

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update September 14, 2023 (Elul 28, 5783)



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Rescuers Hunt for Morocco Quake Survivors as Death Toll Rises to 2,122; Rescuers searched on Sunday, September 10, for survivors of Morocco's deadliest earthquake in more than six decades, with at least 2,122 people killed and 2,421 injured by the disaster that has laid waste to villages in the mountains outside Marrakech. Many people spent a second night in the open after the 6.8 magnitude quake hit late on Friday. Relief workers face the challenge of reaching the most badly affected villages in the High Atlas, a rugged mountain range where settlements are often remote and where many houses crumbled. Large chunks of a cliff had broken off and fallen onto the road near the small town of Moulay Brahim, partly blocking a winding road connecting Marrakech to the Atlas Mountains. The village of Tansghart in the Ansi area, on the side of a valley where the road from Marrakech rises up into the High Atlas, was the worst hit of several visited by journalists on Saturday. The World Health Organization said more than 300,000 people have been affected by the disaster. Morocco has declared three days of mourning and King Mohammed VI called for prayers for the dead to be held at mosques across the country on Sunday. (JPost / VFI News)

Two Wounded, 1 Seriously, in Terror Stabbing Near Jerusalem's Old City; Two people were wounded, including one seriously, in a terror stabbing attack on a promenade near Jerusalem's Old City on Wednesday afternoon, September 6, police and medics said. According to police, the alleged terrorist, a 17-year-old Palestinian from East Jerusalem, carried out the attack with a cleaver just outside the Jaffa Gate entrance to the Old City. Graphic footage showed the terrorist stabbing people with the cleaver on the promenade. The assailant, who attempted to flee the scene after tossing the knife, was arrested by officers following a brief chase, police said. The Magen David Adom ambulance service said a 56-year-old Israeli man was seriously hurt after being stabbed in the upper body and a 17-year-old tourist was slightly hurt

after sustaining a superficial stab wound to his abdomen. Another woman in her 50s was treated by medics for acute anxiety. MDA said it took the seriously wounded man to Hadassah Hospital Mount Scopus in the capital in stable condition. (TOI / VFI News)

Mossad Director Warns Iran: 'Harm to Israelis Will Lead to Strike in Heart of Tehran'; Mossad Director David Barnea, during a conference at Richman University in Herzliya on Sunday, September 10, revealed that Iran intended to sell Russia short and long-range missiles, but the deal was shut down. "They intend to sell additional arms, which will be shut down as well. Our fear is that in return, the Russians will transfer advanced weaponry to the Iranians that would certainly threaten our wellbeing and even our existence." "Tehran continues trying to get the status of an enlightened country. They hide behind a story ... We see a significant rise in attempts to harm Jews and Israelis around the world. In the past year, we foiled, together with our partners, 27 terror attacks worldwide," he added. Barnea declared that "until now, we only hit the commanders, the time has come that we take a different toll on Iran. Harm to an Israeli or a Jew, in any way, would lead to action deep in Iran and even in the heart of Tehran, from the executive level to the decision-makers. " During his speech, Barnea presented a video that reveals Iran's deep involvement in global terror and shows terrorists admitting that they were sent by official intelligence and security organizations to harm Israelis and Jews. According to Barnea, these reveal Iran's fingerprints on terror operations and demonstrate that Iran cannot deny its responsibility for terrorism even as it hides behind missions that aren't Iranian. (INN / VFI News)

Israel Legalizes Three Judea and Samaria Outposts; Israel legalized three Judea and Samaria outposts on Wednesday, September 6, after the head of the IDF's Central Command, Maj. Gen. Yehuda Fox signed off on orders designating for the first time their municipal boundaries. The process turns the outposts into recognized settlements — by the State of Israel, not the international community, which by and large views all settlements as illegal — with formal and legal municipal boundaries, albeit ones with illegally built homes and other structures, since they were constructed years ago without an approved masterplan or construction permits. The three outposts, Avigayil, Asahel, and Beit Hogleh, are on a list of nine such outposts approved for legalization by the government in February, as part of promises made to the far-right Religious Zionism party in coalition agreements. That process could still take several months. According to the Peace Now settlement watchdog, Avigayil has some 48 housing units on 85 dunams (21 acres) of land, two dunams of which are considered private Palestinian land. Its new municipal boundaries greatly expand the outpost over a total of 202 dunams. Asahel, also in the Mount Hebron Regional Council area, has 71 housing units and is built on 61 dunams of state land. Its new boundary jurisdiction will extend to a massive 880 dunams, making it 14 times bigger than its current size. The size of Beit Hogleh's new boundary jurisdiction was not immediately available. (TOI / VFI News)

