

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update March 2, 2023 (Adar 9, 5783)



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Two Israeli Brothers Shot Dead in West Bank Terror Attack — IDF; Two Israeli brothers were shot dead in a terror attack in the northern West Bank town of Huwara on Sunday, February 26, the military and medics said. The two were named Hallel Yaniv, 21 and Yagel Yaniv, 19, and were residents of the West Bank settlement of Har Bracha. The Israel Defense Forces said a Palestinian gunman opened fire from close range at an Israeli-owned car on the Route 60 highway, then fled the scene, apparently on foot. Graphic footage from the attack in Huwara showed the victims' car riddled with bullets. Troops at the scene found 12 nine-millimeter shell casings, indicating the attacker used a handgun or makeshift submachine gun. An initial probe of the shooting suggested the gunman took advantage of a traffic jam on the highway to carry out the attack. The IDF said it had launched a manhunt for the gunman, closing off several roads in the area. On Sunday evening, after holding a situation assessment with top defense officials, Defense Minister Yoav Gallant ordered the military to ramp up operations in the West Bank to locate the gunman. "Gallant directed the security forces to focus operational and intelligence efforts to capture the terrorists, while taking any necessary action, including offensive actions, to prevent further attacks," his office said in a statement.

Israel Bombs Hamas Sites in Gaza, Hours after Rockets Shot Toward Ashkelon, Sderot; Israeli warplanes carried out bombing raids against the Hamas terror group in the Gaza Strip early Thursday morning, February 23, the military said, hours after Palestinians fired six rockets into southern Israel in an apparent revenge attack for a deadly Israeli incursion into Nablus a day earlier. The Palestinian rockets were fired at the Israeli cities of Ashkelon and Sderot, and other areas near the Gaza Strip. The military said five of the projectiles were downed by the Iron Dome anti-missile system and the last one landed in an open area. There were no reports of damage or casualties and no Palestinian group claimed responsibility. On Thursday, the Israeli fighter jets hit a Hamas weapons workshop in central Gaza, as well as an unspecified "military site" in the northern part of the Strip used by the group to store naval weapons, the Israel Defense Forces said in a statement. "The complex is located near a mosque, a medical clinic, a school, a hotel, and a police station. This is further proof that the Hamas terror organization places its military assets in the heart of a civilian population," the military said. "The strike deals a serious blow to Hamas's ability to fortify and arm itself," it added. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Iranian Girls Are Being Poisoned to Stop Them from Attending School; Hundreds of girls around Iran have been poisoned in their schools since November, the country's Deputy Health Minister Younes Panahi confirmed to Iranian state news agency. "After the poisoning of several students in Qom schools, it was found that some people wanted all schools, especially girls' schools, to be closed." "It has been revealed that the chemical compounds used to poison students are not war chemicals, and the poisoned students do not need aggressive treatment, and a large percentage of the chemical agents used are treatable." The statement came after scores of girls in Qom began to experience respiratory poisoning with several requiring hospital medical treatment. According to Persian media, the poisoning began in Qom and spread to other cities in the area. At least 14 girls' schools in four different cities have been hit. Last week, a Telegram account featured a message from a group that calls itself "Devotees of the Supreme," which said that education is forbidden for girls and will only poison them. The message also warned that girls all across Iran would be poisoned if their schools were not shut down.

US 5th Fleet Commander: 'Iranian Actions Have The Attention of Everyone'; As tensions rise over Iran's advancing nuclear program, Iranian attacks in the waterways of the Middle East and elsewhere in the region "have the attention of everyone," Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, the head of the U.S. Navy's 5th Fleet, told American media Tuesday, February 21. Cooper says he's seen a rise in "malign activities" on Iran's part in the region over his two years leading the Bahrain-based 5th Fleet. While Cooper pointed to recent weapons confiscations by American and allied forces in the region as a success, he acknowledged that Iran has been able to carry out drone attacks targeting shipping in the Middle East and other assaults in the region. Earlier during the previous week, the International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog, announced that their monitors in Iran had detected uranium enrichment levels of 84% purity, only 6% less than the amount needed to create a nuclear weapon. Regarding Iran's nuclear ambitions, Cooper says, "Obviously, the nuclear component is all being handled via diplomatic means," adding, "I think over two years, we have for sure seen an increase in the number of malign activities, much of which we've been catching just in the last 60 to 90 days. "

