

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update May 25, 2023 (Sivan 5, 5783)

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Some 50,000 Israelis Join Jerusalem Day Flag March, Scuffles Erupt in Old City; About 50,000 Israelis gathered in Jerusalem for the Jerusalem Day flag march on Thursday, May 18, with police working throughout the day to break up scuffles that broke out between Jews, Arabs, and journalists. The march was conducted on its traditional route, departing from the center of the city along King George and Agron streets before splitting into two, with men continuing through Damascus Gate and the Muslim Quarter and women continuing through Jaffa Gate before meeting up again at the Western Wall. Several Jews carrying Israeli flags headed to the Damascus Gate area ahead of the flag march, with scuffles breaking out in the area between Jews, Arabs, and police. Scuffles between Jews and Muslims were also reported in additional locations throughout the Muslim Quarter of the Old City. Journalists covering the flag march were attacked by right-wing participants of the march near the Damascus Gate on Thursday afternoon, with participants jeering at them and hitting them with various objects. At the ending ceremony at the Western Wall, Ben-Gvir stated "How beautiful to see tens of thousands, in the Old City, on the way to the [Western] Wall. How beautiful to see our flags, the blue and white flag. Today we say to Hamas who threatened us, to the terrorists who threatened us, Jerusalem is ours. We will continue to love Jerusalem, we will continue to dream of Jerusalem, we will continue to be and live in Jerusalem." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke at the government ceremony for Jerusalem Day at Ammunition Hill on Thursday evening, stating "We dealt heavy blows to our aggressors in the Gaza Strip, and I believe that the message was received not only by them, [but] also in other places in our region, who witnessed the impressive operational capabilities of the State of Israel. We changed the equation." (JPost / VFI News)

Jerusalem Remains Israel's Biggest City with Nearly 1 Million Residents; Jerusalem remains Israel's largest city with 984,500 residents, about 10% of the entire country's population, according to data

published by the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS) on Wednesday, May 17, ahead of Jerusalem Day. In December 2022, some 60.8% of the city's population was Jewish or non-Arab, while 39.2% was Arab. Some 29% of the city's residents are Haredim (ultra-Orthodox) and thus comprise almost half of the city's Jewish population. The capital's population grew by about 13,200, but more people left the city than moved to it. The rise was accounted for by 20,200 additional births while 8,500 arrived and 15,500 left for other localities. Most new arrivals came from Beit Shemesh, Tel Aviv, and Bnei Brak. Most who left moved to Beit Shemesh, Tel Aviv, and Givat Ze'ev. Children under 15 account for 33% of the city's population, while only 9.6% are over the age of 64, making Jerusalem a relatively "young" city compared with other municipalities. The birth rate in Jerusalem stands at 3.86 children per family, higher than the national average of 3. It is higher among Jews and non-Arabs than among Arabs: 4.39 compared to 3.09. (JPost / VFI News)

70 PA Arabs Attempt Lynching of Israeli Farmers in Samaria Hills; The Samaria Regional Council reported that a group of around 70 PA Arabs attacked Israelis in the hills near Havat Yair in Samaria. According to the report, the Israelis are farmers from the "Shuvi Eretz" farm in the area. IDF and Israeli Police forces as well as security officers from the regional council arrived on the scene and they disclosed that one Israeli was lightly wounded and treated on the spot. Yossi Dagan, Head of the Samaria Regional Council, said: "It is unthinkable that farmers cannot roam freely in the hills of our country. This is a serious case of a lynching attempt that ended in a miracle." "I expect the security forces to track down the rioters and bring them to their punishment. The answer is one of deterrence, and embarking on a military operation to eliminate the terrorist infrastructure." (INN / VFI News)

