

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update April 21, 2022 ***(20th Nisan, 5782)***



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For April 2022

Over 150 Injured, 400 Arrested as Palestinians and Cops Clash on Temple Mount; Clashes broke out between Palestinians and Israeli police at the Temple Mount early Friday morning, April 15, as spiking tensions, threats of terror, and the observance of major holidays all converge around the flashpoint holy site. Skirmishes between police and worshipers at the site were reported around 6:30 a.m., with officers entering the compound and clashing with people barricaded inside. Police said in a statement that at around 4 a.m., dozens of young people began marching in the area. Some bore the Palestinian flag, while others carried green banners associated with the Hamas terror group. Police said they waited for morning prayers to end before entering the Temple Mount to disperse the rioters, and that some of them threw stones at the Western Wall below. The Palestinian Red Crescent emergency group reported that 158 people were hurt in the clashes. It said the vast majority were treated at East Jerusalem's al-Makassed Hospital or at a field hospital set up by medics, without giving details on the nature of the injuries.

Six Extremist Jews Arrested for Planning Animal Sacrifice atop Temple Mount; Six Jews in their 20s were arrested Thursday morning, April 14, after police suspected they were planning to sacrifice a goat at the Temple Mount in Jerusalem's Old City ahead of Passover. The suspects, residents of Jerusalem and Jewish settlements in the West Bank, were detained and taken in for questioning after police found a goat in one of the suspects' homes. The "Returning to the Mount" extremist group, which advocates the construction of a third Jewish temple on the site that once housed the two biblical temples, has circulated a flier offering a cash prize to anyone who managed to offer a living sacrifice on the Temple Mount, and to anyone arrested trying to do so. The "Returning to the Mount" group said that in addition to the arrests, a number of their members have received phone calls from the Shin Bet warning them not to proceed with their plans. "Despite all this, the goats are on their way to Jerusalem." Israeli authorities have vowed to stop any attempts to bring sacrificial animals to the complex, as they have in years past. "Police will continue to operate in Jerusalem and anywhere else together with all security agencies, 24/7, covertly and overtly, against any person who attempts to violate the order and laws in place at the Temple Mount and the other holy sites in the city," a police statement read. The statement added that "publications that raise suspicion of a potential criminal violation will be treated accordingly."

Israeli Forces Arrest Palestinian Cell Planning 'Imminent' Terrorist Attack; Israeli security forces arrested a number of Palestinians on Wednesday night, April 13, in the towns of Silwad and Kobar, north of Ramallah, who were planning an imminent terrorist attack against Israeli targets. IDF soldiers, Shin Bet operatives, and officers from the Border Police's counterterrorism unit took part in the arrests. The Israeli forces entered the area after Maad Hamad, who had been in the custody of the Palestinian Authority for carrying out a deadly terrorist attack in 2015, escaped from custody. Israeli citizen Malachi Rosenfeld was killed and three others were wounded in the shooting attack carried out by Hamad near Shvut Rahel in 2015. The Shin Bet received intelligence on Wednesday that Hamad had escaped and was planning a terrorist attack against Israeli targets in the immediate future. After a number of hours, Hamad was arrested by Israeli forces in Kobar, and three additional Palestinians suspected of promoting terrorist operations with Hamad were arrested in Silwad. Security forces surrounded the house where the suspects were hiding and after the suspects refused to exit, they fired at the house and the suspects surrendered without being injured. The suspects were transferred for questioning by the Shin Bet.

Iran's IRGC Quds Force Head Threatens Israel; Iran's head of the IRGC Quds Force Esmail Qaani gave a recent speech in which he praised the late Mohammad Hossein-Zadeh Hejazi, a key IRGC figure; and slammed Israel. He praised "Palestinian martyrs" in his speech. "We are in the middle of the battlefield. The Islamic Republic of Iran is at the forefront of the scene against global arrogance and international Zionism, and we will continue on the path of their honor and greatness, thanks to the martyrs," he said. He hinted at Hejazi's key role in Iran's threats against Israel in the past. The commander of the Resistance Front said: "One of the steps of Martyr Hejazi to achieve martyrdom was his sincerity, and although he was the deputy commander of the IRGC, he came and became the deputy commander of the Quds Force and did his job with seriousness and effort." Qaani does not give long public speeches often so this one is of great interest to understand his mindset. Ostensibly the speech was about Hejazi but it is also about what Iran's "Resistance Front" is doing today in the region. This refers to the IRGC, Hezbollah, Houthis in Yemen, and Iranian militias in Iraq and Syria. He accused Saudi Arabia of being backed by Israel. He claimed that Israel is in decline and that Iran is rising in the region.

