

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update January 27, 2022 ***(25th Shvat, 5782)***



[For the Yachad Report Newsletter For January 2022](#)

China, Russia, and Iran Launch Joint Naval Drill on Friday; China, Russia, and Iran held a maritime joint exercise on Friday, January 21, a public relations official from Iran's armed forces told the semi-official ISNA (Iranian Students News Agency) on Thursday, January 20. The wargame took place in the northern Indian Ocean, Mostafa Tajoldin said, and is the third joint naval drill between the three countries, with the previous one taking place last February. Preparations for the latest maneuvers came as Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Iranian counterpart, Ebrahim Raisi, met in Moscow Wednesday, as pressure mounts for a decision on the Iran nuclear deal. Raisi said he had presented Moscow with draft documents on strategic ties that would cement joint collaboration for the next two decades. Putin praised the countries' "close cooperation" on the international stage and said: "It is very important for me to know your opinion on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action." The 2015 accord between Iran and world powers — the United States, France, Britain, Russia, China, and Germany — offered Tehran relief from crippling international sanctions in return for deep curbs on its nuclear program. But the unilateral US withdrawal from the agreement in 2018 under former president Donald Trump prompted Tehran to walk back on its commitments.

Israeli Fighter Jets, Refueling Planes Hold Massive Drill Aimed at Tehran; Israeli fighter jets carried out a large drill over the Mediterranean that included practicing mid-air refueling, according to a report in a Saudi-run news outlet Thursday, January 20. The unverified report in London-based Elaph described air maneuvers on Thursday by "an unusually large" contingent of F-15, F-16, and F-35 fighter craft, as well as Boeing mid-air refueling tankers, in what would likely be seen as a warning beacon to Iran amid Israeli threats to take military action in order to stop Tehran's nuclear program. Citing an unnamed Arab source, Elaph reported that the "wide" maneuver took place over the Mediterranean. Israeli defense officials, who rarely comment on foreign reports, could not be immediately reached. The use of Israel's aging mid-air refueling fleet would be the strongest indication that Israel is planning for an attack on Iran's nuclear facilities, or would like to project to Tehran and the rest of the world that it is preparing.

Iran Accuses Israel of Exploiting Jewish Suffering in UN Holocaust Denial Resolution; An Iranian diplomat accused Israel of exploiting the suffering of Jews through a United Nations resolution condemning Holocaust denialism. The diplomat, whom Iran's office did not identify, said Israel was exploiting "the sufferings of the Jewish people in the past as a cover for the crimes it has perpetrated" and alleged that the

resolution adopted "an awkward approach toward historical studies." Israeli U.N. Ambassador Gilad Erdan made veiled references to Iran, which has supported Holocaust denialism for several years while promoting the resolution. "Nations with seats in this hall openly deny the Holocaust, casting doubt on its occurrence and praising its perpetrators," he said. "In fact, those that most blatantly deny that Jews suffered a genocide are the ones now threatening Jews with another genocide." The resolution defines distortion or denial of the Holocaust as "intentional efforts to excuse or minimize the impact of The Holocaust or its principal elements, including collaborators and allies of Nazi Germany," a "gross minimization of the number of the victims of The Holocaust in contradiction to reliable sources," any "attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide," and statements that cast the Holocaust as a good thing. The resolution was adopted on the 80th anniversary of the 1942 Wannsee Conference, where Nazi leaders devised their plans for exterminating the Jews.

