

# ***Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update April 28, 2022 (27<sup>th</sup> Nisan, 5782)***



**[For the Yachad Report Newsletter For April 2022](#)**

***'Don't Join the Lies,' Bennett Says as Jordanian PM Praises Palestinian Rioters;*** Prime Minister Naftali Bennett came out against those who incite against Israel and encourage terrorists, hours after Jordanian Prime Minister Bisher Al-Khasawneh praised Palestinian attacks on Israelis in a speech to the parliament in Amman on Monday, April 18. "Israel is doing everything so that everyone can always celebrate their holidays safely – Jews, Muslims, and Christians," Bennett said. "We expect everyone not to join the lies and certainly not to encourage violence against Jews." Bennett also spoke out against those who "blame Israel for the violence against us, those who encourage throwing rocks and violence against the citizens of the State of Israel." This is unacceptable. That is a prize for the inciters, foremost of which is Hamas, which is trying to spark violence in Jerusalem," Bennett stated. Khasawneh said he "praises every Palestinian and Jordanian Islamic Wakf [religious trust] worker who stands tall like a turret and those who throw rocks at the pro-Zionists who are defiling al-Aqsa Mosque while under the security of the Israeli occupation government." He also repeated an unsupported theory advanced by the Palestinians that Israel plans to divide the Temple Mount like the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, into separate spaces and hours for Jews and Muslims. An Israeli senior diplomatic source confirmed that no changes to the current situation have been proposed. Meanwhile, Jordan called an emergency meeting of Arab League foreign ministers on Thursday, to discuss the situation.

***Mansour Abbas: No Jewish Prayer on Temple Mount or Ra'am Will Leave Coalition;*** The Ra'am party has submitted its conditions for remaining part of the coalition to Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, maintaining the status quo at the Temple Mount under which Jews are banned from any form of prayer at their holiest site, Channel 12 News reported. In addition, the party demands an agreed outline for the implementation of the economic five-year plan within a year, accelerating the recognition and regulation of villages in the Negev and expanding the program to eradicate crime and violence in the Arab sector. Tomorrow, April 19, a meeting will be held of members of the Ra'am party and the Islamic Movement in which Abbas will be required to take more drastic measures in response to the recent violence on and surrounding the Temple Mount, possibly including withdrawing from the coalition altogether. However, Mansour Abbas insists that it is not right for the party to leave the coalition at this time and lose the unique status it has attained as an Arab party in the Israeli government. On Sunday, April 17, the Ra'am party froze its participation in the coalition in response to pressure from the Islamic Movement, citing law enforcement

efforts against Arab rioters on the Temple Mount. The council held an emergency meeting Sunday afternoon after one of its leaders, Sheikh Mohammad Salameh Hassan, demanded the UAL (United Arab List or Ra'am in Hebrew) party bolt the coalition and bring down the government. At the urging of party chief MK Mansour Abbas, the council did not insist on the UAL's immediate departure from the coalition but instead instructed the faction to cease all cooperation with the government for the time being.

***In call with PA's Abbas, Putin Criticizes Israeli policies at Al-Aqsa Mosque;*** Russian President Vladimir Putin held a phone call Monday, April 18, with Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to discuss tensions in Jerusalem and negotiations between Russia and Ukraine, the Russian state-owned news agency RIA reported. According to the report, Putin updated Abbas on "Russia's special military operation to defend the Donbas region" in eastern Ukraine. The phone call reportedly took place at the Palestinian leader's behest. With the war in Ukraine driving up food prices globally, Putin also assured Abbas during the phone call that Moscow will provide the Palestinians with "Russian wheat, materials, and crops." The Palestinian official news agency Wafa said that Putin "stressed Russia's firm position in support of the rights of the Palestinian people, and that Russia will continue to accord its political support to the Palestinian cause in all international forums, and what is happening in Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque." Wafa also reported that the Russian leader rejected "the Israeli practices that prevent worshipers from freely accessing the Al-Aqsa Mosque," adding that Israel must "respect the existing historical status quo" at the holy site. Russia has long been a champion of the Palestinian cause, with PA hoping Moscow will play a more central role in mediating between it and Israel.

***Raisi Says if Zionists Make 'Tiniest Move Against Us' They'll Target Center of Regime;*** Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi Monday, April 18, warned that Israel will be targeted by his country's armed forces if it makes "the tiniest move" against Iran. Raisi addressed Israel directly during a speech at an annual parade of Iran's armed forces. "If you make the tiniest move against the nation of Iran, the center of the Zionist regime will be the target of our armed forces," Raisi said, referring to Tel Aviv. Raisi did not elaborate, but said Iran watches any move by Israel "closely." He spoke as talks stalled in Vienna over a deal to rein in Iran's nuclear capabilities. European-sponsored talks hope to save the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which gave Iran relief from sanctions in return for curbs on its nuclear program aimed at preventing it from obtaining a weapon.

