

Ynet-News Jan 14, 2020 – Tuesday

01.14.20 – Tu -

Israel attacked western Syrian Army T-4 airbase, partially intercepted by air defense  
Tuesday

01.14.20 – Tu -

Wife of Rabin assassin registers party to reform justice & trials for all innocent prisoners

01.14.20

Telegrass founder runs for Knesset, currently being held at Nitzan Prison in Ramla

01.13.20 – Mo - - - News Placed in Jan 13 spot - Monday-

Knesset 30 member panel to debate Netanyahu immunity before March 2 ballot

01.12.20 – Su - - - News Placed in Jan 12 spot - Sunday-

Report: Damascus spies gave US the location of the jet, to remove general & militia founder

01.13.20 – Mo -

Former Pope's book implores Pope Francis to not allow married men as priests

01.14.20 – Tu - - - News Placed in Jan 14 spot - Tuesday-

Lebanon protests of economy giving politicians 48 hours to form a new government.

01.14.20 – Tu - - - News Placed in Jan 15 spot - Wednesday-

Iran arrests 30 protesters over passenger jet downing & **will form a special court**

01.14.20 – Tu -

PM Boris Johnson urges Trump to stop Iranians from acquiring a nuclear weapon

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Syrian Army says Israel attacked T-4 airbase

According to state media, **four rockets hit base** and only caused material damage; location has been targeted several times in the past for suspicion of being **storage point for Quds Forces in Syria**

Ynet| Published: 01.14.20 , 23:49

The Israeli Air Force attacked T-4 military airport near the city of Homs in western Syria, state news agency SANA reported Tuesday.

According to the report, four missiles hit the base, causing no casualties.

Syrian television reports that the attack was carried out by unmanned aircraft and by missiles partially intercepted by air defense systems.

The T-4 airbase has been attacked at least four times in recent years.

The base is believed to be a storage point for personnel and equipment delivered and used by Iran's Quds Forces in Syria.

These attacks were attributed to the Israeli Air Force.

Last week, Lebanese news outlet Al Mayadeen reported that Israeli fighter jets attacked a weapons truck and personnel at the Al Bukamal border crossing between Iraq and Syria.

According to a report by the United Kingdom-based Syrian Center for Human Rights Monitor - eight activists belonging to the pro-Iranian militia Al-Hashad Al-Sha'abi were killed in the attack.

01.14.20 – Tu -

Wife of Rabin assassin registers party to reform justice & trials for all innocent prisoners

01.14.20

Wife of Rabin assassin registers party

Trimobler-Amir submits party slate to Central Elections Committee in bid to score retrial for jailed husband; Party Registrar says party will not attempt to justify Rabin's murder

Amir Alon| Published: 01.14.20 , 23:27

The wife of Yigal Amir, who assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995, registered on Tuesday a new political party in an effort to get a retrial for her husband.

Upon filing the forms to register the party, called Mishpat Tzedek (Hebrew for fair trial), Larissa Trimobler-Amir told Central Elections Committee Chairman Neal Hendel and Director General Attorney Orly Ades that her party will act to implement reforms to the justice system and for the release of Yigal Amir from prison.

"We demand a retrial for Yigal Amir, we demand retrials for all those people who deserve it, all the innocent people sitting in prison," said Trimobler-Amir. "We demand a deep reform of the courts and media and only we can do that. The politicians are only worried about their image."

Party Registrar Attorney Eyal Globus announced earlier this month that he approved the establishment of the party after Trimbobler-Amir declared that the party will not attempt to justify Rabin's murder.

"One of **democracy's** greatest qualities is **allowing different ideas to be heard**," said Globus. "The registration of a party will only be declined in extreme cases where basic fundamental rights are feared to be violated."

The party's slate constitutes of 14 candidates, including Amir's mother, Geula Amir, who is placed sixth on the list.