ISIS Calls for More Attacks in Israel, Europe; Close to a month after two deadly Islamic State attacks in Israel that claimed six lives, the spokesperson of the Sunni terror group has called on supporters to carry out more attacks. Giving an address for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Abu Omar al-Muhajjr called for a "global offensive" in revenge for the death of the group's leader Abu Ibrahim al-Qurayshi last February during an operation by the Americans in Syria as well as the group's former spokesperson al-Muhajjr Abu Hamza al-Qurashi. "We announced, with the help of God, a blessed battle to avenge the two sheikhs, Sheikh Abu Ibrahim al-Hashemi al-Qurashi and Sheikh al-Muhajjr Abu Hamza al-Qurashi," he said in the address released on Telegram. In his address titled "Fight them, and God will chastise them at your hands," Muhajjr called for more attacks to be carried out in Europe since "the opportunity is ripe for you" because it is "preoccupied" with the war in Ukraine. Citing the March terror attacks in Israel claimed by the terror group, he called on supporters to "follow their path and arm themselves with weapons and carry out further attacks." "These acts caused pain to the Jews and showed the world that there is a difference between those who fight and die for God and those who fight for empty political slogans," he said. He praised the attackers, saying that "they fought and were killed for the sake of Allah" and said that Jerusalem could only be liberated with the return of the caliphate, not by the Palestinian leaders who he called "secular terrorists." "Modern Muslim politicians trying to liberate Jerusalem are nothing more than puppets in the hands of Israel and the West," he said.

Hezbollah MP Says only \$9 Billion Needed to Destroy Israel; Mohammed Raad, the head of the Hezbollah parliamentary bloc in the Lebanese parliament declared on Saturday, April 16, that it would take a mere \$9 billion to obliterate the State of Israel. "The resistance only needs \$9 billion and there will be nothing

left called Israel in the region," said Raad, who previously met with French President Emmanuel Macron, according to a news broadcast by Lebanese outlet MTV. MTV tweeted Raad's remarks to its 1.4 million followers on Twitter. The Islamic Republic of Iran — the world's worst state-sponsor of terrorism as defined by the US state department — is the main financier of the Lebanese terrorist organization Hezbollah. Raad also said that \$900 billion was spent to destroy Yemen during the unfolding civil war. France has outlawed Hezbollah's military wing yet continues to block a full terror designation of Hezbollah within the EU. Meanwhile the US, the Arab League, Germany, Japan, Canada, Austria, the United Kingdom, and additional European and Latin American countries classify Hezbollah's entire organization as a foreign terrorist movement.

Lapid Says Israel's Gov't Can Last till Next Passover, if 'We Do it Right'; "This government will be here next Passover as long as the coalition crisis is managed correctly," Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said on Thursday, April 14, as he explained that it was possible to continue to operate without a Knesset majority. "The current political crisis is not easy, but it can be managed. If we work correctly, this government will be here next Passover and the one after that. It will not be simple, but we will make it happen. "This is an excellent government, and every effort will be made to ensure that it continues," Lapid said. He spoke more than a week after MK Idit Silman (Yamina), resigned from the coalition that she chairs. The move dropped the coalition from a narrow majority of 61-seats to 60, out of a 120-member parliament. "There were governments in Israel with far fewer than 60 seats that did great things," Lapid said. Lapid told reporters that the government could remain stable at 60, particularly since the right-wing block headed by Likud party leader and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu only had 54 seats. Lapid said that he was checking into the legal possibility of approving a one-year budget rather than a two year. The government, he added, has enough support to pass a budget.