Russia and Iran Ink Deal for Rail Link as Part of Intercontinental Trade Route; Russia and Iran signed an agreement Wednesday, May 17, to finance and build a railway line that will form part of a developing international cargo route they hope can become a major player in global shipping. Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Iranian counterpart, Ebrahim Raisi, participated via video link in the signing ceremony for the Rasht-Astara railway, inked by Iranian Roads and Urban Development Minister Mehrdad Bazrpash and Russia's Transport Minister Vitaly Savelyev. The 162-kilometer (100-mile) route will run along the Caspian Sea coast and through Azerbaijan. It will be a key part of the International North-South Transport Corridor, a 7,200-kilometer (4,473-mile) combined road, rail, and sea route aimed at moving goods from Russia via Central Asia to India, slashing shipping costs and times. "The unique North-South transport artery, of which the Rasht-Astara railway will become a part, will help to significantly diversify global traffic flows," Putin said, according to British media. "Without a doubt, this agreement is an important and strategic step in the direction of cooperation between Tehran and Moscow," Raisi said. Under the terms of the agreement, Russia will spend 1.6 billion Euros on the construction of the railway, whose completion is planned within 48 months, while Iran's side of the project will cost about 4.6 billion Euros and it is looking for foreign investors to help cover the expense. (TOI / VFI News)

Anti-Israel Left Has Become New York Dems' Ugly Future — Op-Ed; Progressives' rise to power in New York's Democratic Party also means soaring anti-Semitism. The latest is the bill from Democratic Socialist lawmakers Jabari Brisport (D-B'klyn) and Zohran Mamdani (D-Qns.) that would punish New York-based charities that supposedly engage in "unauthorized support of Israeli settlement activity." Legislative leadership in both houses has made it clear that the bill is DOA — for now. Brisport and Mamdani engaged in age-old anti-Semitic tropes of deception and disguise: The Jewish outfits in their crosshairs "masquerade as charities", "funnel hundreds of millions of dollars to ethnic cleansing", "white supremacy" by Israel's (multiracial!) Jewish community somehow drives (nonexistent!) "apartheid" there. Let's take note of the single-minded, punitive focus on the Jewish state and its alleged crimes. Neither puts anywhere near the same energy into defending actual victims of current and ongoing genocide, like China's Uyghurs. The bill is a clear warning about just how wedded the next generation of New York

Democrats is to anti-Israel rhetoric and policies. It's adjacent to open Jew-hatred. And Mamdani and Brisport are far from the only examples. Late April saw City Council Shahana Hanif and Sandra Nurse (both D-B'klyn) vote "no" on a resolution to establish an "End Jew Hatred" day. Also, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez not long ago joined her Squad in (briefly) stopping US support for Israel's purely defensive Iron Dome and falsely claimed Israel cages Palestinian children. (NYP / VFI News)

Swedish Party with Nazi Roots 'Wants to Be Friends of Israel, Jews'; The Israeli Foreign Ministry has long had a policy of blacklisting political parties with Nazi or openly anti-Semitic roots, from the Austrian Freedom Party to the National Front in France and beyond. The Sweden Democrats always fell under that category, counting Nazis and neo-Nazis among its founding members, but the boycott had little impact since they were far from positions of power in Stockholm. Last year, however, the Sweden Democrats became the second-largest party in parliament, supporting the governing coalition – and they want to befriend Israel. "Israel is the only true democracy in the region, and we like that," Sweden Democrats lawmaker Richard Jomshof, chairman of the parliament's Justice Committee, said on a visit to the Knesset on Wednesday, May 17. "We are pro-Israel, we would like to cooperate with Israel and we want to be friends." Member of the European Parliament Charlie Weimers, who has been an outspoken supporter of Israel in Brussels in recent years was proud to point out that a recent study by the European Coalition for Israel determined Sweden Democrats had the most pro-Israel voting record of the Swedish parties in the European Parliament and was the eighth-most pro-Israel overall. (JPost / VFI News)