Israel's 'Top Gun': The US-Israeli Aircraft that Can Take Down Iran; Israel's F-35 Adir elite fighter aircraft sped off one by one down the Nevatim Air Force Base runway near Beersheba, curving at first slightly to the right and then bursting forward with a stunning thrust, cutting deep rightward, as well as sailing upward at an acute angle. IDF Lt.-Col. M, commander of the 140 F-35 squadron, told media that the entire squadron could be up in the air during the exercise in less than 10 minutes and in an operational situation, far more rapidly. However, the four American F-15s, even during the exercise, seemed to take off at a much faster rate – within 30 seconds or less – practically one right after another. A Gulfstream G-500/G-550 (Nachshon) was also involved to train for intelligence collection. Asked about a variety of tasks, such as refueling, which might be necessary when striking distant locations such as Iran, M declined to address specific targets but said, "The Air Force would be ready for all tasks," sending a message that the IDF has creative solutions for long-range flights. Some analysts have noted that the aircraft that Israel possesses can also fire long-range missiles to strike targets in Iran from a significant distance, and then hightail it back to Israel while remaining out of range of Iranian defenses, or while maximizing their ability to get out of range before those defenses kick in. CENTCOM, IDF and anonymous US officials all made it clear, either explicitly or implicitly, that Iran should take notice of the joint capabilities of Washington and Jerusalem to project and use power anywhere in the Middle East.

Suspect Arrested in Florida Attack of Man who Spoke Hebrew; The Broward County Sheriff's Office has arrested a suspect in connection with an attack of a Jewish man who was punched while speaking Hebrew earlier this month, American media reported. Tevin Grant, 28, is facing charges in connection with the February 7 attack in Dania Beach, according to a written statement released by the

sheriff's office on Tuesday, February 21. It was not immediately clear if bond had been set in the case. Officials have said that the attack occurred at 5:30 p.m. near the 2400 block of Sterling Road. The man told detectives he was riding his bike and talking on the phone in Hebrew when the suspect directed an anti-Semitic slur at him. The suspect then punched the Jewish man in the face before he fell from the bike and to the ground, according to investigators. The attack was caught on a surveillance camera that was posted in the area. Law enforcement identified the attacker in a separate incident caught on video, in which he was in a verbal altercation with workers near the scene of the assault. He was also captured on cell phone video accosting people who ran over to help the victim after he was knocked off his bicycle.

'Global Terrorist' Hezbollah Financier Arrested in European Capital; A Lebanese and Belgian citizen considered a key financier of the Iranian-backed militant group Hezbollah was arrested Friday, February 24, in Bucharest, Romania's capital, federal authorities said. Mohammad Ibrahim Bazzi, 58, who was labeled a "global terrorist" by the United States in 2018 when \$10 million was offered for information about his whereabouts, has funneled millions of dollars to Hezbollah over the years, authorities said. U.S. Attorney Breon Peace in Brooklyn said the extradition of Bazzi and Lebanese citizen Talal Chahine, 78, was sought on charges contained in an indictment returned last month in Brooklyn federal court. "Mohammad Bazzi thought that he could secretly move hundreds of thousands of dollars from the United States to Lebanon without detection by law enforcement," Peace said in a release. "Today's arrest proves that Bazzi was wrong." Charges lodged against Bazzi and Chahine included conspiracy to cause U.S. individuals to conduct unlawful transactions with a global terrorist, and money laundering conspiracy. Daniel J. Kafafian, acting head of the Drug Enforcement Administration in New Jersey, said the defendants "attempted to provide continued financial assistance to Hezbollah, a foreign terrorist organization responsible for death and destruction."

Netanyahu: Israel Is Now Main Transit Point between Asia and EU, after Oman Opens Airspace; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday, February 23, welcomed the authorization for Israeli planes to fly over Oman. "The Far East is not so far away and the skies are no longer the limit. This is a day of great news for Israeli aviation. Israel has, in effect, become the main transit point between Asia and Europe," Netanyahu said. "We have worked to open the airspace, first over Saudi Arabia, and from 2018 when I visited Oman, to add Oman as well so that we can fly directly to India and on to Australia. This was achieved today, after considerable effort, including in recent months. Here is good news – Israel is opening up to the east on an unprecedented scale." Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen thanked Omani Sultan Haitham bin Tariq al-Said for the decision, calling the move "a historic and significant decision for the Israeli economy and the Israeli traveler."

