

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update June 1, 2023 ***(Sivan 12, 5783)***

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A golden menorah with seven branches and a bottle of Anointing Oil. The bottle has a label with Arabic text and an illustration of a person. The items are set against a white background with a dashed red border.

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Iran Is the Biggest Threat to Israel, the Middle East – Editorial; Iran continues to pose a major threat to Israel, the Middle East, and the world. Last week, during the Herzliya Conference at Reichman University, Israel's top security and defense officials raised the alarm about Iran's continued advances toward a nuclear weapon. IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Herzl Halevi said that Iran has in recent years enriched uranium more than ever before. This is a major concern and means that the Islamic Republic has steered a path to nuclear capability, he indicated. The overall picture is that Iran continues its nefarious behavior on numerous fronts and that Israel cannot let its guard down. Unlike previous conventional military or terrorist threats, Iran combines multiple types of threats into one sprawling matrix that it seeks to use against the Jewish state. Tehran is open about its desire to attack Israel on multiple fronts. It wants to weaken Israel internally, and it supplies and funds proxies and militias around Israel – like Hamas, Hezbollah, and Palestinian Islamic Jihad – to carry out attacks against it. It is important to focus on the comments by our senior defense officials, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, to understand that while we should not be overly alarmed about the Iranian threat, we also need to prepare for the continued provocations that Tehran will likely throw at us in the near term. (JPost/VFI News)

US, France Say Iran Ballistic Test Worrying in Light of Nuclear Escalation; The United States and France on Thursday, May 25, accused Iran of violating a UN Security Council resolution endorsing the 2015 nuclear deal after it carried out a long-range ballistic missile test, which Paris said was worrying given the "uninterrupted escalation" of Tehran's nuclear program. Iran successfully test-launched a ballistic missile with a potential 2,000-km range on Thursday, state media said, the latest in ballistic missile tests and satellite launches. Iran's development of ballistic missiles poses a serious threat to regional and international security, State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller told reporters on Thursday, after

Iran carried out a long-range ballistic missile test. French foreign ministry spokesperson Anne-Claire Legendre told reporters at a daily briefing: "These activities are all the more worrying in the context of the continuing escalation of Iran's nuclear program." UN Security Council resolution 2231 calls on Iran not to conduct "any activity" related to ballistic missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons, but the language is ambiguous, leaving it open to interpretation. Western powers are particularly concerned because UN Security Council restrictions on missiles and related technologies last until October 2023 after which Iran is free to pursue its ballistic missile activity. (JPost / VFI News)

Iran Regime Close to Getting Nuclear Bomb, But What's the Holdup?; Iran has moved dangerously close to enriching weapons-grade uranium for a nuclear bomb, but the regime has not yet crossed the critical threshold of declaring it has built an atomic weapon. "It's an open question as to whether Khamenei wants to die as the father of the Shiite atomic bomb or as the one who kept the Islamic Republic on the nuclear path without provoking a war or pulling the trigger," Behnam Ben Taleblu, Iran expert at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told American media. Aside from the technological impediments to the construction of a modern nuclear weapon, Iran's regime has been confronted with deterrence from Israel and the United States over the years, including Stuxnet computer worm sabotage of the regime's nuclear fuel production system. "I think Iran's leadership to date has calculated the costs of doing so would outweigh the benefits at this juncture — mainly a destructive attack which targets its entire nuclear infrastructure," Jason Brodsky, policy director of the U.S.-based United Against a Nuclear Iran (UANI), told American media. "Iran has not crossed the threshold into building a nuclear weapon because the supreme leader has not decided to weaponize the program," said Joel Rubin, a former deputy assistant secretary of state who served in the Obama administration. Rubin said it was clear that Tehran was "Still open to pursuing a diplomatic path as it knows that if it crosses into weapons-grade nuclear arsenals, which it is capable of doing, the nation would be further isolated internationally — even by its allies. It would trigger a regional nuclear arms race, and Tehran would never get out from under the sanctions pressure it currently is experiencing," he said. (FN / VFI News)