New Immigrants to Israel to Get ID Cards at the Airport; To improve the landing process for new Olim into the State of Israel, the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration will issue identity cards to new immigrants at its different branches throughout the country. New immigrants will not have to go through the Interior Ministry as they did in the past, and this will ease the overcrowding and difficulties in scheduling appointments at the Interior Ministry. The Minister of Aliyah and Integration, Ofir Sofer, and the Minister of the Interior, Moshe Arbel agreed Sunday morning, May 21, to take immediate action and move forward with a new plan to issue Identity Cards (Te'udat Zehut) to new Olim upon their arrival at Ben Gurion Airport. In a joint meeting held this morning at the Ministry of the Interior between the Minister of Aliyah and Integration Ofir Sofer, Minister of the Interior Moshe Arbel, Director General of Interior Ministry, Eyal Siso, and Director General of the Ministry of Aliyah, it was agreed to hire additional staff at Ben Gurion Airport to ensure that new Olim can receive their ID cards upon arrival to Israel. Starting next month, new immigrants arriving in Israel will receive ID cards at the airport at the branch of the Aliyah and Integration Ministry on-premises, and will not have to go through the difficulty of scheduling an appointment at the Ministry of Interior. The ministers also agreed that they will work together so that the ID cards issued to new Olim by the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration will qualify as biometric Identity cards so that the tens of thousands of Olim arriving in Israel will not need to travel to the Interior Ministry offices. (INN / VFI News)

Healing through Nature: Israeli Mental Health Center Uses Butterflies to Help Kids; Udi Ohayon, a psychotherapist and art therapist at the Shahaf School at Bat Yam's Abarbanel Mental Health Center, loves butterflies. An idea struck him that the teens at the hospital might benefit from watching the colorful insects, which could serve as a therapeutic tool. In fact, his unique "butterfly garden" at the 79-year-old hospital has become the young patients' favorite place to be and improved their emotional state. The art teacher initiated a project inspired by the garden in which the patients and staff members created their own special butterflies in a piece of art. A Butterfly Garden News board was established by the pupils as part of the work habits workshop that operates at the school. They made keyholders in the shape of 3D-printed butterflies. The Purim carnival was also inspired by the butterfly garden, and the staff dressed up as butterflies. "The emotional contents that arise in the clinic are amazing; through the butterflies, the kids manage to express feelings and share. One of the children treated here at the center suffers from anxiety

and withdraws, and the butterfly garden is one of the few places where he's willing to go" Ohayon said. "A girl suffering from severe depression draws encouragement from the butterflies and said during the course that 'if the small and delicate butterfly is able to wander like that and overcome all the hardships on the way, then so can I.'" (JPost / VFI News)

Iran Fears for Its Gaza Proxies after Israel's Surprise Op. – Analysis; On Tuesday, May 9, Israel's Operation Shield and Arrow targeted Palestinian Islamic Jihad in Gaza. Iran is watching Israel's moves closely, and this is not the first time that the IDF have targeted the PIJ, which is widely seen as a proxy of Iran. Back in 2019, Israel launched Operation Black Belt which was a precision strike on Baha Abu al-Ata, a senior terrorist in the Islamic Jihad. In 2018 Israel also launched Operation House of Cards in Syria after Iran fired rockets at Israel. Iranian pro-regime media linked to the IRGC has heavily covered the new operation. One media outlet says that PIJ's Saraya al-Quds, the so-called "armed wing" of PIJ, has been struck and it has lost several commanders. Iran spins this as an acceptable blow it can recover from claiming that this will "increase the determination" of Islamic Jihad. Iran also claims civilians were killed, claiming a daughter of PIJ commander Khalil Salah al-Bahtini was killed. It also claims that the son of PIJ member Tariq Muhammad Ezzidin was killed. The operation has also been a top story in Turkish media. Turkey refers to Islamic Jihad, which is a terrorist group, as an "armed group," while claiming to fight its own war on terrorism. This is an illustration of how some media in the region do not see groups such as the Iranian-backed PIJ as terrorist organizations. (JPost / VFI News)

