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Global death toll hits 100,000, with over 1.6 million COVID-19 cases

04.10.20 – Fr - - -

Israel's coronavirus cases rise to 10,408, fatality toll rises to 95

04.10.20 – Fr - - -

Israel's coronavirus cases rise to 10,408, fatality toll rises to 95

There are 689 people currently hospitalized out of which 167 are considered in serious condition of those 127 require the help of ventilators; 1,183 people in Israel have recovered from COVID-19

Adir Yanko | Updated: 04.10.20 , 22:30

Israel's coronavirus fatality toll rises to 95 Friday evening with 10,408 confirmed cases, 440 of them confirmed in the past 24 hours

There are 689 people hospitalized and 167 of them in serious condition and 124 of those, needing the help of ventilators.

6,631 people have are being treated at home and 1,002 in dedicated hotels for coronavirus patients. As of Friday, 810 people are awaiting a decision as to where they should be treated.

1,183 people have recovered from COVID

A 68-year-old man had died at the Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem. He had been suffering from severe underlying health problems.

Earlier an 80-year-old woman died at the Laniado Hospital in Netanya. She was the 13th resident to die from the Mish'an retirement home in Beer Sheva.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, 29 citizens from assisted living residences died in Israel after contracting the novel coronavirus.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Friday said a great effort was being made so that after Passover and Maimouna it would be possible to gradually allow sections of the Israeli population to go out.

Speaking with lone soldiers from around the country via video conference Netanyahu said "I hope, to allow sections of the Israeli population, residents of the state, to go out. This will be a gradual process that will take time."

Government officials have said that the places of work will resume activity social distancing regulations observed.

The finance and tech industries will be the first to open.

special education schools will be opened and public transportation will be increased. Malls, restaurants, and cafes as well as cultural and sporting events will be required to remain closed initially and their reopening will be considered later. The officials said that air travel restrictions will remain in place until September but more flights will be allowed to support commerce and business.

The population considered at a higher risk from the coronavirus will remain under the same restrictive measures already in place.

04.10.20 – Fr - - -

Hamas charges treason to Gaza organizer after conference with Israeli activists

04.10.20 – Fr - - -

Hamas arrests Gaza activists after Zoom call with Israelis

The meeting was advertised on a Facebook event page and a recording was posted online by Israeli participants, prompting an outpouring of Palestinian incitement against the Gaza activists on social media

Associated Press| Published: 04.10.20 , 09:08

Hamas-run security forces have arrested several peace activists in the Gaza Strip on treason charges after they took part in a web conference with Israeli activists, officials said Thursday.

The Hamas-run Interior Ministry said the activists are accused of “holding a normalization activity with the Israeli occupation.”

“Holding any activity or contact with the Israeli occupation under any cover is a crime punishable by law and a betrayal for the people and their sacrifices,” it said in a statement.

Hamas, which seized Gaza from rival Palestinian forces in 2007, does not recognize Israel and has carried out scores of attacks against Israelis over the last few decades.

Israel, the U.S., and the EU view Hamas as a terrorist organization.

Hamas has nevertheless been holding indirect talks with Israel through Egyptian, Qatari and U.N. mediators for months. The negotiations are aimed at easing an Israeli and Egyptian blockade imposed on Gaza after Hamas took power in exchange for calm along the frontier.

The activists held a nearly two-hour meeting on Monday over Zoom, an online conferencing service, discussing issues of common interest, including the coronavirus pandemic.

The meeting was advertised on a Facebook event page and a recording was posted online by Israeli participants, prompting an outpouring of Palestinian incitement against the Gaza activists on social media.

The family of Rami Aman, the main organizer, said he answered a summons from the security service early Thursday and that they have not heard from him since.

Hamas praised the arrests. “The relationship with the Zionist occupation is only a continuing fight until it is forced out of all Palestinian lands,” spokesman Hazem Qassem said.

04.10.20 – Fr - - -

Passover Four-day lockdown eased, may travel for work or other essential needs statement sent out early Friday.