Jewish Groups Blast Biden's Antisemitism Strategy; Shaped by Anti-Semitic CAIR; The Republican Jewish Coalition (RJC) blasted President Joe Biden's new antisemitism strategy on Thursday, May 25, as it emerged that it was crafted with help from the anti-Semitic Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR). The strategy excludes extreme criticism of Israel from the definition of antisemitism, rejecting the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition that was adopted by President Donald Trump in 2019. The Biden strategy also lumps antisemitism in together with Islamophobia, which fails to acknowledge the fact that the two are fundamentally different and that antisemitism is frequently motivated by Islamic extremism. Critics noted that CAIR was involved in the drafting of the document, as the White House acknowledged. CAIR has frequently used anti-Semitic rhetoric, blurring the boundary between criticism of Israel or "Zionism" and outright attacks on Jews and Judaism. For its part, CAIR boasted Thursday of its involvement in crafting Biden's antisemitism strategy and specifically praised Biden for protecting criticism of Israel. RJC, another Jewish group, the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, a non-partisan group, and The Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the oldest pro-Israel group in the United States all blasted this strategy. (BB / VFI News)

Syrian Migrant Arrested Over Planned 'Bomb Attack' on Swedish Church; Police have arrested a 24-year-old Syrian migrant on suspicion of planning a "bomb attack" on a church in Sweden. The 24-year-old Syrian migrant is at least the second person to be arrested by law enforcement in relation to the "bomb attack" terror plot. The agency also arrested the individual's 28-year-old brother in relation to the allegedly planned bombing of an unidentified church in Sweden. While initially suspected of only being an accessory to his brother's crime, the press release published on Tuesday, May 23, says that the migrant is now "urgently suspected of jointly preparing a serious act of violence that is dangerous to the state", as

well as the "joint financing of terrorism". In a previous press release published in April, law enforcement suggested that both men are motivated by radical Islam, though according to police it is unclear whether they have any formal ties to extremist groups. "The two Syrian nationals are said to have planned an attack with a self-made explosive belt out of a radical Islamist and jihadist attitude in order to carry out an attack against civilian targets," it reads. "In addition, the 28-year-old main suspect from Hamburg is said to have purchased raw materials for the production of explosive material for a few weeks via the online platform eBay and other providers." (BB /VFI News)

Arabs Celebrate on Temple Mount: Erdogan Won, Muhammad's Army Will Return; Thousands of Muslims who came to pray at Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Temple Mount square on Sunday evening, May 28, celebrated Recep Tayyip Erdogan's victory in the Turkish presidential election. In a video from the scene, the crowd can be seen chanting: "O Jews...Muhammad's army will return to fight against you." Hamas congratulated Erdogan on his victory and said that "this historic victory will be a new starting point for strengthening relations on the Arab and Islamic level and for supporting the Palestinian cause and the Palestinian people's right to freedom, self-determination and the establishment of a Palestinian state on its national land." President Isaac Herzog on Sunday also congratulated Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on his victory. "Congratulations to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey on his election victory. I am convinced that we will continue to work together to strengthen and expand the good ties between Turkey and Israel." Erdogan earlier on Sunday claimed victory over his reformist opponent, economist Kemal Kılıçdaroğlu, after the polls closed across Turkey. The Turkish Electoral Body announced that with 75.4% of the vote counted, Erdogan leads Kılıçdaroğlu 53.4% to 46.6%. (INN / VFI News)

Roger Waters Dresses up as SS Officer, Compares Anne Frank to Abu Akleh; Roger Waters dressed up as an SS officer and compared Anne Frank to journalist Shireen Abu Akleh during a concert at the Mercedes-Benz Arena in Berlin two weeks ago. Throughout the show, humanoid pigs and shady businessmen "pulling the strings" were displayed on the screen. Social media users and activists condemned the imagery as an "anti-Semitic dog whistle." The screen proceeded to display the names of Sophie Scholl, an anti-Nazi activist murdered by the Nazis; Mahsa Amini, who was murdered by Iranian "morality police"; George Floyd, who was killed by a police officer in Minneapolis; and Anne Frank, who was murdered by the Nazis in Bergen-Belsen, among other individuals killed by various authorities and regimes throughout the past century. The list also included Abu Akleh - right before Anne Frank - who is believed to have been killed by shots fired by Israeli soldiers during a shootout with Palestinian terrorists in Jenin, and Rachel Corrie, who was crushed by an armored IDF bulldozer in the southern Gaza Strip in 2003. In both cases, Palestinians claim that Abu Akleh and Corrie were targeted directly by the IDF, while the IDF says the deaths were an accident. After the list of names, a graphic on the screen stated that "they" are so brutal "because they want to crush our resistance and keep ruling the world." After an intermission, Waters walked on stage in a SS uniform as an inflatable pig with various words and symbols and glowing eyes floated over the crowd and banners in the style of the Third Reich but with crossed hammers instead of a swastika hanging from the ceiling. Later in the performance, Waters displayed the words "F\$%& the occupation" while singing "Lay Down Jerusalem (If I Had Been God)." (JPost / VFI News)