Bernie Sanders Steps in to Help Rep. Tlaib Hold Anti-Israel Event in Capitol; Sen. Bernie Sanders chaired a gathering in the US Senate Wednesday, May 10, during which Congress member Rashida Tlaib hosted an event where she bashed Israel as an "apartheid" state that engages in terror. The gathering was to mark the Nakba, a Palestinian term meaning "catastrophe" that refers to the displacement of Palestinian people when Israel was founded in 1948. Michigan lawmaker Tlaib had initially hoped to hold the event in the Congress Visitors Center, but Republican House Speaker Kevin McCarthy thwarted her plan by reserving the space himself and hosting a celebration to mark 75 years of US-Israel ties. Sanders then stepped in by chairing the meeting in the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Hearing Room, located in the Senate office building and therefore outside of McCarthy's reach. Sanders, a Jewish independent lawmaker, made no mention of the Nakba event on his own Twitter feed. Reports and images from the meeting showed that it was full with standing room only. Democrat Rep Cori Bush also attended the meeting. Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt panned Sanders for facilitating the Nakba event in the Capitol, calling it "disgraceful." (TOI / VFI News)

Survey: Palestinian Arabs Prefer China over US as Mediator with Israel; A majority of Palestinian Arabs view China and Russia as potentially effective mediators for their peace talks with Israel, a survey conducted by YouGov for Arab media found. The survey showed that Palestinian Arabs' most preferred potential peace broker was Russia, followed closely by the European Union and China. The US, in contrast, proved far from popular. 80 percent of Palestinian Arabs welcomed a Chinese offer to mediate with Israel. Almost 60 percent of respondents said they did not trust the US to mediate negotiations, the poll found. China's Foreign Minister, Qin Gang, recently told his Israeli and Palestinian Arab counterparts that his country is ready to help facilitate peace talks between the two sides. Russian President Vladimir Putin has in the past expressed a desire to host an Israeli-Palestinian Arab summit to revive the stalled peace talks between the sides, but nothing has materialized yet in this regard. Since taking office, the Biden administration has renewed ties with the PA and has been crafting a plan aimed at "resetting" US ties with the PA. Despite Biden's efforts, PA chairman Mahmoud Abbas told Putin in October 2022 that he does not trust Washington can resolve the conflict with Israel while expressing appreciation for Russia's role in the process. (INN / VFI News)

Report: King Charles to Become First UK Sovereign to Visit Israel; Preparations are currently taking place for King Charles III, the newly crowned monarch of Britain, to make history as the first sovereign of the UK to visit the Holy Land, as reported by British media on Sunday, May 14. Lord Stuart Polak, a Conservative peer in the House of Lords who served as the director of Conservative Friends of Israel for over 25 years, told British media that “the preparation has been done by his team to pave the way for this visit.” “There is no doubt that Charles will be the one to break this pattern.” According to the British tabloid, Charles is expected to include a visit to the Palestinian Authority in order to avoid criticism from the Arab world. Sunday's report noted that President Isaac Herzog has personally engaged in lobbying efforts to encourage the king's visit. Prior to ascending the throne, Charles had privately traveled to Israel on three occasions. In 2018, Prince William also undertook an official trip to Israel and the Palestinian Authority. During her 70-year reign, Charles's mother, Queen Elizabeth II, never visited Israel, amid concerns it would cause a backlash in the Arab world. (INN / VFI News)

FM Cohen in Sweden: A New Era for Our Relationship; Foreign Minister Eli Cohen on Monday, May 15, hailed a “new era” in the relationship between Sweden and Israel, as he began a visit to Stockholm, the first by an Israeli foreign minister in 22 years. “More than 20 years have passed since an Israeli foreign minister visited Sweden, and today I had an important meeting with the Swedish Minister for Foreign Affairs in Stockholm, Tobias Billström, a close ally of Israel,” tweeted Cohen. “Sweden holds the presidency of the European Union and is expected to join NATO; therefore, strengthening the relationship between our countries is a strategic interest,” he added. “We discussed enhancing the economic and security cooperation between the countries, the fight against a nuclear Iran, and broadening the Abraham Accords.” Billström commented on the meeting as well on his Twitter account, writing, “A very good and productive meeting with Eli Cohen in Stockholm today. The first one in 20 years, so long overdue.” “The purpose was to further strengthen the bilateral relations between Sweden and Israel and to discuss global and regional issues of mutual interest,” he added. (INN / VFI News)