**01.14.20**

**Telegrass founder runs for Knesset, currently being held at Nitzan Prison in Ramla**

**01.14.20 – Tu -**

**Telegrass founder runs for Knesset**

Wife says he will promote **liberal** economic **agendas** such as open market and competition despite drug trafficking charges; 'if Netanyahu can, so can we'  
Amir Alon, Attila Somfalvi, Alexandra Lukash | Published: **01.14.20**, 18:50

The **founder and head of the online drug-dealing network** Telegrass will run for the 23rd Knesset after his New Economic Dawn party was registered at the Central Elections Committee on Tuesday.

Silver, who was placed second on the party's list for Knesset, **is currently being held at Nitzan Prison** in Ramla after he was **indicted on charges of trafficking dangerous drugs** and running a criminal organization.

Silver's wife, Gali Silver, said her husband has been long interested in politics and that he will promote liberal economic agendas.

"Amos was always into politics, changing the law and adjusting it according to the will of the public," Silver told Ynet in an interview. "It was also Telegrass's goal. He wants change and now **he wants to expand** to other issues besides **legalization and cannabis**."

"Amos was always in favor of an open market, it's one of the things he always valued. He shares the same opinions with the party, as they all believe in an open and competitive market. The more competition - the lower the prices drop and the easier it will become for everyone."

When asked about Amos's drug trafficking charges, Silver said that the charges against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who was indicted in three corruption cases with bribe, fraud and breach of trust charges, are much more serious than her husband's.

"The charges against Netanyahu are much more serious," said Silver. "If Netanyahu can [run for Knesset], so can we."

New Economic Dawn party founder, economist Gilad Alper, said that the link-up between Silver and the liberal party came naturally.

"I appreciate what he [Silver] managed to do with Telegrass," said Alper. "He contacted us, we spoke about joining forces and it seemed right to me – also because of our shared ideology over the legalization of cannabis and also because he literally saved thousands of Israelis who needed medical cannabis and didn't get it from the state."

To this day, thousands of Israelis turn to Telegrass when in need of medical cannabis. It is an illegal organization because the state doesn't sell them the product and whatever it does sell is of such poor quality that it is completely useless."

Our agenda is very liberal – reducing the cost of living, freedom of trade, freedom of religion, civil marriage, opening businesses on the Sabbath, canceling the Chief Rabbinate's monopoly on kosher food and legalization of cannabis, of course."

Silver was arrested in Uman, Ukraine in March of last year following a large-scale undercover investigation by Israeli police.

Silver was later extradited to Israel in August after a legal battle with Ukrainian authorities in an effort to appeal his extradition.

Lahav 433 anti-corruption unit police officers also raided the homes of 42 suspects alleged to have a connection with the online drug-dealing network, which operated as a channel on instant messaging app Telegram.

Potential buyers could contact individual sellers through a private chat facilitated by the channel and arrange their own drug purchases.

One month later, the State Prosecutor's Office Cybercrime Unit indicted 27 people in the case.

The indictment attributes suspects to allegations of brokering and trafficking of dangerous drugs, drug offenses involving the corruption of minors, money laundering and more.

01.13.20 – Mo -

Knesset 30 member panel to debate Netanyahu immunity before March 2 ballot

01.13.20

Knesset OKs panel to debate Netanyahu immunity

House Committee can debate and potentially vote on PM's immunity bid in coming weeks, perhaps even before March 2 ballot; Likud MK Zohar accuses Blue & White of hijacking Knesset

Nina Fuchs, Moran Azulay | Published: 01.13.20 , 20:20

Members of the Knesset Sorting Committee voted Monday in favor of establishing a House Committee, the only parliamentary panel able to debate Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's request for immunity from prosecution in his three graft cases.

After a two-hour deliberation, constantly interrupted by right-wing MKs, the panel voted 16 to 5 in favor of establishing and staffing the committee.

