

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update October 7, 2021*** ***(1<sup>st</sup> Cheshvan, 5782)***



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

### ***Christians, Religious Minorities in Afghanistan Now Face Greater Danger Under Taliban Rule;***

The highly criticized United States withdrawal from Afghanistan leaves local Christians and many other religious minority groups fearful following the Taliban takeover of the country. Before the Taliban took control over Afghanistan, the country ranked second on an annual report of countries where Christians face the most extreme persecution released by Open Doors. The international NGO advocating on behalf of persecuted Christians, also found that there was a 60% increase globally of Christians being killed for faith-related reasons in 2020 up from 2019. The March for the Martyrs, the first large-scale march in U.S. history to stand in solidarity with Christians around the world, will be hosted in the nation's capital this year. The march, hosted by For the Martyrs, has moved from Long Beach, California, amid the current situation in Afghanistan to raise further awareness. The founding president of For the Martyrs, Gia Chacon, said that it couldn't be better timing that the march will be held in D.C., sharing "everyone's been paying attention to what's been going on in Afghanistan ... the reports of Christians who are now hunted down ... killed for their faith."

### ***Jews on Spanish Island Get First 'Public' Sukkah;***

Before the Spanish Inquisition, the island of Mallorca had a sizable Jewish community. Every fall, the island became dotted with the leaf-roofed huts that Jews are commanded to erect during the holiday of Sukkot. But that all changed under the Inquisition's campaign of persecution that began in 1488 (four years before it started on Spain's mainland) and was only officially abolished centuries later in 1834. This year, however, the island's tiny Jewish community in the capital Palma is determined to reintroduce its Sukkot tradition with a public statement. Ahead of the holiday this week, the Jewish community along with the municipality of Palma have erected what organizers are calling the island's first "public" sukkah since the Inquisition, situated in the city's former Jewish Quarter. "It's one of several firsts for the Jews of Mallorca, and it's especially meaningful because it restores something from this community's past," said Dani Rotstein, founder of Limud Mallorca and secretary of the Jewish Community of the Balearic Islands. A tourism and video production professional from New Jersey, he has led efforts to promote Mallorca's Jewish community since he moved there in 2014.

### ***Amid Iron Dome Funding Spat, Gantz Says US Remains Israel's Closest Ally;***

Defense Minister Benny Gantz indicated on Thursday, September 23, that a Congressional decision to nix funding for the Iron Dome missile defense system would not seriously affect defense ties between Israel and the United States.

Speaking publicly about the highly touted relationship between the allies for the first time since Democrats temporarily took \$1 billion earmarked to restock interceptor missiles off the table this week, Gantz said that the countries' ties would remain strong. "Our alliance with the United States is the result of deep security ties, which are based on common security interests and above all on shared values," Gantz said. "That's how it has been and that's how it will continue to be." The defense minister's comments came two days after a group of progressive Democrats in the US Congress successfully lobbied their party leadership to nix a \$1 billion earmark to fund Israel's Iron Dome from a bill funding the US federal government. While the Iron Dome funding has since been introduced in Congress as a separate bill and is widely expected to pass, the incident has raised questions about the future of Democratic Party support for the State of Israel.

***Time For Action Against Iranian Nukes;*** Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett will use his address at the United Nations General Assembly session Monday to focus on Iran's atomic aspirations and its support for terrorism, and less on the Israel-Palestinian conflict, an official close to the prime minister said Sunday, September 26. Speaking with journalists Sunday afternoon, the official said that Bennett himself penned his address, set to be delivered at the UN General Assembly tomorrow. The address highlights both Iran's efforts to speed up its uranium enrichment program, as well as the terrorist war it is waging against Israel via proxies like Hezbollah and other terror groups. "Dialogue is important, but this is the time primarily for actions," Bennett wrote in his upcoming address. Bennett also devoted a segment of his address to the coronavirus pandemic, and how he believes Israel can serve as an example of how to avoid further lockdowns, using practical solutions such as the COVID vaccine. The address also highlights the Abraham Accords, and argues that additional peace agreements between Israel and moderate Arab states will lead to 'a new spirit' across the Middle East. The general message of the address, the source said, is optimism about Israel's future, leaning heavily both on the expansion of the Abraham Accords and Israel's avoidance of further lockdowns against the COVID pandemic. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict, on the other hand, will receive less attention in the prime minister's address, the official said Sunday. "The Palestinian issue is another subject, one of many issues, which the State of Israel is dealing with, but it is not the primary issue." Bennett, the official added, will not directly respond to Palestinian Authority chief Mahmoud Abbas' UN address. "People would be better off trying to help their people and not obsessing over Israel." The official added that Bennett is staunchly opposed to the formation of a Palestinian state and that there are no plans to resume final status talks with the PA.