Israel, Morocco Co-Host Women in Innovation Conference in Marrakesh; Almost 100 female business leaders from four continents gathered in Morocco two weeks ago for the Women Connect to Innovate conference where they discussed women-driven innovation as a path to regional prosperity. The three-day conference in Marrakesh was hosted by the Israeli nonprofit Start-Up Nation Central and Morocco's Consensus Public Relations firm. This collaboration involving women from across the Middle East and Africa served as a reminder of how much Israel's position in the region has improved in just a few years. The 2020 Abraham Accords normalized Israel's relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco. In 2021, Sudan signed on as well. Since the signing of the agreements, the countries have established substantial partnerships with Israel. Conferences like this one and other forms of innovation diplomacy have helped Israel to cement its partnerships with countries in the region. (JPost / VFI News)

Cabinet Approves NIS 13.7b in State Funds to Meet Haredi Coalition Demands; The cabinet on Sunday, May 14, approved NIS 13.7 billion (\$3.7 billion) worth of coalition funds mainly allocated in support of ultra-Orthodox institutions and programs as the Treasury warned that the promised funds could lead to trillions of shekels in lost gross domestic product in the coming years. The coalition funds worth NIS 13.7 billion are higher than the previous call for NIS 12.5 billion in spending. Out of the NIS 13.7 billion, about NIS 3.7 billion is promised to be spent on increasing the budget for stipends at religious yeshiva student institutions. About NIS 1 billion is directed as an allowance for a food voucher program being pushed by Shas leader Aryeh Deri. Another NIS 1.2 billion is budgeted for private, non-supervised educational institutions, which do not teach core subjects such as math and English. Israel's ultra-Orthodox population, which constitutes about 13.5% of the country's total population, is expected to grow to 16% in 2030. The ultra-Orthodox population's current growth rate of 4% is the fastest of any group in

Israel, according to Central Bureau of Statistics data. Opposition leader Yair Lapid called the amount and allocation of coalition funds “irresponsible and corrupt,” and a robbery of public money. Ahead of Sunday’s vote, the Finance Ministry’s Budgets Department head Yogev Gardos warned that the allocation of funds to ultra-Orthodox institutions and initiatives creates negative incentives for Haredi men to seek employment, and will harm the country’s labor market and the economy as a whole. (TOI / VFI News)

Ancient Roman-era Marble Cargo Shipwreck Found by Israeli Beachgoer; The wreck of a Roman-era shipment of marble was found by a swimmer off of Israel’s Yanai beach, in what is the first discovery of its kind in the Eastern Mediterranean, the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) announced Monday, May 15. The shipment of marble items had been known to the IAA for years, but because the shipwreck was covered in sand, its exact location had remained unknown until recent stormy weather helped to expose it. The find was spotted by a local swimmer, Gideon Harris, who reported it to the Antiquities Authority. The marble cargo included Corinthian columns decorated with capitals. It is theorized that these valuable marble columns would have been used for an important construction project, such as a temple or theater. These items were very valuable and the marble aesthetic was highly sought-after in the ancient world. For example, in Caesarea during Roman times, buildings were made of local stone but covered with stucco to make them look like marble, as noted by IAA Maritime Archaeology Unit director Kobi Shavit. IAA Director-General Eli Escusido praised Harris for his discovery. “Gideon’s report illustrated how essential it is for citizens to be vigilant for antiquities and how important it is for these discoveries to be reported to the Antiquities Authority,” Escusido said. “This is invaluable information for building the Land of Israel’s story.” (JPost / VFI News)



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