***Iran Confirms Moving Centrifuge Facility Allegedly Hit by Israel to Underground Site;*** Iran has confirmed it relocated a centrifuge facility to its underground Natanz nuclear site, state media reported, days after the UN atomic watchdog said it installed surveillance cameras to monitor the new workshop at Tehran's request. Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman for Iran's atomic energy organization, has been quoted as saying authorities had moved the operation to a safer place. Iran's centrifuge facility in Karaj found itself targeted in what Iran described as a sabotage attack in June. Natanz itself has twice been targeted in sabotage attacks amid uncertainty over the nuclear deal, assaults that Iran has blamed on Israel. "Unfortunately because of a terrorist operation that took place against Karaj, we were obliged to intensify security measures under which we moved an important part of the machines and transferred the rest to Natanz and Isfahan," said Kamalvandi. Isfahan is the location of another Iranian nuclear facility. On Thursday, April 14, the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency said it installed cameras and removed seals from machines at the new workshop in Natanz two days earlier. Those machines will be used to make centrifuge rotor tubes and bellows, crucial parts for the devices that spin at very high speeds to enrich uranium gas. Talks between Iran and world powers in Vienna to revive the 2015 nuclear deal have stalled. There is concern that Iran could be closer to being able to construct an atomic weapon if it chose to pursue one. The nuclear deal collapsed four years ago when former US President Donald Trump withdrew and imposed crushing sanctions on Iran.

***Israeli Laser-Based Air Defense Shoots Down Drones;*** The Defense Ministry revealed Thursday, April 14, that a laser air defense system it is developing successfully shot down drones, rockets, mortars, and anti-tank missiles in the first series of tests last month. According to the head of the ministry's research and development team, Brig. Gen. (res.) Yaniv Rotem, the tests were conducted at "challenging" ranges and timings. "The use of a laser is a 'game changer' and the technology is simple to operate and proves to be economically viable," he said. In a video released by the ministry, the laser-based system can be seen intercepting a rocket, a mortar, and a drone at an undisclosed location in southern Israel's Negev desert, in March of this year. The ministry has been testing the laser-based defense system for several years, shooting down a drone with it last year. The recent tests were the first to be successful against the other threats, including unguided projectiles and anti-tank guided missiles. Its research and development department initially planned to deploy the anti-missile system by 2024, but the military has pushed for an earlier deployment. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett announced in February that Israel would deploy the system within the year.

***Israeli Consumer Goods Prices Rose by 0.6% in March; Housing Costs Continue to Soar;*** The cost of consumer goods in Israel rose by 0.6 percent over the course of March 2022, data released by the Central Bureau of Statistics showed Friday. Since the beginning of 2022, there has been a rise of 1.5%, and over the past 12 months, the consumer price index has risen by 3.5%, according to the new CPI data. The CPI measures the average cost of household goods. Particular rises were seen in clothing and footwear (4.6%), culture and entertainment (2.1%), and transport (1.6%). However, a decrease of 2.5% was seen in the costs of fresh vegetables and fruits, the data showed. The rise in the index was lower than expected, and the annual inflation rate had not risen since last month. Apartment prices also rose during the first two months of 2022, by 1.8%, resulting in a cumulative rise of 15.2% in the past 12 months compared to the previous period. Central Israel and Jerusalem saw the highest increase during January and February of 2022, 2.4% and 2.2% respectively. Haifa saw an increase of 2.1%, the rest of northern Israel 1.6%. Southern Israel saw an increase of 1.5% and last came Tel Aviv, with 1.3%.

***Western Wall Passover Prayer Event Ends Peacefully, with Relatively Low Turnout;*** Jerusalem was on edge Monday morning, April 18, as a prayer ceremony went ahead at the Western Wall for the Passover holiday, with authorities still facing the ongoing threat of Palestinian violence around the Jewish holy site. The semi-annual priestly blessing event, known in Hebrew as "Birkat Hacohanim," was held without incident. The ceremony usually draws tens of thousands to the Western Wall plaza. However, turnout appeared to be quite low on Monday compared to previous years, amid heightened tensions in the capital. Several Hebrew media reports estimated that attendance was in the low thousands. This year's event was split into two sessions, with the first on Monday and the second on Wednesday, to reduce crowding for security reasons. A stampede at an overcrowded religious event at Mount Meron in northern Israel killed 45 people last year in Israel's worst-ever peacetime disaster. Around 2,500 police officers were securing the area around the time of the prayers. Jewish pilgrims make their way to the ceremony on the intermediate days of the Passover and Sukkot festivals, with crowds spilling out from the wall's plaza into the surrounding areas. The ceremony, which sees male descendants of the Kohanim priestly caste gather to bestow a benediction, involves the raising of hands to perform the blessing, with those conducting the blessing wrapped in prayer shawls. Pictures from Monday's prayer session showed some worshipers covered with Ukrainian flags amid the Russian offensive in the eastern European country.