Holocaust Survivor Throws 1st Pitch at Yankees-Rays Game on 100th Birthday; She may not have the same velocity on her fastball as an MLB pitcher, but Helen Kahan still had plenty to be proud of as she threw out the ceremonial first pitch before the Tampa Bay Rays and New York Yankees took the field on May 5 — her 100th birthday. To prepare, Kahan watched her grandsons and great-grandsons play catch so she could get the pitching motion in her head. Kahan stood confidently on the Tropicana Field pitcher's mound with her daughter and son by her side. It didn't matter that the throw only made it halfway to home plate. The crowd of more than 25,000 gave her a standing ovation as Rays relief pitcher Kevin

Kelly, who caught the pitch, congratulated her with a smile and a handshake. Kahan, of Seminole, Florida, who survived multiple Nazi concentration camps, was triumphant. “I never could have imagined celebrating a birthday like this, let alone my 100th!” said Kahan. “I’m so grateful that I am here to tell my story and help the world remember why kindness and empathy are so important for us all.” Born in 1923 in Romania, Kahan was forced into a ghetto as a young adult before being deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, then Bergen-Belsen and Lippstadt. As the end of the war approached, she escaped from a death march before the camp was liberated by the Soviet army in May 1945. In addition to honoring Kahan, the Rays announced a \$10,000 partnership grant with the Florida Holocaust Museum during the pregame festivities. Kahan has been a longtime volunteer educator at the St. Petersburg Museum. (TOI /VFI News)

Iran’s Latest Subterranean Nuclear Site Likely Impenetrable to US Bunker Busters; Near a peak of the Zagros Mountains in central Iran, workers are building a nuclear facility so deep in the earth that it is likely beyond the range of a last-ditch US weapon designed to destroy such sites, according to experts and satellite imagery analyzed by American media. The photos and videos from Planet Labs PBC show Iran has been digging tunnels in the mountain near the Natanz nuclear site, which has come under repeated sabotage attacks amid Tehran’s standoff with the West over its atomic program. Completion of such a facility “would be a nightmare scenario that risks igniting a new escalatory spiral,” warned Kelsey Davenport, the director of nonproliferation policy at the Washington-based Arms Control Association. “Given how close Iran is to a bomb, it has very little room to ratchet up its program without tripping US and Israeli red lines. So at this point, any further escalation increases the risk of conflict.” Experts say the size of the construction project indicates Iran likely would be able to use the underground facility to enrich uranium as well — not just to build centrifuges. Those tube-shaped centrifuges, arranged in large cascades of dozens of machines, rapidly spin uranium gas to enrich it. Additional cascades spinning would allow Iran to quickly enrich uranium under the mountain’s protection. (TOI / VFI News)

