

# **Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update April 20, 2026 (Iyyar 2, 5786)**



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## ***Israel; Cease-fire Brings Quiet to Israel's North, but Residents Fear Next War***

- *Iran says U.S. violated truce by firing at Iranian ship, claims military retaliated against American vessels*
- *Netanyahu, top Israeli officials condemn smashing of Jesus statue in Lebanon by IDF soldier*
  - *Gazans report hours-long queues for bread amid flour and fuel shortages, aid restrictions*
    - *Two IDF reservists killed in southern Lebanon after truce takes effect*
  - *Thousands protest against Netanyahu government across Israel ahead of Memorial Day*
    - *Lebanon starts repairing bridges and roads hit by Israel in country's south, army says*

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## *Standing with Israel!*

***Opposition, Northern Mayors Decry Imposed Ceasefires as Lebanon Truce Declared;*** Residents of northern Israel reacted with anger and dismay on Thursday, April 16, following US President Donald Trump's announcement of an Israeli ceasefire with Hezbollah in Lebanon, while opposition lawmakers berated Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for capitulating to Washington and allowing a truce to be imposed on Israel. Trump announced that the 10-day ceasefire would take effect at midnight on Thursday, and said he would invite Netanyahu and Lebanese President Joseph Aoun to the White House for negotiations on permanent peace. Ministers in the cabinet reportedly fumed during a hastily convened phone call, claiming they first heard about the ceasefire from Trump's announcement and questioning how it had been declared without their approval. Moshe Davidovich, who chairs the Forum of Front-Line Communities, charged that agreements are signed in Washington but paid in blood, destroyed homes, and dismantled communities on Israel's northern frontier. Metula Mayor David Azoulay declared that northern residents feel betrayed once again and directly challenged Netanyahu, saying his basic duty as prime minister is to provide security to the citizens of the state, a duty he is failing at time after time. Merom HaGalil Regional Council chair Amit Sofer insisted that the IDF should be allowed to win and achieve its goals of disarming Hezbollah, warning that a few days of apparent calm will tarnish the entire process and lead to the next disaster. Opposition Leader Yair Lapid said the confrontation in Lebanon can end in only one way, the permanent removal of the threat to northern communities, adding that this will not happen under the current government but under the next one. Yisrael Beytenu chairman Avigdor Liberman called it impossible to make residents live from one round of fighting to the next, describing the situation as simply unbearable. Benny Ben-Muvhar, head of the Mevo'ot HaHermon Regional Council, said he cannot assure evacuated residents that it is safe to return home, warning that there is no security here and calling on Netanyahu to convene northern leaders for a closed-door forum on the matter. (*TOI/VFI News*)

***Israeli Strike on Hezbollah More Devastating than 2024 Pager Attack, IDF Says;*** Israel's devastating 60-second air assault on Wednesday, April 8, killed 250 Hezbollah operatives in Lebanon and has drawn direct comparisons to the famous pager attacks of September 2024, the IDF announced. Roughly 50 Israeli aircraft struck more than 100 Hezbollah targets simultaneously across Beirut, the Beqaa Valley, and southern Lebanon. Rather than hitting rocket launchers or weapons depots, the strike targeted command rooms, intelligence headquarters, and offices where Hezbollah commanders plan the next stage of the fight. IDF spokesman Lt. Col. Nadav Shoshani explained that the operation was the result of weeks of painstaking intelligence work as Israeli agencies tracked operatives moving between apartments, offices, and safe houses. Many of those killed belonged to Hezbollah's elite Radwan Force, along with operatives from its intelligence apparatus, missile units, and aerial Unit 127. The IDF noted that most of the struck infrastructure was embedded deep within civilian areas, a tactic consistent with Hezbollah's long-standing use of human shields. The strike marked a new phase in the Hezbollah-Israel war, which erupted on March 2, 2026, after the Iran-backed terror group joined the fight in support of Tehran one day after US and Israeli strikes on Iran and the killing of Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei. A former Israeli intelligence official indicated that Hezbollah remains stunned by the scale of the blow, even though its

rocket fire has not yet dropped. Before the war, Hezbollah was believed to hold between 150,000 and 200,000 rockets and missiles, and it remains a genuine threat to Israeli civilians. (*FOX/VFI News*)