***Arab Social Media Spreading False, Inciting Information;*** Israel Police on Thursday morning, April 21, released a statement correcting the misinformation regarding the events on the Temple Mount and providing full details on the events which occurred. "At the end of the Fajr prayer on the Temple Mount Thursday morning, dozens of lawbreakers and masked men rioted and disturbed the peace with severe violence, as they have done in recent days," the statement communicated by the Israel Police Spokesperson for the Jerusalem

District said. "While the Israeli Police is doing everything in its power to enable the public to worship freely, once again, this morning, lawbreakers have again thrown fireworks and rocks, including from inside the mosque." The police also emphasized that "Arab social media networks continue to spread false, inciting, and misleading information about events on the Temple Mount in an attempt to escalate the situation and misinform the public. It should be emphasized that many reports are out of touch with reality regarding events in the Temple Mount." "The Israel Police will continue to allow freedom of worship and take resolute action against rioters and violent lawbreakers wherever they are."

***Former Iran MP Says Iran Always Wanted to Build a Nuclear Bomb;*** Despite Iran's insistence that its nuclear activity is for peaceful purposes only, former Iranian MP Ali Motahari revealed on Sunday, April 24, that Iran "from the very beginning" aimed to make a nuclear bomb, in an interview with the Iran Student Correspondents Association (ISCA). "From the very beginning, when we entered the nuclear activity, our goal was to build a bomb and strengthen the deterrent forces, but we could not maintain the secrecy of this issue, and the secret reports were revealed by a group of hypocrites," he said. The former MP stressed that a country that wants to make peaceful use of nuclear power "never starts with enrichment," but instead first builds a reactor and then enters the field of enrichment. "To do enrichment directly creates the illusion that we want to make a bomb." "If we, like Pakistan, could secretly make and test bombs, it would be very deterrent," Motahari told ISCA. "When we started something, we should have seen it to the end." The former MP stressed, however, that Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei is now of the opinion that producing nuclear weapons is forbidden. The ISCA interviewer also referenced an earlier comment by Motahari that Tehran can still make a nuclear bomb, despite Khamenei's fatwa (Islamic religious decree) against such weapons, because the fatwa only forbids the use of a bomb, not the creation of one.

***Israel, Germany to Expand Bilateral Defense and Industrial Cooperation;*** Defense Minister Benny Gantz discussed ways to expand bilateral ties with his German counterpart on Thursday, April 21. Posting on Twitter, Gantz said that he spoke with German Defense Minister Christine Lambrecht "about the international effort to support Ukraine and its citizens. We also discussed ways to expand bilateral defense and industrial cooperation and agreed to meet soon in Israel." Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Germany increased its defense budget to two percent of the GDP and said it would set up a special fund of €100 billion (\$108b.) in order to swiftly upgrade its armed forces. It is understood that Israel will play a key role in helping Germany's force buildup. A leader in defense, the world has for many years looked to the Jewish state for security and intelligence. Israel's defense industry has leading international companies exporting to countries across the globe. Israel's military exports brought in \$11.2b. last year, the largest distribution of Israeli defense exports being in Europe with 41%, up from 30% in 2020.

***Israeli Envoy to Russia: Would Be an 'Honor' to Host Putin-Zelensky Talks in Jerusalem;*** Israel is willing to host talks between the leaders of Russia and Ukraine on ending the Russian invasion, Jerusalem's envoy to Moscow said Thursday, April 21. Ambassador Alexander Ben Zvi told the Russian state news agency TASS that it would be "a great honor" for Israel if Russian President Vladimir Putin and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky meet in Jerusalem. He stressed, however, that it was up to them to agree to such a meeting. Ben Zvi floated the possibility that Israel could alternatively host delegations from Kyiv and Moscow that do not include their respective leaders. "What was done in Turkey can also be done in our country," he said, noting talks that took place between representatives of the warring nations in Istanbul last month. The envoy also said that Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Putin are "in regular contact with each other." Bennett traveled to Moscow to meet with Putin in early March, and the two have also spoken several times by phone as part of Israel's efforts to mediate between Russia and Ukraine. The premier has also held a number of calls with Zelensky. Following Ben Zvi's comments, Russian Ambassador to Israel Anatoly Viktorov played down the prospects of a meeting between Putin and Zelensky in Jerusalem, telling TASS that

while Moscow welcomed the Israeli offer to host the sit-down, it was currently premature to hold face-to-face talks.