04.10.20 – Fr - - -

Nationwide lockdown eased, Bnei Brak restrictions relaxed

Partial lockdown remains in place, with people only allowed to leave home for work or other essentials; Health Ministry tells Israelis to continue keeping social distancing rules
Ynet | Published: 04.10.20 , 08:56

A four-day lockdown that kept Israelis confined to their hometowns expired at 6am Friday, as officials urged the country to not let up social distancing efforts in a bid to keep the deadly coronavirus from spreading.

In Bnei Brak, residents saw an even stricter lockdown on their town ease slightly, with residents allowed to travel outside the town for work and some other essential needs for the first time in a week.

From Tuesday evening to Friday morning, Israelis nationwide had been banned from moving between cities, amid fears that people traveling for the Passover holiday could lead to a fresh surge of virus cases just as it seemed numbers were beginning to level off. In Jerusalem, residents were too confined to one of seven delineated zones dividing the city.

Nationwide, 10,095 people have been confirmed to have the virus and 92 people have died, according to Health Ministry figures released Friday.

In recent days, officials have begun to discuss possibly rolling back some restrictions later this month if the rate of infection continued to slow.

A stricter curfew in place from Wednesday night forcing Israelis to remain within 100 meters of their homes was lifted Thursday morning.

Throughout the holiday Wednesday and Thursday, police had handed out hundreds of fines to people breaking restrictions on movement.

In a statement announcing the coming lifting of the lockdown and the government’s decision to ease Bnei Brak’s quarantine, the Health Ministry urged Israelis to continue maintaining social distancing regulations and not to become complacent.

“The danger of the coronavirus has not passed. We all saw what happened in other countries around the world,” Health Minister Yaakov Litzman said in the statement. “A gradual opening of the economy will only be possible if we all make sure to keep the rules, despite the hardships.”

The announcement said a decision regarding special measures for Jerusalem, where most infections have been in ultra-Orthodox parts of the city, would be forthcoming.

Under the rules remaining in effect Friday, Israelis may travel for work or other essential needs, such as shopping for food or medicine, but are generally barred from being more than 100 meters from their home. Gatherings of more than two people are forbidden. People are also supposed to wear face masks when out of the home, but enforcement on that measure is not set to go into effect until Sunday.

In Bnei Brak, residents will only be allowed to leave the city limits for work, medical treatments, transferring children between separated parents, funerals of immediate relatives and “other necessary matters approved ahead of time,” the Health Ministry said in a statement sent out early Friday.

04.09.20 – Th - - -

Treasury nixes Health Ministry chief bid to extend lockdown until end of Passover

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Treasury nixes Health Ministry chief bid to extend lockdown until end of Passover

Moshe Bar-Siman-Tov feared some Israelis have violated ban on movement imposed for the first days of the festival as part of efforts to curb spread of coronavirus, wants strict restrictions to last until next week and not end on Friday morning; Netanyahu and Litzman to consider proposal

Itamar Eichner, Itay Blumenthal | Updated: 04.09.20 , 22:26

The Finance Ministry on Thursday night rejected a recommendation by Health Ministry Director-General Moshe Bar-Siman-Tov to extend the tighter coronavirus lockdown until the end of the Passover next week.

The stricter restrictions, which came into effect Tuesday, will be lifted on Friday morning as planned.

Bar-Siman-Tov called earlier Thursday for the strict lockdown imposed for the first few days of Passover to be extended until the end of the holiday on Wednesday.

The call was based on the belief that many people in Israel did not abide by the strict regulations to fight the coronavirus put in place on Tuesday and have left their homes. The emergency regulations were introduced as part of steps taken to curb the spread of the coronavirus and in particular effort to avoid a spike in cases as happened during the Purim holiday last month.

Bar-Siman-Tov fears that many people ignored the strict regulations put in place on Tuesday and have left their homes during Passover.

The issue was to be raised with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Health Minister Yaakov Litzman.

The regulations, announced Monday by the prime minister, were twofold: a general lockdown from Tuesday until Friday morning that includes a ban on moving between cities and a tighter curfew from Wednesday afternoon until Thursday morning, which kept people in their homes for the first night of the Passover holiday.

Public transportation has also been halted and will only resume on Sunday morning. Many people across Israel took to their balconies Wednesday night to sing together the songs of the Seder service that marks the first night of the festival. In Givatayim, near Tel Aviv, the local police chief joined officers enforcing the curfew to wish local residents a happy Passover.