***After Khamenei's Anti-Israel Tirade, Athletes Want IOC to Suspend Iran;*** The executive manager of United for Navid, an Iranian-run sports organization advancing the human rights of Iranian athletes, filed on Tuesday a formal letter of protest with the International Olympic Committee (IOC), arguing that the Islamic Republic should be suspended from the IOC because Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei urged discrimination against Israeli athletes. Sardar Pashaei, a former head coach of Iran's Greco-Roman wrestling team, the executive manager of United for Navid, wrote to the IOC's President Thomas Bach that a video of Khamenei's anti-Israel speech is "further proof [of] Iran's grievous violations of the Olympic and Paralympic Charters." Attached to the letter was a video of Khamenei from September 17, in which he meets with Iranian Olympic and Paralympic athletes who won medals at the 2021 Tokyo Olympics. Pashaei wrote: "As you can see, the Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic once again firmly instructs Iranian athletes as well as Iranian sports officials that they are forbidden from competing or interacting in any way with athletes from the so-called 'Israeli criminal regime.' The Supreme Leader also instructs senior Iranian sports officials to support non-Iranian athletes from other countries who refuse to compete with Israeli athletes, including an Algerian athlete who refused to compete with an Israeli athlete at the Tokyo Olympics."

***Iranian Witness to Torture of Wrestler Navid Afkari Killed;*** A witness to the sustained torture of champion Iranian wrestler Navid Afkari died under mysterious circumstances in solitary confinement on Tuesday, September 21, in Greater Tehran Prison, according to his family. The US government media outlet

Radio Farda reported on the death of Shahin Naseri and said it obtained his latest audio message from inside the prison. Naseri said he was an “eyewitness to medieval torture” of Afkari. He announced his "solidarity" with Navid’s brothers, Vahid and Habib, who are incarcerated, "because of the baseless hatred and baseless accusations against the citizens of Iran and the violation of the most basic citizenship rights" by the Islamic Republic. Naseri said he was “disgusted” and "demands the revocation of his citizenship of this regime." He accused regime officials of "grand thefts" and called on the Iranian people to "support" the protests of citizens in Khuzestan, Sistan and Kurdistan, and to "stand up for them." The Iranian-American human rights expert and activist Lawdan Bazargan said "the sudden death of Shahin Naseri, a witness to the torture of Navid Afkari, Iranians' beloved champion who was unjustly executed last year, was unexpected but not surprising. The Islamic Republic of Iran [IRI] is a mafia regime that kills and eliminates its opponents and people who do not fall in line with its oppressive measures, to stay in power."

***Family Marks 2,000 Days Since British Woman Jailed in Iran First Arrested;*** The husband of detained UK charity worker Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe appeals to the British government to be brave in its dealings with Iran as the family marked 2,000 days since her arrest there. Richard Ratcliffe and the couple’s 7-year-old daughter Gabriella stand on top of a snakes and ladders game board in Parliament Square, symbolizing the dilemma of being caught between two governments. Zaghari-Ratcliffe is one of several people with British or dual-British nationality now being held there. “It’s 2,000 days of ups and downs and twists and turns and false dawns, and snakes and ladders seemed to encapsulate that because we’re in the middle of a game between two governments, we’re just a bargaining chip in it,” he says. The Foreign Office insists that the case is a priority for Liz Truss, who recently took over as foreign secretary. She raised the case before her Iranian counterpart yesterday. “The government needs to be brave and just start doing things that will cause a rethink amongst those in charge of Iran’s hostage-taking action,” Ratcliffe says.