British PM Wishes Jews a Happy Passover; British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Friday, April 15, released a video in which he wished Jews in the UK and across the world a happy Passover. "For the first time in far too long, this year the Seder table will once again be thronged with family and friends, every seat occupied by an actual loved one, rather than the unblinking eye of a phone camera or laptop," he said. Johnson also commented on the situation that many Ukrainian Jews will be facing during Passover as they hold their Seders in bomb shelters or in unfamiliar new countries to which they escaped. "The story of Passover is about a journey to freedom, about faith in the midst of hardship, and a reminder that there will always be better times ahead for those who hold God as closely and tightly as he holds us," he said. "I hope this Passover brings not just a reason to celebrate today, but also a renewed hope for tomorrow. Chag Sameach," he concluded.

Iran-Backed Militias in Iraq Reportedly Smuggling Weapons to Arm Russia in Ukraine; Iranian-backed militias in Iraq are smuggling weapons to arm Russia in its invasion of Ukraine. RPGs, anti-tank missiles, and Brazilian-designed rocket launcher systems have made their way from Iraq to Ukraine, according to the report, which cited members of the Iranian-backed militias as well as regional intelligence services familiar with the matter. An Iranian-made Bavar 373 missile system was also donated to Moscow by Iranian authorities. RPGs and anti-tank missiles belonging to the Hashd al-Shaabi Shia militia group were transported from Iraq to Iran on March 26 where they were collected by Russian authorities who then shipped them to Russia by sea. Hashd al-Shaabi also dismantled Brazilian-designed Astros II rocket launcher systems on April 1 for shipment to Russian forces. The reported weapons transfers represent the latest progression in Russia's relations with Iran as Moscow finds itself increasingly isolated and struggling to keep up on the battlefield as Western sanctions continue to pile up. US officials said that Russia has also been leaning on China to send its own military aid for use in the Ukraine invasion.

Israel Says Iran Has Nearly Enough Uranium for a Bomb, as Talks Remain Stuck; Iran is close to having enough enriched uranium for a weapon as negotiations to return to the 2015 nuclear deal remain stuck, a diplomatic source said on Wednesday, April 13. The Islamic Republic is very close to having a significant quantity of enriched uranium – meaning enough to produce one bomb and a redline set by Western parties to the talks. While Iran is not yet enriching uranium to weapons-grade material at 90% purity, larger quantities of uranium enriched to a lower purity can be enough for a bomb. Jerusalem’s assessment is that Iran is close to having a significant quantity of uranium enriched to 60%. Negotiations for the US and Iran to return to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action ended weeks ago, with Iran making a demand outside of the nuclear agreement, for its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) to be removed from the US Foreign Terrorist Organization list. Washington has not yet officially responded to the demand, but a State Department spokesperson said last week that US President Joe Biden views the IRGC Quds Force as a terrorist organization. Thus far, none of the Europeans’ proposals for a compromise or alternative agreement between the Americans and Iranians have been accepted by the Iranians, who have made removing the IRGC’s FTO (foreign terrorist organization) designation the sine qua non of an agreement. Israeli officials have also asked European interlocutors to ensure that another of Iran’s demands not be met and that the International Atomic Energy Agency’s (IAEA) open investigations of possible military dimensions of Iran’s nuclear program not be closed for political reasons, which could set a dangerous precedent. IAEA Secretary-General Rafael Grossi did not agree to close the probes but the matter is expected to be discussed in an IAEA board meeting in June.

Regional Alliance Needed Against Iran; Defense Minister Benny Gantz called for a regional alliance and an expansion of intelligence cooperation in order to make up for a lack of inspections of Iran’s nuclear project. Speaking at a Washington Institute Policy Forum, Gantz said that Iran is continuing its uranium enrichment, and is close to 90% that is suitable for nuclear weapons “once they decide to reach it.” He told the audience that while he understands America’s need for an agreement, the loopholes in the deal need to be closed because “if you don’t close the open loopholes, you will have serious problems down the road.” Pointing to the war in Ukraine, where Western countries are using economic and political pressure on Russia but are being “very careful” with military options because Moscow has nuclear capabilities, Gantz warned that this is not something Israel wants with Iran. Thus if a deal is not reached, “we will have to move to Plan B,” he said. “We must make sure we are increasing our intelligence cooperation, and create an intelligence coalition that operates against Iran and compensates for a lack of inspection capabilities.” In addition to strengthening ties with regional countries, Gantz said that Israel “will have to increase offensive capabilities, intercept regional activities carried out by Iran in other countries, increase our defensive capacities, and communicate with the Iranian society held hostage by the regime in the long run.” Israel took part in a drill with neighboring countries several months ago based on scenarios that included drones and other aerial threats. Increasing Israel’s cooperation with Gulf countries that are geographically closer to Iran will allow the IDF to stop threats even further from its borders.