Israel Officially Orders Third F-35 Squadron; Israel's Ministry of Defense procurement delegation in the US has submitted a formal Letter of Request (LOR) to the US F-35 Program Office (JPO) for the procurement of 25 F-35 stealth fighter aircraft from the US government. When the procurement of the third F-35 squadron is complete, Israel will have 75 stealth jets. The deal will cost an estimated \$3 billion from US military aid to Israel, with the first three aircraft to be delivered in 2027 and thereafter at the rate of three F-35s each year. As part of the original agreement between the Israeli and US governments, the aircraft manufacturer Lockheed Martin and the engine manufacturer Pratt & Whitney agreed that Israeli manufacturers would be involved in producing parts for the planes. This collaboration will be especially beneficial for Israeli defense electronics company Elbit Systems, which manufactures displays and helmets for the F-35 planes. The helmet produced by Elbit is considered a global technological leader providing pilots with advanced capabilities. (eGL / VFI News)

Smotrich Says Israel to Withhold Millions from PA to Repay Electricity Debt; Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich has announced that Israel will start withholding money from the funds it collects on behalf of the Palestinian Authority to pay for the latter's outstanding debt to the Israel Electric Corporation (IEC). "No more... For many years, the Finance Ministry failed massively, and because of that Israeli citizens paid millions of shekels each month to fund the electricity consumption of the PA," Smotrich said on Tuesday, September 5. "From now on, I will deduct from the funds for the PA each month the entirety of its electricity consumption, and later on we will also deduct money to offset its past debts." Under the Oslo Accords, Israel is responsible for collecting customs duties and other tax revenues on behalf of Ramallah, due to the PA's lack of statehood status. It then transfers the funds to the PA every month, providing funds that amount to nearly 65 percent of the Palestinian annual budget. The PA's debt to the IEC currently stands at NIS 2 billion (\$525 million), according to Israeli media. In a response to the deductions announced by Smotrich for the electricity debt, PA Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh said that the debt had been incurred by the Jerusalem District Electricity Company, a private company. (TOI / VFI News)

Treasury: Foreign Investments in Israel Plunged 60% in 1st Quarter of This Year; Foreign investment in Israel dove by 60 percent in the first quarter of this year, according to a report published by the Finance Ministry on Wednesday, September 6. Israel lured about \$2.6 billion in foreign investment in the first three months of the year, reflecting a 60% decline compared to the average quarterly figures recorded in 2020 and 2022, according to the data, which did not compare this year to 2021 as it was a record year and viewed as an outlier. Citing data from the Central Bureau of Statistics, the report notes that foreign direct investment in the first quarter of 2023 fell 34% to \$4.76 billion, versus the quarterly averages recorded in 2020 and 2022. In addition, the average size of exit transactions — mergers and acquisitions or initial public offerings of shares — in the first quarter plunged 80% to \$56 million from about \$307 million in 2020 and 2022. The Finance Ministry attributed part of the sharp drop to the decline in the valuations of many technology companies in the United States. (TOI / VFI News)

Steps Where Yeshua Walked and Healed a Blind Man Unearthed for First Time in 2,000 Years; A new excavation project in Jerusalem has unearthed steps unseen in over 2,000 years at a place where the New Testament records Yeshua as having healed a blind man. The Israel Antiquities Authority, the Israel National Parks Authority, and the City of David Foundation early this year announced that the Pool of Siloam, a biblical site cherished by Christians and Jews, will be open to the public for the first time in 2,000 years in the near future. In recent weeks, archeologists achieved significant progress in the excavation, unearthing some eight steps descending into the Pool which had not been seen in 2,000 years — around the time when Yeshua walked the earth. According to estimates, the Pool of Siloam passed through many stages of construction and reached the size of 1.25 acres. According to a passage in the Gospel of John, Yeshua restored the sight of a man born blind at the Pool of Siloam. "The ongoing excavations within the City of David — the historic site of Biblical Jerusalem — particularly of the Pool of Siloam and the Pilgrimage Road, serve as one of the greatest affirmations of that heritage and the millennia-old bond Jews and Christians have with Jerusalem," Ze'ev Orenstein, director of International Affairs - City of David Foundation, told American media. (FN / VFI News)

Netanyahu Calls to Deport Eritreans After Hundreds Hurt in Tel Aviv Riot; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called for rough measures, including immediate deportation, to be taken against Eritreans who rioted in the streets of Tel Aviv on Saturday, September 2, he said at a ministerial task force on Sunday. Hundreds of police officers and refugees were injured as the protests in Tel Aviv by Eritrean asylum seekers against the East African nation's regime turned violent, Israel Police and local hospitals reported. The clashes, in which stones were thrown and storefronts were vandalized, saw at least 160 people wounded in total, eight in serious condition, 13 in moderate, and 93 sustaining light injuries.

