

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update October 28, 2021 (22th Cheshvan, 5782)



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For October 2021

IAF to Start Training for Strike on Iran Nuke Program in Coming Months; The Israeli Air Force will begin practicing for a strike on Iran's nuclear program beginning next year, having set aside funding and updated its training schedule for the mission, The Times of Israel has learned. In light of growing uncertainty regarding a return by Iran to the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, amid long-stalled negotiations with the United States, the Israel Defense Forces in recent months has ramped up its efforts to prepare a credible military threat against Tehran's nuclear facilities. Following the signing of the JCPOA in 2015, Israel put the issue of a military strike on the Iranian nuclear program on the back burner, allowing the IDF to invest its resources into other areas. But following the US abrogation of the nuclear deal in 2018 and Iran's subsequent violations of the agreement since then — which picked up considerably ahead of and during the stalled talks — the matter has taken on renewed importance to Israel, which sees an Iranian nuclear bomb as a near existential threat. In the beginning of this year, IDF Chief of Staff Aviv Kohavi announced he had instructed the military to begin drawing up fresh attack plans, and last week the government reportedly allocated billions of shekels toward making those plans viable. In his speech to the United Nations General Assembly last month, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett declared that "Iran's nuclear program has hit a watershed moment, and so has our tolerance. Words do not stop centrifuges from spinning... We will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon." Some aspects of the IAF's strike plan, which is still in the "draft" stage, could be ready within a short period of time, while others would take more than a year to be fully actionable. Preparing for such a strike has become a top priority for the Israeli Air Force and making the necessary preparations has required changes to its training schedule. In addition to having to find ways to strike Iranian facilities that are buried deep underground, requiring specialized munitions and tactics, the Israeli Air Force will have to deal with increasingly sophisticated Iranian air defenses in order to conduct such a strike. The air force will also have to prepare for an expected retaliation against Israel by Iran and its allies throughout the region.

Senior Al-Qaeda Commander in Syria Killed by US Army; The US military killed senior al-Qaeda leader Abdul Hamid al-Matar in a drone strike in Syria on Friday, October 22, a US Central Command spokesman said. "The removal of this al Qaeda senior leader will disrupt the terrorist organization's ability to further plot and carry out global attacks threatening US citizens, our partners, and innocent civilians," US

Army Major John Rigsbee said in a written statement. The strike comes two days after a US outpost in southern Syria was attacked. Rigsbee did not say if the US drone strike was carried out in retaliation.

Russia Disbanding Syrian Militia It Formed, Opening up Golan for Iran; Russia is attempting to disband a militia it formed, funded, and armed in southern Syria near the border with Israel over the past few years, a part of an ongoing reconciliation process in the province of Daraa. The Russian military police demanded earlier this month that groups affiliated with the Eighth Brigade hand over their weapons to the command of the brigade, the London-based Al-Quds al-Arabi reported. The leader of the group, which comprises mainly former opposition fighters, agreed two years ago to join the Syrian army with his 10,000-strong paramilitary. But soldiers of the 8th brigade of the 5th corps of the Syrian Arab Army are not paid by Damascus, but rather by the Russians. Reports have indicated they were not particularly loyal to the regime nor to its Iranian partners, and that Damascus and Tehran have long been unhappy with them. Since last month, when a Russian-brokered ceasefire came into force in the Daraa province, reconciliation efforts have been ongoing to allow rebels who refuse to disarm to be evacuated. The southern province of Daraa, held for years by opposition forces, was returned to government control in 2018 under a previous Moscow-backed ceasefire that had allowed rebels to stay in some areas. With the 8th brigade expected to be entirely disarmed, Israel is reported to be keeping a close eye on the border area. “This opens a wide door for the Iranians, for Hezbollah, for Assad’s forces... to complete a takeover of all this region near the [Israeli] Golan,” Channel 12 news Arab affairs analyst Ehud Ya’ari said Wednesday.

