

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update January 19, 2023 ***(26th Tevet, 5783)***



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'If Israel Is Abandoned, Netanyahu Will Bomb Iran's Nuclear Facilities'; Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is prepared to use military force to destroy Iran's nuclear facilities, the head of Israel's National Security Council said Monday, January 16. Speaking with Israeli media during the ceremony, marking the transfer of control of the IDF from outgoing chief of staff Aviv Kochavi to his successor, Herzi Halevi, National Security Council chief Tzachi Hanegbi said that should Israel find itself isolated and without alternatives vis-à-vis Iran's nuclear program, Netanyahu would undoubtedly use force to prevent Tehran from realizing its atomic ambitions. "If we are abandoned, Prime Minister Netanyahu will attack Iran's nuclear facilities." Hanegbi, a long-time ally of Netanyahu who thrice served as minister in the prime minister's office and also served as acting prime minister in Netanyahu's stead, said Israel has been preparing for a scenario in which it must act alone against Iran. "This is not a change, the previous government also said that it is preparing the defense forces...for a situation in which we are on our own." "The central mission of the prime minister and his primary obligation is to ensure that Iran does not obtain nuclear weapons. The alternative to an attack is accepting a reality in which a radical regime has nuclear weapons. No Israeli leader can accept that." Netanyahu himself hinted Monday at a possible military confrontation with Iran, saying that Israel "won't wait until the sword is on our neck, but we also won't be dragged into unnecessary wars."

Report: Iran Steps up Air Defense Deployment in Syria, in Bid to Curb Israeli Strikes; Iran has invested millions of dollars in an effort to ramp up the deployment of an advanced air defense network in Syria, amid repeated attempts by Israel to target Iranian sites and shipments of weapons to its regional proxies, according to a Tuesday, January 10, report. Citing an unnamed intelligence source from a nation allied with the United States, media reported that Iran over the past two years has been "promoting the deployment of aerial defense capabilities on its behalf in Syria at a cost of tens of millions of dollars, in order to deal with the Israeli airstrikes." The source said the deputy commander of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps' Aerospace Force, Brig. Gen. Fereydoun Mohammadi Saghaei, is leading the air defense project. Military officials have said in the past that Syria has improved its air defense capabilities with upgraded Iranian-made components. In a 2018 strike, Israel reportedly targeted a soon-to-

be-deployed Iranian advanced air defense system. “The promotion of these capabilities is carried out as a project shared with the Syrian army and possibly even with the aim of enabling independent Iranian operation of the aerial defense systems from within parts of Syria,” the source reported.

Netanyahu, Smotrich Announce Plan to Combat Cost of Living in Israel; Property taxes (arona) will be frozen for a year in order to combat the continually increasing cost of living in Israel. This was announced during a live-streamed presentation held by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, wherein they explained the new government’s plan to deal with rising prices in the economy, which “has entered an inflationary spiral,” according to the premier. Also included in the government’s plan is the reversal of the latest increase in gas prices (a net reduction of 10 agorot), and a cut of 70% in the price of electricity and water. Furthermore, those entitled to disability stipends through the “heating grant” will receive NIS 200 of their allotment now, instead of having to wait until October when it is typically distributed. “Since the government I lead puts... the war on the cost of living at the top of its priorities, we are not waiting. Tonight we are announcing a series of first steps to fight the generators of inflation: electricity, water, fuel and property taxes,” said Netanyahu. “These steps will immediately reduce the monthly expenses of every family in Israel, and will do another thing: they will slow down the pace of price increases and start turning the wheel backward