***Ukraine Passes New Law Defining Concept of Antisemitism;*** Ukraine's parliament on Wednesday, September 22, passed a law defining the concept of antisemitism and establishing punishment for transgressions. An estimated 0.2% of Ukraine's 41 million population is Jewish and there have been isolated cases of antisemitism since independence in 1991. Its pre-war Jewish population of about 1.5 million was virtually wiped in the Nazi Holocaust. "The lack of a clear definition of antisemitism in Ukrainian legislation does not allow for the proper classification of crimes committed on its basis," the law's authors said. "In practice, this leads to the actual impunity of offenders," they said. The law, passed in the final reading by 283 votes with the required minimum of 226, defines antisemitism as hatred of Jews and bans it. Its manifestation can be directed at Jews as well as their property, religious buildings or communities. It did spell out punishments but allows victims to claim compensation for material and moral damage. To enter into force, the law must be signed by President Volodymyr Zelensky. The president's parents were Jewish and he has said he lost relatives in the Holocaust.

***Israelis in Lod Seek Religious Exemption from Sleeping in Sukkah as Local Arabs Go on Rampage;*** For most of its history, Lod, composed of two-thirds Jews and one-third Arabs, was a model of coexistence. That dream was shattered in May when the Arabs rioted, attacking Jews in the streets carrying out arson, stone-throwing, and vandalism. The Jews reacted, sometimes violently. Prime Minister Netanyahu declared a state of emergency in Lod on 11 May, marking the first time since 1966 that Israel has used emergency powers over an Arab community. At least three synagogues were targeted by firebombs. After the 11-day conflict between Israel and Gaza ended, it seemed that the idealistic calm had returned to the seaside city. But this was not the case. As the final Jewish high holiday of Sukkot rolled around, the Jews of Lod began to prepare by erecting Sukkot (booths). Cases of rock-throwing were being reported as were dozens of cases in which Arabs destroyed Sukkot. In many cases, the temporary structures were not only overturned but the materials from which they were built were destroyed. Yedidyah Tzuckerman posted an image of one such Sukkah on Facebook with the caption, “The new branch of sport in Lod: destroying Jewish Sukkot”. MK Nir

Orbach responded to the post saying: “A lot of frustration and a lot of sadness. The Sukkah symbolizes our ephemerality and that we must trust our Father in heaven. May God stop the hand that corrupted this Sukkah and other Sukkot. And I demand that the Israeli police get their hands on the vandals.”

***Leader of Bin Laden's Former Black Guard Obtains High Rank in Afghan Taliban;*** The leader of Osama bin Laden's former Black Guard and mastermind behind his escape from the U.S. bombing at Tora Bora in 2001 is now back in charge of Taliban fighters in Afghanistan. 'Anwar ul Haq Mujahid, the son of Younus Khalis, has returned with hundreds of vehicles and thousands of supporters to his family's seat of power and to a heroic welcome in Jalalabad,' a senior Afghan intelligence official who was recently deposed told the Daily Beast. The official claims that Mujahid's command is joined by others who helped al Qaeda in 2001. 'Everyone who worked closely with al Qaeda in 2001 is back in his entourage, which arrived by air from Doha to help establish the new government in Kabul and then traveled overland this past week from Kabul to Jalalabad. He is now in charge of both Taliban and foreign fighters in eastern Afghanistan, including a Chechen contingent.' Filippo Rossi, a journalist on the ground in Afghanistan, and a senior U.N. political official also confirmed Mujahid's return as a military commander.

***Lebanon's New PM Vows to Take Back Land it Sees as Occupied by Israel;*** Lebanon's new Prime Minister Najib Mikati vowed on Monday, September 20, to reclaim territories it sees as occupied by Israel while warning that the country has the right to respond to any aggression. Lebanese lawmakers convened on Monday to confirm the country's new government, following a power outage and a broken generator that briefly delayed the start of the parliament session. During the session, Mikati said that “Lebanese citizens have the right to oppose Israel's occupation and to respond to its attacks,” according to Israel's Kan public broadcaster. Mikati pledged that his government would continue to work to liberate territories it sees as occupied by Israel, according to the report. The Shebaa Farms — known in Hebrew as Mount Dov — is a small patch of land captured by Israel from Syria in 1967. Lebanon maintains that the strip of land is a part of Lebanon, despite it having been under Syrian control from the 1950s until it was captured and later annexed as part of the Golan Heights by Israel in 1981.