The committee will constitute of 30 members "to ensure representation of all factions," said Sorting Committee Chairman MK Avi Nissenkorn of Blue & White. Eight seats, each allotted to Blue & White and Likud; three seats for the Joint List; two apiece for Shas, Labor-Gesher, Yisrael Beytenu and United Torah Judaism; and one seat each for the Democratic Union, the Jewish Home, and the New Right. Nissenkorn, who called the establishment of the committee "an absolute necessity," agreed to Yisrael Beytenu MK Oded Forer's proposal to also establish all the other permanent Knesset committees that have been dormant during the past year. The formation of a House Committee still requires a plenum vote, which Nissenkorn said he hoped would be held this week.

Likud MK Miki Zohar stormed out of the debate, accusing Blue & White of "hijacking Knesset" and stated he will petition the decision to the High Court.

The results of the vote mean that the House Committee can debate and potentially vote on Netanyahu's immunity request in the coming weeks, perhaps even days, long before election day on March 2.

Likud officials have said they will try to delay the process, hoping to push it past March 2, when a new Knesset will be voted in.

Blue & White is hoping the committee will debate and reject Netanyahu's request within three weeks, with enough time to spare before the election.

The House Committee will also debate the immunity request filed by former Likud minister Haim Katz, who also faces several corruption charges.

01.12.20 – Su -

Damascus spies gave US the location of the jet, to remove general & militia founder

01.12.20

Report: Israeli intel helped U.S. assassinate Soleimani

NBC News says Jerusalem 'helped confirm the details' of Iran's general secret flight from Damascus to Baghdad, where his vehicle was struck by drones upon arrival; earlier, top IDF official claimed Israel was 'not the story' of the operation

i24NEWS, Ynet, News agencies | Published: 01.12.20 , 08:52

Israeli intelligence was used by the United States in a mission to assassinate a top Iranian general, NBC News reported Sunday.

Gen. Qassem Soleimani, the head of Iran's elite Quds force and mastermind of its regional security strategy, was killed in an airstrike a week ago near the Iraqi capital's international airport. Iran struck back at the Americans days later by firing a series of ballistic missiles at two military bases in Iraq housing American troops. There were no reported American casualties.

According to the report, Israeli intelligence "helped confirm the details" of Soleimani's Cham Wings Airbus A320 flight from the Syrian capital of Damascus to Baghdad on January 3. Neither Soleimani nor the soldiers were registered on the passenger manifesto, according to a Cham Wings airline employee.

Despite the high level of secrecy, once the general had landed in Iraqi capital, rockets fired from a U.S. drone killed him as he left the airport in a convoy of two armored vehicles.

Citing interviews with two officials with direct knowledge of the operation, NBC News says that initially informants at the Damascus airport provided intelligence on Soleimani's flight to Baghdad.

In Iraq's capital, American spies pinpointed the location of the jet carrying Soleimani, his meeting with an Iraqi ally at the runway broadcast live for U.S. officials across the globe to watch.

At this point, three U.S. drones were already hovering up above, armed with Hellfire missiles and ready to eliminate a man who, according to President Donald Trump, was planning attacks on four U.S. embassies.

With little traffic on Baghdad's roads, Soleimani's convoy - one sedan carrying the general and Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis (founder of Kata'ib Hezbollah militias) and a minivan with their entourage - headed out and went up in flames after four missiles were launched from the drones.

The report gave no further details on the extent of Jerusalem's alleged involvement in the operation.

01.13.20 – Mo -

Former Pope's book implores Pope Francis to not allow married men as priests

01.13.20

Former pontiff's book draws criticism

Benedict XVI, who retired in 2013, promised to not interfere in church affairs, publishes book imploring Pope Francis to not allow appointment of married men as priests

Reuters| Published: 01.13.20 , 23:50

Roman Catholic scholars rebuked the former Pope Benedict on Monday for his comments in a new book regarding the delicate matter of priestly celibacy, saying his words were helping to destabilize the reigning Pope Francis.

