

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update August 12, 2021 ***(4th Elul, 5781)***



[*For the Yachad Report Newsletter For August 2021*](#)

Israel Carries out Airstrikes against Lebanon after Rocket Fire; The Israeli Air Force struck southern Lebanon early Thursday morning, July 5, in the fourth round of retaliatory attacks following rocket fire toward the city of Kiryat Shmona. The airstrikes were the most severe since the Second Lebanon War in 2006 and followed some 100 artillery shells that were fired by the IDF in response to the rocket fire. The strikes targeted the direct areas from where the rockets were fired, as well as other locations from where rockets had previously been fired. The IAF also struck additional infrastructure used for terrorism, according to a statement released by the military.

Will Faith Protect Israel from the Fourth COVID-19 Wave?; Faith could be one of the keys to helping Israel successfully ride the fourth COVID-19 wave if success against the Delta variant is judged by the number of people who die from the virus. According to a new study conducted by Prof. Uzi Rebhum of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, any 1% increase in the number of residents with a strong religious identity is expected to reduce mortality rates by about a third. Rebhum, whose study was published in the British journal *Migration Letters*, examined population characteristics and environmental factors to determine which one contributes most to a country's ability to effectively deal with the pandemic. Israel was ranked first among OECD countries for managing COVID then, making it a role model for other countries around the world. Rebhum said that although this research was conducted during the first wave, "I interpret and draw conclusions for the current COVID wave." The more religious a country was – judged by the percentage of the population that goes to pray at least once per week – the lower its mortality rate was during the first 100 days of the pandemic, Rebhum said.

Israel to Send Firefighters to Greece to Battle Wildfires; Israel is sending a 16-man delegation of firefighters to Greece, to help battle the wildfires that have been raging in the country over the past few days, in the wake of extremely hot weather, with temperatures surging as high as 45C / 113F. The delegation left on Friday, August 6, following a request for assistance from the Greek government, and was coordinated by the Israeli embassy in the Greek capital of Athens, the Israeli Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Internal Security, the Fire Fighters Organization, and the National Security Agency. A statement issued on behalf of Foreign Minister Lapid noted that "Israel is coming to the aid of Greece due to our mutual sense of responsibility and amicable relations. The entire region is grappling with climate change challenges, and wildfires are

threatening human lives and property." "I thank our firefighters who represent the State of Israel and are now coming to the aid of our Greek friends."

UNRWA to Probe 10 Staff Members for Anti-Israel Hate Speech; The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian refugees (UNRWA) pledged to investigate 10 of its staff members for anti-Israel hate speech following a report by the Geneva-based NGO UN Watch that highlighted such activity. "The Agency takes each allegation seriously. It has immediately launched a thorough investigation," UNRWA stated. Earlier this week, UN Watch reported that 22 UNRWA school employees had authored social media posts that glorified terrorism including against Israel, denied Israel's right to exist, advocated violence over peace, put Hitler in a positive light, and blamed Jews for the COVID-19 pandemic. "We are concerned that some of the posts violate our rules and policies, and should misconduct be found, UNRWA will take immediate administrative or disciplinary action," UNRWA said in response to the report. But it did not pledge to fire the employees. It explained that when it dealt with such violations of its policy in the past, those employees were censured or fined. UN Watch has called on UNRWA to fire employees engaged in incitement against Israel, antisemitism, and glorification of terror. It has also demanded that UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres investigate UNRWA's educational system, which runs for 539,000 refugee Palestinian children in Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem. "UNRWA's failure to fire a single teacher of hate, and its scurrilous resort to ad hominem attacks on those seeking to combat antisemitism, makes it clear that they are incapable of investigating themselves on incitement, just like on corruption and abuse," UN Watch executive director Hillel Neuer said.