100 Seconds to Midnight: Man-Made Apocalypse Closer Than Ever; Earth is closer to a catastrophic global demise than ever before, with the famous Doomsday Clock of the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists being at 100 seconds to midnight. The Doomsday Clock was first created in 1947 as a metaphorical countdown to the end of the world as we know it. Specifically, it refers to the impending global disaster that is solely caused by human hands, and it is adjusted every January upon review by scientists from the Bulletin. Originally, the biggest factor at play in evaluating how close humanity is to its end was a nuclear apocalypse. This makes sense, considering it was formed right after nuclear bombs ended World War II and right before the arms race of the Cold War started. In fact, the record for the closest the Doomsday Clock had been to disaster used to be in 1953, set two minutes to midnight, when the US and Soviet Union both started to test hydrogen bombs. Nowadays, it isn't just nuclear weapons that the Bulletin is concerned with. While the case in 2018 shows that nuclear weapons are far from irrelevant in the chance that humanity can thrust itself into a global armageddon, it is likely the fastest way humans can do so. Several other issues are also factored into these estimates. Specifically, the factors nowadays that are being factored in are, aside from nuclear weapons, COVID-19, climate change, and disruptive technologies. "The dangerous rivalry and hostility among the superpowers increase the likelihood of nuclear blunder," Bulletin executive chairman Jerry Brown said. "Climate change just compounds the crisis. If there's ever a time to wake up, it's now."

Israel Leads World in Infections as Covid Surges out of Control; Quarantine for Schoolkids to End; Israel is leading the world in COVID cases by capita, as an Israeli professor told the media on Thursday, January 20, that according to global statistics, some 0.6 percent of people in the Jewish State are testing positive for the virus on a daily basis. In the last week, some 276,000 Israelis tested positive for the virus, pushing Israel's total COVID cases over the two million mark. Less than 9,000 Israelis have died with COVID since March 2020. The record spike in cases comes despite Israel being one of the first countries in the world to implement a digital COVID passport system barring entry to restaurants, hotels, and other leisure venues to unvaccinated people, widespread vaccine mandates for employees in most industries, and a mandatory third booster shot which was criticized as unnecessary by doctors and immunologists. "We are very close to the height, or even at the height of the Omicron wave," Prof. Eran Segal of The Weizmann Institute told Channel 12 News. He said he expects that one out of ten Israelis will test positive during this wave, and then "there will be a relatively fast decline" in infections. Israel has signaled that it's abandoning previous strict policies aimed at eliminating the virus, as the Jewish State finally reopened its borders to tourists after nearly two years of a total blanket ban on entry for non-citizens and residents. The government announced Thursday that it was suspending quarantine for children whose classmates test positive for the virus, as some 300,000 students were in isolation as of Thursday. Education Minister Yifat Shasha-Biton said the move to end quarantine was "a brave decision," and that "it would have been easier to close the education system, but our duty is to save every boy and girl" from the social and educational disruption of isolation. Regardless of vaccination status, students will perform biweekly antigen tests to enter educational institutions.

If they test positive, they will isolate. But if a classmate tests positive and they test negative, they can continue as normal, rather than entering quarantine.

Israeli Startups Head to Dubai to Tout Medical, Health Technologies; Representatives of 11 Israeli companies are headed to Dubai this week as part of a delegation organized by the Economy and Industry Ministry to take part in a leading medical technologies exhibition showcasing innovations in healthcare. The annual event, Arab Health, brings together thousands of entrepreneurs, business people, healthcare professionals, and government officials from across the Mideast region and the world. It will run from Monday to Thursday this week at the Dubai World Trade Center. According to the event's organizers, over 50,000 people are expected to attend. This will be Israel's second time participating in the yearly conference since the US-brokered Abraham Accords were reached in August 2020. The historic agreement normalized ties between Israel and the United Arab Emirates, quickly followed by Bahrain, Sudan, and Morocco. While Israelis have long maintained quiet commercial and security ties with the UAE, the normalization agreement was seen as a potential economic boon, with increased access to the global business and shipping hub of Dubai, on top of tourism and energy.

Israel Becomes World Leader in Live Donor Kidney Donations; In 2020, Israel was the country with the most living kidney donors worldwide, according to a recent World Health Organization (WHO) report. Published by the Global Observatory on Donation and Transplantation in December, the report listed Israel's average annual number of living kidney donors as just over 30 people per one million inhabitants. The United States boasted the greatest average number of kidney donations from deceased donors at more than 55 per million. However, the number of living donors was less than half of Israel's average – about 15 per million. Matnat Chaim, an Israeli non-profit that recruits and supports healthy volunteers to donate kidneys to patients waiting for a transplant, accounted for two-thirds of all live kidney donations in Israel in 2020 and 2021. The Jewish state ranked 28th on the worldwide list before Matnat Chaim's founding in 2009. So far, the organization has assisted in the donation of 1,170 healthy kidneys in Israel

