

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update January 21, 2021 ***(8th Shvat, 5781)***



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For January 2021

EU Warns Iran's Enrichment of Uranium to 20% 'A Matter of Deep Concern'; The European Union said Monday that Iran's recent move to ramp up uranium enrichment was undermining diplomacy over its nuclear program and urged Tehran to avoid any further escalation. In a statement on behalf of the 27-nation bloc, European Union foreign policy chief Josep Borrell warned Tehran that its 20 percent enrichment was "a very serious development" with "potentially severe proliferation implications." "We urge Iran to refrain from further escalation and reverse this course of action without delay. Continued full and timely cooperation with the (UN nuclear watchdog) IAEA remains critical," he said.

Likud Minister Warns Israel Could Attack Iran Nuclear Program if US Rejoins Deal; Likud ministers on Wednesday refrained from confirming whether Israel was behind a raid in Syria overnight, but said the incoming US administration must not "appease" Iran, and warned Tehran the Jewish state will not tolerate its military presence in Syria or its development of nuclear weapons. In one of the most forceful statements made by an Israeli official, the Likud's Tzachi Hanegbi, considered an ally of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, threatened that Israel could attack Iran's nuclear program if the United States rejoined the nuclear deal, as US President-elect Joe Biden has indicated he plans to do. "If the United States government rejoins the nuclear deal — and that seems to be the stated policy as of now — the practical result will be that Israel will again be alone against Iran, which by the end of the deal will have received a green light from the world, including the United States, to continue with its nuclear weapons program," Hanegbi said in an interview

Army Warns Civilians: Buy Radio for Bomb Shelters in Preparation for Mass Power Outage; In what many are saying is a forewarning against an imminent Iranian strike, a rather ominous video was published on Wednesday by the IDF'S Homefront Command. The Army's clip instructs Israeli civilians to keep a radio in their bomb shelters in case of massive power or internet outage. In the video, the presenter explains that if there is a power cut, the only way to get information or warnings is via radio. Although the IDF tried to keep the video lighthearted, reports from Tehran indicate that their nuclear ambitions have only gained steam. The US Reports: Iran has notified the International Atomic Energy Agency that it intends to install metallic uranium production equipment at the Isfahan site, which could be used to develop nuclear weapons.

Reports Say Iran Has Expanded 'Kamikaze Drone' Base in Yemen; Iran has sent drones to Yemen, enabling the creation of a base for so-called "suicide drones" or what are known as loitering munitions, according to Newsweek. The report claims that "Shahed-136" drones are now based in Al-Jawf. These are supposedly "advanced UAVs." The report is unclear regarding most of the details, only noting that these drones might have a range of some 2,200 kilometers – which puts them conveniently just within range of Israel. In the past, Iran has claimed long ranges for its drones. It operates drones that are basically like cruise missiles: They are given a target coordinate and fly to it without needing to communicate with their base. In this sense they operate as a German V-1 rocket more than a modern drone; they don't really "loiter" over a target.

Israel, Arab Allies 'On Same Page' Against Iran Ahead of Biden Transition; Israel and like-minded Arab states have a shared message ahead of US President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration next week: Don't reduce the pressure on Iran. The countries aligned with Israel on this matter are not just its new allies in the Gulf, the United Arab Emirates, and Bahrain, but also include Egypt and Jordan, an official involved in the matter said on Thursday. "Our message to Biden is that we would hope he would take into account the attitudes of Middle East allies before he went ahead and did anything with Iran," the official said. "Many Arab states are on the same page on this issue."

Israel, UAE Sign Visa-Free Travel Agreement; Israel and the United Arab Emirates will allow visa-free travel between the countries after the UAE ratified an agreement on the matter on Wednesday. Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi said, "the ratification of the agreement is a central element of the full and quick implementation of the many agreements being worked on these days with the Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco." Ashkenazi credited the Foreign Ministry with "quickly advancing the relations with these countries." The visa-free agreement will go into effect on February 12. The UAE was originally expected to authorize the agreement in late December or early January but deferred the final ratification.

Jerusalem Approves Expanded US Embassy; The Jerusalem Municipality's Building and Planning Committee approved plans for a new US embassy building in Jerusalem on Wednesday. Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion called it a "historic and exciting moment," and that he thinks it will inspire other countries to move to the capital. "After two years, we're thrilled the local planning committee finally approved it," Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Fleur Hassan-Nahoum said. "We've been waiting for a very, very long time and we're happy it finally passed." The approved plans include expanding the current embassy site in Arnona, as well as the construction of a new embassy on Derech Hebron. They will need additional approval from a district council, but it's expected to pass easily.

Palestinian Authority Will Hold Legislative, Presidential Elections; The Palestinian Authority on Friday announced it will hold its first national elections in more than a decade, in the latest of many attempts to end years of infighting between President Mahmoud Abbas's Fatah movement and his Islamist rival Hamas. Palestinians' last parliamentary ballot in 2006 resulted in a surprise win by Hamas, widening an internal political rift that led to the group's seizure of the Gaza Strip in 2007 and contributed to a long delay in setting further elections. The PA, which has limited self-rule in the West Bank, will hold legislative elections on May 22 and a presidential vote on June 31, a decree from Abbas's office said.