Cabinet to Approve President Herzog's Brother as Amb to US; Veteran political negotiator and brother of President Isaac Herzog, Michael Herzog, is Prime Minister Naftali Bennett's leading candidate for ambassador to the US, a senior source in Jerusalem said on Thursday. Currently, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, Herzog had a long IDF career including as head of strategic planning and retired a brigadier general. He later served as a senior adviser to defense ministers Ehud Barak, Amir Peretz, Shaul Mofaz, and Binyamin Ben-Eliezer, including as chief of staff to the defense minister. He was former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's special envoy on the peace process 2009-2010 and was a negotiator in the secret channel between Israel and the Palestinians 2013-2014. He previously participated in most rounds of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, Jordanians and Syrians, including the Wye Plantation summit, Camp David summit, Annapolis, and others hosted by the Americans, and as such has many connections in Washington.

El Al to Try Inflight COVID-19 Testing; Israel's national carrier El Al held a trial for inflight COVID-19 testing on Thursday, August 5, in a plan that will enable passengers to skip the mandatory tests that all arrivals are required to undergo when they land at Ben Gurion Airport. There have been numerous complaints about long and crowded lines at the airport, as arriving passengers wait to take their tests. These have sparked concerns that the conditions could facilitate the spread of the virus among the crowds. The voluntary pilot program was tried on an El Al flight leaving New York's John F. Kennedy Airport at 2 p.m. local time, carrying about 280 passengers. It is being done in coordination with the Health Ministry and the Femi Premium company, which operates COVID-19 testing facilities at Ben Gurion, as well as XpresCheck, a US company that carries out testing at JFK. Specially qualified personnel will perform throat and nose swabs while wearing personal protection outfits and disposable gloves — the latter replaced between passengers. The tests will be placed in a culture used for transporting samples and stored in special refrigerated coolers during the flight. Each sample will be marked with a barcode to identify the passenger it came from. Passengers will be asked to provide details such as name, passport number, address, and telephone number, in order to inform them of the test results. Tests will cost NIS 80 (\$25) each for passengers who sign up for the program before the flight.

Six Palestinians Injured in Clashes with Israeli Security Forces in Jenin; Six Palestinians were wounded in a firefight with Israeli Police in the city of Jenin overnight on Monday, August 2, as Israeli security forces conducted arrest operations. The arrest operation was carried out by IDF troops from the Menashe Regional Brigade along with Israel Police and its Counterterrorism Unit. According to Palestinian News Agency Wafa, Israeli forces and undercover units clashed with Palestinian youths after they raided the city's industrial area. One Palestinian was seriously injured in his stomach after being shot by troops and he was rushed to a hospital in Nablus. The other five were injured after being shot by troops as well. A statement released by the Border Police said that troops fired towards a number of Palestinians who fired live ammunition, hurled explosives and Molotov cocktails at them. While there were no injuries to Israeli security forces, an armored vehicle was damaged in the fighting.

Ministers Approve Slew of New Restrictions to Curb Covid Resurgence; The high-level coronavirus cabinet on Tuesday evening approved a raft of new restrictions that will go into effect on Sunday, August 8, after the daily COVID-19 caseload surpassed 3,000 for the first time since March. Under the new rules, which the ministers adopted on the advice of Health Ministry officials, masks are to be required outdoors for gatherings of 100 people or more; in-office work for public servants is to be scaled back to 50 percent, with the private sector encouraged to allow employees to work from home; and vaccinated caretakers of infected children under 12 years old are to be required to self-isolate. In its effort to contain the renewed COVID-19 outbreak, which has been blamed on the fast-spreading Delta variant, the government also agreed to expand the Green Pass system to all gatherings from August 20 — not merely those with over 100 people, as is currently the case — and restrict access to public venues to unvaccinated children. The high-level coronavirus cabinet on Tuesday evening approved a raft of new restrictions that will go into effect on Sunday, August 8, after the daily COVID-19 caseload surpassed 3,000 for the first time since March.

