

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update November 3, 2022 (9th Cheshvan, 5783)



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Somalia Bombings: At Least 100 Killed in Terrorist Attacks by al-Shabaab; At least 100 people were killed and 300 people were wounded by two car bombs in Somalia's capital of Mogadishu on Saturday, October 29, Somali President Hassan Sheikh Mohamud said. Al-Shabaab, which the Pentagon describes as the "most kinetically active al-Qaeda network in the world," claimed responsibility for the attacks, which targeted the country's education ministry. President Mohamud took office in May and recently declared "total war" on al-Shabaab, saying Saturday that the death toll could rise. "Our people who were massacred... included mothers with their children in their arms, fathers who had medical conditions, students who were sent to study, businessmen who were struggling with the lives of their families," he said. The U.S. military has been coordinating strikes with the Somali government against al-Shabaab this year, including an airstrike earlier the previous month that took out Abdullahi Nadir, a top official who was in line to replace al-Shabab's leader.

After a Meeting with Biden, Herzog Believes a Deal with Iran Is Not on the Table; President Isaac Herzog's meeting with President Joe Biden on Wednesday, October 26, lasted 90 minutes and was mostly focused on Iran and other regional issues, including the maritime border deal between Israel and Lebanon. Herzog left the meeting with the impression that the administration is disappointed with the Iranian approach, and that negotiating the return to the 2015 nuclear agreement is not on the table right now. The discussion included the recent human rights violations and crackdown on protests, as well as the Iranian drones provision to Russia. Shortly after the meeting, NSC spokesperson John Kirby spoke about the prospects of renewing the negotiations in Iran and said that the two sides are too far apart to have a meaningful dialogue right now. The issue of the UN Commission of Inquiry was also a part of discussion with Biden, Blinken and Sullivan, and the three told Herzog in their respective meetings that they strongly oppose the recent COI report. The two Presidents also discussed the recent rise of anti-Semitism in the US, and Biden reassured Herzog that his administration is committed to fight this troubling trend, according to a person briefed on the content of the meeting.

Lebanon-Israel Maritime Boundary Deal, Signed at Nakoura UNIFIL HQ; The Israeli and Lebanese negotiating teams put the final signatures on their countries' maritime boundary agreement on Thursday, October 27. The delegations met around a table at the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) headquarters in Naqoura, on the border between the countries, with US Energy envoy Amos Hochstein, the deal's mediator, in the middle. "We have a maritime border. Congratulations," Hochstein said at the end of the ceremony, to applause. US President Joe Biden tweeted about the deal, saying it "promotes the interests of both countries and the region, and this moment marks a new chapter of prosperity and hope. Congratulations to all involved." Earlier, Prime Minister Yair Lapid signed the deal in Jerusalem and Lebanese President Michel Aoun signed it in Beirut. Hochstein met with each leader in their respective capitals. Hochstein said in Jerusalem that the agreement "enhances Israeli security and prosperity and enhances the economy on both sides...[This is] day one of more cooperation, more Israeli integration into the region, a top priority of President Biden. We in the US are clearly very happy that we can play a role and support Israel's security, economy and prosperity."

'Our Secret Weapon': Ukraine Enlisting US to Push Israel into Sending Military Aid; Ukraine is seeking the assistance of the United States in pressuring Israel to supply it with military aid, Kyiv's envoy to Jerusalem told US media on Sunday, October 30. Ukrainian Ambassador to Israel Yevgen Korniychuk told the Washington-based news site that he holds weekly meetings with US Ambassador to Israel Tom Nides as part of a process to push Israel to send defense equipment to Ukraine. "I'm joking, but I'm calling him our secret weapon. This is why we discuss the different measures of support, and again, we need to change this major trend that makes Israel's position different from the rest of the democratic world, and have more military-technical cooperation," Korniychuk said. Though Jerusalem has sent multiple shipments of humanitarian aid to Ukraine, Israel has repeatedly rebuffed Kyiv's requests for defensive weapons, specifically missile defense systems. Israeli officials have expressed fear that advanced military technology could fall into enemy hands and cited production and supply limitations.