27% of Religious Hate Crimes in Sweden Target its Tiny Jewish Community; Anti-Semitic incidents accounted for 27% of all religious hate crimes in 2020 in Sweden, where Jews make up 0.1% of the population. Hate crimes against Muslims, who make up at least 8% of the population, accounted for 51% of the hate crimes against religious groups documented by police in 2020, according to a Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention report published last month. Anti-Christian hate crimes accounted for 11% of hate crimes targeting religious groups. In absolute numbers, 170 anti-Semitic hate crimes and 328 anti-Muslim crimes were documented in 2020. The Swedish National Council for Crime Prevention publishes a hate crime report every other year. Although antisemitism figures in the 2020 report are significantly lower than the 280 incidents reported in 2018, the Council cautioned about structural changes in the latest report and warned that there may not be any decrease in the actual prevalence of anti-Semitic crimes. Crimes related to religion accounted for 638, or 18%, of the total amount of incidents deemed hate crimes in Sweden in 2020. Racist incidents against Black people accounted for 15%. Attacks on the LGBT population were 8% of the total. Incidents included in the 2020 report included a gathering of far-right activists outside a synagogue in Norrköping on Yom Kippur. Men waved Nordic Resistance Movement flags outside the synagogue, which was empty at the time. In recent years, Jewish leaders in Sweden have warned that their community is under threat both from the far-right and from Muslim extremists. Sweden, a nation of some 10 million people, has about 14,900 people who self-identify as Jews, according to a 2020 demographic study of European Jewry.

Terrorist's Brother Blames Shooter's Actions on Mental Health; The family of a 44-year-old British Muslim man who was shot dead by police in Texas after launching a terror attack on a synagogue on Saturday, January 16, demanded to know how he was allowed into America despite a long criminal record. Malik Faisal Akram, from Blackburn, died in a hail of bullets after a 10-hour stand-off on Saturday in which

four people were held hostage at the Congregation Beth Israel synagogue in Colleyville, 27 miles from Dallas. Akram had apparently flown to America two weeks ago, lived in homeless shelters, and bought a gun on the street, according to US President Joe Biden. He was described by his family as suffering 'mental health issues' but concerns over a wider plot grew last night as two teenagers were arrested over the incident by anti-terror officers in south Manchester. The pair, both believed to be under 18, cannot be identified for legal reasons. They were still in custody overnight, Greater Manchester Police said. However, the FBI's field office in Dallas had earlier said there was 'no indication' that anyone else was involved in what President Biden called 'an act of terror'. Malik's brother Gulbar issued a statement on behalf of the family last night in which he told of their 'devastation' and revealed how relatives had been in contact with Malik during his attack at the police's request but could not convince him to surrender. But speaking to Sky News he also demanded to know how the incident had been allowed to unfold. 'He's known to police. Got a criminal record. How was he allowed to get a visa and acquire a gun?', he said. It remained unclear why Akram flew to Texas, 4,700 miles away from his Lancashire home, to carry out his attack. He was shot dead at around 9 pm local time (3 pm GMT) by the FBI's elite Hostage Rescue Team after holding four hostages, including the rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker for ten hours. The incident began when Akram entered the building as it was livestreaming a service, shouting that he had weapons and 'backpacks of explosives' on him. He demanded the release of jailed female terrorist Aafia Siddiqui—known as Lady Al Qaeda. He referred to her as his 'sister' during the attack but the pair are not related. She is being held in jail about 20 miles from Colleyville.

