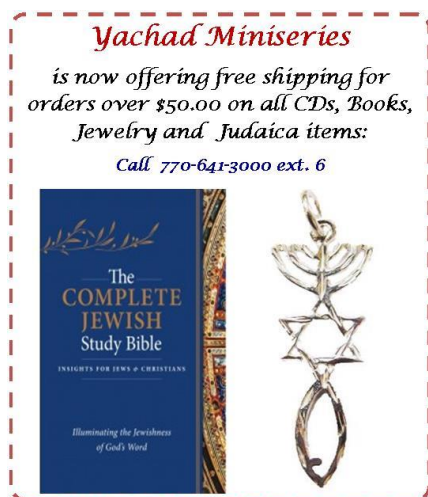


Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 24, 2022 (21st Adar-B, 5782)



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Syria to Supply Russia with 40,000 Mercenaries; Syrian President Bashar Assad has promised to provide some 40,000 militants to the Russian Federation for the war in Ukraine, The Ukrainian Defense Ministry reported on Thursday afternoon, March 17. According to Ukrainian intelligence, weapons and other equipment will be transferred to Russia and Belarus from Syria in the near future, the statement reported, in addition to as many as 40,000 militants. A report on March 13 from Ukrainian intelligence indicated that Russia had already opened 14 recruitment centers across Syria, in Damascus, Aleppo, Hama, Raqqa, and Deir ez-Zor, in order to strengthen its forces. Russia is reportedly paying foreign mercenaries a monthly salary of between \$300-\$600 to fight. Two days prior, on March 11, it was reported that Russian President Vladimir Putin would allow 16,000 volunteers from the Middle East to join the Russian-backed forces in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. The mercenaries have reportedly been informed that they will perform "exclusively police functions to restore order in the occupied territories." However, the statement added, "information about direct participation in hostilities against the Ukrainian army has begun to spread among mercenaries. This significantly reduced the 'fighting spirit' of the Syrians." The morale of the Syrian mercenaries has apparently also been reduced, according to Ukrainian media, due to the arrival of over 30 injured Russian Forces militants to an army base, resulting in some deciding to refuse to participate in hostilities. Responding to the news of Syria's intention to send mercenaries, the Ukrainian Defense Ministry's official Twitter account shared a statement, saying: "The Kremlin wants to engage Syrian troops of the Assad regime in the war against Ukraine. If they freeze, our artillery will warm them up." Additionally, Head of the Chechen Republic Ramzan Kadyrov has said he will be sending another 1,000 Chechens to assist Russian forces in Ukraine. Despite these reports and reports from the Kremlin, the US says it has not seen an influx of Middle Eastern fighters joining Russian forces, according to Central Command Head of the United States Military, Kenneth Mackenzie.

To Avoid Attack, Israel said to Coordinate on its Ukraine Field Hospital with Russia; Israel has coordinated its plans to set up a field hospital in Ukraine with Russia, giving Moscow the exact coordinates of the base to ensure it is not attacked, the Walla news site reported Thursday, March 17. According to the report, that cited two Israeli officials, Israeli Ambassador to Moscow Alexander Ben Zvi met last week with Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov to update him on the plans. After the cabinet took the

decision to establish the hospital, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett then raised the issue during a call with Russian President Vladimir Putin. Bennett has been trying to mediate between Russia and Ukraine. Concerns over the possibility that the field hospital could be attacked were heightened Thursday when the UN said Russia had repeatedly attacked hospitals in Ukraine. World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told the UN Security Council Thursday that WHO has verified 43 attacks on hospitals and health facilities with 12 people killed and 34 injured. The UN health chief decried the devastating consequences of war on the Ukrainian people who are facing severe disruption to services and medication and stressed that “the life-saving medicine we need right now is peace.” In a virtual briefing, Tedros said “the disruption to services and supplies is posing an extreme risk to people with cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, HIV and TB, which are among the leading causes of mortality in Ukraine.” The WHO chief said displacement and overcrowding caused by people fleeing the fighting are likely to increase the risks of diseases such as COVID-19, measles, pneumonia, and polio. In addition, more than 35,000 mental health patients in Ukrainian psychiatric hospitals and long-term care facilities face severe shortages of medicine, food, health, and blankets, he said. Seventeen tons of equipment needed to set up the Israeli field hospital in Ukraine were loaded onto a cargo plane of national carrier El Al on Thursday. The cargo will be flown later in the day to Poland and from there sent to the town of Mostyska in western Ukraine, where the hospital, dubbed “Kohav Meir” (“Shining Star”) will be set up. A delegation of doctors led by David Dagan, chief of the State Hospitals Directorate at the Health Ministry, was set to fly out on Sunday to staff the hospital. The delegation includes doctors and medical staff from across Israel’s health system, the statement said. The government approved plans for the Israeli field hospital to be established in war-torn Ukraine, where it will operate for a month.