Lebanon Seethes with Grief and Rage as it Marks One Year since Beirut Blast; Lebanon on Wednesday marked a year since a cataclysmic explosion ravaged Beirut, with a mix of grief over lost lives and rage at the impunity for its worst peacetime disaster at a time when its economy was already in tatters. Shortly after 6 p.m. on August 4, 2020, a stock of ammonium nitrate fertilizer haphazardly stored at the city's port exploded and left swaths of the Lebanese capital looking like a war zone. What went down as one of the largest non-nuclear blasts in history killed at least 214 people, leveled entire neighborhoods, irreparably scarred the nation's psyche, and deepened the country's economic abyss. With more than half the country living under the poverty line, former colonial power France aims to raise humanitarian aid at another international conference co-hosted by the UN on the anniversary. President Emmanuel Macron, at the start of the event, pledged 100 million euros (\$118 million) from France alone. But as the probe into the disaster stalls, he warned that Lebanese leaders "owe their people the truth and transparency" over what happened. The countries already reviled political class has hidden behind its proclaimed immunity to avoid prosecution, delaying the lead investigating judge's work at every turn.

Controversial Holocaust Memorial in Westminster Approved; A major Holocaust memorial, set to be built in London's Victoria Tower Gardens, has been approved after many years of debate. The memorial, to be built next to the Houses of Parliament, will feature an underground study center, and 23 bronze fins will be erected to represent the number of countries whose Jewish populations were persecuted during the Holocaust. First proposed by Prime Minister David Cameron in 2016, the plans were rejected by the Westminster City Council's planning committee amid opposition from local residents and several peers. The proposals were finally put through a public inquiry, which took place online last year, and the divisive project was finally green-lighted. Backers of the £100 million project include London Mayor Sadiq Khan, Labour leader Keir Starmer, the Association of Jewish Refugees, the Holocaust Educational Trust, and the Jewish Board of Deputies. Objectors argued that a Jewish memorial being granted such a coveted London spot falls into anti-Semites' depiction of Jews as a privileged group receiving "special treatment." They also expressed concern

over the central location being the target of terrorist attacks. Another aspect to draw criticism is the architectural design, described by free-speech activist Carl Benjamin as “hideous.” Others referred to the monument’s scale as being out of character for the famously tranquil oasis, frequented by over 3 million visitors a year.

Germany Announces \$40 Million Investment in Antisemitism Research; The German government said Wednesday it will strengthen its battle against the quickly growing antisemitism in the country by investing 35 million euros (\$41.5 million) into research and educational projects focused on understanding its causes and effectively fighting hatred of Jews. Police registered 2,351 cases of antisemitism in Germany last year, which was an increase of 15% compared to the year before, officials reported. “This is the highest number in the last couple of years,” said German Education and Research Minister Anja Karliczek. “There’s reason for worry that this is only the tip of the iceberg and that the unreported number of daily attacks on Jews is substantially higher.” She said millions would be given to universities to examine the different facets of hatred against Jews and to develop strategies on what to best do against it.

Israel in Contact with Most Arab Countries, Including Iraq; The Foreign Ministry maintains some form of contact with almost all Arab countries, including ones officially designated as “enemy states” like Iraq, a senior Foreign Ministry official said Tuesday, August 3. “Over the last twenty years, the Foreign Ministry was always in touch with almost all the players in the Arab World,” said the outgoing director of the Foreign Ministry’s Middle East Division, Haim Regev, during a briefing in Jerusalem. While he clarified that this list of covert contacts does not include Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, it does extend to Baghdad. In 2019, Iraqi ambassador in Washington Fareed Yasseen said, “There are objective reasons that may call for the establishment of relations between Iraq and Israel,” speaking in Arabic at an event entitled “How Iraq Is Dealing with the Current Regional and International Developments” at the Al-Hewar Center for Arab Culture and Dialogue in Washington. He noted that there is an important Iraqi community in Israel, and they are still proud of their Iraqi attributes. “At their weddings, there is Iraqi culture of celebration. At their weddings, there are Iraqi songs,” the veteran diplomat, who has served in DC since November 2016, went on. Yasseen also noted “outstanding” Israeli technologies in the fields of water management and agriculture.



Robert I. Solomon: Messianic Rabbi, rabbisolomon@yachad.com

Jeffery Blalock: Ministries Coordinator, jeffery@yachad.com

Yachad Ministries, 950 Pine Grove Road, Roswell, Georgia 30075

E-mail: info@yachad.com, Web Page: <https://www.yachad.com/>

Phone: 770-641-3000 (ext. 6)

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