

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update August 24, 2023 (Elul 7, 5783)

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Two Israelis Murdered in Terrorist Attack Near Huwara; Silas (Shai) Nigerker, 60, and his son Aviad Nir, 28 from Ashdod were killed in a terrorist shooting near Huwara on Saturday afternoon, August 18, according to the IDF Spokesperson's Unit. The shooting occurred at a carwash. Bus driver Avi Elharar told Israeli media that he had chatted with Nigerker and Nir minutes before they were murdered. "Suddenly, I heard gunshots, and I ran like a rocket against the wind," he said. Elharar added that Nigerker had told him he was at the carwash getting the air conditioning in his car fixed. Employees at the carwash allegedly alerted the terrorist to the presence of people speaking Hebrew who approached the victims on foot and shot them from close range before running away. Other reports said that Nigerker and Nir had spent hours in Huwara. The IDF said it had launched a search after the terrorist, closing roads around the town and the nearby Tapuach Junction, with the search going as far as Nablus. At the same time, the Shin Bet arrested the carwash's owner and other Palestinians who had been in the area in an attempt to discover whether the terrorist was indeed tipped off. The US State Department, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, President Isaac Herzog, and Yesha Council head Shlomo Neeman have already condemned the attack, whereas Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad quickly celebrated it: "We congratulate the heroic shooter in Huwara who is the result of our continued promise of resistance to protect our people, respond to the crimes of the occupation and defend Al-Aqsa mosque from the dangers of the Justification." According to Palestinian reports, after the attack, Israelis threw stones at homes in the town and at Palestinian vehicles north of Huwara while shouting "Arab, Arab!" Fires were lit in the town as well. (JPost /VFI News)

Hebron Terror Attack: Mother Shot Dead in Front of Daughter; Preschool teacher Batsheva Nigri, 40, was shot to death in front of her six-year-old daughter on Monday, August 21, on Route 60 in Judea

and Samaria after hitching a ride to her nearby home in Beit Hagai junction. Nigri, a mother of three, grew up in Efrat. The driver Aryeh Gottlieb, 39, also of Beit Hagai is in serious condition from gunshot wounds and was transported to Soroka Medical Center. The child suffered from light shrapnel wounds. Two terrorists drove in front of the victims' car, cutting it off while slowing down traffic at the intersection. They then shot at the victims from short range, spraying their vehicle with at least 20 bullets, and then continued driving. Al-Aqsa Martyr's Brigade, the armed wing of the Palestinian Authority's ruling Fatah faction, took credit for the attack, explaining in a statement that it was "a natural response to the crimes of the occupation." The group noted that this terrorist attack took place on the 54th anniversary of an attack on al-Aqsa by a Western tourist. A Hamas spokesperson, Hazem Qassem, also praised the attack and said it was a response to Israel's ongoing assaults on Palestinians. Security forces do not yet know the identity of the terrorists or whether there was any connection between this Hebron attack and the weekend one in Huwara. (JPost /VFI News)

IDF Soldier Killed During Violent Criminal Shootings across Israel; Two people were killed and another four were injured in separate incidents across Israel on Wednesday, August 16, at around 8 p.m. One of those killed was later revealed to be a 21-year-old IDF soldier. The soldier, who was a resident of Petah Tikva, was shot to death in his car in Jaljulia. The 21-year-old was taken to the Meir Medical Center in Kfar Saba in critical condition, but the medical staff there had to pronounce him dead, Jewish media reported. A 15-year-old was also slightly injured in the incident. Furthermore, a 17-year-old was killed and another three people were injured in a violent incident and what is also suspected to be an assassination on Highway 65 near Gan Shmuel, according to Israeli media. Israel Police reported that the incident took place inside a vehicle and the details are being investigated. The targets of the assassination are apparently a father and son, Avi and Yarin Biton, two criminals known to the police. The two had previously served prison sentences for their role in the "bloody wedding" in which a resident of Pardes Hanna was stabbed to death in 2016. Police stated in both incidents that the attacks were criminal in nature rather than terror attacks. Police are currently looking for suspects behind both attacks. (JPost / VFI News)

Iron Dome Shoots Down Drones over Gaza Twice in 24 Hours; The Iron Dome was activated on Monday morning, August 21, and fired at an unmanned drone flying over Gaza, according to the IDF Spokesperson's Unit. The aircraft did not cross into Israeli territory and from the moment it took off, IAF systems monitored the drone throughout the incident, the IDF stated a while later. The drone did not pose an immediate threat to civilians in the area surrounding the Gaza Strip, and therefore no alerts were activated. Israel's Iron Dome was activated near the Gaza border on Sunday morning as well, in response to a drone heading toward Israel from Gaza, according to the IDF. Israel's Air Force followed its route and used the Iron Dome to intercept the drone, which according to the IDF also did not pose a threat to Israeli citizens near the Gaza border and therefore did not trigger any national alerts. (JPost / VFI News)