Iran Defies Western Powers with Enriched Uranium Work; Iran has defied Western countries by carrying out work on near-weapons grade enriched uranium that will make it harder to implement the terms of any revived nuclear deal with world powers, Reuters reported Wednesday, March 16. The work carried out earlier this month was to convert the uranium into a type that is less easily recovered and diluted so that it can then be removed from the country, according to an International Atomic Energy Agency report issued to member states last Thursday and seen by Reuters. It came as negotiations continue in Vienna to save the so-called Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, a pact that aimed to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons but has been in tatters after the US pulled out in 2018. Since then, Iran has dropped some of its own commitments, enriching uranium to levels beyond those in the deal and that the IAEA says are only used by states seeking a weapon. Converting uranium into a different form in the manner Iran has done will make it harder to implement any agreement for it to return to lower limits of enriched uranium laid out in the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action). Diplomats say that the emerging agreement will require Iran to dispose of its uranium enriched above 3.67%. Iran’s most enriched uranium is at 60%, a short technical step from 90% weapons-grade, and it has about 33 kg of the material. Until the recent work, it was all in the form of uranium hexafluoride, which can be easily diluted and transported, something that has been under discussion for months at the Vienna talks, Reuters reported. However, between March 6-9, Iran transformed 2.1 kg of up to 60% uranium from one form into 1.7 kg of another form. The process produced molybdenum 99, and another, a medical radioisotope. However, the enriched uranium then requires processing to recover it from the resulting materials.

US Weighs Dropping Iran's IRGC from Terrorism List; The United States is considering removing Iran's Revolutionary Guards from its foreign terrorist organization blacklist in return for Iranian assurances about reining in the elite force, a source familiar with the matter said on Wednesday, March 16. The source said Washington had not decided what might be an acceptable commitment from Tehran in exchange for such a step, which would reverse former US President Donald Trump's 2019 blacklisting of the group and draw sharp Republican criticism. The move was the first time Washington had formally labeled part of another sovereign government as a terrorist group. The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) is a powerful

faction in Iran that controls a business empire as well as elite armed and intelligence forces that Washington accuses of carrying out a global terrorist campaign. The source, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the Biden administration was weighing whether to drop the terrorist designation "in return for some kind of commitment and/or steps by Iran, with respect to regional or other IRGC activities." Asked about the possibility of removing the IRGC from the US terrorism list, US State Department spokesman Ned Price declined to comment beyond saying that sanctions relief is at the heart of negotiations to revive the nuclear deal. Last week an Iranian official said the IRGC's removal from the blacklist had been under discussion as far back as June but that the issue had become more complicated after last summer's election of hardliner Ebrahim Raisi as Iran's president. The Iranian official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the United States had made clear "they cannot remove it without major concessions from Iran," a stance he said had been rejected by Iran's lead nuclear negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani. The IRGC's political influence in Iran's complex power structure has increased since the election of Raisi, who took office in August and whose government includes dozens of Revolutionary Guard commanders.

Two Iranian Drones Shot Down over Iraq Were Heading to Israel; Two Iranian drones shot down over Iraq last month by American fighter jets were set to explode in Israeli territory, the defense establishment has confirmed. The drones, which were downed by the international coalition close to Erbil in the Kurdistan region of Iraq, were said to be Shahed-136s. Prior to the foiled attack, which occurred on February 14, Israeli security officials had been on high alert over fears of an Iranian response to a series of Israeli attacks on Iranian targets as part of the IDF's war-between-wars campaign. Last week, Hezbollah-affiliated al-Mayadeen reported that earlier in February Israel destroyed hundreds of Iranian drones in a strike that targeted the Kermanshah airbase. In response to that attack, Iran fired 12 ballistic missiles toward Erbil targeting what they claimed to be an Israeli military base. The confirmation of the reports comes a month after the Israel Air Force announced that two Iranian Shahed 197 drones heading toward Israel were downed by IAF F-35i fighter jets last year.