Iranian Americans to Biden: Don't Remove IRGC from Terror List; A group of more than 500 Iranian American scientists, scholars, and engineers, on Tuesday, April 12, urged US President Joe Biden to not remove the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) from the list of foreign terrorist organizations as nuclear talks stall, Fox News reports. Iran has demanded sanction relief and the removal of its top military branch from the US list of designated terrorist groups as a condition for its return to the 2015 nuclear deal. The letter, led by University of Connecticut professor and Dean of the School of Engineering, Kazem Kazerounian, and signed by another 501 Iranian officials, says the IRGC not only "safeguards" Iran’s dictatorship but impedes any progress of human rights advancements. Kazerounian argued that the nuclear talks should not only be about ensuring nuclear stability but should also target issues surrounding human rights. Last month it was reported that the Biden administration is considering removing terrorism sanctions from the IRGC as part of negotiations to restore the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. The Pentagon's top general recently said he was opposed to removing the IRGC from the US terror group list.

EU Continues to Support NGOs Designated Terrorist Affiliates; The European Union and Palestinian NGOs have been working together to offset losses caused by Israel designating six of the NGOs as terrorist groups, under the guise of battling the “shrinking space for civil society organizations” among Palestinians, according to a document obtained by The Jerusalem Post. “EU and member states have continued to engage with the six designated organizations collectively showing solidarity both at a technical level and [head of missions] level,” the minutes of a January 21 meeting between the EU Representative to the Palestinians and other European officials with Palestinian civil society leaders said. The meeting took place following Defense Minister Benny Gantz’s decision in October to ban six Palestinian organizations – Addameer, Al Haq, Bisan Center, Defense for Children International-Palestine (DCI-P), Union Of Agricultural Work Committees (UAWC), and the Union of Palestinian Women’s Committees (UPWC) – due to their affiliations with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a designated terrorist group in Israel, the US, the EU and elsewhere. Contracts with Al Haq and the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, which ran an EU-funded project with some of the banned NGOs, were suspended because of Israel’s accusations last year, even before the official designation. They were cleared by the European Anti-Fraud Office, but the suspension of funding, direct and indirect, remained in place. The full investigation would likely take six more months, the document published in January stated. The meeting with the EU Representative and the PNGO conference did not mention Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas’s presidential decree restricting the activity and finances of Palestinian civil society organizations. However, PNGO has called Abbas’s moves to freeze Palestinian NGOs’ bank accounts “a vicious attack.” Al Haq said the decree “infringes on the pillars of transparency and openness to civil society.”

Islamists ‘Mercilessly Killing Christians’ in Democratic Republic of the Congo; Islamic extremists raided the village of Masambo in the northeastern province of North Kivu in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) early this month. The raid by jihadists from the Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), a group allied to the Islamic State, is just one episode in a flood of Islamist violence across North Kivu and its neighboring province of Ituri, The Barnabas Fund noted in an email Tuesday, April 12. In May 2021, DRC President Felix Tshisekedi declared the two provinces to be in a “state of siege,” a situation that continues to this day. A church leader in neighboring Uganda, the birthplace of the ADF, declared that the jihadists are “mercilessly killing Christians” and many people are fleeing the DRC and seeking refuge in western Uganda. Africa News notes that in December, Uganda sent more than 1,000 soldiers to aid Congo’s army in their fight against ADF rebels in the region. The Barnabas Fund, a charity that assists persecuted Christians, requested prayers for Christians in northeastern DRC, “asking for the Lord’s hand of protection over them.” “Pray that Islamist extremism and other forms of violence in this troubled region will be brought to an end. Pray also for churches in western Uganda as they seek to help thousands of refugees who have fled across the border,” the group asked.

