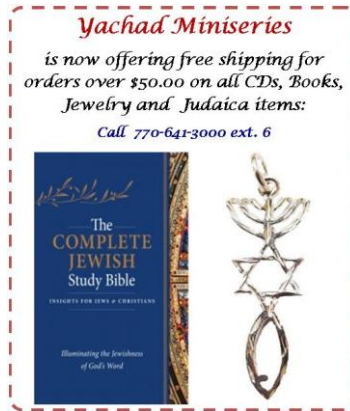


Yachad Ministries' Israel's News Update July 23, 2026 (Av 8, 5786)



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Israel; Netherlands to Ban Import of Goods From Israeli Settlements in West Bank Starting September, Senior Diplomat Says
It will be illegal for goods originating from Israeli settlements to be bought, sold or imported. The Netherlands is the fourth EU member state to adopt such a measure, though only Spain's has entered into force

- *U.S. issues security alert for Israel over escalating crime family wars*
- *Iran vows to cut off U.S. allies' electricity if bridges, power plants struck, following Trump warning*
 - *Hasan Piker speech at College Democrats confab sparks backlash from Jewish Caucus*
 - *Jordan intercepts four Iranian missiles, blasts heard in Eilat*
 - *Democrats hold steady in polls as Arab parties gain ground*
- *U.S. open to Iran talks as military completes 11th night of strikes*

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Standing with Israel!

Former Saudi General Warns Iran's Regional Assault Cannot Pass Without 'Serious Consequences'; In a rare appearance on Israeli television, a former general in the Royal Saudi Air Force declared on Sunday, July 19, that Iran's wave of strikes across the Middle East could not be allowed to pass without “extremely serious consequences.” Abdullah bin Ghanem Al-Qahtani, now a security and strategic affairs analyst, warned that Tehran's actions threaten the stability and future of the entire region. His willingness to address an Israeli audience directly signaled the deepening alarm among Gulf states over Iran's aggression. “What Iran is doing in the region and against the region is extremely dangerous,” Al-Qahtani said, warning that the campaign endangers the stability and future of coming generations. “This is a dangerous act that cannot be met with silence, and it cannot simply be allowed to pass without extremely serious consequences.” He offered a pointed assessment of the Islamic Republic's ambitions against the Jewish state, insisting that Iran “will not succeed in defeating Israel, fighting it, or harming it as it expects or claims it will, but it has certainly harmed the entire region.” The remarks came as citizens across the Gulf voiced mounting anger over Iranian strikes on their own countries. Jordanian journalist Mustafa Zouati noted that Israel would strike back immediately if attacked, while many Gulf States lack the same capacity to respond. Voices once unwilling to engage Israeli media are now speaking openly, pointing to Iran not Israel as the central danger to the Middle East. (*JPost/VFI News*)

Israel Enlists Rabbis and Influencers to Warn the Public Against Spying for Iran; Israeli authorities have enlisted respected rabbis and ultra-Orthodox influencers to urge their followers never to cooperate with Iranian intelligence, part of a broadening campaign to stamp out espionage recruited by Tehran. Over the past two years, dozens of Israelis, including several soldiers and reservists, have been charged with spying on behalf of Iran, and one soldier was sentenced to five years in prison. At least nine members of the Haredi community are among those accused, and mobilizing trusted religious voices has become a key tool for police and prosecutors working to reverse the trend. Rabbi Yigal Cohen, a member of the Chief Rabbinate, posted a widely shared video after officials asked him to address the issue directly. “I am begging you, there is no greater blasphemy than seeing a Torah-abiding, observant Jew betray his people,” he pleaded. Prominent Haredi commentator Israel Cohen said the community was in “shock” when the first arrests surfaced and that he understood the need to warn against the danger and stop it, while journalist Mendel Unger released a warning in Yiddish to reach Ashkenazi ultra-Orthodox audiences. Most of those recruited are Israeli citizens approached on social media by faceless Iran-linked agents who dangle cash in exchange for cooperation, though some are foreign nationals in the country on visas. Handlers typically begin with mundane assignments such as photographing public sites or petty vandalism before pushing recruits toward more serious and even violent offenses. The surge in cases has grown so pronounced that Israel opened a dedicated wing at Haifa's Damon Prison for those indicted, with most prosecutions still moving through the courts. (*TOI/VFI News*)

