

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update April 7, 2022 ***(6th Nisan, 5782)***



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IDF Chief Tells Commanders to Ready for Month or More of Heightened Alert; IDF Chief of Staff Aviv Kohavi reportedly told commanders on Sunday, April 3, that the military is gearing up to be on heightened alert for a month or more, following several recent attacks and the start of Ramadan. Kohavi made the remarks in Tel Aviv, where he was visiting soldiers sent to reinforce police. Kohavi told the commanders they should be ready for a second “Operation Guardian of the Walls,” referring to the 11 days of fighting last year between Israel and the Hamas terror group, and accompanying violence in ethnically mixed Israeli cities. He also reportedly said that Palestinian Islamic Jihad could fire rockets from the Gaza Strip, after three of the terror group’s operatives were killed in a shootout with security forces in the West Bank, while allegedly headed to carry out an attack in Israel, in the predawn hours of Saturday. A series of recent terror attacks killed 11 people in Israel, putting security forces on heightened alert. The escalation has come as the Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins — often a period of high tension in Israel and the West Bank. Israel has ramped up security measures in response to the attacks and deployed additional forces to the West Bank, Gaza border, and major cities such as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Amid Terror Wave, Applications for Firearm Licenses Jump by 2,500%; Since a string of deadly terror attacks in Israel, there has been a near-2,500% rise in applications for a firearms license, Channel 12 news reports, citing Public Security Ministry data. The network says yesterday alone saw over 1,500 applications for a license, compared to some 60 applications ordinarily. The data also shows some 2,980 calls were made to the ministry by citizens inquiring about a firearms license, compared to some 600 ordinarily. Officials say the last time such an increase was observed was during last year’s 11-day war with terror groups in the Gaza Strip and related sectarian violence in Israel.

Iran’s Regime Continues its Execution Wave in Restive Isfahan Province; The Islamic Republic of Iran is slated to hang two men accused of killing a security official in the province of Isfahan, sparking outrage from Iranian dissidents about the theocratic state’s credibility in bringing charges against opponents of the regime in Tehran. “The Islamic Republic's forces kill the people but there's no justice for them, neither in Iran nor in the international society. Sure any criminal must face justice but the fact is no one believes the Islamic Republic when they execute people with such charges," Sheina Vojoudi, an Iranian dissident who fled

to Germany to escape persecution, told The Jerusalem Post on Monday. The first branch of the Revolutionary Court of Isfahan and branch one of the criminal court of the province convicted the 25-year-old Sadeh M. and the 38-year-old Mohammad G. of murdering Ehsan Nasiriduring clashes with security forces according to reports on Sunday in the regime-controlled media. It is unclear from the Iranian regime news reports if the protest was against the clerical state. The opaque nature of the Iranian regime's widely criticized judicial system makes it difficult to understand execution cases. The clerical regime frequently engages in mass murder of Iranians who protest economic and political corruption in the country and question the legitimacy of the theocratic state. Dr. Kazem Moussavi, a German-Iranian dissident, tweeted on Monday that the regime in Isfahan seeks "to intimidate society and opponents of the regime" by executing the two men. Vojoudi added that "The Islamic Republic took people's life and joy away. There's no hope for the people in Iran. There's absolute political suffocation in Iran. You have no right and freedom to express your opinion and to criticize the Islamic Republic's officials, especially Ali Khamenei. The political activists, environmentalists, social activists, human rights activists, and women's rights activists all end up in the Islamic Republic's prisons. The Islamic Republic charges them with espionage, acting against national security, and spreading propaganda against the system. Even if the normal civilians go to the streets and protest for their rights, the Islamic Republic will label them as thugs and all the charges that I mentioned above." This month, the UN special rapporteur on Iran, Javaid Rehman said Iran executed "In 2021, at least 280 individuals, including at least 10 women, were executed." He noted that minority communities in the Islamic Republic experienced an increase in executions, with over 40 Baluch and over 50 Kurds killed.