30% of Anti-Semitic Incidents Worldwide Occur in the US; Roughly 30% of all anti-Semitic incidents reported worldwide in 2021 occurred in the US, according to data published by Israel Hayom from a new report by the Jewish Agency and the World Zionist Organization. The US had the second-largest number of anti-Semitic incidents reported last year, after Europe. Broken down by state, New York had the largest number of anti-Semitic incidents in 2021, followed by California, Florida, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania. Texas, where a gunman held four people hostage at a synagogue last Saturday, ranked number six. The figures tended to correlate with the size of local Jewish populations in absolute terms. New York, California, and Florida, which ranked first, second, and third in terms of anti-Semitic incidents, are also home to the first, second, and third largest Jewish populations in the US. Massachusetts has the seventh largest Jewish population in the US, Pennsylvania the fifth, and Texas the ninth. The US, which accounted for some 30% of anti-Semitic incidents reported worldwide, is home to roughly 40% of the entire Jewish population. More troubling, however, was the report's finding that anti-Semitic incidents in the US were more likely to be physical, rather than verbal. Outside of the US, anti-Semitic incidents were more likely to take the form of vandalism, with both physical violence and verbal assaults less common. Anti-Semitism rose substantially on college campuses in the US in 2021, in particular during the month of May, during Israel's Operation Guardian of the Walls, conducted against the Hamas terrorist organization in Gaza.

Iran Sees Ties with Russia as 'New Middle East'; Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi was in Moscow on Wednesday, January 19, to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin. This is happening as the US is concerned about a Russian invasion of Ukraine. Moscow has backed Tehran at the Vienna nuclear talks with the West. This comes as Russia might also take part in another naval drill with Iran and China. These are important talks. Russia is calling on the US to not supply weapons to Ukraine, and Turkey is offering to host Russia-Ukraine talks. This means that Iran's visit is part of a larger Russian policy that stretches from Europe to the Middle East. Tehran sees Moscow as a key partner along with Beijing in its quest for more power. "The visit may become a turning point in political, economic and trade relations between Iran and Russia, and it may also be effective in ensuring security, economic and trade relations in the region," the Iranian president said at Tehran's Mehrabad Airport. "This trip is conducted at the invitation of Mr. Putin, and during this visit efforts will be made to promote the policy of good-neighborliness in the region. Former ambassador of Iran in Moscow Mahmoud Reza Sajjad said, "Interaction between Iran and Russia in the region will, undoubtedly, ensure security and prevent unilateralism. We and Russia are members of many economic and political

organizations in the region, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and Russia plays an important role in these organizations.” What he means is that Iran is now shifting back to focus on Russia rather than the West. Tehran sees economic ties as important with Moscow. This new Middle East will include closer work with China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, as well as cooperation with Russia, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan. These were key points in the Fars News discussion.

Explosive Boom Shakes Western Iran, Officials Blame Lightning 10 Hours Later; Residents throughout a large area in western Iran reported hearing loud explosions strong enough to shake windows on Saturday night, January 15, with Iranian state media reporting hours after the incident that it was caused by lightning. Some of the cities where the blasts were heard are located over 100 miles away from each other. Earlier, Saeed Ketabi, governor of the city of Asadabad, had told Iranian media that the possibility that the explosion was the sound of thunderstorms had been ruled out. Additional statements made earlier in the evening by local officials added that the cause of the explosion was unclear. The Tasnim News Agency, associated with the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps, reported on Sunday morning that the explosion sound was caused by lightning and that it had "nothing to do with the activities of the armed forces or the testing of defense systems." Deputy Interior Minister Majid Mirahmadi also told Iran's Fars News Agency that the explosion was caused by lightning. Additionally, Aboulghasem Jalali, a deputy head at Iran's Civil Aviation Organization, told the Iranian ILNA News Agency on Sunday morning that flights in western Iran had been grounded due to "unfavorable weather conditions," adding that the grounding of flights "is not related to anything else." The blasting sound which remained unexplained for over 10 hours initially sparked speculation about an unannounced air defense drill taking place in the country. Last month, multiple blasts which were not preceded by any warnings or announcements were later explained by Iranian officials as military drills. (