It is not the first time that Benedict has spoken out on Church matters despite a public vow he made in 2013 when he became the first pontiff in 700 years to resign.

The situation also underscores the polarization between conservatives and progressives in the 1.3 billion-member Church.

"One pope is complicated enough. This is a mess," John Gehring, Catholic Program Director at Faith in Public Life, a U.S. group, said in a tweet.

"With great respect to Benedict XVI, it's time for him to live up to his promise to be 'hidden from the world.'"

In the book, "From the Depths of Our Hearts," written with Cardinal Robert Sarah, 74, Benedict, 92 and in ill health, defends priestly celibacy in what appears to be a strategically timed appeal to Francis to not change the rules.

The book, Benedict's first since his resignation, comes as Francis must decide whether to allow older married men with proven leadership qualities in the Amazon to be ordained priests in exceptional cases as a response to a shortage in the vast region.

The proposal was made during a contentious gathering of bishops at the Vatican in October and Francis will respond to it and other suggestions, including the role of women in the region, in a document expected to be published soon.

While Francis has not ruled out a limited change in a specific region, he has also strongly supported priestly celibacy in general.

Excerpts from the book were published on Sunday by the French newspaper Le Figaro.

On Monday, the Vatican issued a statement reminding reporters that Francis supports celibacy as "a gift for the Church".

It's timing, giving the perception that a retired pope may be trying to influence the decision of a reigning pope, was debated by Church commentators. Massimo Faggioli, a theologian at Villanova University in the United States, called it "a serious breach" by Benedict, adding that for many conservatives who oppose Francis "Benedict XVI never retired really".

Kurt Martens, professor of canon law at the Catholic University of America in Washington, said: "A former pope should not speak in public about anything at all. He had his chance when he was in office. Now it belongs to his successor to govern".

Benedict caused a stir last year by writing an essay for a German newspaper in which he blamed the Catholic Church's sexual abuse scandal on the effects of the sexual revolution of the 1960s, homosexual cliques in seminaries and what he called a general collapse in morality.

Many Catholic theologians and abuse experts rebuked him, saying he was trying to shift the blame away from the Church.

Some commentators openly questioned whether others were using Benedict, saying he is too frail to have written a book and alleging that he can barely hold a conversation anymore.

His defenders strongly contested this.

"The (liberal Church) mafia is out to get Benedict XVI. He's old, but he isn't on his deathbed," read a Tweet from the conservative Catholic blog Rorate Caeli.

"We pray for Benedict XVI: may the Lord keep the wolves from devouring him until the time comes of his natural departure from this earth," Rorate Caeli said.

Matthew Schmitz, an editor at the conservative U.S. Catholic intellectual journal First Things, also backed the former pope.

"Benedict XVI and Cardinal Sarah have written an eloquent defense of celibacy, not an attack on Pope Francis," he said in a tweet.

01.14.20 – Tu -

Lebanon protests of economy giving politicians 48 hours to form a new government.

01.14.20

Lebanon protests turn violent outside central bank

Demonstrations resume after relative calm following designated caretaker PM Diab failed to form emergency government to address economic crisis

Associated Press| Updated: 01.14.20 , 23:12

Lebanese security forces lobbed tear gas at protesters who responded with rocks outside the country's central bank Tuesday, a violent turn after demonstrators returned to the streets following a weekslong lull.

The violence outside the central bank came as protesters resorted to blocking roads around the capital to express their impatience at a ruling elite they say has failed to address the economy's downward spiral.

Calm had prevailed since the designation of Hassan Diab as prime minister in mid-December. He has so far failed to form an emergency government amid political divisions and jockeying for power. The lull was also partly due to the holidays followed by soaring regional tensions between the U.S. and Iran that eclipsed the protesters in Lebanon and Iraq demanding sweeping political change.

Clashes at the bank began late Tuesday after security forces arrested a few of the protesters. It was not immediately clear why they were arrested. Local media said the protesters had removed metal barriers erected around the central bank.