Israel and Iran Holding Separate Large Scale Aerial Drills; As tensions continue to rise between Iran and Israel, both countries are holding large-scale aerial exercises. Israel and seven nations – Germany, Italy, Britain, France, India, Greece and the US – are participating in Blue Flag 2021, the largest and most advanced aerial exercise ever held in the Jewish state. This year’s drills will focus on the integration of fourth- and fifth-generation aircraft, including the F-35 Adir in complex operational scenarios, the Israeli military said. IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kohavi visited the drill on Thursday, October 21, and was informed of what was learned so far. “This is an important and significant exercise, at both the strategic and tactical level,” he said, adding that “the unique cooperation with the air forces from around the world is an expression of the strategic state of the State of Israel.” The exercise will focus on “broadening and enhancing the operational capabilities of the participating forces,” with a focus on air-to-air and air-to-ground attacks, as well as evading ground-based air defense systems “and various operational scenarios in enemy territory,” the army said. The two-week drill which is taking place in the Negev desert out of Uvda Airbase marks the first time that a British fighter squadron has been deployed to Israel since the establishment of the state as well as the first time that India has sent a Mirage fighter squadron to Israel and that France has deployed a Rafal squadron to the Jewish state. Israel Air Force commander Maj.-Gen. Amikam Norkin, who took part in a symbolic flyover over Jerusalem alongside his German counterpart Lt.-Gen. Ingo Gerhartz last week, said that the threats posed to Israel continue to increase and that the drill is a “stepping stone” toward cooperation with other countries in the region. “We are living in a very complicated region, and the threats to the State of Israel from Gaza, Lebanon, Syria and Iran are only increasing,” he said. “Holding an international exercise in this current reality, while continuing our public and covert operational activities on all fronts, is of utmost strategic importance and has an extensive impact over the Israeli Air Force, the IDF and the State of Israel.” “This exercise is groundbreaking in terms of technology, quality of training, and the number of participating nations. It illustrates the partnership and strong bond between the nations’ air forces and acts as a stepping-stone toward regional and international cooperation,” Norkin said. Meanwhile, Iran’s Air Force kicked off Modafe’an Aseman-e Velayat 1400 (Guardians of ‘Velayat Sky’ 1400) on Thursday, which is aimed at testing the capabilities of the Islamic Republic’s Air Force. According to the Iranian Fars News Agency, the drill will see the use of indigenous and upgraded systems and weapons, including heavy and semi-heavy smart bombs, all kinds of laser, television, thermal, radar missiles, rockets and bombs.

Vaccinated Tourists to be Allowed into Israel Starting November 1; Israel will begin allowing tourists who have been vaccinated against the coronavirus into the country starting November 1, the Prime Minister's Office announced Thursday, October 21. Tourists will be allowed from all countries except 'red' countries and countries which are seeing an outbreak of the new AY4.2 variant. Six cases of the AY4.2 variant have been discovered in Israel so far. The first case to have been discovered in Israel was that of an eleven-year-old boy who had recently returned from Moldova and was already in quarantine when his test came back positive. On Wednesday, October 20, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett held a consultation with senior government and ministry figures on ways to combat the spread of the new mutation. The Prime Minister stressed that developments must be closely monitored and acted upon quickly. Bennett ordered that each case of the new strain in Israel be focused upon with an increased epidemiological investigation. It was also decided to contact countries in which the variant exists, in order to clarify and share information.

Israel and UAE Sign Historic Space Agreement; Israel and the UAE signed a historic space exploration and cooperation agreement last Wednesday, October 20, at 'World Space Week', part of 2020 Expo Dubai. Israel's Minister of Science, Technology and Space Orit Farkash, and the UAE's Minister of State for Advanced Technology Sarah Al Amiri signed the historic agreement together at Expo 2020's World Space Week, held throughout this week in Dubai. Alongside the umbrella agreement, two other specific cooperation projects were signed: one on the 'Beresheet 2' moon mission and the other on groundbreaking scientific research based on the Israeli-French satellite 'Venus' and its data. The Beresheet 2 is Israel's second attempt at launching a lunar mission. The first – named 'Beresheet' after the first word in the Torah meaning "in the beginning" – was launched in 2019 with the goal of landing on the surface of the moon, making Israel just the fourth country on the planet to attempt a moon landing. The agreement pertaining to the Israeli-French 'Venus' satellite will examine phenomena related to Earth resources, precision agriculture, desertification, and monitoring of bodies of water, among other research. By constantly examining the earth, the satellite will analyze agriculture, desertification, water monitoring, and climate change— issues common both to Israel and the Emirates. In addition, the two will promote a project with the participation of Arab and Jewish students from both countries. The project began as an educational initiative for Arab and Jewish students of the 'Nazareth Space Center' to study satellite engineering and astronomy, and is now being promoted between the two countries as they attempt to determine the exact timing of the moon's birth. After the two nations reached a historic peace deal just last year, this marks the fifteenth agreement in a row since the establishment of peace between the two countries. "It would be wonderful if we could develop a space program that would be a combination of Israel and the Arab world," SpaceIL's chairman Morris Kahn told the Global Investment Forum in Dubai on Wednesday. "I would welcome it – if it fits in with the program the Emirates have. They have an ambitious program."