The Health Ministry said Thursday morning that the death toll from the coronavirus in Israel has risen to 79.

There has been a rise of 351 in confirmed cases, bringing the number of people infected with the virus to 9,755. Of that number, 165 people are in serious condition and 119 people are on ventilators.

The stringent regulations were due to end on Friday morning.

Israelis have been largely obeying the stricter regulations; city roads and interurban highways mostly empty of cars Thursday, while very few people could be seen on the streets.

Those who did venture out were walking their dogs or taking some air within the 100-meter range allowed by regulations.

Meanwhile, police on Thursday continue extensive enforcement operations throughout the country.

In Tel Aviv, police found a man violating his home isolation to take a walk on the seafront boardwalk. He was fined and given a police escort back to his home.

04.09.20 – Th - - -

Lockdown in West Bank, crowds in Gaza: Hamas banned large street gatherings

04.09.20 – Th - - -

Lockdown in West Bank, crowds in Gaza: Palestinians divided over coronavirus

Authorities swoop on restriction violators in PA-run territory, while Hamas-ruled coastal enclave imposes only few limitations on public life as isolation may have slowed arrival of virus

Reuters| Published: 04.09.20 , 21:21

Political and physical divisions between Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza have induced two very different responses to the coronavirus pandemic, with a strict lockdown in the first and crowds milling about freely in the second.

In the West Bank, which has 250 recorded cases of the COVID-19 lung disease, a lockdown on public life was swiftly imposed - Bethlehem was sealed off after the first outbreak in March and a state of emergency declared.

But in the Gaza Strip, a densely populated coastal enclave, there have been few restrictions on movement and people packed into public markets and beaches, with few wearing masks against the risk of coronavirus contagion.

Forty kilometers (25 miles) apart and separated by Israel, the West Bank and Gaza have no direct link between them.

Gaza, measuring 375 sq km (145 square miles), is home to around two million Palestinians. Since 2007 it has been under the control of the Hamas terror group, bitter rivals of President Mahmoud Abbas's more secular Palestinian Authority whose power base is in the West Bank.

Smaller and poorer, Gaza has for years been under a blockade by Israel and Egypt to stop weapons and money reaching Hamas.

Gazans say the blockade has crippled their economy and undermined the development of medical facilities, weakening their ability to face a pandemic.

But the geographical isolation that Gazans chafe against may also have helped stem the entry of the new coronavirus, with only 13 reported cases. All are at quarantine facilities.

Hamas says health conditions make a full lockdown unnecessary in Gaza, but it has closed schools, mosques and wedding halls and banned large street gatherings.

However, public markets remained busy this week. "We will stay home (to avoid coronavirus) when they give us money, food, aid and diapers, our children want to eat," greengrocer Ahmed Al-Nahal said in the Beach Camp market.

But many fear disaster if the coronavirus penetrates further into the teeming Mediterranean enclave.

Scenes of crowds on beaches last weekend provoked criticism on social media, prompting Hamas to deploy police along the coast urging people not to gather.

"I kept my mouth shut last week but I'm genuinely concerned for Gaza, my family and people here," Gaza journalist Omar Ghraieb tweeted. "Do we think we are invincible?"

Eyad Al-Bozom, a Hamas interior ministry spokesman, said: "We will not hesitate to impose a curfew if we have to... We are taking necessary decisions in accordance with our daily evaluation."

The reaction has been different in the West Bank, where the Palestinian Authority exercises limited self-rule over around 3 million Palestinians living alongside Israeli settlements and military bases.

President Abbas ordered tight restrictions that left some West Bank towns nearly deserted except for shoppers going to groceries and pharmacies.

Some flouted the lockdown, prompting security forces to seize their cars and to intervene last week after hundreds of government employees gathered outside banks to draw salaries.

Palestinian laborers also angered the authorities after reports that they had become infected in Israel and then snuck back into the West Bank, bypassing Israel's military barriers and Palestinian health officials.

"There are health measures that must be heeded to prevent the spread of coronavirus," said Ghassan Nimer, a Palestinian Interior Ministry spokesman.

