

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update May 20, 2021 (9th Sivan, 5781)



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Israel Under Rocket Attack—Netanyahu Convenes Cabinet Amid Escalation; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has summoned his senior ministers for a meeting of the Diplomatic-Security Cabinet in the wake of the ongoing escalation in Jerusalem and the Gaza area, while Hamas issued an ultimatum to Israel to stop its efforts to quell the violence. The Hamas ultimatum said that Israel has to release rioters arrested and to withdraw police officers from the Al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount, where most of the disturbances have taken place in recent days, as Israel celebrates Jerusalem Day and Muslim's mark the peak of the holy month of Ramadan. The ultimatum was to expire at 6 p.m. Israel time. The recent tensions were also a result of ongoing disputes between Jewish and Arab residents of Sheikh Jarrah, over contested homes and ownership rights. The Hamas ultimatum said Israel must withdraw forces from that neighborhood as well. Shortly after the Hamas ultimatum expired at 6 p.m. Red Alert sirens were heard in multiple areas in Israel, indicating a likely rocket being fired toward population centers in the vicinity, including in Jerusalem. Israeli media reported multiple explosions in the capital shortly after those sirens were heard, although it is unclear if these were the actual rockets or their interception by the Iron Dome. The IDF tweeted that seven launches were detected from the Gaza Strip in the initial volley toward the Jerusalem area, one was intercepted by air defense forces.

Lapid and Bennett Hold Talks Aimed at 'Unity Government'; Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid, currently tasked with forming a government, and Yamina chair Naftali Bennett, held a series of meetings with political leaders on Friday aimed at establishing a unity government. "The meetings were all held in good spirits and with a willingness to proceed," a joint statement from the "change bloc" leaders said after the talks. A first meeting was held with New Hope leader Gideon Sa'ar. Yesh Atid said in a statement that the discussions, held at Lapid's home in Tel Aviv, "advanced positively."

'Major Attack' in Israel Foiled—3 Gunmen Shot in Firefight Near Military Base; Three Palestinians who opened fire at Border Police soldiers near a military base in the northern West Bank on Friday had initially planned to commit a "major attack" against civilians in central Israel, army and police officials said on Friday. Two of the gunmen were killed and the third was critically injured in a firefight with the Israeli

troops. The three attackers, all in their early 20s, were traveling on a bus with illegal Palestinian laborers en route to central Israel, and intended to commit the shooting there, a security official said. Forces had halted the bus near the border crossing between Israel and the West Bank as part of routine security efforts to stop illegal laborers from entering Israel. Shortly after, the three Palestinians got off the bus and opened fire at the soldiers.

Iran's Khamenei Says Fight Against Israel is a Public Duty; Iran's Supreme Leader on Friday called on Muslim nations to keep fighting against Israel, which he said was not a state but a "terrorist garrison" against the Palestinians. "The fight against this wretched regime is the fight against oppression and the fight against terrorism. And this is a public duty to fight against this regime," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said in a televised speech. Khamenei was speaking on Iran's annual Quds Day, which uses the Arabic name for Jerusalem, held on the last Friday of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

Israel Says Palestinian NGOs Funneled EU Donor Cash to Militants; Israel accused a Spanish resident of the occupied West Bank on Thursday of being part of a network of NGOs that it suspects of diverting sums "in the eight figures" from European donations to a Palestinian faction that is on the EU's terrorism blacklist. Juana Ruiz Rishmawi, a 62-year-old fundraiser for the Health Work Committees (HWC), a Palestinian aid group, was indicted in an Israeli military court on charges that included activity in a proscribed organization, illicit money transfers, and fraud. Israel's Shin Bet security agency named three Palestinian HWC staffers who, it said, had with Rishmawi "duped" European donors using financial records doctored to hide cash diversions to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP).