Almost 50 police officers were also injured, most suffering from bruises and other injuries caused by stone-throwing, police confirmed. Thirty-nine protesters have been arrested for attacking police officers by throwing stones, police said, saying they have successfully "calmed the streets of southern Tel Aviv." Eritrean rioters were transferred to administrative detention on Monday night as another man was arrested on suspicion of being in possession of an illegal firearm after he was spotted with a pistol during the Saturday clashes. (JPost / VFI News)

Report: New Hamas Rocket Has One Ton Warhead, Can Hit Israel's Northern Border; A Telegram channel bearing the name of Mohammed Deif, supreme commander of Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades, the military wing of Hamas, reported that a missile that threatens the majority of Israeli territory has recently become operational. According to the report, the new rocket has a range of 190 KM (118 Miles), can reach Rosh Hanikra, on Israel's northern border, from Gaza, and its warhead weighs one ton. It was also reported that the rocket is manufactured by the Izz al-Din al-Qassam Brigades in the Gaza Strip, and its explosives are imported from Iran. On August 17th, 2023, this model of rocket was launched from the Gaza Strip toward the Mediterranean Sea, and according to the report, the launch was meant to send a message to Israel. A separate message sent on the channel stated that the "Palestinian struggle organizations" led by the joint operations room are closely following the development in Judea and Samaria, and Jerusalem. "We remind you (Israelis) that the decision to bomb Tel Aviv is easier for us than drinking water," the message stated. (INN / VFI News)

Gaza Border Crossing Restricted After Explosives Smuggling Attempt; Exports through the Kerem Shalom crossing were halted after the Defense Ministry thwarted an attempt to smuggle kilograms of explosive material from the Gaza Strip into Israel on Monday, September 4, according to a joint statement with the IDF and the Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories. Inspectors at the Kerem Shalom crossing found the highly explosive material hidden among a shipment of clothing. Following the incident and in accordance with a situation assessment, IDF Chief of Staff Herzi Halevi and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant decided to halt the passage of goods from the Gaza Strip to Israel in order to reexamine inspection practices at the crossing. On Tuesday, the Shin Bet also said that two Israeli citizens from the Tulkarm area, Samer Farid Ghanam Knoh, and Osama Nissim Ghazi Harouf, were arrested while smuggling firearms and explosives for the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorist movement from Jordan in early August. More specifically, on August 3, Knoh and Harouf, the latter known for his connections to terrorist operatives, were caught smuggling firearms and explosives at the Jordanian border, with four handguns and four explosive devices found in their possession. A photo of the devices showed that the explosives were MON-50 anti-personnel mines (similar to a Claymore mine) produced in Russia and Bulgaria. (JPost / VFI News)

Report: Egypt Asked Israel Not to Harm Hamas and Jihad Leaders; An Arabic newspaper reported, citing Egyptian sources, that the American government in recent days has been involved in negotiations with several regional factors, led by Egypt, to prevent a total confrontation in light of American and Israeli fears of the role Iran would play in one. According to the Egyptian sources, "The American administration has been holding intensive talks with Egyptian officials to pressure Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad to stop their struggle ... due to feeling that there are attempts to ignite the Lebanese front and put pressure on the occupation government according to the Iranian agenda." The Egyptian official also said that Egypt "is involved in the attempt to halt the Israeli plans to strike Hamas by assassinating (Saleh) al-Arouri, who is in Lebanon and who it blames for the escalation (in Judea and Samaria)." Al-Arouri serves as the deputy leader of Hamas and is responsible for directing the organization's military and terror operations in Judea and Samaria. Egyptian officials contacted the Hamas leadership and clarified the gravity of Israel's intentions to strike the organization's officials in Lebanon, starting with al-Arouri. The official also stated that officials in the Egyptian general intelligence apparatus

asked Israel to refrain from making public statements on the matter, to stop their security plan that would move the confrontation beyond Judea and Samaria, and not to strike Hamas and Jihad leaders outside Judea and Samaria. (INN / VFI News)