***Lapid Speaks with Sweden FM, Renewing High-Level Contacts After 7 Years;*** Foreign Minister Yair Lapid announced that he spoke with his Swedish counterpart, marking the first such call between the nations' top diplomats in seven years. “This phone conversation, the first in 7 years between the foreign ministers of our countries, symbolizes the relaunching of relations at this level,” Lapid tweeted on Monday, September 20, after he spoke with Sweden's Ann Linde last week. “I appreciate her statement regarding Sweden's strong and solid commitment to the security of Israel and her recognition in the course of our conversation of Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people,” Lapid added. Linde had tweeted on Wednesday, September 15, that the call was an “opportunity for me to wish him Shana Tova & emphasise the importance of our bilateral relationship.” “Both of us stressed that friendship & cooperation can & must go hand with respect for each other's convictions & differences,” she said. The previous Swedish foreign minister, Margot Wallstrom, repeatedly enraged Israel, starting with Sweden's recognition of a Palestinian state shortly after she took the post in October 2014.

***Head of 'Russian Mafia' in Israel Arrested Thanks to Informant;*** Police announced Monday, September 20, the arrest of the head of the so-called “Russian mafia” in southern Israel, crediting the successful operation to a close confidant of the mobster who it managed to turn into an informant. Michael Tansky was arrested along with 16 other members of his crime organization located in southern Israel. The 38-year-old subsequently appeared before the Askelon Magistrate's Court where his remand was extended by nine days. Police in a statement said their operation lasted roughly three months after officers managed to turn a senior member of Tansky's inner circle into an informant, who managed to incriminate his boss and 16 others from Ashdod, Ramle, and several Bedouin villages in the south. The informant was known to police by

the code name of Nikita. He was a former convict who was offered a way out of a life of crime by police in exchange for assistance in taking down Tansky. The informant's handlers had him carry out a number of weapon and drug sales that were used to incriminate Tansky and other suspects, police said, adding that the goal of the operation was to clip the wings of one of the most influential criminal organizations in the country.

***Half of Jewish College Students have Hidden their Identity;*** Half of Jewish students have at one point hidden their Jewish identity, according to a survey conducted by the Cohen Research Group in conjunction with The Louis D. Brandeis Center last April. Additionally, 65% of Jewish students stated that they had felt unsafe on campus. The survey also states that the longer Jewish students stay on campus, the more they feel they must hide their connection to Judaism rather than embracing it. The poll was conducted among students belonging to predominantly Jewish fraternities and sororities. Other main findings of antisemitism in the survey included 50% of members at the leading Jewish fraternity Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi) and 69% of the members at the leading Jewish sorority Alpha Epsilon Phi (AEPi) have personally experienced an anti-Semitic verbal attack.

***Yeshiva University Ranked as 68th Best College in the US;*** Yeshiva University (YU) continues to rise in the 2022 U.S. News & World Report Best College Rankings released this week and has secured the 68th spot – rising from No. 76 in 2021 and moving up 29 spots in the last two years. YU also placed No. 33 in the Best Value Schools category, up from 54th position last year. This accolade recognizes the colleges and universities that offer students the best value based on academic quality and average cost of attendance. “This continued rise in the rankings reflects strong execution on our long-term strategy of growth through investments in the key areas of Values & Leadership, STEM & Health, Entrepreneurship & Innovation, and Great Jobs & Impactful Careers,” said Dr. Ari Berman, president of Yeshiva University. “We are moving YU forward into its next great era, and I am deeply thankful to our faculty, staff, lay leaders and students who are driving our growth.”

***Baseball: Israel Overcomes Italy 11-5 to Reach Gold Medal Game;*** Team Israel upset tournament host Italy 11-5 in the semifinal game of the European Baseball Championships in Avigliano, Italy. The Israeli side beat the odds as well as a powerful Italian national team managed by iconic Hall of Famer Mike Piazza. The Blue and White responded with its own icon: 41-year-old pitcher Shlomo Lipetz, who has played on Israeli national teams at every level over a period that spans 4 decades. By winning Friday night, September 17, Israel earned its first-ever berth in the European Gold Medal game and will face-off against the heavily favored squad from the Netherlands on Sunday in Torino. While its potent offense produced 11 runs, reaching a double-digit score for the third time in five games, the key to Israel's success was once again its pitching. Shlomo Lipetz, having pitched for Israeli teams since 1989 thought he had earned a bye following his appearance with Israel's Olympic squad in Tokyo last month. The Tel Aviv native had planned to sit this tournament out to prepare for his upcoming wedding in NY only a few weeks away. “But Nate (Israel's newly appointed Manager Fish) called me, and I got on a plane.”

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