

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update June 10, 2021 (30<sup>th</sup> Sivan, 5781)***



## ***For the Yachad Report Newsletter For June 2021***

***New Government to be Sworn In on Wednesday;*** Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will leave office after 4,454 consecutive days on Wednesday when the new government of incoming Prime Minister Naftali Bennett is scheduled to be sworn in, a Likud source said on Thursday night. While Knesset Speaker Yariv Levin would like to keep Netanyahu in office as long as possible, sources acknowledged that he does not intend to fight over a few extra days in deciding when the new government will be brought to a vote of confidence in the Knesset. "We don't want to deal with a challenge to the Supreme Court, receive bad press and look like sore losers," a Likud source said. "We fight the Supreme Court over more serious issues." The following Monday, June 14, has also not been ruled out.

***Israel Arrests Top Hamas Leader in Predawn Raid;*** The Israel Defense Forces said they arrested a top Hamas leader during a raid in the West Bank early Wednesday. Sheikh Jamal Tawil is allegedly linked to a number of suicide bombings and has been arrested by Israel multiple times. "Tawil is a senior figure in the Hamas terror group in the West Bank, who recently took an active part in organizing riots, inciting violence, and reforming Hamas's headquarters in Ramallah," the IDF said in a statement. Hamas responded to the arrest by saying it would not "silence" the group's voice in the region. "The sons of Hamas and its commanders are all soldiers of the resistance, and they will continue the path of freedom and liberation whatever the sacrifices," the statement said. Israel has cracked down on Hamas since the Israel-Gaza conflict last month, arresting 10 activists just on May 20. This week Hamas called for Palestinians to exhibit a "Day of rage" against Israeli treatment on Friday. This comes amid a ceasefire between the two sides. Hundreds of people, mostly Palestinian, died during the 11-day conflict last month.

***Massive Fire Breaks Out at Oil Refinery Serving Tehran;*** A massive fire broke out Wednesday night at the oil refinery serving Iran's capital Tehran. The fire sent thick plumes of black smoke over Tehran. It was not immediately clear if there were injuries. The fire struck the state-owned Tondgooyan Petrochemical Co. to the south of Tehran, said Mansour Darajati, the director-general of the capital's crisis management team. Firefighters believe it struck a pipeline for liquefied petroleum gas at the facility, Darajati told Iranian state television. He did not elaborate. It was not immediately clear what started the blaze, but AP noted that

temperatures in Tehran reached nearly 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) on Wednesday. Hot summer weather in Iran has caused fires in the past.

***Iran, Turkey Among Top 10 Nations with Most New COVID Cases;*** When the World Health Organization announced on June 2 that it had recorded 3.5 million new COVID-19 infections in the prior week (a 15 percent decline from the week before), two countries in the Middle East appeared among the top ten nations with the most new cases: Iran had the sixth-largest number of cases worldwide with over 69,000, and Turkey had the ninth-largest number of new cases at over 57,000. Despite this, Turkey eased restrictions to prevent the spread of the coronavirus on June 1, including loosening weekend curfew rules and allowing small groups of people to be served in restaurants and cafés. Iranian authorities announced earlier this week that it hopes to begin its first state-sponsored COVID-19 vaccination drive in September. This comes as the death toll from the virus has passed 304,000 in the Islamic Republic.

***Reduced to 'Begging' for Funds, 7 Hospitals to Boycott Pandemic Victory Ceremony;*** Plans for a government event honoring the health system for COVID-fighting efforts have taken an embarrassing turn after seven hospitals announced they were boycotting the event because they feel the government has abandoned them financially since the pandemic. Israel's seven "public" hospitals — meaning institutions that are open to all patients and rely mostly on state funds, though they are privately owned — are taking the stand together, they announced on Thursday. In the statement, the institutions said it would be "ridiculous" for them to attend the Health Ministry-organized ceremony on Sunday, which is likely to involve Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

***Honduras to Open Embassy in Jerusalem this Month, President to Travel to Israel;*** Honduras will open an embassy in Jerusalem this month, the country's president said Thursday, in a bid to build closer ties with Israel after decades of operating in Tel Aviv. The Central American nation previously opened a commercial office in Jerusalem, breaking a decades-long policy of neutrality in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Israel is set to open a diplomatic office in Tegucigalpa, Honduras's capital city, in response, after opening a temporary representative office in the Honduran capital last August.

***Israeli Shark & Dolphin Expert Named National Geographic Emerging Explorer;*** University of Haifa researcher Dr. Aviad Scheinen has been named by National Geographic as one of the 15 Emerging Explorers of 2021, changing the world "one idea at a time." Scheinen is the head of the Marine Apex Predator Lab at the university's Morris Kahn Marine Research Station. In this capacity, he has for decades been one of Israel's leading researchers on sharks, rays, and coastal dolphins. He made waves in his recent long-term project, the first of its kind, that examined the behavior of coastal dolphins, and also made a significant splash by discovering gray whales and false killer whales in the eastern Mediterranean. Scheinen is also a co-founder of the nonprofit Delphis organization and led the establishment of the Dolphin and Sea Center, an Israeli conservationist institution.

***German Army Appoints Chief Rabbi for 1st Time in a Century;*** For the first time in 100 years and 76 years after the Holocaust ended, the German Army will appoint a chief rabbi and other rabbis to its military chaplaincy. Rabbi Mordechai Eliezer (Zsolt) Balla's appointment ceremony will take place in Leipzig in three weeks' time, according to several reports said this week. At least ten other rabbis will also be appointed to various positions in the German army, the reports said. "It is a great responsibility. We need to help all Jews [in the army] live a Jewish life, if they are looking for Kosher food, if they are looking for the opportunity to pray," Balla said on Thursday.