***Iran Digging Out Its Bombed Missile Bases During Ceasefire, Satellite Images Show;*** Newly released commercial satellite imagery captured on Friday, April 10, reveals that Iran has begun clearing debris from tunnel entrances at an underground ballistic missile base near Khomein in Markazi Province. Front-end loaders, excavators, and dump trucks are operating at the entrances of tunnel complexes struck during a month-long campaign of coordinated US and Israeli airstrikes. The campaign focused on sealing access points rather than penetrating the deeper underground infrastructure, which remains intact inside mountainous terrain. The Khomein facility is part of Iran's network of hardened underground installations known as missile cities, designed to protect ballistic missile launchers and enable rapid deployment. US intelligence now estimates that roughly half of Iran's missile launchers remain operational despite more than a month of sustained airstrikes, including launchers that were buried but not destroyed. Sam Lair, a researcher at the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies, noted that such recovery activity is expected during a ceasefire and aligns with the basic design of the missile cities: eat the first attack, dig yourself out, then launch again. The excavation work is taking place during a two-week pause in hostilities agreed on April 7, which has allowed Iranian engineering teams to deploy heavy equipment without fear of additional strikes. American intelligence indicates Tehran still maintains thousands of ballistic missiles in underground storage. Israeli officials have offered lower estimates of intact systems, citing differences in methodology, and Jerusalem continues to warn that the Iranian regime's ability to rebuild must be denied if a lasting peace is to be secured. (*NYP/VFI News*)

***Strait of Hormuz 'Completely Open' Until Ceasefire's End as Trump Celebrates Tumbling Oil Prices;*** President Donald Trump and Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi jointly announced on Friday, April 17, that the Strait of Hormuz is now completely open to all commercial shipping, though the US blockade on Iranian ports will remain in full force until a war-ending deal is reached. Araghchi posted that in line with the ceasefire in Lebanon, passage for all commercial vessels through the strait is declared completely open for the remaining period of the ceasefire. The Israel-Lebanon ceasefire went into effect on Friday and is scheduled to last 10 days. Trump took to Truth Social to tout the news and pushed the announcement further, declaring that the reopening of the critical chokepoint, which carries 20 percent of the world's oil, would be permanent. He wrote that Iran has agreed to never close the Strait of Hormuz again, and that the waterway will no longer be used as a weapon against the world. Trump also clarified that the reopening means all sea mines will be removed, noting that Iran, with the help of the United States, has removed or is removing the explosives it had littered throughout the passage during the war. The commander-in-chief stressed that the American naval blockade on Iranian ships and ports will remain until Tehran cuts a deal with Washington, preserving critical leverage to pull the theocratic regime to the negotiating table. Araghchi emphasized that the strait is open only on a coordinated route approved by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, and a senior Iranian official added that all commercial sail plans must be cleared with the IRGC while military vessels remain prohibited. The US-Iran ceasefire is set to expire Tuesday, April 21, and mediator Pakistan is working to arrange a second round of talks in Islamabad before the clock runs out. (*NYP/VFI News*)

***US Announces Aggressive Expansion of Iran Blockade, Warns Regime to 'Choose Wisely';*** US Secretary of War Pete Hegseth issued a sharp warning to Iran's new leadership on Thursday, April 16, declaring that the American military is locked and loaded to escalate operations if Tehran refuses to strike a deal. Speaking at a Pentagon briefing alongside Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. Dan Caine and US Central Command head Adm. Brad Cooper, Hegseth said the blockade on Iranian ports and coastline will continue for as long as it takes. The defense chief urged Iranian leaders to choose wisely for the betterment of their own people and the world. Hegseth told Tehran that as Iranian forces expose themselves through

movement, the US is locked and loaded on critical dual-use infrastructure, remaining power generation, and the energy industry. He added that if Iran chooses poorly, the regime will face a blockade together with bombs dropping on infrastructure, power, and energy sites. Gen. Caine confirmed that 13 ships have already turned around rather than attempt to break the blockade, emphasizing that Central Command has not yet been required to board any vessels because each approaching ship receives a firm verbal warning first. The US is simultaneously reinforcing its Middle East posture, sending the USS George H.W. Bush carrier strike group and roughly 6,000 additional troops to the region. Hegseth emphasized that American naval dominance is being exercised with only 10 percent of US naval capacity, signaling significant untapped leverage. The pressure campaign aims to force Tehran back to the negotiating table before a shaky two-week ceasefire expires next week, as Vice President JD Vance prepares to potentially lead a fresh round of talks with Iranian officials. *(NYP/VFI News)*

