend and Yom Kippur when most testing centers and labs were closed.

Brothers of Executed Iranian Wrestler Held in Solitary; An Iranian regime prison guard beat the brothers of executed wrestler Navid Afkari, Vahid and Habib, who are now being held incommunicado, raising growing fears that “something bad is in store for them, too,” according to a Monday report. A source close to the devastated Afkari family said it had been more than 16 days since they have had any news of the brothers. The information they had received before this was contradictory in places, exacerbating their worries. The family understands that Vahid and Habib are in solitary confinement, and have now recovered after recently being beaten by a prison guard. Judiciary and prison officials are misleading the family. The prison officials say it’s out of their hands; they say they have orders from higher up not to transfer them to public wards and to keep them in solitary confinement. The source continued that “The brothers do not have the right to visitation or a phone call, and upon going to the deputy prosecutor supervising the prison, they were told they were not allowed to talk to their family.”

Olympics Will Not Discuss Iran’s Murder of Wrestler; The agenda for Wednesday’s International Olympic Committee executive board meeting omits the Iranian regime’s execution of the champion wrestler Navid Afkari, prompting calls for IOC president Thomas Bach to include Afkari’s execution in its agenda and sanction the clerical regime in Tehran. When asked if the IOC plans to sanction Iran’s regime and raise Afkari in its agenda, an unnamed committee spokesperson said that, “For your information, you will find here the schedule for tomorrow’s IOC Executive Board committee’s meeting.” Rob Koehler, the Director-General of Global Athlete, a sports human rights advocacy organization, wrote on Twitter: “The Olympics Executive Committee meets Wednesday 7 October... How about under miscellaneous you include: 1. Suspending Iran @Olympic_ir #Justice4Navid #navidafkarai.” Koehler included the Twitter handle for Iran’s Olympic chapter and the hashtags in support of Navid Afkari.

EU Refuses Stopgap Aid to PA Amid Refusal of Israel-Collected Tax Funds; The EU turned down requests from Ramallah for additional aid, as long as the Palestinians refuse to accept their own money because it is collected by Israel. “No stopgap extra funding should be expected...if they do not accept their own money,” an EU diplomat said on Wednesday. The PA will, however, continue to get the aid it usually receives from the EU. All imports to the PA go through Israeli checkpoints, and Israel collects VAT and tariffs for the PA. Those funds are the largest source of income for the PA. Israel also collects income tax and health insurance funds for Palestinians who work for Israelis. In May, Palestinian Authority President

Mahmoud Abbas announced that he is stopping cooperation with Israel, in anticipation of Israel applying sovereignty to parts of the West Bank.

Fatah Teaches Students to Reject Normalization; The Fatah Shabiba Student Movement organized an activity against normalization at the Al-A'amiriya High School for Girls in Qalqilya, as part of the Shabiba Student Movement's educational program for school students and in the framework of the medical protocol guidelines. Shabiba Student Movement coordinator of activities at the schools for girls Hanaa Al-Haj Hassan, school principal Hanaa Ja'aydi, representatives of the Directorate of Education (i.e., branch of the PA Ministry of Education), and female school students participated in the activity. In her speech, Hanaa Al-Haj Hassan emphasized the position of the Palestinian leadership and the Palestinian people, which rejects normalization with the Israeli occupation. She explained that normalization is a betrayal of the Palestinian cause, of the blood of the tens of thousands of Martyrs, and the sacrifices of the hundreds of thousands of heroic prisoners... The female school students participated in several activities against normalization, and the school principal thanked the Shabiba Student [Movement] for being sure to spread national awareness among the female students."

Czech Republic to Move Embassy to Jerusalem; The Czech Republic is ready to take further steps towards moving its embassy to Israel to Jerusalem, a spokesman for Czech President Miloš Zeman said on Monday. The government committed to "further strengthening of our representation in Jerusalem," in a readout from a meeting of top Czech government officials, including Zeman and the country's prime minister, foreign minister, defense minister, interior minister, and parliament speaker. Zeman's spokesman Jiří Ovčáček explained that moving the Czech embassy to Jerusalem is one of the president's long-term goals. Prague opened a "Czech House" in Jerusalem in November 2018, meant to be a first step towards opening an embassy in the capital. The house includes a cultural center, branches of the Czech Republic's trade and tourism offices, and a space for the Czech Ambassador to hold meetings in the capital.

Jewish Scientist Shares Nobel for Hep C Discovery; Americans Harvey J. Alter and Charles M. Rice and British-born scientist Michael Houghton jointly won the Nobel Prize for medicine on Monday for their discovery of the hepatitis C virus, a major source of liver disease that affects millions worldwide. Announcing the prize in Stockholm, the Nobel Committee noted that the trio's work identified a major source of blood-borne hepatitis that couldn't be explained by the previously discovered hepatitis A and B viruses. Their work, dating back to the 1970s and 1980s, has helped save millions of lives, it said. "Thanks to their discovery, highly sensitive blood tests for the virus are now available and these have essentially eliminated post-transfusion hepatitis in many parts of the world, greatly improving global health," the committee said.

India's Bnei Menashe Community Celebrates Sukkot; The Bnei Menashe Jewish community in northeastern India celebrated Sukkot this week, and within their prayers, they requested to make aliyah to Israel—as has been the dream of the community for years. The Bnei Menashe ethnic group is said to number at around 10,000 total, and are believed by many to be descended from one of the Ten Lost Tribes, specifically that of Menashe. They were recognized as members of a lost tribe in 2005 by then-Sephardi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Atar, though he did specify they would need to formally convert. To date, more than 4,000 members of the community have made aliyah to Israel—some 6,500 still live in India. Within their "exile," the community observes and practices Jewish tradition (i.e. observe the sabbath, keep kosher and celebrate the holidays on the Jewish calendar). In partnership with the Absorption Ministry and the Interior Ministry, around 722 Bnei Menashe will be making aliyah following the High Holy Days.

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