04.09.20 – Th - - -

Empty roads, deserted streets as Israel remains on Passover lockdown

04.09.20 – Th - - -

IN PICTURES: Empty roads, deserted streets as Israel remains on Passover lockdown

Israelis have been largely obeying emergency regulations imposed for the first days of the festival as part of efforts to curb spread of coronavirus; strict restrictions to remain in place until Friday morning, public transport only to resume on Sunday

Itay Blumenthal | Published: 04.09.20 , 17:58

Israelis have been largely obeying emergency regulations imposed for Passover as part of efforts to curb the spread of the coronavirus.

The roads were mostly empty of cars Thursday, while very few people could be seen on the streets.

Those who did venture out were walking their dogs or taking some air within the 100-meter range allowed by regulations.

Meanwhile, police on Thursday continue extensive enforcement operations throughout the country.

In Tel Aviv, police found a man violating his home isolation to take a walk on the seafront boardwalk. He was fined and given a police escort back to his home.

At 7am, the curfew that took effect at 3pm Wednesday came to an end, allowing Israelis to again shop for essential products within their immediate vicinity if possible.

Moving between cities is still prohibited, and public transportation will only resume on Sunday morning.

The Health Ministry said Thursday morning that the death toll from the coronavirus in Israel has risen to 79.

There has been a rise of 351 in confirmed cases, bringing the number of people infected with the virus to 9,755. Of that number, 165 people are in serious condition and 119 people are on ventilators.

04.08.20 – We - - -

Israelis mark Passover in virtual isolation as virus curfew begins

04.08.20 – We - - -

Israelis mark Passover in virtual isolation as virus curfew begins

Streets of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and other cities empty with most of population confined to their homes from Wednesday afternoon until Thursday morning to deter mass gatherings for Seder Night; less stringent lockdown in place until Friday as authorities try to combat the spread of pathogen

Reuters| Published: 04.08.20 , 14:46

The Jewish Passover holiday typically draws crowds of Israelis outside to burn heaps of leavened bread, commemorating the Biblical exodus from slavery in Egypt.

But on Wednesday a tightened coronavirus lockdown meant the streets of Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and other cities were nearly empty on the first day of the week-long holiday, when they would normally be dotted with fires and columns of smoke.

Israel this week imposed special holiday restrictions to try to halt the spread of the disease.

Jews may only celebrate the traditional Seder meal that kicks off the April 8-15 holiday season with immediate family.

And travel between cities is banned until Friday, with roadblocks erected at main junctions leading from Jerusalem to Tel Aviv.

A full curfew was due to take effect on Wednesday at 3pm, before the Seder begins, and will last until Thursday morning. This prompted a dash for last-minute shopping, which saw long lines of Israelis wearing face masks outside grocery stores.

Some areas found workarounds to keep festive traditions alive in a month that will also see Christians celebrate Easter and Muslims mark the beginning of the holy month of Ramadan.

The Jerusalem municipality on Wednesday collected leavened products from designated dumpsters outside peoples' homes and took them away to be burned in a large open area on the city's outskirts.

A rabbi accompanied by a firefighter tossed a long, fire-tipped stick onto a patch of flammable liquid leading to a pile of the leavened bread products, many of them still in plastic bags, engulfing the mound in smoke and flames.

An ultra-Orthodox Jew crosses a mainly deserted street because of the government's measures to help stop the spread of the coronavirus, in Bnei Brak

An ultra-Orthodox Jew crosses a mainly deserted street because of the government's measures to help stop the spread of the coronavirus, in Bnei Brak (Photo: AP)

One Jerusalem man, Daniel Arusti, disposed of a paper bread box in one of the dumpsters outside of his house, instead of gathering with his ultra-Orthodox community to burn it in public.

"Next year ... when there will hopefully be no (coronavirus) threat, we'll be able to come and redo public burning of chametz (leavened bread) together, as we should," Arusti said. Throughout Passover, Jews abide by special dietary laws which include eating unleavened bread known as matzo.

The tradition marks a Book of Exodus tale that the Jews did not have time to prepare leavened bread before leaving for the promised land.

Unable to gather in person, some Israelis plan to hold the seder with friends and extended family online by video conferencing platforms.

The holiday restrictions added to anti-virus measures that had already seen Israelis largely confined to their homes, forcing many businesses to close and sending unemployment to 25%.

Israel has reported more than 9,400 cases and at least 71 deaths from COVID-19, according to Health Ministry data.