Fourth COVID Vaccine Still Doesn't Stop Omicron, New Israeli Study Shows; Even a fourth shot of a COVID-19 vaccine is “not good enough” to prevent Omicron, according to a preliminary study in Israel. Sheba Hospital last month tested a fourth shot given to more than 270 medical workers, with 154 getting the Pfizer jab and 120 receiving Moderna. The researchers revealed Monday, January 17, that both groups showed a “slightly higher” increase in antibodies than after the third shot — but still not enough to prevent Omicron, the latest variant responsible for the vast majority of infections around the world. “Despite increased antibody levels, the fourth vaccine only offers a partial defense against the virus,” said Dr. Gili Regev-Yochay, director of the hospital’s infection disease unit leading the study. The study saw “many infected with Omicron who received the fourth dose,” she said. “Granted, a bit less than in the control group, but still a lot of infections.” “The vaccines, which were more effective against previous variants, offer less protection versus Omicron,” Regev-Yochay said, adding that the vaccines are “not good enough” to prevent the less-severe new variant. The findings have not yet been published and do not reveal specific data.

US Warns Against Travel to Israel due to Surging Omicron Infections; The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention warned against traveling to Israel on Tuesday, January 18, due to surging COVID-19 infections. The CDC placed Israel in its highest risk assessment category, a “Level 4” designation meaning “very high” COVID-19 risk. The agency added 22 countries to the list on Tuesday, including Israel, Australia, Egypt, Albania, Argentina, and Uruguay. Around 100 countries are currently in the Level 4 category. The agency says to avoid travel to such destinations if possible and to make sure vaccinations are up-to-date if travel is necessary. Omicron has caused a staggering number of infections in Israel in recent weeks. Daily infections have repeatedly broken pandemic records including on Sunday and Monday, which saw over 60,000 new confirmed cases each. Close to 500 Israelis are hospitalized in serious condition.

180 Mayors Call to End of Quarantine for Children; On Tuesday, January 18, 180 mayors and local council heads from all over Israel addressed Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Health Minister Nitzan

Horowitz demanding that the quarantine obligation for children who have been exposed to coronavirus carriers be rescinded, Channel 12 News reported. The letter sent by the Association of Israel's Self-Government Cities and Federation of Local Authorities in Israel states that "it is clear to all that children are not among the groups at risk from the Omicron strain and [from the coronavirus] in general, it is our duty to ensure continuity of studies and routine for students and staff to ensure their safety and health." "Returning a sense of security along with ensuring the safety and health of students and staff is essential, and will be further validated with the application of an orderly testing outline based on the 'Shield of Education' program. For the purpose of operating the testing outline, a regular institutional testing outline must be contained within the schools, or by distributing kits to students and staff for the purpose of a set of regular home tests," the mayors added. According to them, "The government's decision regarding shortening isolations stems from a decision-making process that included many components while weighing the chances and risks. The consequences of decisions on the education system must be considered and the work completed in light of the hard data." At the same time, Finance Minister Avigdor Liberman said he would work against the continuation of the green pass policy. "There is no medical and epidemiological logic in the green pass, and many experts agree." "What this does is cause direct damage to the economy, daily functioning and in addition a significant contribution to panic in the public. I will work with all parties to eliminate the green pass and maintain a normal life routine for all of us," Liberman wrote on Twitter.

Jewish-American Astronaut Jessica Meir may be First Woman on the Moon; NASA astronaut Jessica Meir is a candidate to be the first woman to land on the Moon as part of the Artemis lunar mission, which would see the first woman, Jew and Swedish citizen to step foot on the lunar surface, and the first person to do so since Eugene Cernan on December 12, 1972. The child of a Swedish mother and Israeli Sephardi father, Meir is no stranger to space, having made history in 2019 for being part of the first all-female spacewalk. She has also always kept her Jewish and Israeli roots close to her heart, having brought an Israeli flag, Star of David socks, and other related items with her into space. Now she is hoping to make her mark on the lunar surface. The announcement comes as part of NASA's Artemis program, a series of missions named after the Greek goddess of the same name who was the twin sister of Apollo, the namesake of NASA's lunar missions in the 1960s and 1970s. Female astronauts have flown for years, with Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova being the first woman in space in 1963. However, they are still a minority among astronauts. In fact, the only people to ever land on the Moon have been white men. However, NASA made a pledge in April 2021 that it would put a woman and a person of color on the Moon, a promise in line with US President Joe Biden's aims of advancing equality.



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