Colombia's Incoming President Withdraws from The Hague Genocide Case Against Israel; Colombia's incoming government under President-elect Abelardo de la Espriella will pull the country out of South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Israel's Foreign Ministry confirmed the reversal on Friday, July 17, following a meeting in Washington on Wednesday, July 15, between Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar and Colombia's designated foreign minister, Omar Bula. De la Espriella's office cast the move as a commitment to “return to a responsible position in the international arena” once he takes office on August 7. South Africa lodged the complaint in late 2023, alleging that Israel's military campaign against Hamas in Gaza violated the Genocide Convention, and a string of nations among them Cuba, Nicaragua, Turkey, Spain and Ireland later joined the suit alongside the Palestinian Authority. Israel has rejected the accusation as baseless, insisting its operations were acts of self-defense after the Hamas massacre of October 7, 2023. The court has set Pretoria's next filing deadline for November 22, 2027, and Israel's response for May 22, 2029. Colombia's withdrawal is one piece of a sweeping reversal of the anti-Israel course charted by outgoing President Gustavo Petro, who severed ties with Jerusalem in 2024 and moved to open an embassy in Ramallah. Sa'ar and Bula agreed to restore full diplomatic and commercial relations, including an exchange of ambassadors. Bula further confirmed that Colombia intends to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital and open an embassy in the city. (INN/VFI News)

Rubio Praises Lebanon's Drive to Disarm Hezbollah as Peace Framework Advances; US Secretary of State Marco Rubio praised Lebanese President Joseph Aoun's push to disarm Hezbollah when the two met in Washington on Sunday, July 19. It marked the first visit to the American capital by a Lebanese head of state since 2009, and Aoun is set to meet President Donald Trump on Tuesday, July 21. The talks centered on carrying out the framework agreement designed to end the war between Israel and the Iran-backed terror group. Rubio “commended the courage of the government of Lebanon, under President Aoun's leadership, for their determined effort to reclaim Lebanon's sovereignty, disarm Hezbollah and dismantle its terrorist infrastructure, and move towards peace,” a State Department readout stated. Hezbollah dragged Lebanon into the regional war on March 2, when it began firing on Israel in support of its patron, Iran. Israel and Lebanon, which hold no formal diplomatic relations, opened US-sponsored negotiations in April aimed at a lasting peace and a permanent end to the fighting. On June 26, the two sides reached a framework in Washington under which the Israeli military was to withdraw from southern Lebanon and the Lebanese army was to deploy, beginning with two “pilot zones.” The entire arrangement, however, hinges on Hezbollah actually laying down its weapons a step the group has resisted. Aoun's visit signals that Beirut, backed by Washington, is pressing forward despite that obstacle toward a border finally free of the terror group's arms. (TOI/VFI News)

Souring on Vance, Many Jewish Republicans Rally Behind Rubio for 2028; Many Jewish Republicans have lost confidence in Vice President JD Vance, frustrated by his rebukes of Israeli officials, his indulgence of anti-Israel conspiracy theories, and his silence toward pundit Tucker Carlson, who has turned sharply against Israel. Yet Vance is still widely seen as President Donald Trump's likeliest successor atop the party's 2028 ticket, leaving the pro-Israel base searching for an alternative. A growing number are settling on Secretary of State Marco Rubio. “The overwhelming majority of American Jewish MAGA voters, donors, and policymakers are enthusiastically supporting a Marco Rubio presidential run,” said activist Shabbos Kestenbaum, who has become a hero among Jewish conservatives for his fight against campus antisemitism. He estimated support for Rubio in those circles at “99 to 1.” A former Florida senator now serving as Trump's top diplomat, Rubio has won admirers with his firm backing of Israel, his hawkish line on Iran, and his vow to dismantle the International Criminal Court, which holds an arrest warrant against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Vance's standing has eroded well beyond Jewish circles, with some of Trump's own advisers said to favor Rubio for 2028. Florida Congressman Randy Fine branded Vance's warning to Israeli critics of the failed Iran deal “absolutely inappropriate and

frankly disgusting.” Valerie Greenfeld, a Republican Jewish Coalition member now living in Jerusalem, called the remark “incredibly arrogant... because we're partners,” adding that the more Vance aligns himself with figures like Carlson, the more he loses ground with pro-Israel voters. (TOI/VFI News)