04.08.20 – We - - -

Israel brings newly-acquired reagent test & 30,000 hazmat suits from S-Korea

04.08.20 – We - - -

Israel brings missing coronavirus test material from S. Korea

In an emergency airlift, some 30,000 hazmat suits intended for medical teams had also been brought on an El Al flight from Seoul, as Israel scrambles to purchase needed supplies to fight COVID-19 epidemic

ynet| Published: 04.08.20 , 10:15

In a special operation between defense and foreign ministries, a plane packed with a key material needed to analyze coronavirus tests, took off Wednesday from South Korea en route to Israel.

It has been revealed earlier this week that the shortage of a key reagent (a substance that causes a chemical reaction) needed to analyze COVID-19 samples is bringing the number of tests in Israel down again and unless a new batch of material is found, testing would become increasingly difficult.

The El Al plane from Seoul apparently is carrying enough chemical reagents to perform tens of thousands of coronavirus tests in Israel. In addition, some 30,000 hazmat suits for medical teams were also flown over in the emergency airlift. Many medical authorities have pointed to a robust testing campaign as critical to tracking and preventing the spread of the novel coronavirus.

“The reagents were bought by the Defense Ministry’s purchasing office for the use of the Health Ministry,” the Defense Ministry said in a statement, “In light of the urgency, the Defense Ministry’s unit tasked with international shipping led a rapid operation to bring these chemicals to Israel, before the start of the Passover holiday.”

Defense Minister Naftali Bennett and Foreign Minister Israel Katz praised their ministries’ success in bringing the materials to Israel. The CEO of the El Al airline, which has been hit hard by the crisis, also hailed his company for assisting in the effort. The tens of thousands of tests that could be conducted with the newly-acquired reagent would not last more than a few days at the rate of 10,000 to 30,000 tests a day, which Israeli officials have called for.

As of Wednesday, there have been 9,404 confirmed coronavirus cases in Israel, with a death toll of 71. According to the Health Ministry, 147 patients were in serious condition, while another 199 were in moderate condition. The rest either had light symptoms or had already recovered from the disease.

04.07.20 – Tu - - -

Young West Bank settlers riot after refusing to go into isolation, damaging bus

04.07.20 – Tu - - -

Young West Bank settlers riot after refusing to go into isolation

Members of so-called Hilltop Youth won't comply with emergency regulations and enter quarantine in Jerusalem motel, clash with police seeking alternative at detention facility in southern Israel

Yoav Zitun, Elisha Ben Kimon, Gilad Cohen | Published: 04.07.20 , 21:06

Some 20 young settlers from the West Bank settlements clashed with police late Monday as they refused to go into isolation despite having had direct contact with a confirmed coronavirus patient.

The members of the so-called Hilltop Youth were taken by military vehicle to Jerusalem to spend their isolation period in one of the city’s motels designated for that use, but apparently refused to stay in separate rooms as per government directives.

Police said that as a result of the settlers' refusal to comply with regulations, an alternative was being sought for them in southern Israel, with a detention facility in the Negev being the most likely location.

On the way there under police escort, however, the youths started to riot, damaging the bus in which they were traveling.

Their police escort managed to subdue the youths and returned them to Jerusalem, leaving the question of where they would spend their isolation period to other officials.

The police said that after the isolation period is over, the youths will most likely face a police investigation due the damage they inflicted during their riot.

According to witnesses, the youths tried to escape the bus and were then detained, although the youths claimed that they were taken to a detention center for non reason.

Itamar Ben-Gvir, the lawyer for several of the youths, said: "The system's conduct is unclear. True, the boys should have gone into the motel, but they should still have been given food instead of being surrounded by policemen with clubs."

After having met with several of the youths, GOC Central Command- Major General Nadav Padan went into isolation in accordance with Health Ministry directives.

04.07.20 – Tu - - -

Israel on Passover lockdown & curfew 7pm Tuesday until Thursday morning

Modified to fit – Israel on Passover curfew 7pm Tuesday until Thursday morning

04.07.20 – Tu - - -

Israel on lockdown: Passover restrictions take effect

Nationwide restrictions include remaining within municipal boundaries, shopping for essential supplies in immediate vicinity only; country to be under full curfew from

Wednesday afternoon to Thursday morning, to deter movement on Seder Night

Ynet,News Agencies| Published: 04.07.20 , 19:19

A nationwide lockdown to last for the first few days of Passover has come into effect in Israel.