Housing Lottery in Israel Sees Huge Demand for Discounted Apartments; The first lottery under this government’s new housing discount scheme closed last week, with 119,207 households registering a million bids to compete for 10,000 properties that will be built nationwide. Households were allowed to bid in up to three localities and for all the units in the lottery in those localities. The housing units are located in 150 projects across 31 localities in Israel. Households had to be first-time buyers and go through a validation process. Under the new “Target Price” (Mekhir Matara) scheme, those who are successful get a chance to buy newly built apartments at below-market prices. The most popular locations — those entering the lottery could specify which parts of the country they are interested in — were Or Yehuda, Ashdod, Be’er Yaakov, Rishon Lezion, and Tel Aviv-Jaffa, according to a ministry announcement on Monday, April 11. The lowest demand was for housing units in Beit She’an, Dimona, Turan, Karmiel, Nazareth, and Kiryat Shmona. The lottery was extended by a week because levels of interest were so high, allowing more households to qualify to enter. The lottery process itself has strict, computerized systems which involve no human contact. The results are

produced in a closed room, in the presence of the lottery committee. The Mekhir Matara scheme has replaced the Mekhir Lamishtaken (Buyers' Price) program that ran from 2015. It too was aimed at first-time buyers but tried to incentivize lower-cost properties by putting forward discounted land for development outside central Israel. Mekhir Matara offers successful lottery winners a 20% discount, or up to NIS 300,000 (\$93,700), on the purchase price with some additional incentives in certain areas. Housing and Construction Minister Ze'ev Elkin said he was delighted by the response to the new program. The number of people participating "proves the longing of young couples in Israel for help from the state in buying an apartment at a discount of hundreds of thousands of shekels," Elkin said. Aviad Friedman, director-general of the Housing and Construction Ministry, promised that additional lotteries through the year would offer at least 20,000 more housing units through the Mekhir Matara scheme. He said, "we are working around the clock to increase this number. At the same time, we are working on additional channels to increase the number of housing units for long-term rent." Lottery results will be announced in May, with the winners contacted, while registration for the next lottery of additional new housing units will open in June. Target Price, like programs before it, is aimed at making homeownership more accessible in a housing market that is seeing spiraling costs amid sky-high demand and inadequate supply.

Israeli Mathematics Team Places 9th in the World; The Israeli team at the European Girls' Mathematical Olympiad (EGMO) made their country proud this week, with each of the four members of the team bringing home a medal. This year's EGMO occurred in Hungary, with 56 countries participating, a total of 222 contestants overall. The Israeli team ranked ninth overall, and the team captain, Nogah Friedman, ranked third in the world. Their success is particularly meaningful given recent initiatives to involve more women in Israel in STEM and hi-tech. To that point, President of the Weizmann Institute Professor Alon Chen said, "I hope that this achievement will lead more girls to show interest in scientific professions." The competition took place over the course of two days. Each day, the students took a 4.5-hour exam consisting of three extremely challenging questions in Algebra, Combinatorics, Geometry, and number theory. 2022 marks Israel's seventh year participating in the EGMO, which itself began in 2012. This year's Israeli delegation won four medals: Friedman, from Rehovot, won gold; Noga Labin from Tel Aviv won bronze; Ya'ara Shulman and Tamar Pe'er from Herzliya also won bronze medals. Education Minister Yifat Shasha-Biton offered congratulations to the victorious young women saying, "you are a great [source of] pride to the Israeli team, to the Israeli education system, and to the entire country. This unprecedented achievement you have reached is inspiring, and I hope it will bring in many more students who will want to follow the same path."



Robert I. Solomon: Messianic Rabbi, rabbisolomon@yachad.com

Jeffery Blalock: Ministries Coordinator, jeffery@yachad.com

Yachad Ministries, 950 Pine Grove Road, Roswell, Georgia 30075

E-mail: info@yachad.com, Web Page: <https://www.yachad.com/>

Phone: 770-641-3000 (ext. 6)

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