Lifting Sanctions on Iran Will Finance Terror Against Israel; Lifting sanctions on Iran will fund terrorism against Israel and throughout the Middle East, US Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-New York) warned in an interview with The Jerusalem Post this week. "I share Israel's concern about lifting sanctions," Torres said. "If we lift the sanctions, how are those dollars likely to be spent? I have no reason to think those dollars will be spent on an Iranian Build Back Better Act. I have every reason to think those dollars will likely finance acts of terrorism and proxy warfare and the Sunni Arab world." Torres also said he does not think that a majority of Congress would support lifting sanctions on the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps. "If there was an ally of the US lifting sanctions on al-Qaeda in the immediate aftermath of 9/11, how would we feel?" he said, making the case to Americans against lifting sanctions. "We would be outraged. That's how Israelis feel about the lifting of sanctions on Iran and its proxies." For Americans, Torres said, lifting sanctions is an abstract idea, while Israelis will feel its concrete effects. "Unlike the US, which is surrounded by two oceans and peaceful neighbors, Israel is largely surrounded by hostile neighbors" – like Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon – "and essentially shares a border with Russia. Most of us in the US have no concept of the fragile security situation; none of us have had to live with rocket fire or live in neighborhoods where bus stops double as bomb shelters or have [had] the trauma of children running to bomb shelters. "Nothing in the American experience is remotely comparable to the volatility Israel faces every day."

Zelensky tells German MPs 'Never Again' Holocaust Slogan is Now Meaningless; Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky evoked the Holocaust in his address to Germany's parliament Thursday, March 17, telling lawmakers that vows to never let the atrocity be repeated are empty in light of a failure to prevent Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "Every year politicians repeat 'never again,'" the Ukrainian leader said, referring to annual Holocaust commemorations. "And now, we see that these words simply mean nothing. A people is being destroyed in Europe," he said, noting that 108 children had been killed in his country since the

start of the Russian offensive. Zelensky stressed that the future of the continent was at stake in the current war and argued that governments across the West were failing to meet the moment.

“Help us stop this war,” he said.

Israel Ranked 9th Happiest Country in the World; Israel is ranked the world’s ninth happiest country in the annual World Happiness Report, coming just one point below Norway and beating out New Zealand. Israel has been climbing through the happiness rankings in the past two years, from 14th in 2020 and 11th last year. Like last year, COVID-19 played a major role in this report, as the world continues to grapple with how the global pandemic disrupted and upended society in all sectors. Overall, Nordic countries once again dominated the top slots. Finland topped the list as the world’s happiest country for the fifth year in a row. In second place was Denmark, followed by Iceland. Switzerland came in fourth followed by the Netherlands and Luxembourg, with the Nordic states of Sweden and Norway following in seventh and eighth place. Factors taken into account include GDP, social support, life expectancy, freedom to make life choices, generosity, and perceptions of corruption. This is the 10th anniversary of the release of the World Happiness Report, a publication of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

Plan to Establish Field Hospital in Western Ukraine Approved by Israeli Cabinet; Cabinet ministers on Monday, March 14, approved plans for an Israeli field hospital to be established in war-torn Ukraine in the coming days. The hospital — under a project dubbed Shining Star — is slated to operate in western Ukraine for fleeing refugees for one month, a government statement said. Budgeted at NIS 21 million, the funds are to come from the Prime Minister’s Office, the Health Ministry and Foreign Ministry, as well as the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee. The facility will be operated by Sheba Medical Center, Clalit Health Services, and medical staff from other hospitals, according to the Health Ministry. The hospital will include wards for children and adults, an emergency room, a delivery room, and a primary care clinic. Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz clarified last week that the hospital will be managed and manned exclusively by civilians. The project (Kochav Me’ir in Hebrew) is named after former prime minister Golda Meir, who was born in Ukraine and was the founder of the Foreign Ministry’s MASHAV aid program, which is leading the field hospital project. Kyiv-born Meir has become a symbol of hope for Ukrainians amid Russia’s invasion.