European Powers Tell Israel to Stop Jewish Building in East Jerusalem; France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Britain urged Israel on Thursday to halt the expansion of Jewish building in east Jerusalem. The joint statement came as tensions mounted in east Jerusalem ahead of a hearing that could see Palestinian families evicted from Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood where Jewish residents backed by an Israeli court have taken over some homes. "We urge the government of Israel to reverse its decision to advance the construction of 540 settlement units in the Har Homa E area of the West Bank, and to cease its policy of settlement expansion across the Palestinian Territories," the European nations said.

Hate Crimes Up 73% in NYC, Asians and Jews Most Targeted; A dramatic rise in attacks on Asian-Americans has led to an overall increase in hate crimes in New York City during 2021, while the number of crimes targeting Jews decreased slightly. Jews in New York were targeted in 54 hate crimes reported between Jan. 1 and May 2, down from 58 such crimes in the same period in 2020, according to New York Police Department figures released Monday. The NYPD's Hate Crime Task Force said the city recorded 180 hate crimes through May 2, compared to 104 such crimes during the same period last year, a 73% increase. Asians were the most targeted group with 80 hate crimes through May 2 — soaring from 16 in the same period in 2020. Jews were the next most targeted.

44 Israeli Experiments to Join Israel's Next Astronaut to Space; The sky isn't the limit for 44 Israeli research projects that are going to be carried out in outer space by Eytan Stibbe as part of the Rakia mission at the beginning of 2022. Stibbe is set to be Israel's second astronaut to be sent to outer space in a mission to the International Space Station, led by the Science and Technology Ministry and the Ramon Foundation. Stibbe is funding the \$50 million cost of his participation on the Ax-1 mission himself on what will be the first fully private crew in history to live and work aboard the ISS, run by the American company Axiom Space. While in space for 10 days, Stibbe will run a series of experiments created by Israeli start-ups, universities, and hospitals. Most of the experiments are not for space-related technologies but will test conditions in space that may lead to technological, scientific, and medical breakthroughs that will influence human life on earth – and perhaps beyond.

Hamas Rockets Damage Sderot Houses Amid Reports of Ceasefire Efforts; Two rockets hit houses in Sderot beside the Gaza border just as Hamas reportedly said that it is prepared for a "reciprocal ceasefire" as rocket barrages continued to slam into southern Israel on Friday. One rocket hit a home directly and caused extensive damage to two additional homes in the neighborhood, with no injuries reported. Another rocket that hit Sderot damaged a store in the city. A top Hamas official said the group is ready for a "reciprocal" ceasefire if the international community pressures Israel to "suppress military actions" on the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

IDF Strikes Hamas Tunnel Networks in Non-Stop Assault on Gaza; The Israeli Air Force bombed Hamas's underground tunnel network late Thursday night in the northern Gaza Strip in what military officials said was one of the most aggressive aerial assaults in recent years. They bombed an additional tunnel shaft in the southern Gaza Strip which was located near a kindergarten and a mosque, on Friday evening. According to a statement issued by IDF Spokesperson, this tunnel shaft is just one of the ways in which Hamas continues to endanger their civilian population with their military assets. A high-rise building that housed a branch of Hamas' Palestinian production bank, in the north of the Gaza Strip was destroyed by IDF forces late on Friday afternoon.

Continuous Rocket Attacks on Be'er Sheva; Heavy and continuous rocket barrages were launched this evening (Thursday) at communities in the south of the country, including Be'er Sheva, the Bedouin settlements, and the Gaza periphery. In response, Defense Minister Benny Gantz authorized the IDF to call up another 9,000 reservists per the operational needs, after an assessment of the security situation. The reservists are part of combat units and will be called upon to assist in Operation Guardian of the Walls. They will be stationed in the Southern Command as well as in the Central Command and the Northern Command, in place of forces that have been relocated to other missions.