Sheba Launches Digital Health Partnership with SciTech City in New Jersey; Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer signed a memorandum of understanding with Liberty Science Center (LSC) and broke new ground on Friday, October 22, in New Jersey to develop a cutting-edge high-tech hospital simulation space called "SciTech Scity" that is designed to highlight the future of digital health and home healthcare. "COVID gave us the opportunity to accelerate innovation and especially digital health solutions," said Sheba's CEO, Prof. Yitshak Kreiss. "We have much more in store." Phase I of SciTech Scity is scheduled to open in late 2023 or early 2024. The "city of tomorrow" will be a full campus focused on developing world-changing science and technology companies and Sheba is the city's first innovation partner and international tenant. Specifically, Sheba will transform one floor of the "city" into "Liberty ARC HealthSpace2030," which will serve as a simulation space and leverage the expertise of its existing medical simulation center, and focus on advances in digital health and home healthcare. Technologies that will be harnessed include digital sensing and monitoring, artificial intelligence and augmented reality, and robotics. Solutions will be focused on promoting healthy living, coping with chronic diseases at home and promoting health equity. Kreiss said that participating in the center will "enable Sheba Medical Center to spur the digital healthcare revolution within

the realm of ARC HealthSpace 2030, providing an engine of economic growth, as well as creating a myriad of cutting-edge healthcare options for the citizens of New Jersey and the metropolitan region.” He added that “this is also an important development for the State of Israel, collaborating with our partners in New Jersey on ground-breaking medical innovation for the benefit of all.” The feedback on all the technologies being piloted at Sheba and soon in SciTech Scity’s space will be shared with partner hospitals throughout North America and Europe, explained Dr. Eyal Zimlichman, chief medical officer and chief innovation officer at Sheba. Specifically, there will be a focus on collaboration with Sheba ARC’s planned innovation center in Chicago that will host many Israeli startups. ARC Chicago technologies will be showcased in New Jersey, too. Finally, the ARC should also assist the city in serving underserved communities in Jersey City and create jobs in the area, said LSC’s President and CEO Paul Hoffman.

Exclusive Perfume of Cleopatra and the Temple Found in Jerusalem; The first-ever depiction of the Balm of Gilead, the exclusive perfume of Cleopatra and the Temple, may have been found in Jerusalem. Inscribed on the 2000-year-old amethyst seal, which was worn as a ring, there appears a bird and next to it a branch that apparently depicts the famous plant. In ancient times, this expensive plant went by multiple names including biblical persimmon, bosome or balsam, and even the Balm of Gilead. This amethyst seal was discovered at the Foundation Stones of the Western Wall, north of the City of David. This may be the first depiction discovered in the entire world with an engraving of the famous plant. This biblical persimmon plant, which is not at all related to the orange persimmon fruit that we are familiar with today, is known from biblical and historical sources and was used during the Second Temple Period as one of the more expensive ingredients for producing the Temple incense perfume, in addition to medicines and ointments. According to the historian Josephus, Mark Antony gifted valuable persimmon orchards that formerly belonged to King Herod, to his beloved, Cleopatra. Some commentators identify the persimmon in the list of gifts given by the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon. This surprise discovery was found at the Emek Tzurim National Park operated by the City of David, where archaeological remains are sifted by volunteers and archaeologists. Participants were sifting soil from Israel Antiquities Authority excavations conducted along the foundation stones of the Western Wall, when they saw the 2,000-year-old tiny oval stone that served as a seal during the Second Temple Period.