Chevron Says It Discovered ‘Significant’ Natural Gas Find off Egypt’s Coast; US energy giant Chevron, which operates Israel’s Tamar and Leviathan gas fields off the Mediterranean coast, announced on Sunday, January 15, that it made a “significant” new gas discovery in an Egyptian offshore field. “Chevron is encouraged and excited by the success of this first exploration well which encountered high-quality reservoirs and follows from Chevron’s entry into the Egyptian upstream sector in 2020,” said Clay Neff, president of Chevron International Exploration and Production. “The Eastern Mediterranean has abundant energy resources, and their development is driving strategic collaboration in the region.” The new gas discovery is located at the Nargis-1 exploration well, which is part of Egypt’s 1,800 square kilometers Nargis Offshore Area concession. With a 45% working interest, Chevron is the operator of the concession. The Middle East Economic Survey reported in December that the size of the new well was 3.5 trillion cubic feet of gas. “The Nargis-1 well encountered approximately 200 net feet (61 m) of Miocene and Oligocene gas bearing sandstones and was drilled in 1,014 feet (309 m) of water by the Stena Forth drillship,” Chevron said in a statement.

Brazil Fires Pro-Bolsonaro Ambassador to Israel, as Part of Wider Shake-up; Brazil’s Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira has fired his country’s envoy to Israel, apparently as part of a wider shake-up following the ousting of president Jair Bolsonaro and the subsequent storming of parliament by his supporters. Gerson Menandro Garcia de Freitas — a retired general — was appointed ambassador to Israel by Bolsonaro in 2020, reportedly with the aim of boosting security cooperation between the two countries. Vieira also removed Brazil’s ambassador to the US and the consul-general in New York from their posts. According to American media, newly inaugurated Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva has vowed to take a more “balanced and traditional” approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict than his predecessor. On Saturday, January 7, hundreds of supporters of far-right ex-president Bolsonaro stormed Congress, the presidential palace and the Supreme Court in what da Silva condemned as a “fascist” attack. Bolsonaro fled to Florida after he lost the election. An outspoken supporter of Israel, Bolsonaro cultivated close ties with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and was seen as one of his key international allies.

Spectacular Byzantine Church Mosaics Uncovered Near Jericho; A Byzantine church with elaborate mosaic floors was uncovered in the area of Jericho, in the West Bank, the Civil Administration said in a statement Wednesday, January 11. The Civil Administration, the government body that oversees activity in the West Bank, did not say when the church was first discovered by its archaeology unit, which

has been working at the site. It dated the church to the 6th century CE, and noted it was still being used during the Early Muslim Period a hundred years later. Though Islam bans the display of icons and images in public places, the mosaic floors showed no indications of damage from destructive iconoclasm. The church covers 250 square meters, big enough to have served as one of the larger Christian houses of worship in the area at the time. Its nave was almost completely preserved and is covered with a mosaic depicting vine braids and animal figures. A three-meter-long inscription, containing five lines in Greek and found in the prayer area, commemorates Georgios and Nonus, apparently two public figures who donated to the construction of the church. The building survived a major earthquake in 749 CE that destroyed other churches and constructions throughout the region, though it was abandoned before the landmark event and its entrance deliberately sealed. The Civil Administration said it intends to move the building and put it on display in the mosaic museum at the Good Samaritan site, close to the West Bank settlement of Ma'ale Adumim.

US Navy Intercepts Over 2,000 Assault Rifles Headed from Iran to Yemen; The US Navy intercepted over 2,000 assault rifles being carried on a fishing vessel from Iran to Yemen on January 6, the US 5th Fleet announced on Tuesday, January 10. A US Navy team from the USS Chinook patrol coastal ship discovered and seized the weapons with support from the USS Monsoon, and guided-missile destroyer USS The Sullivans. The vessel was sailing on a route historically used to traffic illicit cargo to the Houthi terrorist group in Yemen, and was crewed by six Yemeni nationals. The direct or indirect supply of weapons to the Houthis violates UN Security Council Resolution 2216 and international law. "This shipment is part of a continued pattern of destabilizing activity from Iran," said Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, commander of US Naval Forces Central Command, US 5th Fleet and Combined Maritime Forces. "These threats have our attention. We remain vigilant in detecting any maritime activity that impedes freedom of navigation or compromises regional security." Two other fishing vessels smuggling weapons and materials for weapons to the Houthis from Iran were intercepted by the US 5th Fleet in the Gulf of Oman in the past two months.