Israel: 84% Enrichment Means it's Now or Never to Stop Iran; The world must understand that these are the last moments by which to stop Tehran from producing nuclear weapons, now that the International Atomic Energy Agency detected Iranian uranium enrichment at 84%. "It is now or never" to stop Iran, Israel's National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi said Monday, February 20, in a public interview conducted for the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations. He spoke just one day after reports in American and British media revealed that Iran was close to weapons-grade uranium enrichment at 90%. The development "is worrying," he said. Iran had previously been understood to be enriching uranium at 60%. "We are trying to convince everyone that in order to prevent a confrontation with Iran, you need to have a credible military threat" either by Israel, the US or the global community, he said. News that Iran was on the edge of weapons-grade enrichment did not surprise Israel, said Hanegbi who underscored that the Jewish state had long attempted to alert the global community to the growing danger from Tehran. Initially, there were those who believed Iran's uranium enrichment could be for civilian use, Hanegbi said, but the fact that Tehran has enriched uranium at 84%, which is only used for weapons production, leaves no doubt as to its motives.

Israeli Nuclear Expert: Iran Can Create Nuclear Bomb with 84% Uranium; Israeli nuclear physicist Dr. Naama Charit Yaari told Israeli media in an interview on Monday, February 20, that the bomb dropped by the US on Hiroshima, Japan that ended World War II had uranium with 80% purity, and if the Americans had had time to reach 93% or 94%, the damage would have doubled. “If the report by the IAEA about finding in Iran uranium enriched to the level of 84% is indeed accurate, then in theory, the Ayatollah regime already has nuclear fuel suitable for making a bomb. It will be less effective than a quality bomb, but certainly possible,” said Charit Yaari. Dr. Charit Yaari is Israel’s representative in the UN Preparatory Commission for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty that works to prevent experiments on nuclear weapons and not where they work on uranium. The International Atomic Energy Commission (IAEC) revealed this week that Iran has enriched uranium to the highest level ever – to 84%, which is close to the weapons’ grade of 90% – but the Iranian government quickly denied it for an unknown reason. “So far, we have not made any attempt to enrich above 60%,” Behrouz Kamalvandi, the spokesman for Iran’s Atomic Energy Organization, said on Monday, according to the Iranian state media. “The presence of particles above 60% enrichment does not mean production with an enrichment above 60%,” Kamalvandi added. Not surprisingly, the Iranian regime has not produced the necessary documents to announce its plans to raise uranium-enrichment levels at two of its nuclear facilities in Fordow and Natanz.

Iran’s New Underground Air Base Seen Preparing to Host Advanced Russian Fighter Jets; An analysis of images from a newly revealed underground air force base in Iran named “Eagle 44” reveals that the site is likely being prepared to host advanced Russian Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jets, American media reported Saturday, February 18. The first clue that Eagle 44 was being prepared as a base for the Su-35s was seen in the promotional video and photos released by Iran. In them, a poster is seen with the silhouettes of fighter jets. All the silhouettes are of aircraft currently in the Iranian air force, except for one, which is of the Sukhoi. In addition, satellite imagery of the site shows that the Iranians have built a full-scale mock-up of the Su-35, which was likely being used to ensure the base could accommodate the larger dimensions of the Russian jet. Iran said last year it was looking to buy the jets as it dramatically stepped up defense coordination with Moscow in the wake of the invasion of Ukraine. Iran has become a major weapons supplier to Russia, particularly of its killer drones. It is believed Russia is willing to supply Tehran with 24 of the fighters after a deal to supply the same number to Egypt fell through.

Iranian Foundation Offers Land to Salman Rushdie's Attacker - State Media; An Iranian foundation has praised the man who attacked novelist Salman Rushdie last year, leaving him severely injured, and said it will reward him with 1,000 square meters of agricultural land, state media reported on Tuesday, February 21, through its Telegram channel. Rushdie, 75, lost an eye and the use of one hand following the assault by Hadi Matar, a 24-year-old Shi'ite Muslim American from New Jersey, on the stage of a literary event held near Lake Erie in western New York in August. "We sincerely thank the brave action of the young American who made Muslims happy by blinding one of Rushdie's eyes and disabling one of his hands," said Mohammad Esmail Zarei, secretary of the Foundation to Implement Imam Khomeini's Fatwas. "Rushdie is now no more than living dead and to honor this brave action, about 1,000 square meters of agricultural land will be donated to the person or any of his legal representatives," Zarei added. The attack came 33 years after Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, then Iran's supreme leader, called on Muslims to assassinate Rushdie a few months after *The Satanic Verses* was published. Some Muslims saw passages in the novel about the Prophet Muhammad as blasphemous.