***Israel, Lebanon Huddle for First Time in 33 Years Over Potential Peace Pact;*** Lebanon and Israel held their first direct diplomatic talks in more than three decades on Tuesday, April 14, meeting at the US State Department to explore ending the latest round of conflict between Israel and the Iran-backed Hezbollah terror organization. Secretary of State Marco Rubio hosted the trilateral gathering, which brought together Israeli Ambassador Yechiel Leiter, Lebanese Ambassador Nada Hamadeh Moawad, and US Ambassador to Lebanon Michel Issa. The meeting marked the first major high-level engagement between the two governments since 1993. Participants held productive discussions on steps toward launching full direct negotiations, with Washington expressing hope that the talks can exceed the scope of the 2024 agreement and bring about a comprehensive peace deal. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu made clear that Israel's primary goal is the dismantling of Hezbollah's weapons and a real peace agreement that will last for generations. Jerusalem is expected to propose dividing southern Lebanon into three security zones, with the closest band along the border held under long-term IDF presence until Hezbollah is fully disarmed. Lebanese authorities emphasized that Beirut's priority is first to secure a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, and Hezbollah itself has already denounced the dialogue as a grave error. Hezbollah MP Hussein Hajj Hassan urged Lebanese leaders to halt what he called a series of useless concessions. Both governments have nonetheless committed to further sessions at a mutually agreed time and venue, a step welcomed by the US as a historic milestone that could unlock significant reconstruction assistance and investment for both nations. *(NYP/VFI News)*

***Shekel Breaks Below 3 to the Dollar in First Since 1995; Exporters Warn of Economy Risk;*** The Israeli shekel crossed the psychological threshold of NIS 3 per dollar on Wednesday, April 15, reaching its strongest level in more than 30 years as optimism builds around an end to the war with Iran and the new Lebanon ceasefire. The currency was trading at 2.993 to the dollar at one point, its firmest showing since October 1995. The shekel has now appreciated more than 5 percent against the dollar so far in 2026 and more than 20 percent over the past year, even as military campaigns with Iran and Hezbollah have strained the economy. Despite the bullish signal, manufacturers and exporters warned that the runaway currency represents a serious risk to the broader economy. Israel Manufacturers' Association President Avraham Novogrocki called a dollar exchange rate below NIS 3 a death blow to export profitability, noting that a cumulative 20 percent drop in the exchange rate effectively erases profit margins and pushes factories to the brink of closure. Companies earning in dollars but paying salaries and expenses in shekels are already facing collapsing dollar revenues alongside rising shekel costs. Novogrocki cautioned that industry is grappling with reduced activity, fewer investments, and looming layoffs, and that high-tech and multinational companies are actively considering relocating operations out of Israel. He called on Bank of Israel policymakers to cut interest rates immediately in response to the 30-year peak, arguing that March inflation numbers confirm industry is absorbing cost increases without passing them on to consumers. Without swift intervention, he warned, the entire economy could pay a heavy price despite the positive geopolitical signals driving the shekel's surge. *(TOI/VFI News)*

***KKL-JNF Announces NIS 30 Million Program to Give Northern Residents a Hotel Break;*** The KKL-JNF Jewish National Fund unveiled a fresh NIS 30 million (\$10 million) initiative on Thursday, April 16, to give residents of northern Israel a much-needed respite from Hezbollah rocket and drone attacks. The program will enable each of around 15,000 residents living up to nine kilometers from the Lebanese border to spend five days at one of 26 hotels, with half board, free transportation, and educational and recreational activities included. Local authorities will select participants, giving priority to vulnerable groups such as the elderly, the disabled, and residents who lack adequate home protection. The new announcement builds on an earlier respite effort launched at the end of March, which took some 6,000 people living within two kilometers of the Lebanese border for a two-night hotel stay. Northern communities have not been evacuated during this round of conflict, meaning that Israelis in kibbutzim, moshavim, and villages under drone and missile fire must spend long stretches in bomb shelters without relief. KKL-JNF chairman Eyal Ostrinsky emphasized that northern mayors asked directly for respite rather than evacuation so that families can remain rooted in their communities. Funds and activities have been coordinated in close partnership with municipalities along the confrontation line, including Shlomi, Metula, and Kiryat Shmona. Previous KKL-JNF relief has also included emergency aid for missile-struck cities such as Beit Shemesh and Beersheva, and hotel programs featuring music, crafts, drumming workshops, and Mimouna celebrations for families spending Passover away from home. The new Hezbollah respite plan offers a tangible gesture of solidarity to border communities that have borne the heaviest burden of the Iran-backed terror group's ongoing aggression. *(TOI/VFI News)*

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