Israel Destroyed Hundreds of Iranian Drones in Massive Attack; Israeli forces devastated an Iranian airbase recently, destroying hundreds of drone aircraft in a massive airstrike, Ha’aretz reported Tuesday morning, March 15. According to the report, six Israeli drone aircraft carried out an attack on an airbase in western Iran near Kermanshah in mid-February, destroying hundreds of drones. The incident went unreported until this week and was first disclosed by Al Mayadeen, a Beirut-based media outlet aligned with the Hezbollah terrorist group and the Iranian government. Iran, an Al Mayadeen report Sunday said, has blamed Israel, though the Jewish state has neither confirmed nor denied the claim. Al Mayadeen linked the attack on the drone base to Saturday’s, March 12, missile attack by Iran on a base in Erbil in Iraqi Kurdistan, claiming the Erbil strike was retaliation for Israel’s drone attack last month. The New York Times cited a senior US official who said that the building hit in the Erbil attack also served as an Israeli training facility. The Kurdistan regional government has denied the claim, saying that the building struck in Erbil was a civilian facility.

Iran Has 3,000 Ballistic Missiles, Many That Can Reach Israel; Iran has more than 3,000 ballistic missiles, many of which can reach the State of Israel, commander of the United States Central Command Gen. Kenneth McKenzie said on Tuesday, March 15. “At a military level my concern is first of all that they do not have a nuclear weapon but I am also very concerned about the remarkable growth and efficiency of their ballistic missile program,” McKenzie told the Senate Armed Services Committee. “They have over 3,000 missiles of various types, some of which can reach Tel Aviv,” McKenzie said in response to a query by the

senate committee. "None of them can reach Europe yet." In McKenzie's written statement, he called Iran's missile force the greatest threat to the region's security, and that Iran has developed an arsenal of nuclear-warhead capable ballistic missiles and has tested these weapon platforms multiple times. He told the committee that over the last 5-7 years Iran has invested heavily in its ballistic missile program. Iran has armed its proxy in Yemen, the Houthi rebels, with drones and ballistic and cruise missiles, the general wrote. The Houthis have also expressed hostility toward Israel, and have previously said that they have joined the "anti-Israel" front. They have also used these missiles and drones to attack the UAE and Saudi Arabia. McKenzie also expressed concern about Iran's drone program. Iran's drone fleet has evolved from "commercial off-the-shelf" UAVs to drones that resemble cruise missiles in terms of increased speed, range, accuracy, resistance to electronic warfare, and warhead weight, he assessed in his statement. Iran has also been able to mass-produce the drone components, allowing them to be supplied with greater ease to the Islamic Republic's proxy network.

Kyiv's Mayor Learns from the IDF How to Defend Ukraine; Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko has been a fighter his entire life. The former World Boxing Organization heavyweight champion knocked out dozens of boxers from around the world during his first career. But Klitschko, who then shifted to politics and has been the mayor of Ukraine's capital since 2014, has never faced a fight like the current one against Russia. The Russian army's 64-km-long military column outside Kyiv presents a formidable challenge. In a Skype interview with The Jerusalem Post on Wednesday, March 9, Klitschko says his models for how to win against all odds are based on Israel – a country he has visited and admires – and the IDF, which has been successful in mobilizing and maximizing its reservists. "We have to learn from Israel how to defend our country, with every citizen," he said. "If they love the country, they need to be ready to defend the country. We have a lot to learn from Israel because we need every citizen to defend his home and his future." Klitschko has built strong ties with Ukrainian Chief Rabbi Yaakov Bleich and other Jewish leaders. His father's mother is Jewish, and he has been told many times by Jews that they wished it was his grandmother on his mother's side who was a member of the tribe so that he would be a Jew by Jewish law. "I am proud to have Jewish blood," he said.