Israel Prepares for Terror Attacks, Gaza Rocket Fire after Nablus Raid; The defense establishment is preparing for possible revenge attacks and rocket fire from the Gaza Strip after 10 Palestinians were killed and over 100 others were injured in armed clashes between Palestinians and Israeli forces in Nablus

on Wednesday, February 15. Leaders in the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, Hamas and the Lion's Den movements were among those killed. A senior Israeli security source noted that tensions have been high since last year and that there is a possibility that the raid could be the spark that ignites an escalation. Over 100 security personnel were involved in the operation in Nablus, according to a senior security source. During the operation, Palestinians on motorcycles and in cars fired at Israeli forces throughout the city. The source stressed that the Palestinians killed in the clashes were armed and firing at Israeli forces and that the circumstances of the reported deaths of two elderly Palestinians were still being clarified. Two firearms and ammunition were seized during the raid as well. No Israeli personnel were injured in the clashes. The defense establishment is preparing for possible ripple effects from the operation such as revenge terrorist attacks in the West Bank, Jerusalem and the interior or rocket fire from the Gaza Strip. After the operation, Israel Police raised the level of alert throughout the country and reinforced forces near the Seam Line, in Jerusalem and in central areas, in light of the concerns of possible revenge attacks.

US Backs UN Security Council Condemnation of Settlements; The UN Security Council on Monday, February 20, published a statement expressing its "dismay" over Jewish settlement activity in Judea and Samaria during a briefing on the situation in the Middle East. The statement, which received the support of all 15 members of the Security Council, including the US, reads: "The Security Council reiterates that continuing Israeli settlement activities are dangerously imperiling the viability of the two-state solution." The statement is non-binding, unlike a resolution which was proposed last week, which would have demanded that Israel "immediately and completely cease all settlement activities in the occupied Palestinian territory." That resolution was shelved at the behest of the Biden Administration. US Ambassador to the UN Linda Thomas-Greenfield, in explaining the Biden Administration's support for the non-binding statement in an address which condemned both the recent terrorist attacks in Jerusalem in which 11 Israelis have been murdered and Jewish "settlement" activity, appearing to draw a moral equivalence between the murder of civilians and the building of homes by Jewish people in the disputed region of Judea and Samaria. The ambassador called on "all parties to take steps to restore and maintain calm." She did not mention the fact that the Israeli government has agreed not to legalize any additional outposts in Judea and Samaria in the coming months as part of an agreement with the Biden Administration not to engage in any further unilateral actions. Nor did she specify that the nine that were authorized, such as Beit Hogla, have been awaiting legalization for years.

Palestinian Waste Fires Are 'Killing Us Slowly,' Warn Israelis in West Bank; Israelis living in the West Bank warned that illegal waste fires are "killing us slowly," during an emergency discussion concerning illegal waste fires at the Knesset's Interior Affairs Committee on Monday, February 20. "I didn't imagine that I would have to fight to get clean air, our house is closed all the time. My children have an aggravation of hives and tingling in the throat, and the neighbors' children have asthma. I don't want to get into a situation of severe and serious illnesses. This is an anxiety that accompanies me every day," said Reut Schechter, a mother of five whose family was one of the first to move into the settlement of Kedem Arava. "We have been suffering from these fires since our first day, and recently it has increased to the extent that there are fires all day long. The fires can be for days in a row, several days in a row. We report and the feeling is that there is no response. The suffering is daily - you cannot play outside, do sports or go on a walk." "We literally leave the children at home and the distress is very, very great. I am a victim of terrorism, my father was killed in a shooting attack when I was a child, but the feeling is the same - a feeling that we are simply being killed, amid great suffering and no one cares." Trash burning in the West Bank is common in Palestinian towns and cities throughout the West Bank and in many areas across Israel. The chairman of the committee, MK Yakov Asher, noted that plastics and metals are burned in the fires as well and called for heavier enforcement at the crossings through which waste passes and to formulate relevant legislation on the matter.

Israel's Economy Expanded by 6.5% in 2022; The Israel Bureau of Statistics published its annual report on Israel's economy. The country's GDP rose by 6.5%, after last year's even more impressive rise of 8.6% followed a 1.9% decrease caused by the COVID-19 crisis. GDP per capita rose by 4.4% compared to 2021, while the population in Israel increased by 2% in the same time frame, according to the report. The GDP per capita in 2022 amounted to NIS 3,184, at current prices. For comparison, the OECD forecast predicted the average increase of GDP per capita at only 2.6% for its member countries. The increase in the export of goods and services was measured at 7.9%, while the import of goods and services saw an increase of 11.2%. The product of the public and community services industry, estimated based on salary payments in the government, local authorities and non-profit institutions (most of which are financed by the government) increased in 2022 by 2.7% after an increase of 5.1% last year. The business product at basic prices (equal to the domestic product, at market prices, minus the taxes paid on products plus subsidies on the products received by the manufacturers) increased in 2022 by 7.3%.



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