Tourism Ministry Convenes to Address Harassment of Jerusalem Christians; Israel's Tourism Ministry convened a forum regarding a series of cases of harassment and attacks directed at Christians in the Old City of Jerusalem on Monday, August 28. The forum covered the overall state of the tourism industry in the Old City of Jerusalem – with a specific focus on the recent spike in harassment of Christians in the area. Tourism Minister Haim Katz brought the Tourism Ministry, the Foreign Ministry, the Interior Ministry, the Justice Ministry, the Israel Police, the Israel Jerusalem Development Authority, the East City Development Company, and the Old City Reconstruction and Development Company together to participate in the forum. "Every tourist who comes to Israel becomes our ambassador, and therefore we are committed to providing a unique and high-quality experience," said Tourism Ministry Director-General Danny Shahar, who participated in the forum. Numerous attacks by extremist Jews on Christians or Christian sites have been reported thus far in 2023. For instance, 30 graves at a Protestant cemetery on Mount Zion in Jerusalem were vandalized in January this year, while two Jewish men attacked a bishop and two priests during Mass at the Church of Gethsemane in March. (JPost / VFI News)

Finland to Ban Holocaust Denial; Finland's government on Thursday, August 31, outlined a plan to fight racism that includes a ban on denying the Holocaust, media reported. The move comes after the coalition cabinet was twice rocked by scandals. "Every government minister renounces racism and commits to actively work against it," Prime Minister Petteri Orpo was quoted as having said at a press conference. As part of the new plan, the government will seek to criminalize Holocaust denial and explore the possibility of banning the use of Nazi and Communist symbols. The move comes after Finance Minister Riikka Purra, leader of the far-right Finns Party, apologized following the emergence of years-old racist comments by her online, leading to condemnation from cabinet colleagues. In June, another Finns Party minister, Vilhelm Junnila, announced his resignation after only 10 days in office following an uproar over pro-Nazi remarks. During his election campaign, Junnila had joked about the election candidate number 88 being a reference to "Heil Hitler", because 'H' is the eighth letter in the alphabet. With the new plan, Finland joins other countries that have outlawed Holocaust denial, including Germany, Austria, France, Belgium, and Switzerland, among others. Thursday's announcement by Finland was welcomed by World Jewish Congress (WJC) President Ronald S. Lauder. (INN / VFI News)

Israeli Shekel Sees 10.34% Decline vs. USD Since 2023 - New Research; New research from the financial services group City Index has revealed that the Israeli New Shekel (NIS) has weakened the most since the COVID-19 pandemic, with a 4.73% decrease against the US dollar (USD), followed by Russia at 4.67%, with the UK, Indonesia, and Australia taking the next three positions with decreases of 3.92%, 3.14%, and 2.20% respectively. Since the beginning of 2023, the Israeli currency has depreciated in value by around 10.34% against the USD, having taken a particularly significant dive in value at the beginning of March. According to the recently released Melnick State of the Israeli Economy Index for July, Israel's economy has shown no improvement in economic activity despite recent efforts. The business sector is experiencing a sustained slowdown, with significant economic growth deceleration in the second quarter. The industrial production index has also been declining, pointing to weakened industrial activity. While there are some positive developments, like an increase in the import index, the overall picture is of a persistently sluggish Israeli economy facing challenges from both domestic and international factors. (JPost / VFI News)

Four Roman Swords, Nearly 2,000 Years Old, Found in Judean Desert; A sensational find in the Judean Desert: a cache of four 1,900-year-old, excellently preserved Roman swords and a shafted weapon

were discovered in a crevice in a cave in the Ein Gedi Nature Reserve. It appears that the weapons were hidden by the Judean rebels after they were seized from the Roman army as booty. “Finding a single sword is rare—so four? It’s a dream! We rubbed our eyes to believe it,” say the researchers. The rare weapons were exhibited for the first time at a press conference that took place Wednesday morning, September 6, with Eli Escusido, the Director of the Israel Antiquities Authority, and the researchers. The weapons were discovered in a small hidden cave located in an area of isolated and inaccessible cliffs north of Ein Gedi, in the Judean Desert Nature Reserve, under the jurisdiction of the National Parks Authority. The swords were exceptionally well preserved, and three were found with the iron blade inside the wooden scabbards. Leather strips and wooden and metal finds belonging to the weapons were also found in the crevice. The swords had well-fashioned handles made of wood or metal. The length of the blades of three swords was 60–65 cm, their dimensions identifying them as Roman spatha swords, and the fourth one was shorter with a 45 cm long blade, identified as a ring-pommel sword. The swords were carefully removed from the crevice in the rock and transferred to the Israel Antiquities Authority climate-controlled laboratories for preservation and conservation. The initial examination of the assemblage confirmed that these were standard swords employed by the Roman soldiers stationed in Judea in the Roman period. (INN / VFI News)



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