Hamas Building Second Front Against Israel on Lebanese Border, Firing Rockets at Israel; The Alma Research and Education Center, an Israeli think tank that specializes in security threats on the northern border, released a report this week outlining the true scope of Hamas’s military activities in Lebanon, indicating that the terrorist rulers in Gaza are building a second front from which to attack Israel. The report identified the principal senior political and military Hamas leaders active on Lebanese territory, the organization’s multiple military projects, and working plans. It also identified the locations of some of Hamas’s key Lebanese military sites. The report also analyzed Hamas’s complex relationship with the Iranian-led radical Shi’ite axis. The report detailed how Hamas’s two operational units in Lebanon – El-Shimali and Khaled Ali recruit members, train them in specialized combat skills such as sniping, anti-tank missile attacks, operating drones, and more. The units also develop and produce their own weapons – rockets, offensive drones, and small unmanned underwater vehicles. And they set up operational cells while preparing attack plans against Israel. The two branches are guided by Hamas’s ‘Construction Bureau,’ based in Lebanon and Turkey, which influences Hamas activity in Gaza, Lebanon, and Judea and Samaria. The Construction Bureau operates covertly out of Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon, concealed from both Hezbollah and the Lebanese government. According to the report, the two units develop and manufacture weapons in Lebanon including rockets, drones, and small unmanned submarines. In addition, the two sections of the Construction Bureau recruit and train would-be terrorists in specialized courses such as sniping, operating anti-tank missile launchers, drone operators, urban warfare, aeronautics, naval diving, and tactical intelligence collection. It is believed that Saleh al-Aroui , the deputy head of the Hamas’ political bureau In Lebanon who is responsible for terror attacks in Judea and Samaria was behind the kidnapping and killing of three Israeli

teenagers in 2014, which preceded the IDF incursion into Gaza. Hamas activity in Lebanon is ultimately directed by the Iranian Quds force. This creates a broad threat as Hezbollah was established as part of an Iranian effort, through funding and the dispatch of a core group of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (Pasdaran) instructors, as an anti-Israel entity on Israel's northern border. Iran also supports the regime of Syrian President Bashar al Assad in his civil war. Proof of Hamas activity in Lebanon came in the form of five incidents of Grad rockets fired from Lebanon against Israel between May and August. According to the report, at least some of the rocket attacks were launched without the knowledge or consent of Hezbollah, a terrorist organization that represents fully one-third of the Lebanese Parliament. The Alma report concluded that this indicated a developing rift between Hamas and Hezbollah. The report claimed that as a response to Hamas firing rockets at Israel from Lebanon, Hezbollah was forced to follow suit.

Extremist Preacher Suggests UK Lawmaker Killed for Being 'Pro-Israel'; David Amess, the British Conservative lawmaker who was allegedly murdered last Friday, October 15, by 25-year-old Ali Harbi Ali in what police have deemed a terror-motivated attack, may have met his demise due to his rumored support for Israel. Amess, 69, was fatally stabbed in a church during a constituency meeting on Friday afternoon, and police say there are no additional suspects. Amess previously served as honorary secretary of Conservative Friends for Israel. Anjem Choudary, an extreme Islamist preacher who in the past expressed support for the Islamic State said on Sunday, October 17, that Amess' support for Israel may have been the cause of his murder. The actual cause of the murder is currently unknown. "Many people do [believe] that it [Israel] is a terrorist state, and who would possibly be a friend of Israel after you see the carnage that they carried out against Muslims in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and continue to do with the appropriation of properties?" Choudary asked. Choudary formerly led the banned Islamist group Al-Mubajiroun, and was sentenced to prison for five years and six months for inviting support for the Islamic State in 2016. He was released in October 2018. "No one in their right and rational mind would support such a state [Israel]," Choudary said. Ali is detained under Britain's Terrorism Act 2000. His father confirmed that his son was arrested in connection to the politician's murder. Ali, a British citizen of Somali heritage, allegedly underwent a program aimed to deter individuals from extremism, but reports say he did not remain long in the program, which was voluntary. His detention has been extended until October 22.

Hamas Member's Son Helped Write UK Labour Motion against Israel; A Hamas official's son — who has himself expressed support for Hamas in the past — has been revealed to be one of the lead drafters of the UK Labour Party Conference motion calling for sanctions against Israel and declaring it apartheid, according to an investigation by the NGO Israel Advocacy Movement (IAM). In an interview with Al-Jazeera, general secretary of the Arab Labour Group Omar Mofeed — Allegedly the son of Hamas official Dr. Mufid Al-Mukhalalati — was acknowledged as a drafter of a Labour conference motion, along with another group, the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, of which he is also a director. Omar Mofeed is the son of Dr. Mufid Al-Mukhalalati, who was the health minister in Hamas's Gazan government. Al-Mukhalalati died in 2014. Mofeed initially denied that his father was a Hamas member. "My father died in 2014 when I was still young," Mofeed said. "He was a surgeon who did remarkable work, for which he is widely recognized in Palestine, building health services for the people of Gaza. I am deeply proud of the work that he did in caring for the health of others and his legacy is extremely important to me." There are social media posts by Mofeed in which he expressed support for Hamas, individual terrorists, and terrorist activity. Mofeed has since closed his Twitter and Facebook accounts. In one 2013 Facebook post, Mofeed called to kidnap Israeli soldiers to ransom them for imprisoned Palestinian combatants. In 2015 he celebrated the anniversary of the death of Hamas chief bomb-maker, Yahya Ayyash. "When it comes to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, mainstream political parties like Labour are expected to act impartially," Joseph Cohen of the Israel Advocacy Movement said. "This is why we were shocked when an al-Jazeera interview suggested Omar helped draft a Labour motion highly critical of Israel. The UK Labour party passed the motion on September 28 during their annual party conference. The motion condemned "the ongoing Nakba in Palestine, Israel's militarised violence