***Number of Ukrainian Refugees Tops Five Million as Conflict Rages;*** The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has released figures claiming that over five million Ukrainians have fled their country since the start of the Russian invasion in February. According to the UNHCR, a total of 5,034,439 Ukrainians have fled their country since the start of the Russian invasion, while the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) claims that around 7.1 million people have been forced to leave their homes in Ukraine due to the conflict. Kelly Clements, Deputy High Commissioner of the UNHCR, commented on the new figures this week saying, “After eight weeks of conflict, we are at five million, and it’s not over,” the European Union-funded website InfoMigrants reports. Many of the foreign nationals, who were either students or workers, have returned to their own countries according to InfoMigrants, while the vast majority of Ukrainian refugees have been welcomed in neighboring countries like Poland, which has taken in six out of every ten Ukrainians fleeing the conflict. The UNHCR also states that nearly 600,000 Ukrainians have fled the conflict to Russia and Belarus. While refugees continue to enter European Union countries from Ukraine, a spokesman for the Ukrainian Border Security claimed last week that around 870,000 Ukrainians have already returned to their home country and estimated that between 25,000 and 30,000 returns each day.

***Israel’s Indoor Mask Mandate Ends After Two Years;*** Israel’s indoor mask mandate, one of the few remaining coronavirus restrictions still in place, was lifted at 8 p.m. on Saturday, April 23. Early last week, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz had agreed that the widely flouted masking requirement will be scrapped, citing the decline in morbidity. The mandate had officially been set to expire on May 1. The Prime Minister’s Office said in a statement that masking will still be required “at places with high contagion potential,” among which it listed hospitals, senior living facilities, and during air travel. “This year — Mimouna without masks,” Bennett later tweeted, referring to the popular Jewish Moroccan celebration that follows Passover. Mimouna celebrations, where people host large gatherings and travel from home to home, were expected nationwide Saturday evening. Bennett set to attend one such event in Shilat, a moshav near Modiin, later Saturday. Since masking rules were first imposed in April 2020, Israelis have been required to wear face coverings indoors for all but 10 days in June last year, when the mandate was briefly lifted before being swiftly brought back amid surging cases at the time. The announcement Wednesday, April 20, by Bennett’s office came two days after a US judge struck down the federal masking requirements on public transportation, with numerous companies and government agencies subsequently announcing they would no longer enforce the mandate.

***Biden to Visit Israel in the Next Few Months;*** US President Joe Biden will make his first visit to Israel as president in the coming months, the White House said, following a call with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett on Sunday evening, April 24. It was the second phone conversation between the pair in less than a month. Bennett used the opportunity to update Biden on Israel’s efforts “to stop the violence and incitement in Jerusalem,” the Prime Minister’s Office said. The two also discussed the Iranian nuclear threat, with the Israeli premier reiterating Jerusalem’s stance against the US heeding Iran’s demand to remove its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps from an American terror blacklist as part of ongoing negotiations between Tehran and world powers in Vienna to return to a nuclear deal under which Iran would at least temporarily halt its nuclear development in exchange for sanctions relief. “I am sure that President Biden, who is a true friend of Israel and cares about its security, will not remove the Revolutionary Guards from the [State Department’s] list of [Foreign] Terrorist Organizations,” Bennett told Biden. “The president took note of ongoing efforts between Israeli and Palestinian officials to lower tensions and ensure a peaceful conclusion to the holy season of Ramadan,” the White House said. “The president also accepted an invitation to visit Israel over the coming months.”

***After Several Days of Delays, Second Israeli in Space Begins Journey Back to Earth;*** Israeli astronaut Eytan Stibbe and the rest of the crew of the Axiom-1 departed the International Space Station (ISS) on Sunday evening, April 24, after several days of delay. The SpaceX capsule began undocking from the ISS at 8:55 p.m. (0055 GMT Monday) for the return trip and is expected to land in the ocean off the coast of Florida on Monday around 1 p.m. (1700 GMT). Stibbe and his three crewmates — the first-ever all-private mission to the ISS — had originally been set to come back on Wednesday, but unfavorable weather conditions for a splashdown in the ocean led to the capsule's return being repeatedly put off. Stibbe, a businessman, and former fighter pilot was one of four astronauts who took off earlier this month for the privately funded mission that successfully docked at the ISS the next day. During their stay on the space station, the group stuck to a regimented schedule, which included about 14 hours per day of activities, including scientific research.



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