People will be restricted to their local communities until Friday morning as part of extended efforts to halt the spread of the coronavirus.

The lockdown began at 7pm Tuesday and includes a curfew from 3pm Wednesday until Thursday morning, to prevent people giving in to the temptation to visit family and friends on the first night of the Jewish festival, known as Seder Night.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced the planned lockdown on Monday, with sources initially saying it could last from Tuesday afternoon until Saturday evening. The cabinet, however, approved a draft that called for a shorter lockdown period.

Earlier Tuesday, the National Roads Authority reported heavy traffic on the country's roads, shortly before the new restrictions were to come into effect.

The state-owned company said that traffic density was up by 45% in comparison with the previous week, a trend that began on Monday, as rumors of the planned restrictions started surfacing in the media.

The nationwide lockdown essentially prevents most Israelis from leaving the municipal boundaries of their own cities, although they would be allowed to shop for essential

supplies in their communities close to their homes. They will also be allowed to walk their dogs up to 100m from their homes.

This is in contrast to the current guidelines that allow the public to stock up on food and medicine in stores and pharmacies that might not be closest to their place of residence. During that time, people will only be allowed to move between cities in extraordinary cases.

All public transport, including international and domestic flights, is halted during the lockdown. Taxi services are still operational, however.

The government said the holiday shopping ban would not apply to non-Jewish minorities.

Around a fifth of Israeli citizens are Arabs, mostly Muslims, Druze and Christians.

Also, due to the nationwide curfew set to be in place on Seder Night, food stores and pharmacies were to close at 3pm on Wednesday, at least three hours earlier than they usually close on the eve of the Passover.

In addition, an order requiring Israelis to wear surgical masks when going outside will officially go into effect on at 7am Sunday.

Israel has more than 9,000 confirmed cases of the coronavirus. At least 60 people have died.

Ahead of the holiday, IDF troops distributed some 50 tons of fruit and vegetables to residents of Bnei Brak, the ultra-Orthodox city that has been hit hard by the coronavirus and was sealed off last week, the military said Tuesday.

Around one third of Bnei Brak residents who were tested for the virus were found to have it, Israeli media have reported, citing Health Ministry data.

Many of the town's residents are poor and some have heeded rabbis who, distrusting the state, spurned anti-virus measures.

In a broadcast Passover benediction on Tuesday, Sephardi Chief Rabbi Shlomo Amar sought to reassure the country.

"May the Lord lift the dark and heavy cloud of this pestilence from over us," he said.

04.06.20 – Mo - - -

PM: Israel in lockdown for Passover holy days, confined to homes on Seder night

04.06.20 – Mo - - -

PM: Israel in lockdown for Passover holy days, confined to homes on Seder night

Netanyahu says holiday week crucial to maintain optimistic indicators that spread of coronavirus is slowing down, promises 10,000 tests a day and a gradual lifting of restrictions after eight-day festival ends

Itamar Eichner| Published: 04.06.20 , 22:07

The whole of Israel will be on a strict lockdown for the first few days of the Passover holiday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday night, as part of the measures to fight the spread of coronavirus.

He also said that there would be a full curfew on Wednesday night, to deter people who may be tempted to visit family and friends during the Jewish festival.

The prime minister said the nationwide lockdown would last from 4 pm Tuesday until 7 am Friday. The curfew will last from 6 pm Wednesday until 7 am Thursday, during which time people would be confined to their homes.

Speaking a televised address, Netanyahu urged Israelis to adhere to the restrictions, which he said would be enforced by police.

"It is important to protect your health and the health of your loved ones," he said. Netanyahu also paid tribute to the medical professionals, IDF soldiers and police officers who were working to keep Israelis safe, calling them "angels in white and angels in uniform."

The prime minister said there were some optimistic indications that the spread of the coronavirus has slowed down, but the holiday week is crucial to maintain that trajectory. The Passover holiday begins on Wednesday night and lasts for eight days and is traditionally a time to spend with loved ones.