The demonstrators accuse the central bank's governor of financial policies that have worsened Lebanon's liquidity crunch.

The country is facing its worst economic crisis in decades. The local currency has lost over 60% of its value in just the past few weeks, while sources of foreign currency have dried up. Meanwhile, banks have imposed informal capital controls limiting the



withdrawal of dollars and foreign transfers in the country, which relies heavily on imports of basic goods.

Panic has set in among residents who fear their deposits are in danger. Protests have taken place inside commercial banks over the last few weeks as depositors tried to access their accounts.

But Tuesday night's violence was the first outside the central bank. Security forces fired several rounds of tear gas while protesters lobbed rocks and fireworks. The pitched street battles were aired live on local TV stations. Some protesters smashed windows of at least two commercial banks nearby using metal bars.

"We are worried about losing our savings ... Lebanon is not an easy country to save in," said Riva Daniel, 40 years old, who was among those protesting outside the central bank since earlier in the day. "We don't trust the banks here anymore."

Protesters returned to the streets Tuesday blocking several roads around the capital, Beirut, and other areas of the country in the south and north. They burned tires and blocked several main highways leading to the capital from the south, east and north, bringing traffic to a standstill. School and university students took part in some of the protests and hundreds marched down main highways, raising Lebanese flags and blasting rallying songs through loudspeakers.

Samer al-Khoury, a 29-year-old protester, said the protesters were giving the politicians 48 hours to form a new government.

"We need solutions," he said. "The street is angry because some people are poorer than others; some people are dying in hospitals; some people don't have food on their table."

Rabie al-Zain, an activist protesting in Jal el-Dib, north of Beirut, said the rallies are a reminder to the rulers that the reasons for their protests are still here. "Today we add the students to the revolution - those who will handle the country when the current rulers will go to the dustbin of history," he said.

In the northern city of Tripoli and in Akkar province, protesters sat in the streets and blocked several roads with burning tires or bricks. In Sidon, thousands of protesters rallied in a central square of the southern city. In the eastern city of Zahle, hundreds rallied by nightfall against the current political class.

In the afternoon, hundreds of protesters in Beirut marched to the house of the recently designated prime minister.

Three months of nationwide protests have failed to pressure politicians to form a new government to institute drastic reforms. Prime Minister Saad Hariri resigned in late October, shortly after the protests began.

01.14.20 – Tu -

Iran arrests 30 protesters over passenger jet downing & will form a special court

01.14.20

Iran announces arrests over downing of passenger jet that killed 176

Announcement comes amid upsurge of anger and protests by Iranians in recent days over the downing of Ukraine International Airlines Flight 752, which was hit by an Iranian missile shortly after takeoff in Tehran last Wednesday, and apparent attempts by senior regime officials to cover up cause of crash

Associated Press| Published: 01.14.20 , 14:44

Iran's judiciary said Tuesday arrests have been made for the accidental shooting down of a Ukrainian passenger plane that killed all 176 people on board just after takeoff from Tehran last week.

The announcement came amid an upsurge of anger and protests by Iranians in recent days over the downing of the jetliner last Wednesday and apparent attempts by senior officials in Iran to cover up the cause of the crash.

The plane, en route to the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, was carrying 167 passengers and nine crew members from several countries, including 82 Iranians, 57 Canadians -- including many Iranians with dual citizenship -- and 11 Ukrainians, according to officials. There were several children among the passengers, including an infant.

Iran, which initially dismissed allegations that a missile had brought down the plane, acknowledged only on Saturday -- three days after and in the face of mounting evidence -- that its Revolutionary Guard had shot down the plane by mistake as the force braced for a possible military confrontation with the United States.

Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili said "extensive investigations have taken place and some individuals are arrested."

His statement on the judiciary's website did not say how many individuals had been detained or name them.

Iran's president on Tuesday also called for a special court to be set up to probe the incident.

"The judiciary should form a special court with a ranking judge and dozens of experts," President Hassan Rouhani said in a speech televised in Iran.