Russian Drone Team Was Stuck in Iranian Hotel During Alleged Israeli Strike – Report; A Russian team visiting Iran to gain expertise in drone manufacturing had to shelter in their hotel after an Israeli strike targeted a weapons factory in Isfahan in January, American media reported on Thursday, August 17. The team was part of efforts to establish a drone production facility in Russia with the help of Iran, which would produce a variant of the Iranian Shahed-136 drone known as the Geran 2. The new facility, located in the Alabuga Special Economic Zone in the Republic of Tatarstan about 900 km east of Moscow, is intended to produce drones on a larger scale than Iran, but so far is at least a month behind schedule and is seemingly still unable to produce full drones. American media obtained documents revealing information about the Alabuga facility from an individual involved in the efforts at the site who is opposed to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. "This was the only thing I could do to at least stop and maybe create some obstacles to the implementation of this project," said the anonymous individual. According to the report, hundreds of Russian employees and students have been sent to Iran to receive relevant training.

While one of those groups was visiting Isfahan in January, the drone strike which Iran blamed on Israel targeted a weapons factory in the city. While Iran's Defense Ministry claimed the strike was unsuccessful, video from the scene showed a large explosion hitting the roof of the facility, which is believed to have been linked to the production of drones and missiles. (JPost / VFI News)

Argentina: Leading Primaries Winner Wants to Convert to Judaism; Argentina has never had a Jewish president. But that concept could move a step closer to reality after a general election in October 2023. That's because on Sunday, August 13, the leading vote-getter in national primary elections was Javier Milei, who said in an interview with Spanish media last month that he is considering conversion to Judaism. One of the obstacles getting in the way: observing Shabbat. "If I'm president and it's Shabbat, what do I do? Am I going to disconnect from the country from Friday to Saturday? There are some issues that would make [the religion] incompatible. The rabbi who helps me study says that I should read the Torah from the point of view of economic analysis," he said. Milei has visited the Buenos Aires Holocaust Museum and last July traveled to New York, where he visited the grave of the Lubavitcher Rebbe Menachem Mendel Schneerson, the influential former spiritual leader of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. However, he had voted against a bill that would make July 18, the date of the 1994 AMIA Jewish center bombing, a national day of mourning. After sharp criticism, Milei tried to change his vote, but his request was denied. Milei is staunchly pro-Israel and has said that his "two great allies are the United States and Israel." If elected, he has vowed to move the Argentine embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. (INN /VFI News)

ADL Calls on Jerusalem Mayor to Condemn Anti-Christian Attacks; The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) wrote a letter to Jerusalem Mayor Moshe Lion asking him to publicly condemn anti-Christian attacks by Jewish extremists in the city. The CEO of the ADL's Israel branch, Carole Nuriel, wrote: "I turn to you in this letter to share with you the league's worry regarding the continuous attacks against Christians in Jerusalem at the hands of a small group of Jews and to ask you to make your voice heard about these actions." According to her: "As a Jewish leader, it is important that you condemn this anti-Christian phenomenon, just as we expect other leaders to condemn antisemitism wherever it may be." She added, "In meetings I held in recent weeks with senior Christian community leaders from various denominations, I heard reports that attacks against community members have become a nearly daily matter." "I call on you, as Mayor of Jerusalem, to make your voice heard publicly against these attacks and to make clear that there is no room in the holy city for anti-Christian hate," she concluded. (INN / VFI News)

Shekel Slides to Lowest Rate in Three Years against US Dollar; The shekel continued to slide against the US dollar on Tuesday, August 15, trading at NIS 3.763, its lowest rate since March 2020. At one point, the shekel reached NIS 3.77 per dollar, before recovering slightly. The closing exchange rate was still a one percent rise over Monday's rate. The Israeli currency also slid against the euro, which traded at NIS 4.1144, a rise of 0.915% over the day before. Monday saw the shekel fall against the dollar but then slow its descent after Fitch Ratings affirmed Israel's A+ credit rating with a stable outlook, as it did in March but continued to warn of fallout if the government advances additional parts of its overhaul of the judiciary. Analysts linked the recent fall in the shekel's value to political turmoil over the judicial overhaul, an overall strengthening of the dollar against a number of foreign currencies, and that August is peak vacation season that sees many Israelis purchasing foreign currencies as they make trips abroad. The shekel's woes came as the Central Bureau of Statistics released figures showing the consumer price index rose by 0.3% in July, with the annual inflation rate dropping significantly from 4.2% in July to just 3.3%. (TOI / VFI News)