Omar, 'Squad' Members' Under Fire for Criticizing Israeli Air Strikes; Rep. Ilhan Omar, D-MN, and other members of the left-wing "Squad" are facing backlash for their tweets amid intensifying violence between Israel and Hamas this week. Republican lawmakers and pro-Israel groups are pushing back against remarks by the progressive group that appeared to blame Israel for the violence. In a Twitter post on Monday, Omar wrote: "Israeli air strikes killing civilians in Gaza is an act of terrorism. Palestinians deserve protection. Unlike Israel, missile defense programs, such as Iron Dome, don't exist to protect Palestinian civilians. It's unconscionable to not condemn these attacks on the week of Eid." According to Israeli Defense Forces Lt. Colonel Jonathan Conricus, over 1,100 rockets were launched by Hamas into Israel over the last few days. Israeli counteroffensives targeted Hamas and the Islamic Jihad military complexes in Gaza.

Massive Rocket Barrage on Ben Gurion Airport, Central Israel; A massive barrage of rockets was fired from the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip towards central Israel Thursday night, including a large number of rockets launched towards the area surrounding Ben Gurion International Airport. Warning sirens were sounded across southern and central Israel Thursday night, including in cities and towns in the vicinity of Israel's largest airport, such as Modi'in, Lod, Ramle, Ben Shemen, Mevo Modi'im, Be'er Yaakov, Kfar Daniel, and Achisamach. Heavy rocket fire was also directed at Ashdod, Ashkelon, and nearby towns. Earlier on Thursday, multiple rockets were fired from southwestern Lebanon towards Israel. An IDF spokesperson said that three rockets had been observed being launched from southern Lebanon towards the coast of northern Israel.

Germany Vows 'No Tolerance' after Israel-Flag Burning Outside Synagogues; Germany on Thursday vowed "unwavering" protection of its synagogues after scattered demonstrations over the escalating military conflict between Israel and Gaza-based terror groups saw protesters shout anti-Israeli slogans and

burn Israeli flags. “There must be no tolerance for attacks against synagogues in our country,” German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas told the Funke media group, pledging “unwavering security” for Jewish temples in Germany. Last week, protesters burned Israeli flags outside synagogues in Muenster and Bonn in western Germany, with 16 people arrested.

IDF Hits Hamas Center after Barrages on Tel Aviv, Beersheba; Hamas operatives fired large fusillades of rockets at the Tel Aviv area and Beersheba and toward Eilat’s airport on Thursday afternoon, in what the terror group said was an act of revenge for its commanders who were killed in Israeli strikes this week. A few dozen rockets were fired in the attacks, which triggered sirens throughout central Israel and the northern Negev desert. A 60-year-old woman was slightly injured by shrapnel in the town of Kiryat Gat in southern Israel, along with a 7-year-old boy and 40-year-old woman who were injured while running to bomb shelters, medics said. Following the rocket fire, the Israeli military said it struck a number of Hamas targets in Gaza, including an intelligence facility with dozens of terrorist operatives inside, as heavy rocket fire at Beersheba and other southern communities continued into the evening.

Gantz Orders Callup of Border Patrol Reserves as Jewish-Arab Violence Spirals; After a night of violence that saw Jewish and Arab rioters wreak havoc in several towns, overwhelming local police, Defense Minister Benny Gantz on Thursday ordered a major call-up of Border Police reservists to bolster officers working to contain the unrest. Ten companies of reservists from the paramilitary Border Police were to be brought in, the Defense Ministry said in a statement. “We are in a time of emergency,” Gantz said, noting the nationalist background of the turmoil. “At this time a massive response by forces on the ground is needed.”

Ben-Gurion Closes to Arriving Flights; Ben-Gurion Airport began rerouting all inbound flights to Ramon International Airport in southern Israel on Thursday morning, as terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip continued to launch rockets into Israeli territory. Departing flights will still take off from Ben-Gurion Airport. Hamas' military wing, the Izzadin al-Qassam Brigades, sent out a blast message on Thursday to international airlines, warning them that they will be targeting Israeli airports, and called it a "legal disclaimer" to serve as a warning. United Airlines, Delta Airlines, and American Airlines have canceled flights between the United States and Tel Aviv, according to data by flight tracker FlightAware, amid an escalating conflict in Israel.

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