

Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update July 16, 2026 (Av 1, 5786)



For the Yachad Report Newsletter For July 2026

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Israel; Congressman Ro Khanna came to Israel to carry out a staged confrontation intended to demonize Jewish "settlers" and curry favor with the more extreme anti-Israel and anti-Semitic elements of the Democratic Party. The stunt backfired.

- *In first, poll shows opposition defeating Netanyahu without Arab parties*
 - *Government to use Shin Bet for law enforcement in Arab community*
- *Palestinians report settler raids in West Bank as government allocates \$330 million for settlements*
 - *Top court freezes divisive law halting arrests of Haredi draft evaders*
 - *Rights groups sue U.S. over sanctions on those aiding ICC Israel probe*
 - *U.S. launches another wave of strikes on Iran*

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Standing with Israel!

Beneath Beaufort's Strategic Bulwark, a Hezbollah Lair Built to Attack Israel is Unearthed; Atop Beaufort Castle in southern Lebanon, where Hezbollah operatives once launched hundreds of attacks on Israeli troops and northern Israel, the IDF has uncovered a fortified tunnel network built into the ridge below the medieval fortress. Israel recaptured the historic Beaufort Castle and the surrounding ridge in late May 2026, 26 years after withdrawing from the site, as its forces pushed deeper into Lebanon against Hezbollah. Speaking during a media tour on Tuesday, July 7, the commander of the 36th Division, Brig. Gen. Yiftah Norkin, called the capture of the ridge “critical to the defense of the Galilee Panhandle, Metula, and the surrounding communities.” Hezbollah fired more than 400 rockets from the Beaufort Ridge toward northern Israel during the current round of fighting, mostly at the border town of Metula, and also launched drones and anti-tank missiles at troops from the area. About a kilometer south of the fortress, beneath the ridge, soldiers found several major tunnels constructed with direct Iranian assistance. One passage stretches 1.3 kilometers from the cliff face into the mountain and opens with a clear line of sight to Metula. Troops recovered “an exceptional quantity” of arms inside, including anti-aircraft systems and Iranian-made anti-helicopter mines, some of which had never before been captured. An officer from the elite Yahalom combat engineering unit said the tunnel featured water and electricity infrastructure, living quarters with showers and kitchenettes, and a fully equipped, sterile operating room where fighters could remain for months at a time. He estimated the complex took 10 to 15 years to drill, blast, and excavate without detection. The army said it plans to demolish the facility, and explosives were already laid throughout its rooms and passages. Norkin said his forces remain in a defensive phase under the fragile ceasefire but are prepared to return to offensive operations if required. (TOI/VFI News)

Turkey and Egypt Deepen Military Ties with Joint 'Golden Eagle' Drills; Egypt and Turkey have launched a large joint military exercise codenamed Golden Eagle, bringing elite paratroopers, Special Forces, and commando units from both nations together for synchronized operations on Egyptian soil. The drills mark a striking convergence between two powers that had been bitter rivals for the past decade, and they follow a major defense framework agreement signed in Cairo during Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. For Israel's defense and intelligence communities, the rapid warming between Cairo and Ankara has become a significant strategic concern. Golden Eagle is the second major escalation in bilateral military cooperation this summer. In late June 2026, the two countries concluded a multi-day joint air force exercise hosted across several Egyptian air bases, featuring the American-made F-16 fighters that form the backbone of both air fleets. Egypt then sent assets to Turkey to take part in the Anatolian Eagle 2026 trilateral air exercise alongside Azerbaijan and NATO forces, where pilots practiced coordinated strikes, command-and-control procedures, and electronic warfare. The swift move from air maneuvers to face-to-face commando training points to a deliberate, multi-domain integration of two of the region's largest militaries. Beyond the joint drills, Egypt has explored joining Turkey's KAAN stealth fighter program and signed agreements with Turkish defense firms to produce advanced drones domestically. Ankara under Erdogan has sheltered senior Hamas figures and positioned itself as a champion of political Islam across the region, deepening Israeli unease about the

partnership. Israel is expected to press its Western allies, particularly the United States, to weigh carefully how American-supplied technology is shared during these joint exercises. Jerusalem has signaled it will meet the shifting balance with clear-eyed diplomacy and close intelligence monitoring rather than passive observation. (YNN/VFI News)

Herzog Heartbroken by Lindsey Graham's Death: 'I Will Miss Him'; President Isaac Herzog paid tribute to US Senator Lindsey Graham in a video statement from the President's Residence in Jerusalem on Sunday, July 12. “I was deeply shocked and heartbroken to learn of the sudden passing of a great American patriot, a true friend of Israel, and a dear friend of mine, US Senator Lindsey Graham,” Herzog said. He described the longtime senator as “a beacon of moral clarity” who brought “an exceptional sense of justice, truth, and loyalty to his decades of public service.” Herzog called Graham “a maverick in world affairs, and one of Israel's greatest friends and allies in the United States of America,” praising his steadfast support for the Jewish state “especially at our most difficult and painful moments.” He said the senator understood “the profound importance of the US-Israel partnership” and “tirelessly advocated for our shared values and shared interests.” “The people of Israel will always remember, and always cherish, his exceptional friendship,” Herzog continued. On a personal note, Herzog recalled meeting Graham many times over the years, adding, “I will miss him dearly.” He closed his statement by sending condolences on behalf of the State of Israel to the senator's family and friends “at this devastating moment.” “May he rest in peace, and may his memory be a blessing,” the president said. (INN/VFI News)