Iran Close to Testing Nuclear Weapons for First Time - European Intel; The Islamic Republic of Iran is close to possibly testing a nuclear weapons device and has sought to obtain illicit technology for its

active atomic weapons program, according to a series of shocking European intelligence reports released in 2023. The most unsettling revelation from the batch of intelligence data comes from the Netherlands General and Intelligence Security Service (AVID). The AVID determined the Iranian regime's fast-moving development of weapons-grade uranium "brings the option of a possible Iranian first nuclear test closer." According to the Dutch intelligence report, "Last year, Iran proceeded with its nuclear program. The country continues to increase stocks of 20% and 60% enriched uranium. By means of centrifuges, this can be used for further enrichment to the 90% enriched uranium needed for a nuclear weapon." The Swedish Security Service wrote in its annual report in 2023 that "Iran engages in industrial espionage, which is mainly aimed at the Swedish high-tech industry and Swedish products that can be used in nuclear weapons program." The AVID report added "Iran is further ignoring the agreements that were made within the framework of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). And by deploying increasingly more sophisticated uranium enrichment centrifuges it is enlarging its enrichment capacity." (JPost /VFI News)

Iran Never Has and Never Will Seek a Temporary Nuclear Deal - Iranian FM; Iran never has and never will seek a temporary or interim nuclear agreement, Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amirabdollahian told Iranian media on Monday, August 14. "We have always said that we have never deviated from the path of diplomacy and negotiation. From the beginning of the government's work, the president decided that we should act in two ways: neutralizing the sanctions and trying to cancel the unilateral and unfair sanctions of the United States through diplomacy." "The part that is related to trying to neutralize the sanctions, goes back to the content of the JCPOA. We have been discussing, negotiating, and exchanging indirect messages with the American side for months," said Amirabdollahian. "In this direction, I would like to emphasize that we have never sought a temporary agreement or a lesser agreement and we will never seek it." Efforts by the US, European nations, and Iran to return to compliance with the JCPOA nuclear deal have been stalled for months. In June, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Nasser Kanaani confirmed that the US and Iran were holding negotiations in Oman about Iran's nuclear program and prisoner swaps. (JPost / VFI News)

Iran Tried to Assassinate A Pro-Israel Georgian Jew. Here Is How He Survived; Itzik Moshe says he has been the target of three attempted killings in the past year in his hometown of Tbilisi, the capital of the Caucasian Republic of Georgia. Fortunately for him, all three attempts failed, and his attempted assassins were apprehended, thanks to the intervention of the Georgian security forces. Two of the attacks involved attempted stabbings. The third involved a shooting in which the gun failed to fire due to previous sabotage by the Georgian security forces. Investigations by the local authorities found that Iran's IRGC was behind the attempted hits, Moshe told media. The attacks were apparently aimed at halting Moshe's efforts to advocate for better ties between Israel and Georgia and to improve the perception of Israel in the region. "The attempts were downstairs from Beit Israel. We are located in the main street, and the order was, according to the investigation, to murder me at the entrance of the office so that they could show the blood together with the flag of Israel," he said. He added, "I need to say thanks to the security services in Georgia and Azerbaijan. They are very active. They do not update us, but they guard us 24/7. All my respect to them, because Israel is a friendly country for them. And they are not only guarding their ties with Israel. Allowing terrorism to step into their country puts it in danger." (JPost /VFI News)

Israeli Forces Blast Terror Lab Amid Terrorist Gunfire in Judea and Samaria; IDF and Border Police forces destroyed a lab used by Palestinian terror groups in Judea and Samaria, as well as seven functioning explosive devices in the Balata refugee camp early on Wednesday morning, August 16. Additionally, Israeli forces destroyed a warehouse containing seven explosive devices to be used by terrorists. Clashes broke out upon Israeli forces entering the refugee camp after troops had to defuse an explosive device set up at the entrance ahead of the expected raid. During the raid, Palestinian suspects hurled stones and explosives before some armed rioters opened fire at the soldiers. Israeli security forces

returned fire. There were no Israeli casualties, the IDF confirmed. Elsewhere on Wednesday morning, IDF Unit 636 soldiers shot at terrorists who attempted a drive-by shooting targeting the troops near a military post close to the city of Nablus. The soldiers arrested one of the armed terrorists who had been injured in the exchange by Israeli fire. The weapon used by the terrorist, an M-16 rifle, was confiscated. (JPost / VFI News)