Netanyahu to AIPAC: Time for US and Israel to 'Close Ranks' on Iran; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday, January 9, that it was time for Israel and the US to align their positions regarding the threat emanating from Iran, after years of disconnect on the issue. "It's time to close ranks between Israel and the United States – and others," Netanyahu said in a video address to a gathering of AIPAC members in Washington. The returning premier said the ongoing protests in Iran and the government's crackdown on demonstrators shows "that this is a terrible, repressive, terrorist regime." "I look forward to discussing this issue with [US] President [Joe] Biden and his team. I think there is more of a meeting of the minds today than there has ever been," Netanyahu added. The Biden administration has indeed said in recent months that it is no longer focused on reviving the Iran nuclear deal, given Tehran's radicalized positions on the matter, its cooperation with Russia in the latter's invasion of Ukraine, and its crackdown on protesters at home. White House National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan told reporters Monday that "our priority right now is not the JCPOA," and noted the numerous sanctions that the Biden administration announced against Iran over the past year. However, he clarified that the US still believes that "ultimately, diplomacy is the best way" to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon — a line Jerusalem is less fond of, as it does not include its demand for a "credible military threat."

Netanyahu Warns Iran, Hezbollah of 'Red Lines' Ahead of War Games on Lebanon Border; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday, January 10, warned Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah of Israel's "red lines" on the buildup of militant forces or weapons to its north, as the Israel Defense Forces prepared to hold an artillery drill on a contested hill on the border with Lebanon and Syria. Netanyahu toured the military's Northern Command headquarters in the city of Safed along with Defense Minister Yoav Gallant Tuesday, striking a defiant tone, despite the relatively quiet period on the border.

“The main enemy we are facing is the terror regime in Iran and its satellites in Syria and Lebanon,” Netanyahu said in remarks provided by his office. “We are determined to fight Iran’s attempts to develop a nuclear arsenal. We are determined to fight any attempt by Iran to entrench itself on our northern military frontier in Syria. We are determined to fight all attempts by Hezbollah to show aggression against us from Lebanon,” Netanyahu said. The premier, back in power after a year in the opposition, threatened that Israel would jog the memories of enemies as to what its policies are. Under the Naftali Bennett-Yair Lapid government, Israel largely stuck to the strategy of carrying out airstrikes in Syria to thwart Iranian attempts to gain a foothold in the country.

Iran Claims it Arrested Six Mossad Teams Amid Protests; Iran's Intelligence Ministry claimed Tuesday, January 10, that Iranian authorities have arrested six teams working for the Mossad in the country. In total, 23 alleged operatives were identified by Iranian authorities in the Tehran, Isfahan, Yazd, West Azarbaijan and Golestan provinces, and 13 individuals who were in the country have been arrested. According to the ministry, the network of teams is headed by a person using the pseudonym "Cyrus," who resides in a European country and contacts Iranians through Instagram and WhatsApp. The ministry claimed that the Mossad was trying to "take advantage" of the protests sweeping Iran to assassinate a military official, and carry out several "sabotage operations" in major cities. The network also allegedly tried to transport large-scale explosives from Iran's southern coast. The alleged arrests were first reported by Iran's Intelligence Ministry in late December, when the ministry claimed that four teams had been discovered.

Dirty Bomb Fears as 'Several Kilos of Uranium' Are Found in Cargo at Heathrow; A major counter-terrorism investigation has been launched after several kilograms of uranium were seized at Heathrow airport. The deadly nuclear material - which could potentially be used in a ‘dirty bomb’ - arrived on a flight from Oman, in the Middle East, on December 29. The shipment was addressed to an Iranian-linked firm in the UK, it is understood. Sources said the uranium was ‘not weapons-grade’ - and so could not be used to manufacture a thermo-nuclear weapon. But the security services are understood to be investigating whether the undeclared package could have been destined for an improvised nuclear device, known as a ‘dirty bomb’. Such a device - which has long been a nightmare scenario for counter-terror experts - combines conventional explosives with nuclear material to disperse a lethal radioactive plume. The package originated in Pakistan before arriving at Heathrow’s Terminal Four aboard an Oman Air passenger jet from Muscat, sources told a British media outlet. Separately, another source informed the outlet that there is an overwhelming concern over what the Iranians living here wanted with non-disclosed nuclear material’.