attacking the Al Aqsa mosque, the forced displacements from Sheikh Jarrah and the deadly assault on Gaza." It noted the "unequivocal 2021 reports by B'Tselem and Human Rights Watch that conclude unequivocally that Israel is practicing the crime of apartheid as defined by the UN," and called for "stopping any arms trade used to violate Palestinian human rights and trade with illegal Israeli settlements." However, Labour leadership indicated that the motion would not become official party policy: "Labour's policy is for a peaceful, negotiated two-state solution that ensures a sovereign Palestinian state alongside a safe and secure Israel," the party said in a statement. One of the major criticisms of Jeremy Corbyn, UK Labour party's previous leader, was his interactions and engagement with members of terrorist organizations such as Hamas and Hezbollah. IAM is a British based organization that seeks "to establish a 'mass movement' of Israeli advocates through training and mobilising a network of passionate supporters of Israel."

Gantz Says World Must Take a Stand on Iran; Defense Minister Benny Gantz called on the international community to "take a stand on Iran," at Tuesday's, October 12, Jerusalem Post Conference. He warned that Iran aims to be a regional hegemony by developing a nuclear capability and therefore Israel has developed technological and operational tools that will guarantee its security against Iran's nuclear ambitions. "Iran is first a global challenge, then a regional one and only lastly it is a threat to Israel," he said. "The future is now, and a future with a nuclear Iran is a dark one." Gantz said Israel is developing both defensive and offensive capabilities against its enemies, constantly stopping attempts to harm Israeli citizens. "We must always remain two steps ahead, combining civilian and military capabilities to maintain Israel's cyber superiority and to stop terrorism," he said. "It is a vital need for Israel's security and a common interest with our closest partners, so we are constantly engaged in learning, knowledge sharing and technological development." Gantz said the world is split between countries that innovate, those that steal innovation and those that oppose innovation. He said Israel belonged in the first category, Iran in the second, and the Taliban in the third. He said Iran uses reverse engineering and industrial espionage to take apart Western technologies and produce weapons. He praised the Abraham Accords, which he said promote creativity, innovation and information sharing.

Morocco to Approve Aviation, Culture, and Sport Agreements with Israel; The government of Morocco, which last year normalized ties with Israel, announced on Saturday, October 16, that it was set to discuss and then potentially ratify two new agreements signed with Israel in the fields of aviation, as well as culture and sports. "The [government] meeting will be devoted to the review of two cooperation agreements between the Government of the Kingdom of Morocco and the Government of the State of Israel, signed on August 11, 2021 in Rabat, the first concerning air services with a draft law approving this agreement while the second provides for cooperation in the fields of culture and sports," the government said in a statement reported by the Agence Marocaine de Presse. The agreements were originally signed by Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita during the former's trip to the north African nation in August. Lapid was in Morocco for the first official visit by an Israeli top diplomat since 2003, and the highest-level trip since an agreement was signed by Jerusalem and Rabat last year to reestablish ties after some two decades. The agreement with Morocco came as part of a wave of diplomatic agreements between Israel and Arab states, including the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Sudan.