"This is not an ordinary case. The entire the world will be watching this court."

Rouhani called the incident "a painful and unforgivable" mistake and promised that his administration would pursue the case "by all means."

"The responsibility falls on more than just one person," he said, adding that those found culpable "should be punished."

"There are others, too, and I want that this issue is expressed honestly," he said, without elaborating.

Iran shot down the plane as its forces were on alert for possible U.S. retaliation after Iran launched ballistic missiles on two military bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq. No one was hurt in that attack, which was carried out in response to the stunning killing of Revolutionary Guard Gen. Qassem Soleimani in an American airstrike in Baghdad.

While Rouhani pointed to mistakes and negligence, he also repeated the government's line that the tragedy was ultimately rooted in U.S. aggression.

"It was the U.S. that made for an agitated environment. It was the U.S. that created an unusual situation. It was the U.S. that threatened and took our beloved [Soleimani]," he said.

Rouhani called the government's admission that Iranian forces shot down the plane a "first good step."

He added that Iranian experts who retrieved the Ukrainian plane's flight recorder, the so-called black box, have sent it to France for analysis.

Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the head of the Guard's aerospace division, said over the weekend his unit accepts full responsibility for the shooting. He said when he learned about the downing of the plane, "I wished I was dead."

The incident raised questions about why Iran did not shut down its international airport or airspace the day it was on alert for U.S. military retaliation.

The downing of the plane and the lack of transparency around it has reignited anger in Iran at the country's leadership. Online videos appeared to show security forces firing live ammunition and tear gas to disperse protests in the streets.

Also Tuesday, Iran's judiciary said that 30 people had been detained in the protests, and that some were released, without elaborating further. An Iranian film director who'd called for protests in Tehran's Azadi, or Freedom, Square is among those released.

Iranian authorities briefly arrested British Ambassador Rob Macaire on Saturday evening. He said he had gone to a candlelight vigil to pay his respects for the victims of the Ukrainian plane strike, but left as soon as the chanting began and it turned into a protest.

Iran's Foreign Ministry summoned the British ambassador on Sunday to protest what it said was his presence at an illegal protest

01.14.20 – Tu -

PM Boris Johnson urges Trump to stop Iranians from acquiring a nuclear weapon

01.14.20

UK PM: New 'Trump deal' can replace the Iran nuclear pact

Boris Johnson says the 2015 nuclear agreement with Tehran, brokered by Obama, was 'flawed' from an American perspective and should be scrapped in favor of a deal renegotiated by the current U.S. administration

Reuters| Published: 01.14.20 , 11:02

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson on Tuesday called on U.S. President Donald Trump to replace the Iranian nuclear deal with his own new agreement to ensure that the Islamic Republic did not get an atomic weapon.

"If we're going to get rid of it, let's replace it and let's replace it with the Trump deal," Johnson said of the 2015 nuclear arms control deal with Tehran. "That would be a great way forward."

"President Trump is a great deal maker, by his own account. Let's work together to replace the JCPOA and get the Trump deal instead," Johnson told the BBC.

Under the deal brokered in 2015, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), Iran agreed with China, France, Germany, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, to restrict its nuclear program.

But in 2018, Trump pulled out of the deal. European powers have repeatedly said they still support the deal though Tehran announced earlier this month it would abandon limitations on enriching uranium, a further blow to the deal.

"If you get rid of this nuclear deal, the JCPOA, it's what Trump wants. My point to our American friends is, look, somehow or other **you've got to stop the Iranians acquiring a nuclear weapon,**" Johnson said.

"From the American perspective, it's a flawed agreement, it expires, plus it was negotiated by President (Barack) Obama. From their point of view it has many, many faults."

Trump is confident he could still renegotiate a new nuclear deal with Tehran, White House adviser Kellyanne Conway said earlier this month after **Iran announced it would retreat further from the 2015 nuclear pact.**