Iranian FM to Visit Moscow for Nuclear Talks amid Russian Sanctions Demands; Tehran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian headed to Moscow on Tuesday, March 14, days after negotiations on an Iran nuclear deal stalled amid new Russian demands. Ten months of talks in Vienna have brought major powers close to renewing a landmark 2015 agreement on regulating Iran's nuclear program. But the negotiations were halted again after Russia on March 5 demanded guarantees that Western sanctions imposed following its invasion of Ukraine would not damage its trade with Iran. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has dismissed as "irrelevant" the Russian demands for guarantees, saying that they "just are not in any way linked together." The current round of negotiations started in late November in the Austrian capital between Iran and Britain, China, France, Germany, and Russia, with the US taking part indirectly. The 2015 deal gave Iran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear program. But then-president Donald Trump unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018 and imposed tough economic sanctions on different sectors, including oil exports.

Israel, UAE to Sign Free-Trade Agreement by End of March; The free-trade agreement between Israel and the United Arab Emirates is set to be signed by the end of March, Emirati Ambassador to Israel Mohamed Al Khaja said in a tweet on March 9. Talks for establishing the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) began last November between Economy Minister Orna Barbivai and her Emirati counterpart Abdulla bin Touq Al Mari. The deal will include "issues relating to trade in goods including regulation, customs, trade in services, government procurement, e-commerce and the preservation of intellectual property rights," Ohad Cohen, director of the Foreign Trade Administration who is leading Israel's negotiators, said then. There has been a massive increase in trade between Israel and its Middle East

neighbors, especially since the signing of the Abraham Accords, according to data from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics and Foreign Ministry. Trade has increased dramatically between Israel and the UAE since the signing of the accords. Worth about \$125 million in 2020, that figure reached nearly \$500 m. in 2021. Some have estimated that trade will exceed \$1 billion this year and reach \$3 b. within three years. The Emirates has also recently signed a CEPA with India and is in advanced negotiations with Indonesia, with a deal likely to be completed soon following a positive round of talks in February.

MPs Back Giving Ukrainian President Zelensky an Honorary Knighthood after Defiant Stand Against Russia; Volodymyr Zelensky has become a symbol of Kyiv's resistance since the invasion MPs have backed giving Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky an honorary knighthood in recognition of his defiant stand against Russia. Boris Johnson is being urged to put Mr. Zelensky forward for the title to underline Britain's support in the face of Vladimir Putin's aggression. Mr. Zelensky has become a symbol of Kyiv's resistance since the invasion. When offered the opportunity by the West to leave the capital, he responded by insisting he needs 'ammunition not a ride'. He has been rallying his people by broadcasting from the heart of the country and condemning Putin's 'genocidal' actions. The Queen can award honorary knighthoods to non-British citizens in recognition of their contributions to the UK and the world. The awards technically do not mean that people are referred to as 'Sir' unless they are in a Commonwealth country - although the title is still often used. Tory MP Bob Seely, of the Commons foreign affairs committee, told the Sun on Sunday, March 13: 'Zelensky has been a true leader. He has given a voice and set an example to his people in their hour of courage.' Tory MP Andrew Bridgen added: 'Volodymyr Zelensky is such an inspirational leader that Putin has put a price on his head. Let's give him a knighthood instead.' Fellow Tory Michael Fabricant said: 'I believe we should simultaneously award Volodymyr Zelensky an honorary knighthood for his outstanding and charismatic leadership of a nation - while seeking to indict Putin as a war criminal.'

85% of French Jews Believe Antisemitism is Widespread in France; A recent French survey on antisemitism found that 85% of French Jews believe that antisemitism and anti-Semitic sentiments are widespread in France. The survey, published by IFOP, a French international polling and market research firm, found that 64% of the general population in the country and 85% of the Jewish community feel that antisemitism is ever-present in French society and that 68% of French Jews reported that they had faced harassment and abuse for being Jewish. Twenty percent also said they were the victims of anti-Jewish physical assaults at least once. According to the survey, anti-Semitic stereotypes are held by a large majority of the country. The poll found that 30% of participants thought that "Jews are richer than the average French person" and 37% thought that Jews had too much influence in the French economy and financial system. Those who were over 65-years old were found to more likely harbor anti-Semitic beliefs than younger participants in the survey. Attacks against Jews were found to increase sharply when the individual was wearing a religious symbol, the study also noted. The survey found that the Muslim population in France was the most influenced by the dissemination of anti-Semitic propaganda. Currently, one in two Muslims believes that Jews control the French media, the economy, or the financial system, the study found.

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