One Seriously Injured in 4th Explosion Near Former Israel Military Industries Site; One person was moderately to seriously injured and two others were slightly injured after an explosion was reported at the site of a former Israel Military Industries factory near Herzliya and Ramat Hasharon on Monday night, August 14, according to Israel Fire and Rescue Services. This is the fourth time in the past two months that an explosion or fire has been reported in the area. Video from the dashcam of a vehicle driving in the area showed a large explosion lighting up the night sky. According to Fire and Rescue Services, firefighters who arrived at the scene found several fires outside of the area where buildings are located and gained control of the fires. No dangerous or explosive materials were found by Fire and Rescue Service investigators at the site. The background of the explosion will be investigated. Ramat Hasharon Mayor Avi Gruber stated that the explosion was caused by a work accident at an Elbit factory east of Highway 4. "The IMI areas are a ticking time bomb. There must be no construction in them and the creation of explosive and dangerous materials must be moved from the center of the country to isolated areas," added Gruber. Gruber added that he has instructed the municipality to set up a meeting with the Environmental Protection Ministry on the matter and such a meeting is set to take place this week. (JPost / VFI News)

Paraguay to Reopen Its Embassy in Jerusalem, Israel Says; Newly inaugurated Paraguay President Santiago Pena pledged to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, for the second time in the last five years, Israeli's Foreign Minister Eli Cohen said on Wednesday, August 16. Israel has long campaigned to strengthen international recognition of its hold on Jerusalem by pushing its allies to relocate their embassy to the country's capital. The United States was the first country to do so in 2018, followed by Guatemala, Honduras, and Kosovo. Those countries that have embassies in Jerusalem acknowledge that the city is Israel's capital, at a time when many in the international community refuse to issue such a recognition. "We continue to strengthen the international status of Jerusalem as the eternal capital of the State of Israel," Cohen said. "I invited the president of Paraguay, Santiago Penia, to make a presidential visit to Israel this year and to inaugurate the Paraguayan embassy in Jerusalem, the capital of Israel," Cohen said. "The opening of the Paraguayan embassy in Jerusalem, and the Israeli embassy in Asuncion will strengthen Israel's regional and international position and the significant ties between the countries. We will continue and strengthen the important historical connection with the Latin American nations, which stood by the State of Israel and the Jewish people," Cohen said. (JPost / VFI News)

Israeli Desalination, Wastewater Treatment Becomes Global Model for Water Scarcity; In the scorching summer heat, an Israeli farmer tends to a dripline taking a mix of ground and recycled water to palm trees — an approach honed for decades in the arid country and now drawing wide interest abroad. "All of Eilat's sewage is treated," said Arik Ashkenazi, chief engineer of Ein Netafim, Eilat's water and sewage utility. "The treated wastewater is transferred, to the last drop, to farmers" who mix it with groundwater and use it on the trees, he said. "We began to realize that sewage was a water source, reaching almost 100% reuse in Israel," said Yossi Yaacoby, vice president of engineering for Mekorot, Israel's national water company, noting that 90% of the treated wastewater went to agriculture. "That wasn't enough either, so we began desalinating seawater," he said, beginning with Eilat in 1997 and then the Mediterranean, with desalinated water now providing 60-80% of Israel's drinking water. Israel has had sole access to the Sea of Galilee, a freshwater lake, since seizing the Golan Heights from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War. Clive Lipchin, an expert on water management at the Arava Institute in southern Israel, said the rising unpredictability due to climate change should make "everybody around the world" consider

desalination and treating wastewater. “The world is undergoing a huge crisis,” Yaacoby said, noting that “states you’d never imagine” like France, Germany, and Italy were rethinking the issue. (TOI / VFI News)

New Israeli Blood Test Can Diagnose Bipolar Disorder – Study; A simple blood test developed by the University of Haifa neurobiologists can identify people coping with bipolar disorder (formerly known as manic depression) and predict the efficacy of lithium – the drug given to patients with this disorder. Bipolar disorder is quite common, with one in every 100 adults diagnosed with it at some point in their life. It can appear at any age, but it often develops between the ages of 15 and 19 and rarely after 40. People with bipolar disorder experience dramatic shifts in mood that may include periods of depression and mania. These shifts can make it difficult to carry out day-to-day tasks. The findings from the study showed that 80% of the differences in gene expression are related to the expression of immunoglobins, the chief components of the immune system. “The most significant finding is that in people suffering from bipolar disorder, a difference was found at the expression level of genes of the receptors to the antibodies; this may explain the high rate of comorbidities. There is a known correlation between various psychiatric disorders and ancillary morbidity,” Dr. Shani Stern, who was the corresponding author of the study noted. The findings of the mathematical model were capable of predicting at a level of precision of over 90% if a person suffers from bipolar disorder and whether they respond to lithium treatment. The test diagnoses bipolar within only a few days and at a relatively low cost. “This method can enable people coping with psychiatric disorders to save many months of suffering by adjusting the right medication for them,” Stern concluded. (JPost / VFI News)



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