US Envoy Says Israel's 'Hands Not Tied' on Iran, Even if Nuke Deal Signed; US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides said on Thursday, March 31, Israel won't be faced with any American restrictions if it wishes to act against Iran, whether or not a nuclear deal is signed between Tehran and world powers. Asked in an interview if the US expects Israel to "sit quietly and not do anything" if a deal is signed, Nides replied: "Absolutely not. We've been very clear about this. If we have a deal, the Israelis' hands are not tied. If we don't have a deal, the Israelis' hands are certainly not tied." "Israel can do and take whatever actions they need to take to protect the state of Israel," he added. "The president," he stressed, "will do whatever he can do to make sure that Iran does not have a nuclear weapon... It's clear we'd like to do it through a diplomatic channel." Regarding the progress of the negotiations on a deal, he said: "The Israelis know very clearly exactly what is going on. I'm not suggesting they necessarily like it always, but there are no secrets here." Tehran has said that taking the IRGC off a US terror list is a condition for restoring the 2015 agreement. Israeli officials have openly expressed their concerns over this possibility, including during US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Israel earlier this week for the Negev Summit.

50,000 Tons of Israeli Produce May Be Destroyed Due to Ukraine War; Israeli farmers are destroying thousands of tons of fresh vegetables as produce exports to Russia and Ukraine have ground to a halt due to the ongoing war. Carrots, celery, potatoes, radishes, and more: Up to 50,000 tons of agricultural products are rotting in warehouses or facing certain destruction. Payments for goods have also stopped on account of the plummeting value of the ruble and sanctions in response to the brutal Russian invasion of Ukraine. The situation has resulted in a crisis for hundreds of Israeli farmers, with some having been forced to destroy entire crops after finding no alternative places to sell their produce. Ofir Trabelsi heads Yeron Agricultural Works, a vegetable wholesaler located in the southern town of Sharsheret. Trabelsi, who sells 95% of his crops to Russia, told The Media Line that so far, they had had to destroy 60 dunams (15 acres) of radishes, and 50 dunams (12 acres) of celery. "We've destroyed fields and what I have here in cold storage will also likely be destroyed," Trabelsi said. "We don't know what's going to happen and have had no response from any government body. We're searching for other markets, which is not so simple because it's all last minute." Trabelsi added that he had been trying to find alternatives to Russia for years, even before the war started, but had not been successful because of the strong shekel. Many European markets already have their own produce suppliers.

'A Historic Milestone': Israel and UAE Sign Free Trade Agreement; After five months of negotiations, Israel and the United Arab Emirates signed a free trade agreement on Friday, April 1, hailed as a “significant and historic milestone.” On Tuesday, Economy Minister Orna Barbivai met in Jerusalem with Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi, UAE Minister of State for Foreign Trade, for the fourth and final round of talks. The two signed the agreement at the David Citadel Hotel in Jerusalem on Friday. “Since the establishment of the Abraham Accords, the Economy and Industry Ministry has been working to expand economic relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates and to realize its economic potential,” said Barbivai. “The finalization of the negotiations is a significant and historic milestone in the relationship between the countries and we will continue to assist the Israeli business community in establishing trade relations in the United Arab Emirates,” she added. The agreement will officially take effect following a ratification process in both countries. Government lawyers are currently drawing up the detailed documents needed to put the agreements into practice. The “comprehensive” agreement covers regulation, customs, services, government procurement, e-commerce, and protection of intellectual property rights, the Economy Ministry said in a statement. Some 95% of products traded between the countries, including food, agriculture, cosmetics, medical equipment, and medication, will be exempt from customs duty, according to the statement. A number of products will be exempt immediately, while others will gradually be granted exemptions.