Because of these optimistic indications, the prime minister said the government was preparing plans for Israel's exit from the crisis.

Those plans, he said, would breathe life back into the economy after a record-breaking NIS 90 billion package was approved by the government Sunday to assist small businesses and the unemployed.

He also called on urged Israelis to purchase Israeli-made products to help the local industry.

He said that despite difficulties along the supply chain that had delayed the increase in testing that he had promised, he believed there would be 10,000 tests conducted daily within a number of days, saying procurement efforts around the world continued for vital medical supplies.

Briefly turning to politics, Netanyahu said that despite the current stalemate with Blue & White, it was possible to reach an agreement on a unity government.

"I am convinced that we can reach a unity government," he said. "The way is not yet blocked. There are obstacles, but I believe that with goodwill, we can get there.

"We can get there soon, and we must. Unity is needed not just at the political level, but also within Israeli society."

He added: "I spoke earlier in the day with Russian President Vladimir Putin who praised the efforts we have been undertaking. I told Putin I had stepped away from a meeting with Benny Gantz and he said unity was very important for Israel."

The prime minister condemned the view expressed by many Israelis who singled out the ultra-Orthodox community for ignoring health guidelines and increasing the spread of coronavirus among the population.

04.06.20 – Mo - - -

Blue & White, Labor merger in the works

04.06.20 – Mo - - -

Blue & White, Labor merger in the works

Labor leader Amir Peretz says now newly dissolved union with left-wing Meretz was 'half hearted'; party MK slams him for decision, calling to resist move; Gantz and Netanyahu meet for further talks on unity

Ynet| Published: 04.06.20 , 18:26

The Knesset Arrangements Committee approved on Monday the breakup of the Labor-Meretz union, after Labor chairman Amir Peretz announced his effort to merge the party into Blue & White.

Peretz told the committee that the original merger was made to not lose voters for the center-left bloc and that it was made "half-heartedly."

"We [Labor and Meretz] don't see eye to eye on how to serve the citizens of Israel," Peretz said. "I don't downplay the importance of an opposition in a democratic state, but I have decided to examine the other possibilities we have to serve the public from within the government."

The Labor chairman earlier met with Blue & White Chief Benny Gantz, where the two agreed on working for a merger of the two parties.

The effort will be led by Blue & White MK Avi Nisenkorn and Labor MK Itzik Shmuli. MK Mirav Michaeli, the only other Labor lawmaker in Knesset, slammed Peretz's decision, saying that "just to fix up portfolios for Amir Peretz and Itzik Shmuli, you don't sell out the party of [David] Ben-Gurion, [Yitzhak] Rabin and [Shimon] Peres."

"I call upon all my colleagues in the party to resist this move. Our camp deserves good and proper leadership that keeps its promises and fights for the State of Israel," she said. Earlier Wednesday, Benny Gantz met with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at his official residence in Jerusalem for continued talks on a unity government between the two.

Blue & White and Likud, in a joint follow-up statement, said coalition talks are making progress.

"We will emphasize that the negotiations are underway and in good spirits, with the aim of establishing a national emergency government as quickly as possible," it said.

According to reports, the main sticking point in the coalition talks was Likud's insistence on veto power over the appointment of judges, with Blue & White willing to compromise on Israeli annexation of land in the West Bank.

Blue & White and Likud have reportedly come to an agreement regarding the government's policy toward annexation of parts of the West Bank under the aegis of the Trump administration's peace proposal.

According to the deal, the sides decided that, “the prime minister and acting prime minister will act with the full agreement of the U.S. and in talks with the international community while preserving strategic interests and peace deals.”

04.05.20 – Su - - -

50 passengers allowed entry to Israel signing a form declaring stay home-isolation

04.05.20 – Su - - -

Dozens allowed entry to Israel despite mandatory quarantine in state-run facilities

Travelers allowed entry into country after declaring they have option to self-isolate for next two weeks; passenger on plane says some returnees took taxi home upon leaving airport

Itay Blumenthal | Published: 04.05.20 , 21:15

Dozens of passengers arriving from the United States at Ben Gurion Airport on Sunday were allowed to enter the country despite a regulation requiring any person arriving in Israel amid the coronavirus outbreak to enter a quarantine period at a state-run facility.