IDF to Draft Women into Border Defense Corps Tank Crews; The IDF has decided that female soldiers can serve in the Armored Corps' tank brigades along the country's borders, following a successful pilot program. Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kohavi accepted the recommendation of Ground Forces head Maj.-Gen. Tamir Yadai. "From now on, they will be permanently assigned to the position," the military said. Kohavi said the army recently concluded a professional and in-depth process to start opening up more and more combat positions for women. "I trust the female soldiers serving in the tank to carry out the mission of border defense professionally and with great success," he said. "They will be a significant part of the IDF's operational effort." The decision was made based on both "professional and operational considerations in accordance with the needs of the military," the IDF said, adding that all female soldiers who completed the program met all the pre-defined criteria. The pilot program lasted two years and included a training period as well as a year-long operational deployment along the Egyptian border, with the female soldiers serving under the command of the Paran Brigade as tank operators in the mixed-gender Caracal (Wild Cat) Battalion. The program saw three full recruitment and training cycles, with several of the women completing the program as officers.

Arab-Israeli Lawmaker Slammed for Hailing Palestinian Terrorists Killed by IDF Forces as 'Our Martyrs'; An Arab-Israeli Knesset member on Tuesday, October 25, hailed five Palestinian terrorists as "our martyrs" after they were killed in an Israel Defense Forces raid overnight, saying they were to be "praised" for "resisting the occupation." Aida Touma-Sliman of the Arab majority Joint List party wrote on Facebook: "Nablus separates from our martyrs today. Our Palestinian nation bids farewell to its martyrs." "The more the occupation increases its crimes, the resistance escalates. An important lesson in the history of nations," Touma-Sliman added. She included a photo of the funeral of the gunmen in the West Bank city of Nablus. The Lion's Den terror group, a recent terrorist organization to emerge

from Nablus, has claimed responsibility for several attacks over recent weeks, including the murder of IDF Staff Sgt. Ido Baruch earlier the previous month. The group was also behind a bomb plot at a gas station near the Jewish Kedumim settlement. Israeli Defense Minister Benny Gantz slammed Touma-Sliman over her remarks. "I'm ashamed of public representatives who support terrorists and are prepared to let them continue to spill the blood of Israeli citizens," Gantz wrote on Twitter. "MK Aida Touma-Sliman once again proves that her party cannot be included in a government or relied on in order to form one. Israel's security comes before the formation of a coalition," he added. Touma-Sliman has come under fire for praising terrorists in the past. Last year, she bragged about meetings she had held in Ramallah with the six NGOs designated as terrorist groups by Israel, which she said "fight the great terror of the occupation."

Shachar Sagiv Becomes First Israeli Athlete to Compete in Saudi Arabia; Triathlete Shachar Sagiv has become the first Israeli athlete to compete in Saudi Arabia, the Israeli Olympic Committee said Sunday, October 30, in the latest sign of growing informal ties between the former enemies. Sagiv competed in Neom on the same day that an Israeli tennis player faced off against a Saudi opponent in Bahrain, as the two countries without any diplomatic ties appear comfortable meeting on the field. Olympic committee head Yael Arad called Sagiv's presence at the Saudi NEOM leg of the Super League Triathlon on Saturday "a very significant breakthrough." "In the past year we've seen many Arab states come to terms with the fact that hosting an international tournament means hosting Israelis," she said in a statement. "This is a growing trend and the true force in normalization between nations, and especially people." Sagiv and his brother Ran broke Israeli records in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics by ranking 20th and 35th in the triathlon competition, respectively. They were only the second and third Israeli triathletes ever to participate in the Olympic Games.

Study: Israel's Coastline is Contaminated with Over 2 Tons of Microplastics; A new Tel Aviv University study conducted in collaboration with the Mediterranean Sea Research Center of Israel examined the level of microplastic pollution along Israel's coastline. The researchers collected sand samples from six beaches, from Haifa to Ashkelon. The research findings revealed that the Israeli shoreline is contaminated with more than two tons of microplastics, with the most polluted beaches being those of Tel Aviv and Hadera. In light of these worrying findings, the researchers warn exposure to microplastic waste is unavoidable. It should be noted that microplastics are generally proved as dangerous both to the environment and to human health. The study was led by doctoral student Andrey Ethan Rubin and master's student Limor Omeysi from the laboratory of Dr. Ines Zucker, of the Fleischman Faculty of Engineering and the Porter School of the Environment and Earth Sciences. The study was published in the scientific journal Marine Pollution Bulletin. Rubin explains that over the course of 2021, the researchers collected samples from six areas along the coast: Ashkelon, Rishon LeZion, Tel Aviv, Hadera, Dor Beach and Haifa. The researchers discovered, among other things, that the samples included plastic originating from food packaging, single-use plastic products, and fishing nets. "It was interesting to see that plastics of terrestrial origin, such as food packaging, were more dominant than plastics of marine origin, such as fishing nets," says Rubin. "This indicates a need for better regulation of coastal waste."