Islamized Hagia Sophia Holds First Ramadan Prayers for 88 Years; The Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, formerly Constantinople, held its first Ramadan prayers in 88 years on Friday, April 1, to mark the start of the Islamic month of fasting, after being converted into a mosque in 2020. The Hagia Sophia Grand Mosque — once the Church of the Holy Wisdom, before the Turks’ violent conquest of its city — held its first tarawih prayer since 1934, when the cathedral-turned-mosque was converted into a museum by the secularizing government of Kemal Atatürk. Due to the Wuhan virus pandemic, Ramadan prayers did not take place in the Hagia Sophia in 2021, according to a report from the Andalou news agency. According to the Turkish outlet, due to a number of factors including high vaccination rates and relatively low numbers of cases and deaths, the government decided to allow Muslims to attend the Hagia Sophia to mark the start of Ramadan and prayers will be held throughout the month.

Tel Aviv Leads List of Cities in Israel with the Most Diverse Cuisine; A study by food delivery company found that Tel Aviv was the most diverse city in Israel in regards to dining options. 10bis discovered which city had the largest variety of culinary options within their most populous 5km radius, finding that Tel Aviv had 58 different cuisine options – compared to 43 for Haifa, 41 for Jerusalem, and 32 for fourth-place Netanya. While Tel Aviv had the most options within a 5km radius, they also had by far the most restaurants – nearly 1,400, compared to 647 in Jerusalem and 374 in Haifa. While Mediterranean and Middle Eastern restaurants were the most common in Tel Aviv, Haifa, and Jerusalem, many cities had stunningly different results. For instance, the most common cuisine type in Netanya was Italian, while in Bat Yam, the most common type of restaurant served Japanese food. In Israel overall, the most common type of cuisine was Mediterranean and the second most common cuisine in Tel Aviv is Middle Eastern while ranking third was American, fourth Italian, and fifth was Japanese. In regards to global rankings, New York and Paris tied for the most culinary-diverse cities, with 82 unique cuisines in a 5km radius. Barcelona, London, Moscow, and San Francisco rounded out the top five list, while the least diverse cities were Kuwait with just two types of cuisine within a 5km radius, Porto-Novo in Benin (3), and Pakistan’s capital of Islamabad (3). The most commonly-served cuisine globally was Italian. 10bis analyzed a total of 4 million restaurants around the world while conducting this study.

Palestinian Terrorist Kills Five in Bnei Brak Shooting Spree; Five people were killed by a Palestinian terrorist who opened fire on passersby in Bnei Brak on Tuesday night, March 29, marking the third deadly terror attack in Israel in eight days. The gunman was killed by two police officers following a rampage just

before 8 p.m. that saw him open fire on people out walking, riding bikes, or driving in their cars in the city east of Tel Aviv. One of the two officers sustained injuries in the incident and later died of his wounds in the hospital. The attack, the third deadly terror incident in a week, underlined concerns about an escalating wave of violence ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. "Israel is facing a wave of murderous Arab terrorism," Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said late Tuesday. "The security forces are at work. We will fight terrorism with persistence, diligence, and an iron fist." Four of the victims were declared dead at the scene, with the fifth — police officer Amir Khoury, 32, a Christian Arab — added to the fatalities after being rushed to the Beilinson Medical Center, officials said. Bnei Brak resident Yaakov Shalem, a father of five according to reports, was also named as a victim, as was fellow Bnei Brak resident Rabbi Avishai Yehezkel, 29.

Gantz Orders Deployment of 1,000 Soldiers to Reinforce Police after Terror Attacks; Defense Minister Benny Gantz on Wednesday, March 30, ordered the bolstering of police forces with 1,000 Israel Defense Force soldiers following a string of deadly terror attacks. The combat soldiers — who are still in training — will be deployed to the borders of the West Bank, as well as within Israeli cities, according to police needs, Gantz's office said. Gantz said that since four people were killed in a stabbing and ramming attack in Beersheba last week, the West Bank had been bolstered with 12 extra battalions and the border with the Gaza Strip with another two. There have been another two terror attacks this week, the more recent of which, on Tuesday night in Bnei Brak, killed five people, one of them a police officer. Two Border Police officers were killed in the previous attack in Hadera on Sunday night. Gantz said the defense establishment would focus on locating potential attackers on social media, foiling attempts of Palestinians to enter Israel illegally, and disrupting weapon deals. The military will also offer logistical assistance to the police if required. The moves came following a meeting of top defense and military officials. "The IDF is prepared for a variety of scenarios, is acting and will act as necessary to maintain the daily routine of Israeli residents," IDF chief Aviv Kohavi said at the meeting, according to a statement.