Top Iranian Security Chief Shamkhani Replaced with IRGC Official; Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi appointed Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps Commander Ali Akbar Ahmadian to head the Supreme National Security Council on Monday, May 22, causing a major shake-up in the country’s top leadership. This is a top security position and is important for Iran’s internal and regional policies. Ahmadian is replacing Ali Shamkhani, a former admiral who has held the post for a decade. An Iranian media outlet that is considered close to the IRGC, said Ahmadian “is the head of the Revolutionary Guards Strategic Center and a member of the Expediency Council, and from 1976 to 1979 he was the commander of the Revolutionary Guards Navy and from 1979 to 1986 the head of the Joint Staff of the Revolutionary Guards.” According to Iran Watch, he was “designated by the UN Security Council on March 24, 2007, pursuant to resolution 1737 (2006), as a person linked to Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps; subsequently designated by UN Security Council resolution 2231 (2015). Ahmadian is considered a terrorist by the US and also has been sanctioned by Japan and Australia, according to reports. He played a key role in developing Iran’s forces, American media reported in 2012. Ahmadian has a background in the IRGC’s navy and also in conducting operations near Bandar Abbas, as well as extensive experience in these naval operations, which likely means he has been involved in operations harassing shipping and targeting US forces at sea in the Gulf. The appointment of Ahmadian brings another key IRGC military figure to the top of Iran’s leadership. Raisi has promoted IRGC members throughout its ranks. The bureaucracy essentially leads them to take over the state. (JPost / VFI News)

3 Palestinian Gunmen Killed during IDF Operation near Nablus in West Bank; At least three Palestinians were reported killed by Israeli fire during an overnight raid in a northern West Bank refugee camp, east of Nablus, Palestinian health authorities said early Monday, May 22. The al-Aqsa Martyr’s Brigade terror group later released a statement saying the three had been members of the organization. It said they were killed while battling Israeli forces. Another six Palestinians were injured, including one

person in critical condition, the health ministry said. The IDF said during the operation, Palestinian suspects threw explosives and rocks at soldiers, and the troops responded with fire. While it did not confirm the number of Palestinian deaths and injuries, the military said that "hits were detected." Defense Minister Yoav Gallant hailed the raid, saying it had prevented several terror attacks being carried out against Israelis. "In two successful operations carried out by the security forces overnight in Jenin and Nablus, terrorists who opened fire on our forces were eliminated and those planning terror attacks against Israeli citizens were arrested," Gallant tweeted. "We will hunt down and reach our enemies." A spokesperson for the Israel Defense Forces later announced that an officer had been lightly wounded during the raid. The officer was treated for a shrapnel wound and released from hospital. (TOI / VFI News)

How Israel Exposed and Destroyed Islamic Jihad Rocket Production Sites in Gaza; As soon as the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) fired rockets from Gaza about three weeks ago towards Sderot, as a sign of solidarity with the death of security prisoner Khader Adnan, the IDF's OC Southern Command Col. Liron Batito was asked to pull out the secret attack plan: "Black Cloak" — a booklet of dozens of pages that included quality targets for the attack including photos on PIJ senior officials and terrorist infrastructures. "About a hundred rockets in the middle of the day in Sderot? The sheer scope surprised us," said an IDF senior officer, adding that "with Hamas, we were quite upset with Islamic Jihad because they did not live up to their commitment. It was clear that Israel could not be complacent and that a different kind of response was required." The Military Intelligence Directorate stated that not only did Hamas have no part in the rocket barrages, but that the senior Hamas leaders in Gaza, Yahya Sinwar and Mohammed Deif, had no intention of taking part in the escalation if it erupted, and therefore the IDF had focused only on Islamic Jihad commanders. Every operation has many critical moments, and one of them is the stage for choosing targets to attack. After recommendations were drawn up at the Southern Command, they were examined by senior Shin Bet Intelligence Division officials. Unlike Operation Breaking Dawn, IDF Chief of Staff Herzl Halevi decided to open with Israel severely damaging Islamic Jihad's weapons development, production, and storage infrastructure to create a huge shock effect on an organization that receives full funding from Iran. (JPost / VFI News)

Netanyahu Hits Back at Abbas' Lies that Jews Have No History in Jerusalem; The Jewish people have been in Jerusalem for thousands of years and will remain for thousands more, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday, May 21, responding to PA President Mahmoud Abbas's recent claim that Israel is lying about its historical ties to the city. "Abbas said days ago at the UN that the Jewish people have no connection to the Temple Mount and that east Jerusalem is part of the Palestinian Authority," Netanyahu said. "Well, it should be brought to his attention that we are holding a special cabinet meeting in honor of Jerusalem at the foot of the Temple Mount, on which King Solomon built the First Temple of the Jewish people, and again, it should be brought to Abbas's attention, the heart of the historical state of Israel, the City of David, was here 3,000 years ago." Netanyahu made the remarks in a cabinet meeting at the Western Wall Tunnels honoring Jerusalem Day, celebrated last Thursday to mark Israel's reunification of the city and liberation of the Old City in 1967. The cabinet approved close to a NIS 60 million budget increase for the Western Wall over the next five years, to upgrade infrastructure and encourage visits to the holy site, as well as archaeology and educational activities. (JPost / VFI News)