Breakthrough Israeli Study Finds a Potential Path to Reversing Hearing Loss; Researchers at Tel Aviv University's Gray Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences have identified a biological mechanism that could one day allow the regeneration of sensory hair cells in the inner ear, offering hope to millions who suffer from irreversible hearing loss. The process was long thought impossible in humans, since mammals cannot naturally regrow the cochlear hair cells that detect sound and convert it into signals for the brain. The study was led by Prof. Karen Avraham, dean of the faculty, and spearheaded by doctoral student Lama Khalaily, with the findings published in the journal *Science Advances*. The team discovered a rare subset of supporting cells in the inner ear with unexpected regenerative potential, a kind of “reserve population” that everyone carries but that some people may possess in greater measure. By inhibiting the Notch signaling pathway, a key communication mechanism responsible for hair cell development, the researchers prompted these cells to begin converting into hair cells. Using live tissue imaging and single-cell analysis, the scientists traced how the cells entered a transitional state and started the regeneration process. Avraham's laboratory has already identified 57 of the 224 genes worldwide known to be involved in hearing loss, and she called the work a proof of principle for a field still in its infancy. A future therapy could involve an injection into the inner ear, though the researchers cautioned that regulation and cost remain significant hurdles. The team said a deeper understanding of how certain cells regenerate may open the door to biological treatments that restore hearing rather than merely compensate for its loss. (JPost/VFI News)

Braving War Losses and Tough Conditions, Thai Workers Stay Rooted in Israeli Agriculture; Qwon and her husband, Tay, a Thai couple who tend avocado groves in a small western Galilee farming cooperative, joined their Israeli neighbors at a Shavuot celebration in the western Galilee in May 2026, marking the Jewish harvest festival near the fields they help cultivate. In mid-May 2026, days before the celebration, a Hezbollah drone attack had wounded four Israeli civilians, one critically, roughly 13 kilometers (eight miles) away. Yet Qwon said she is not afraid, expressing confidence in Israel's civilian protection. Even after October 8, 2023, when the Iranian-backed terror group began firing almost daily rockets and drones at northern Israel, Qwon and nine other Thai workers on the cooperative have continued tending 1,000 dunams (250 acres) of avocados alongside their Israeli counterparts, often under fire. Violence has eased since a fragile ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah, mediated by the Trump

administration, took effect on June 19, 2026, though farmers and workers in the north remain exposed. Qwon and Tay are among the tens of thousands of Thai laborers who have become essential to Israeli agriculture, helping tend the fields that supply much of the country's produce. Thai citizens have borne some of the heaviest costs of the war. Forty-six were killed in southern Israel on October 7, 2023, when thousands of Hamas-led terrorists stormed across the border from Gaza, and 31 of the hostages seized that day were from Thailand; 28 were eventually released, while three died in captivity. Five Thai farm workers were later killed by Hezbollah rocket fire in the north. Still, looking around at the Israelis celebrating the holiday, Qwon remained upbeat: "I like Israelis," she said. "Even though I'm a laborer, the people here have never shown any prejudice toward me." (TOI/VFI News)

Haredi Protesters Rally Outside Jerusalem Cafe Open on Shabbat; Dozens of haredi (ultra-Orthodox) protesters gathered outside Cafe Basimta in Jerusalem's Nahlaot neighborhood on Saturday, July 11, to protest the business's decision to open on Shabbat. The demonstrators chanted "Shabbos" but were met by hundreds of Jerusalem residents who arrived through the morning to support the cafe. Police removed two haredi protesters who had sat down near the entrance. It was the latest in a string of weekend confrontations over the cafe's decision to remain open. Jerusalem Deputy Mayor Adir Schwartz, who chairs the Hit'orerut movement, arrived at the scene with movement activists. "Once again this Shabbat, extremists came to Cafe Basimta in an attempt to intimidate the business owners and the Jerusalem public, simply because they chose to open the cafe on Shabbat," Schwartz said. He added that Hit'orerut activists stood alongside the owners throughout the day and made clear that "a small group of extremists would not be allowed to dictate to Jerusalem residents how to live." The demonstration followed unrest at the cafe the previous week, around Saturday, July 4, when hundreds of haredi protesters surrounded the venue, overturned chairs, banged on the windows, and spat at patrons. Posters distributed in haredi neighborhoods had called on residents to march to the cafe and protest its opening. Jerusalem authorities prepared for the possibility of further unrest, gathering intelligence in the days beforehand and holding discussions with all sides. (JPost/VFI News)

Northern Israel Slowly Returns to Life Amid Ceasefire With Hezbollah; The Keshet cave in the western Galilee, one of the most striking sites in northern Israel, was full of visitors on Saturday, July 11, a vivid sign that the region near the Lebanese border is coming back to life. Situated above Nahal Betzet, the cave forms a dramatic natural arch that opens onto sweeping views of northern Israel and the Mediterranean coast. Along the path were several tour groups, Russian speakers, a large motorcycle club on their Harley-Davidsons, and a group of Arab women who had come for lunch, with Hebrew among the many languages heard. The influx illustrates how communities near the Lebanese border are reviving amid the ceasefire in Lebanon. During the 1,000 days of war with Hezbollah, this area was at times closed to traffic; in the first days after the terror group attacked on October 8, 2023, roads were blocked and residents were evacuated from communities such as Adamit, Zarit, and Shtula. Much has changed since. From the border, the concrete fence separating Israel and Lebanon remains a reminder of the threat, but the landscape of small trees and green foliage is once again drawing visitors. There is a great deal to explore across the reviving north, from the Old City of Acre and the coastal area of Achziv to the Crusader castle of Montfort and the Druze towns of Hurfeish and Yarka. Near the Rosh HaNikra community, a food truck called HaRefet now serves smoked brisket, asado, and chicken, one example of the inventive eateries Israelis are opening in the area. What is clear is that the public has returned, fishing along the coast and filling the trails, breathing new life into a region that endured years under fire. (JPost/VFI News)

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