Israeli Officials Claim to Have Destroyed 90% of Iran's Military Operations in Syria; The Israeli military has destroyed about 90% of Iran's military infrastructure and attempts to entrench itself - with Hezbollah - in Syria, top officials in the defense establishment claimed over the weekend. According to the officials, Israel has in recent years succeeded in almost completely curbing Iran's ability to transfer weapons to Syria, to manufacture weapons on the country's soil, and to establish a base in it with pro-Iranian forces. According to the sources, the plan of the former commander of the Iranian Quds Force, Qassem Soleimani, who was killed by the Americans in 2020, has failed due to the IDF's continued air campaign against the forces in Syria. The last alleged attack attributed to Israel in Syria was Friday, October 21, when local media reported that the IDF attacked near the airport in Damascus after about a

month of relative silence. The security officials emphasized that the IDF severely damaged Iran's smuggling routes from the sea, from the air and even from the land from Iran to Syria.

Iran Arrests 10 for Kidnapping, Interrogating Security Forces for Israel; Ten individuals suspected of working with the Mossad in Iran's West Azerbaijan Province were indicted on Monday, October 24, Iranian media reported. The individuals were focused on identifying Iranian intelligence forces who worked against Israel in West Azerbaijan and Tehran provinces in northern Iran and the Hormozgan Province in southern Iran, according to Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). The report claimed that the 10 suspects were in direct contact with several Mossad officers and had kidnapped, threatened and beaten Iranian forces in an attempt to extract information. Four of the suspects were charged with "corruption on earth," a charge usually issued against political dissenters, those accused of damaging Iranian national security, and members of the LGBTQ+ community. Earlier this year, Iranian media had reported that two IRGC officials had been kidnapped and interrogated by the Mossad on Iranian territory. Yadollah Khedmati and Mansour Rasouli were said to have been kidnapped by the Mossad and interrogated. Rasouli reportedly admitted to planning to assassinate an Israeli diplomat in Turkey, a journalist in France and a US general in Germany. Khedmati reportedly admitted his role in transferring weapons to Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen as part of the IRGC's logistics wing. It was unclear whether Iranian authorities were referring to these cases in the indictment published on Monday.

Citing Common Threat from Iran, Lapid Pledges Cyberdefense Help to Albania; Prime Minister Yair Lapid on Sunday, October 23, offered aid to his Albanian counterpart, Edi Rama, who is in Israel to seek protection from Iranian cyberattacks, according to an Israeli readout of a meeting between the two men. Tirana cut diplomatic ties with the Islamic Republic in September after a series of cyberattacks it attributes to Iran. "Iran represents a joint threat for Israel and Albania," said Lapid at the meeting, which took place in the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem. "We saw this in the recent Iranian cyberattacks against Albania. Israel will assist in any way in the effort against Iran. We see this as a national interest and a historical responsibility." After the visit, the next stage will be for the professional echelons in both countries to hold online discussions about cybersecurity. The two leaders also discussed expanding tourism and trade, as well as resuming direct flights between the countries.

Iran and Venezuela Strengthen Dangerous Military, Economic Alliance in Challenge to US; In a move widely lambasted by Republicans, President Biden recently sought to resume Venezuelan oil imports in exchange for a promise of free and fair elections in 2024, a move which critics argue would only strengthen the hand of the Nicolás Maduro dictatorship. The move comes at a time of closer relations between the two U.S. enemies. Iran and Venezuela, both petroleum-rich OPEC members with international pariah status, have recently found solidarity in coordinated geopolitical, economic, and military maneuvers against shared common enemy the United States, which has subjected them to a regimen of economic sanctions for years. Former diplomat and current Venezuelan political dissident Isaias Medina views the alliance as a clear and present threat to the United States: "In my opinion, the countries of the Axis of Evil are increasing their presence on Venezuelan territory to strengthen their state policy of pursuing de facto control of a government that is based on asymmetric warfare against the West...this is where the interests of Venezuela-Iran -China-Russia-Cuba align." Medina quit his position with the Venezuelan mission to the UN where he served in a senior position over Maduro's policies. Geopolitical analysts have noted that the Maduro regime is now pursuing a policy which offers economic and territorial control to rogue states in exchange for access to its vast resources, including petroleum, gold and potentially even uranium.