Iraqi Team Withdraws from Fencing Tournament to Avoid Israelis; Iraq's national fencing team withdrew from the World Fencing Championship in Istanbul after being pitted against the Israeli national team, Iraqi media reported on Friday, May 19. "The Iraqi national team withdrew from the individual races in the World Cup fencing championship, which is taking place in Istanbul, and qualifies for the Paris Olympics after the lottery pitted it against the team of the 'occupying Israeli entity,'" said the Iraqi Fencing Federation, according to the report. "The decision to withdraw came in compliance with the law

criminalizing normalization approved by the Iraqi parliament, in rejection of the occupying Israeli entity, and in solidarity with the Palestinian cause.” Last year, the Iraqi parliament passed legislation criminalizing any form of "normalization" with Israel, banning all Iraqi citizens from having any political, economic, cultural, or any other form of communication with Israeli citizens, even through social media. The punishment set for such interactions with Israelis is the death sentence or imprisonment. Most of Iraq's Jews fled the country after violent riots, known as the Farhud, which targeted Jewish citizens in 1941, killing as many as 180 and injuring hundreds. By 1951, about 124,000 out of the 135,000 Jews in the country had immigrated to Israel; those who remained suffered persecution for decades. (JPost / VFI News)

Israel Accuses Elon Musk of Stoking Antisemitism on Twitter after Anti-Soros Remark; Israel's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday, May 16, accused Twitter owner Elon Musk of driving up anti-Semitic rhetoric on his social media platform in the wake of a remark he made against Jewish philanthropist George Soros. Musk tweeted a day earlier that Soros “hates humanity,” and wrote that the billionaire and progressive megadonor “reminds me of Magneto,” a comic book villain who features in Marvel's X-Men series. “The phrase ‘The Jews’ spiked today on the list of topics trending on Twitter following a tweet with anti-Semitic overtones by none other than the owner and CEO of the social network, Elon Musk,” the Foreign Ministry tweeted on its official account. It said that Musk's tweet “immediately led to anti-Semitic conspiracy theories on Twitter.” CEO of the Anti-Defamation League Jonathan Greenblatt called Musk's remark “dangerous” and encouraging to anti-Jewish extremists. “Soros often is held up by the far-right, using anti-Semitic tropes, as the source of the world's problems,” Greenblatt tweeted. “To see Elon Musk, regardless of his intent, feed this segment — comparing him to a Jewish supervillain, claiming Soros ‘hates humanity’ — is not just distressing, it's dangerous: it will embolden extremists who already contrive anti-Jewish conspiracies and have tried to attack Soros and Jewish communities as a result.” (TOI / VFI News)

Bank of Israel Raises Interest Rate to 4.75%, Highest since 2006; The Bank of Israel on Monday, May 22, raised the interest rate from 0.25% to 4.75% in an effort to curb inflation. The tenth consecutive hike in just over a year brought the interest rate to its highest level since 2006. Various components of the Consumer Price Index have experienced significant inflationary pressures, indicating a need for urgent action. Last month, the central bank raised the interest rate of 0.25% to 4.50%. “Economic activity in Israel is at a high level and is accompanied by a tight labor market, although there is some moderation in a number of indicators. Inflation is broad and remains high,” the Bank of Israel said in a statement. It also said that inflation in Israel over the last year, at 5%, was well over its 1%-3% target range, although the rate of growth is lower than last year. “GDP grew by 2.5% in annual terms in the first quarter, a relatively high pace once the temporary effects of changes in vehicle taxation are omitted. The labor market remains tight and in a full-employment environment, but the job vacancy rate is in a downward trend,” the Bank of Israel said. While the central bank's rate hikes are intended to stabilize the economy, they also affect thousands of mortgage holders. (JPost / VFI News)

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