Bennett: 'Israel is dealing with a new wave of terrorism'; The Israeli military has raised its level of alert and is preparing for a variety of violent scenarios and escalations following a spate of deadly attacks that claimed the lives of 11 Israeli in one week. "The IDF is prepared for a variety of scenarios and will act to the extent necessary to maintain the routine of the lives of the residents of Israel," said IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kohavi. "IDF forces are deployed with the utmost vigilance in various sectors in order to strengthen defenses and the sense of security of the residents of Israel." Kohavi ordered the "immediate implementation" of a number of measures aimed at counter-terrorism efforts, intelligence gathering with a focus on social networks, strengthening IDF readiness in the Palestinian arena, and more. The IDF has reinforced various divisions with 14 combat battalions (12 additional battalions in the West Bank and two in the Gaza Division), sniper forces, special forces, and increased intelligence and collection capabilities of forces in the field. Following a situational assessment with the Defense Ministry and senior IDF officials, the Israeli military will provide the Israel Police with "extensive assistance," including 15 companies of special forces troops (a total of 1,000 troops) in training some of whom will assist in protecting the seam line while others will be deployed to major cities in accordance to the needs of the police. The IDF will also provide logistical assistance as needed in order to provide security to the homefront and all soldiers who have proper training will be able to bring their weapons home from base a statement released by the military said.

Israel Turns to Jordan to Prevent Violence with Herzog, Gantz Visits; Israel has pushed closer to Jordan in a massive effort to prevent an outbreak of Israeli-Palestinian violence next month that could destabilize both countries. President Isaac Herzog is set to make the first-ever "public and official" visit to Jordan, either by himself or by any of his predecessors since the country's founding in 1948, according to a presidency spokesperson. Herzog and King Abdullah will discuss "deepening Israeli-Jordanian relations, maintaining regional stability with an emphasis on the upcoming holiday period, strengthening peace and normalization, and the many latent opportunities in relations between Israel, Jordan, and the wider region," the

President's Office said. Past presidents and Herzog have gone to Jordan, but always in secret meetings publicized only after the fact. Herzog will meet with Abdullah in his palace, just one day after Defense Minister Benny Gantz visited and a week after Public Security Minister Omer Bar-Lev was in Jordan to meet with the country's Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi. Abdullah on Monday, March 28, made a rare visit to Ramallah, his first in five years, to discuss with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas the threat from the religious fervor that could be caused by the overlap next month of the Passover, Easter, and Ramadan. The conjunction of the three festivals last year helped spark tensions in Jerusalem, ethnic Israeli-Arab violence, and an 11-day war with Gaza.

Giant Missile-Detecting Balloon Begins Operational Use Over Northern Israel; The military on Tuesday, March 22, officially received a massive new balloon equipped with an advanced missile and aircraft detection system from the Defense Ministry. The radar-based system, deployed in the north at an unspecified date, is part of a general effort by the Israeli Air Force to improve the country's air defenses, particularly in the north, due to the proliferation of Iranian drones and cruise missiles in the region. The detection system, dubbed "Elevated Sensor," or "Sky Dew" in Israel, is deployed at high altitudes in order to detect incoming long-range missiles, cruise missiles, and drones, officials said. Israel already maintains an array of radar systems to detect incoming threats, but the new aerostat is meant to complement and improve existing capabilities by placing the sensors at high altitudes. During a Tuesday ceremony, the system was formally handed over to the military and began its operational use under a new air force unit, with the same name as the system. Israeli Air Force chief Amikam Norkin hailed the new system, saying the unit would "enable [air traffic control] to build a more accurate and broader air surveillance picture." He added that the system would "make the air force more prepared, and assist it in continuing its mission — maintaining security in the skies of Israel."