Israeli Company Breaks Ground for Largest Solar Field in US; Israel's Ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, Gilad Erdan, participated on Thursday, October 15, in the groundbreaking of the Mammoth Solar project, to be built in Indiana, which will become the largest solar field in the United States. The Mammoth Solar project is being built by Doral Energy, an Israeli company. Once operational, the Mammoth Solar project, which stretches into both Starke and Pulaski Counties, will ultimately produce 1.3 gigawatts of clean energy. The Mammoth Solar project is expected to be complete by the summer of 2023. Aside from Ambassador Erdan, Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb, the Consul General of Israel to the Midwest Yinam Cohen, the President & Co-Founder of Doral Nick Cohen, and the Chairman & Co-Founder of Doral Dori Davidovitz participated in the event as well. In his remarks, Ambassador Erdan said, "The Mammoth

Solar project is a milestone in the Israel-U.S. relationship – the biggest solar energy in the United States. This project, led by Doral Energy, a pioneer in solar energy, is a shining example of the tremendous mutual benefits of our cooperation, not only for the people of Israel and the United States but for the entire world. Mammoth Solar will create hundreds of jobs, and produce enough clean energy to power over one hundred and seventy thousand households annually." "Israel, the Start-up Nation, is on the cutting edge of clean technology. As someone who has worked for many years, as Minister of Environment and a member of parliament, to address the challenges of climate change, I deeply believe that a U.S.-Israel strategic climate alliance can play an extremely critical role in advancing the innovation needed to ensure both strong economic growth and clean air, land and seas, for us and for our children." Ambassador Erdan added, "Friends, this is just the beginning. If our relationship is the Indy 500, then we are only on the first lap. As Mammoth Solar shows, our cooperation today can help ensure that we play a leading role in the innovative industries of tomorrow, from renewable energy to smart agriculture, and from cyber-security to life sciences. As Israel's Ambassador, I am committed to furthering our relationship in every way."

Israel is Country Most Affected by Ransomware since 2020; Israel submitted the highest number of ransomware samples for analysis to a cybersecurity research group commissioned by Google to publish a major study on the phenomenon, according to data released Thursday, October 14. Cybersecurity firm VirusTotal published the Ransomware Activity Report, which entailed reviewing 80 million ransomware samples from 140 countries. Israel, South Korea, Vietnam, China, Singapore, India, Kazakhstan, Philippines, Iran and the United Kingdom were the 10 most-affected territories based on the number of submissions reviewed by VirusTotal. According to the report, Israel had a near 600 percent increase from its baseline number of submissions between January 2020 and September 2021. It was not clear what Israel's baseline was. The report added that Windows-based computers accounted for 95% of the ransomware targets, compared to just 2% on Android devices. The report comes as an Israeli hospital faced a major ransomware cyberattack, crippling systems, which could take months to recover. Earlier this week, Microsoft said that it had identified a group of Iranian hackers targeting Israeli and American defense technology companies using the tech giant's products, as well as firms running maritime shipping in the Middle East. The statement came as Israel and Iran have accused each other of attacks on ships in the Middle East, and amid reports of growing efforts by Tehran to avenge the death of its top nuclear scientist Mohsen Fakhrizadeh, killed last year. Separately, Google warned on Friday of a surge in state-backed hackers, with a report focusing on the "notable campaigns" of a group linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guard Corps.

Israeli Judokas wins Two Golds and a Bronze at Paris Grand Slam; Israeli judoka and Olympic medalist Raz Hershko, 23, took home a gold medal in the women's +78kg category at the Paris Grand Slam 2021 on Sunday, October 17, capping off a successful run for Israeli athletes at the international competition. Gefen Primo took home gold in the women's -52kg category a day earlier, and Inbar Lanir picked up a bronze earlier Sunday in the women's -78kg category. Overall, Israel sent five women to the Paris Grand Slam and three returned with medals. Israel finished the competition ranked in third place overall for the most medals out of 45 competing nations, coming after Japan and Russia. Culture and Sports Minister Chili Tropper congratulated Hershko on her win on Sunday. "Raz, your accomplishments are the fruits of hard work and a long journey," he said, also adding his congratulations to Lanir: "You are both a huge inspiration for every girl and teenager in Israel." Hershko — who took home bronze at the Tokyo Olympics earlier this year for her role in the mixed group competition — beat out France's Lea Fontaine to take the top prize. Lanir — who also holds a bronze from the Olympic team competition despite not competing — defeated the Netherlands' Karen Stevenson to clinch third place. On Saturday, Primo, 21, beat France's Astride Gneto for the gold medal. "I'm so happy for this medal, particularly in this tournament," Primo told reporters after her win on Saturday. "For me, winning a gold medal at the Paris Grand Slam is another small dream that I accomplished. I'm happy that the hard work I invested has come to fruition at such a prestigious competition." Primo won bronze at the

2021 World Judo Championships in Budapest in June, as well as at the European Championships in Lisbon in April.



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