Police Data Shows Anti-Semitic Incidents in NYC More than Doubled Over the Last 2 Years; There were over 250 anti- Semitic hate crimes reported to authorities in New York City last year, marking a steep rise in incidents targeting Jews over the past two years, according to police data. Figures for all of 2022 were tallied by collating monthly New York Police Department reports on hate crimes in the city. The police department released figures for December on Thursday, showing 11 anti-Semitic incidents last month, a relatively low amount. Throughout 2022, however, the data shows that there were 263 hate crimes reported, an average of one anti-Semitic incident in the city every 33 hours. The tally underlines a sharp increase in anti-Jewish incidents that mirrors nationwide trends, more than doubling the 121 anti-Semitic crimes reported in 2020 and rocketing past the 196 incidents reported in 2021. According to the police’s hate crimes dashboard, which includes annual data for 2022 through September, Jews were targeted last year far more than any other group. The incidents in the past year range from violent assault to verbal harassment, property damage, and anti-Semitic graffiti. Jewish security groups have said that many attacks likely go unreported, though observers note that some of the increase in anti-Semitic crimes is due to different and improved reporting methods.

Sale of Israel's Haifa Port Finalized for \$1.15 Billion; A consortium headed by India's Adani Group has finalized its purchase of Israel's Haifa Port, Israel's Finance Ministry said on Tuesday, January 10, in a statement about the completed deal. British media reported that the port, which is located in the coastal city of Haifa in the north of Israel, was sold for a sum of NIS 4 billion, or just over 1.15 billion US dollars. One of the new owners, Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited, is owned by Indian billionaire Gautam Adani. Adani founded his namesake company and is listed as the third richest, according to reports. His net worth is estimated at \$125 billion. According to Adani, the company "is the largest commercial ports operator in India [and accounts] for nearly one-fourth of the cargo movement in the country." The other new owner is Israel's Gadot Group, a chemical company. Previously, the Haifa Port was run by the Haifa Port Company, a governmental corporation that describes the port as "the largest, leading port in Israel." The sale seems to continue a quickening trend of Israel selling its ports to private organizations. Last year, also in Haifa, China's Shanghai International Port Group also opened a port.

Israel Among Top 10 Countries with Longest Life Expectancies – Report; Israel has the 10th highest life expectancy in the world, according to research conducted by NiceRx, which claims Israelis have a life expectancy of 83.49 years: 81.98 years for men, and 84.91 years for women. Taking the number one spot on the list is Hong Kong followed by Japan, Switzerland, Singapore, Italy, Spain, Australia, Iceland, and South Korea. The list is comprised of OECD countries. Hong Kong, which headed the list with a life expectancy of 85.29 years (82.38 years for men and 88.17 years for women), has seen its life expectancy rise to such a degree, largely, due to beneficial lifestyles and healthcare opportunities that mitigate risks from diseases and chronic conditions. Although life expectancy in OECD has ceased its dramatic growth and fluctuates slightly from year to year, Israel's life expectancy has maintained a slow growth. There are numerous reasons why Israel does well in relation to other countries. According to an OECD report last year, Israelis, among other things, drink less alcohol and commit suicide less frequently than people in other OECD countries. Additionally, a 2016 study published by The Taub Center for Social Policy Studies in Israel showed that countries with mandatory military service, such as Israel, enjoy significantly higher life expectancies. Meanwhile, according to the research by NiceRx, Israel ranked 27 of 39 on the list of countries with respect to healthcare expenditure per capita. In this respect, Israelis spend an average of \$3,057.



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