5.2M Israelis to be Fully Vaccinated by Late March; By the end of March, Israel will have vaccinated 5.2 million citizens against the coronavirus, according to a plan drawn up by the Health Ministry. Health officials told Channel 12 Monday that based on the recent agreement reached with the Pfizer pharmaceutical company, each week will see shipments of hundreds of thousands of vaccine doses land in Israel. It will allow an additional 1,300,000 Israelis to receive their first dose, and 1,800,000 to receive their second dose, this month. The Health Ministry plan will see those as young as 40 beginning to vaccinate in February, with 1,450,000 people receiving their first dose and 1,750,000 receiving their second dose in that month. In March, the

remaining population above the age of 16 will be allowed to vaccinate, with 1,700,000 slated to receive the second dose.

Pompeo: Iran is the “New Home Base” of Al-Qaeda; Iran has given a new operational headquarters to al-Qaeda, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Tuesday. He added that the Islamic Republic is “the new home base” for the terror group. “Tehran gives sanctuary to the terror group’s senior leaders as they plan attacks against America and our allies,” Pompeo added. He noted that since 2015, “Tehran has allowed al-Qaida figures in the country to freely communicate with other al-Qaeda members and perform many functions that were previously directed from Afghanistan and Pakistan, including authorization for attacks, propaganda, and fundraising.” Pompeo went on to say that the Iran-al-Qaeda axis poses a grave threat to the security of nations and to the American homeland itself. The outgoing secretary of state announced that the administration is designating two Iran-based al-Qaeda leaders, Muhammad Abbatay and Sultan Yusuf Hasan al-‘Arif as Specially Designated Global Terrorists.

Outgoing US Ambassador David Friedman Honored at Knesset; US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman was honored by a special meeting of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee on Monday as he prepares to finish his term next week. “I am happy to host Ambassador David Friedman for a special meeting,” said Zvi Hauser, chairman of the committee. “This meeting is not a routine event here in the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. It seems to me that it’s even a unique and rare event, but the ambassador is also unique and rare. In Jerusalem, not only will we hear but also say thank you, and we will acknowledge the good of an extraordinary contribution to strengthening the ties between the United States and the State of Israel.”

Sheldon Adelson, Jewish Casino Tycoon, Passes Away at 87; Sheldon Adelson, the longtime casino magnate who bet big on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump, died Tuesday of complications from treatment for non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma. He was 87. News of his death pushed other items off the front pages of Israeli newspapers. It was also widely reported in America’s electronic and print media, as well as in many other publications around the world. Politicians and public figures in Israel and in the US were quick to voice tributes and to send their condolences to the Adelson family after the Boston-born Jewish tycoon passed away. Deprived of his social media accounts, Trump could not tweet his feelings about the man who had contributed so much to his campaign.

Restaurants in Portland Vandalized with ‘Free Palestine’ Graffiti; Several Israeli-affiliated restaurants were vandalized with “free Palestine” graffiti over the weekend in Portland, Oregon. The Portland Police Bureau is reportedly investigating three separate incidents of such restaurants being vandalized at around the same time. These include a vegan hummus restaurant from Israeli chef Tal Caspi called Aviv and two branches of Shalom Y'all, a restaurant that specializes in Mediterranean food, including shawarma and falafel. Some of the graffiti spray-painted on a Shalom Y'all restaurant read: “Hummus not Israeli,” “Falafel is from Palestine” and “murder,” according to photos posted on social media. Kasey Mills, Jamal Hassan, and Laura Amans, the restaurant's owners, described the assaults as anti-Semitic.

Jeff Zucker Shuttters CNN Airport Network, Cites COVID-19; CNN boss Jeff Zucker on Tuesday said that the cable giant is shuttering its CNN Airport Network, which plays exclusively on TVs in airport lounges across the US. The network, which launched 30 years ago, will close up shop on March 31, Zucker wrote in a memo to staff, citing a “steep decline” in usage due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as the fact that more travelers now get news from their smartphones. “The steep decline in airport traffic because of COVID-19, coupled with all the new ways that people are consuming content on their personal devices, has lessened the need for the CNN Airport Network,” Zucker said. “Having to say goodbye to such a beloved brand is not easy ... I am sure most of us have a story to tell about which airport we were at when we first learned of a major news event.”

Fitch Confirms Israel's A+ Credit Rating; Credit rating company Fitch has confirmed Israel's status at A+ and maintained its forecast at "stable," the Finance Ministry said on Wednesday. "The confirmation of the credit rating of the State of Israel in this period of uncertainty and global crisis reflects confidence in its diverse economy and the government's financial and fiscal ability to deal with the consequences of the crisis," Accountant-General Yahli Rotenberg said. According to Fitch, Israel's credit rating balances strong external accounts, a diversified economy with high added value and institutional resilience, and a government debt-to-GDP ratio that is still high relative to reference countries, and ongoing political and security risks.



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