Rishi Sunak to Become UK's Next PM as Last Rival Drops out of Leadership Race; Former Treasury Chief Rishi Sunak won the race to be leader of the Conservative Party on Monday, October 24, and will become Britain's next prime minister — the third this year. The former Treasury Chief will be

Britain's first leader of color, and faces the task of stabilizing the party and country at a time of economic and political turbulence. His only rival, Penny Mordaunt, conceded and withdrew. As leader of the governing party, he will take over as prime minister from Liz Truss, who quit last week after 45 tumultuous days in office. Sunak had been the strong favorite as the governing Conservative Party sought stability at a time of immense economic challenges and after months of chaos that consumed the past two leaders. Sunak's position strengthened after former leader Boris Johnson dropped out of the Conservative Party leadership contest.

IDF Foils Attempt to Smuggle Handguns, 35 Kilos of Drugs into Israel from Lebanon; Israeli troops foiled an attempt to smuggle firearms and drugs worth hundreds of thousands of shekels into Israel from Lebanon on Sunday night, October 23, the military said. According to the Israel Defense Forces, soldiers monitoring an area near the town of Ghajar spotted a suspect smuggling a large bag into the country, and dispatched troops to the scene. The soldiers launched flares over the area and located the man, who was found to be carrying two handguns and 30 kilograms of an unnamed drug, with an estimated street value of 800,000 NIS (\$225,000). The arrested man, the handguns, and the drugs were handed over to police, the IDF said. In an image published by the army, some of the drug packages bore a logo — the Lexus luxury division of Japanese car manufacturer Toyota — previously used in packages of captagon pills. Captagon is an amphetamine-type stimulant manufactured mostly in Lebanon and Syria. Much of it has been bound for illegal recreational use in Saudi Arabia. Captagon pills have previously been seized in-route to the Gaza Strip. Israeli officials have previously called it the “Islamic State drug,” as it was supposedly used by jihadists to prevent fear and fatigue during fighting in Syria and Iraq.

‘Vote or Don’t Vote, It’s the Same’: Arab Israelis Despondent Ahead of 5th Elections; In the Arab Israeli town of Rahat, a few trampled political party flyers on the pavement are the only sign that the country is about to go to the polls. While the campaign ahead of Israel's fifth election in four years has been somewhat lackluster nationwide, the apathy is especially acute among the Arab minority where turnout is feared to be low. “The top issue is how do we get Arab citizens from their house to the ballot box,” said Fayez Abu Souhaiban, mayor of Rahat, ahead of the November 1 polls. “This is a big issue and a very big dilemma.” The town sits in the southern Negev desert region, far from Israel's centers of power and home to the majority of Israel's Bedouins, who are part of the wider Arab community. In Rahat's central market, many traders and shoppers told AFP they had no idea whom to vote for, and were unable to name any candidates or parties. In part, the disinterest is the result of dashed hopes for Arab Israelis, who make up about 20 percent of the country's population and have long complained of discrimination despite recent political gains.

Lebanese Government Fails to Elect a President in Fourth Attempt; The Lebanese government failed to elect a president in a fourth attempt at voting on Monday, October 24, just a week before current President Michel Aoun's term ends. Michel Moawad, an independent Lebanese politician opposed to Hezbollah, received 39 votes, 50 MPs voted with a blank slip, 10 MPs voted for Issam Khalifa (a professor specializing on Lebanon's maritime borders) and 13 MPs submitted ballots reading "New Lebanon." In the last attempted vote, 55 MPs cast blank ballots, while Moawad received 42 votes. House Speaker, Nabih Berri, scheduled a new session to elect a president for October 27, just four days before Aoun's term ends. "There is a dominant authority working to blackmail MPs and the Lebanese to maintain its quotas by disrupting sessions," said Moawad after the vote on Monday. "Treason parties are held between the presidential election sessions, and I tell Hezbollah that it is not possible to continue and accept the logic of treason and coercion," added Moawad. "There is no consensual candidate in the balance of power today unless he submits his credentials to Hezbollah and 'the movement' and the alternative solution is to gather the opposition and secure 65 votes to change the balance of power."

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