Poll: Mahmoud Abbas' Popularity Slipping Among Palestinians; Nearly three-quarters of Palestinians (73 percent) want Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to step down, a new poll has shown. The poll, conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research (PCPSR), also showed that if presidential elections were held today, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh would defeat Abbas. If only the two were running, Haniyeh would receive 54 percent of the votes, and Abbas 38 percent. However, neither Hamas nor the ruling Fatah faction under Abbas deserves to represent and lead the Palestinian people. 33 percent of those polled said that neither side deserves such a role, and 31 percent believe that Hamas fared slightly better (31 percent) than Fatah (29 percent). Instead, Marwan Barghouti, a convicted terrorist serving five life sentences for orchestrating attacks during the Second Intifada, would be the clear winner, receiving 59 percent of the vote while Haniyeh would come in second at 37 percent. A total of 84 percent consider Palestinian Authority institutions to be corrupt, while 69 percent said the same of Hamas institutions in the Gaza Strip. Some 68 percent believe that the likelihood of a Palestinian state alongside Israel in the next five years is slim to non-existent while 30 percent said the chances are medium to high. Asked to choose the most effective means of "ending the Israeli occupation and building an independent state," the public split into three groups: 44 percent chose "armed struggle," 25 percent negotiations, and 24 percent "popular resistance." Additionally, 70 percent oppose resuming Palestinian-Israeli negotiations unconditionally, and 64 percent oppose dialogue with the U.S. under President Joe Biden. The poll, conducted from March 16-20, surveyed 1,200 Palestinians and has a three percent margin of error.

Iraq Builds Wall Along Syrian Border to Block Islamic State Jihadis; The Iraqi government has completed a wall "a dozen kilometers long and 3.5 meters high" along the Syrian border in Nineveh province to keep Islamic State jihadis at bay. Iraq plans to expand the wall to cover more of its 600-kilometer border with Syria. An Iraqi military source told AFP on Sunday, March 27, the Nineveh barrier was just the "first stage" of wall construction, but did not specify how large the wall would eventually become. According to the London-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, the first stage of the wall was constructed opposite the

town of al-Shaddadi in Syria's Hasakeh province. ISIS fighters attacked the al-Sina prison in the Hasakeh region in late January, launching a bloody nine-day battle that included suicide bombs, a prison riot, hostage-taking, and summary executions. Somewhere between 30 and 100 ISIS members escaped from the prison, including several "important leaders." The escapees headed for the Syria-Iraq border, which hosts several active ISIS cells. Kurdish officials are nervous that ISIS might attempt a similar full-scale prison break at the massive al-Hol camp in northeastern Syria. Smaller skirmishes have broken out around the camp as recently as late February. The first phase of the Iraqi border wall went up very quickly. The Iraqi military announced its construction less than four weeks ago, stating the concrete barrier would be erected between "existing fortifications," with the Iraqi army stepping in to help the notoriously undermanned and under-equipped border guards.

Iran Bars Women from Attending Soccer Match in Mashhad; Iran has once again denied women entry to a soccer stadium to watch an international match, leaving hundreds of ticketed fans locked out, Iranian media says. The World Cup qualifier against Lebanon last night, won 2-0 by Iran, was played at the Imam Reza stadium in the northeastern city of Mashhad. "About 2,000 Iranian women, who had bought tickets for the Iran-Lebanon match, were present in the perimeter of Imam Reza stadium, but could not enter the stadium," ISNA news agency says. "For this match, 12,500 tickets were sold, of which 2,000 were for women," it adds. Mohsen Davari, governor of Mashhad, tells IRIB state television: "I apologize that many people couldn't enter the stadium... Unfortunately, a large number of people outside the stadium were deprived of watching the game." In the face of the controversy, Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi today orders the interior ministry to look into the incident. In January, women were allowed to attend an international for the first time in almost three years, for a World Cup qualifier against Iraq. The Islamic Republic has generally barred female spectators from soccer and other sports stadiums since it was established in 1979.



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