Israeli Travelers Fight Off Hatchet-Wielding Attackers in Mongolia; Six Israeli travelers fought off a violent, apparently anti-Semitic assault in northern Mongolia, driving away a group of attackers who came at them with knives and hatchets. The confrontation unfolded on the evening of Monday, July 13, at a remote campsite where the three men and three women had stopped for the night. As a group of men of Kazakh Muslim origin approached, the Israelis sensed danger, put on closed shoes, and braced for a fight. The assailants began striking at them while shouting “Heil Hitler” and “Get out of here,” but the travelers refused to be victims. One repelled an attacker with a glass bottle, another wrested a knife from an assailant's hand, and together the group beat back the assault and forced their attackers to flee. Fighting hand to hand against men wielding blades, the six travelers held their ground and ultimately drove the entire group off. One Israeli suffered a broken jaw in the fighting, the only serious injury among them. With the help of a local driver, the travelers escaped the area, and the wounded man was later flown home to Israel for medical care. “It was clear that it was motivated by anti-Semitism,” one of the victims said afterward. The group alerted the Israeli Embassy in China, which also covers Mongolia, and the ambassador and embassy staff stayed in close contact with them, assisting until all six had safely left the country. (INN/VFI News)

Netanyahu Rebuffs New York Mayor's Threat to Arrest Him; Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office pushed back forcefully on Sunday, July 19, after New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani said he was exploring whether he could arrest the Israeli leader should he visit the city. Mamdani, in an interview released Saturday, July 18, claimed Netanyahu “belongs in The Hague” and pointed to a 2024 International Criminal Court arrest warrant issued over the war in Gaza. The mayor said his legal department was actively studying the question ahead of the United Nations General Assembly in September. The Prime Minister's Office dismissed the ICC as “a kangaroo court that has no jurisdiction over Americans or Israelis” and accused Mamdani of trying to divert attention from his own failures. “Instead of supporting Karim Khan's criminal behavior, Mr. Mamdani should focus on repairing the damage his policies have caused to New York,” the office stated. Netanyahu himself said he was untroubled, charging that the mayor had chosen to champion Hamas, the terror group that carried out the October 7, 2023, massacre. The threat carries little legal weight, as the ICC holds no jurisdiction in the United States and federal law bars local officials from cooperating with the court or detaining foreign heads of state. New York's own governor has previously stated that a city mayor lacks any such authority, and legal experts have called the idea baseless. One US senator dismissed Mamdani's suggestion outright, branding the mayor “a clown.” (TOI/VFI News)

Israel's Medical Clowns Bring Serious Relief to Children Healing from Trauma; In the lobby of Tel Aviv's Dana-Dwek Children's Hospital, a pint-sized clown named Shorty blows and eats bubbles between wisecracks, drawing giggles from young patients waiting for care. Behind the baroque lace cravat and disco-themed baseball cap is Shira Friedlander, one of seven Dream Doctors clowns stationed at the hospital, part of Tel Aviv Sourasky Medical Center. Her pin says it all: “Life is short and so am I.” Over the past two and a half decades, Israel has become a global leader in medical clowning, home to two major organizations and the world's first full bachelor's degree program in the field, offered at Haifa University. The volunteer network Simchat Halev fields some 500 therapeutic clowns focused on morale and emotional relief, while Dream Doctors, founded in 2002, places roughly 100 salaried clowns in more than 30 hospitals. There they work as trained paraprofessionals alongside medical teams, even entering operating rooms, oncology wards, and transplant units. In the three years since the October 7, 2023, Hamas massacre, this uniquely Israeli craft has taken on renewed purpose, helping wounded soldiers, evacuees,

and traumatized families find moments of laughter amid grief. Atay Citron, who founded the Haifa University program, has written that nowhere else in the world did he find clowns to match the Israeli teams' "audacity and insane courage." It is a portrait of a nation that, even in its hardest hours, keeps finding ways to bring healing and joy to its children. (TOI/VFI News)



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