***Lapid Informs President He Can Form Government, Removing Netanyahu from Power;*** Thirty-five minutes before a midnight deadline, Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid on Wednesday night informed President

Reuven Rivlin he is able to form a government in which he and Yamina chief Naftali Bennett will switch off as prime minister, positioning themselves to replace Israel's longest-serving leader Benjamin Netanyahu as premier. Under the terms of the new coalition, Bennett is to serve as prime minister until September 2023, when Lapid will take over from him until the end of the Knesset term in November 2025. The agreement came together after Ra'am leader Mansour Abbas threw his support behind the would-be government late on Wednesday night, setting up his Islamist party to be the first majority Arab party in decades to be part of a ruling coalition. Despite Lapid's declaration, it remained unclear that the prospective "change government" will make it past the finish line. It is set to include 61 of the 120 MKs — the narrowest possible majority. And an MK from Bennett's Yamina, Nir Orbach, earlier on Wednesday night announced he could vote against the new coalition, a move that could potentially doom the prospective razor-thin government of right-wing, centrist, left-wing parties and the Islamist Ra'am.

***Isaac Herzog Elected 11th President of the State of Israel by Wide Margin;*** Jewish Agency chairman Isaac Herzog will be the 11th president of the State of Israel after he received 87 votes from MKs in a secret ballot vote in the Knesset plenum. Herzog's opponent, Israel Prize-winning educator Miriam Peretz, received 27 votes and three MKs abstained. Had she been elected, Peretz would have become Israel's first woman president. It was the largest victory in any presidential election in Israel's history. Herzog will take over for President Reuven Rivlin when his term ends on July 9.

***Disaster for Iran as its Largest Naval Ship Sinks;*** Iran suffered another humiliating disaster after its largest naval ship, which it calls a naval training support vessel, was destroyed in a fire. The fire happened near the port of Jask, as rumors circulated throughout the night. The disaster was confirmed in the morning by Iran's Tasnim News, and other sources reported the same. Iran says that "measures were taken to extinguish the fire; the trained personnel disembarked and were taken to shore." It is not clear whether the fire was accidental, but tensions have loomed over the region for the last year amid reports of various attacks on vessels of Iran and Israel as well as Iranian harassment of US ships. Iranian ships swarmed a US Coast Guard vessel in April, and the US seized an Iranian shipment of weapons on a Dhow in May.

***Gantz Slams Netanyahu over Threat that Israel will Ignore US on Iran;*** Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Benny Gantz clashed on Tuesday after the prime minister issued a veiled threat against the Biden administration's continued effort to return to the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran. "Our greatest threat is the existential threat posed by Iran's efforts to arm itself with nuclear weapons, whether to threaten us directly with atomic weapons, with the destruction of a small state or to threaten us with tens of thousands of missiles or a great many missiles backed by a nuclear umbrella," Netanyahu said at a ceremony for incoming Mossad Director David Barnea. "This is a threat against the continuation of the Zionist enterprise, and we must fight this threat relentlessly." Addressing the Mossad agents seated in front, he said: "All of you do this. We spoke yesterday about the actions that have been taken, and these actions must continue. I have said these things to my friend of 40 years, [US President] Joe Biden, and I told him, 'With or without an agreement, we will continue to do everything in our power to prevent Iran from arming itself with nuclear weapons.'" Following Netanyahu's veiled threat against the Biden administration's policy of seeking to return to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, Gantz said differences should be resolved quietly and without unnecessarily "defiant rhetoric."

***UK Records Record Number of Anti-Semitic Incidents in May;*** A record number of anti-Semitic incidents in May was recorded by the Community Security Trust (CST), the main organization that provides security and assistance to the UK Jewish community, reported the Jewish Chronicle. The CST recorded 325 incidents between May 8 and May 27. The number surpassed the high of 317 incidents recorded during Operation Protective Edge in 2014. There was a 392 percent increase in reported anti-Semitic incidents from the number reported 20 days before the start of the 11-day conflict between Israel and Hamas. Of the recorded incidents, 116 took place online while 209 took place in person.

***Israel Summons Argentina's Amb over Vote to Investigate Alleged War Crimes;*** The Foreign Ministry summoned Argentine Ambassador to Israel Sergio Urribarri for clarification about his country's vote at the UN Human Rights Council last week in favor of creating a permanent investigatory panel into alleged Israeli war crimes. Modi Ephraim, head of the Foreign Ministry's Latin America and Caribbean division, said on Tuesday that Argentina's vote is unacceptable to Israel as it ignores Hamas terrorism and the firing of close to 4,500 rockets at Israeli citizens. Ephraim noted that it is inconceivable that Argentina, whose country has suffered from terrorist attacks on Argentinian soil organized by both Iran and Hezbollah – with the bombing of the Israeli embassy in 1992 and the subsequent bombing of the AMIA building in 1994 – would shy away from condemning Hamas terrorism and support the UN commission instead.

***Israel Signs \$200 Million Deal to Sell Drones to Asian Country;*** The Israel Aerospace Industry said Tuesday it has signed a \$200 million deal to supply drone technology and services to an unspecified Asian country. The deal is for the sale of the IAI's Heron drone, including the more advanced MK II version. "The signing of this deal clearly expresses the satisfaction of our customers around the world, with the operational and technical performance of the Heron UAV system," said IAI director-general Boaz Levi.



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