According to new health regulations that came into effect overnight Sunday, all arrivals from overseas were supposed to be taken to isolation compounds operated by Home Front Command.

However, the travelers were greeted by Magen David Adom teams who checked them for coronavirus-related symptoms and then allowed entry into the country after signing a form declaring they will stay in home-isolation for the next two weeks.

"Everyone who had a place to self-isolate in Israel was allowed to enter," Danny, a passenger on the flight, told Ynet. "I didn't see anyone taken somewhere or told where they're supposed to be. It's funny because when I boarded the plane I was already preparing myself to be taken to a [state-run] hotel [for isolation of suspected virus carriers] and I was pretty glad they released us to self-isolate at home."

According to what I saw, everyone left the hall as usual. There were about 50 passengers on the plane, some drove home and some took a cab."

The flight in question, United Airlines flight UA90 that landed in Israel on Sunday shortly after 5pm, was the first to land in Israel after the new directive came into effect. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu instructed last week to transfer all travelers arriving from the U.S. to state-run isolation facilities, but another group of travelers was allowed entry last Wednesday. Some did not declare whether they had the option to self-isolate in Israel.

A Health Ministry order to detain the passengers at the airport until 8pm of that day was also ignored.

Defense Minister Naftali Bennett's office said in response that legal difficulties rose in transferring the returnees to hotels without signing a pre-authorization form because the prime minister's decision came after the plane had departed for Israel.

04.05.20 – Su - - -

4.3 magnitude earthquake rocks southern Israel along the Great Rift Valley

04.05.20 – Su - - -

4.3 magnitude earthquake rocks southern Israel

The Geophysical Institute of Israel reported the tremor's epicenter was some 100 km (62 miles) south of the city of Eilat along the Great Rift Valley; 'Storms, coronavirus and now earthquake, what else? The 10 plagues?' says one Eilat resident

Ynet| Published: 04.05.20 , 11:10

A 4.3 magnitude earthquake struck the southernmost city of Eilat on Sunday morning, according to The Geophysical Institute of Israel.

The Geophysical Institute said the earthquake's epicenter was some 100 km (62 miles) south of the city, in the Gulf of Eilat along the Syrian-African rift system, known as the Great Rift Valley.

"Storms, coronavirus and now earthquake, what else? The 10 plagues? God save us," said Galit Adler Malka, a resident of Eilat, who felt the earthquake.

Zehava Attia, another southernmost city resident, said she had been woken up by the shaking of the bed. "I did not understand what happened but my heart was pounding."

"I felt the bed shake," said another resident of Eilat, Roni Moyal. "At first, I hadn't realize what was happening, but by the time I had, I began thinking which lintel in the house is the most durable."

Israel was last hit by an earthquake on February 6, when 4 magnitude temblors were felt in the northern city of Haifa as well as in Jerusalem.

According to seismic expert Dr. Ron Avni of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, while the recent temblors weren't strong, it is proof that the Great Rift Valley (the edge of a tectonic plate running parallel to the Jordan River) is active, and a devastating quake could cause a lot damage in Israel in the foreseeable future.

Avni told Ynet last September that Israel experiences a massive quake approximately every 100 years, and the the last major temblor was on July 11, 1927 (a devastating event that caused innumerable damage and killed hundreds across the Jordan Valley), meaning that a major earthquake is expected to rip through the country in the near future.

"A rough estimate is that once every 100 years, devastating quakes occur across the rift," said Avni. "Government puts (the potential death toll) at about 7,000," he added.

"It depends where and when it happens. If, for example, it happens when most of the population is outside, there will be a rather smaller number of fatalities."

04.03.20 – Fr - - -

Israel to allow April 18 ancient Christian ritual of Holy Fire ceremony

04.03.20 – Fr - - -

Israel to help Christians share Holy Fire ceremony despite virus outbreak

Due to ban on mass gatherings, officials say April 18 ceremony at Church of Sepulchre will be limited to about 10 religious leaders from various Orthodox denominations, with a creative way to deliver flame to overseas communities

Associated Press| Published: 04.03.20 , 17:21

Israel is working with foreign governments and Orthodox Christian leaders in the Holy Land to make sure that one of their most ancient and mysterious rituals -- the Holy Fire ceremony -- is not extinguished by the coronavirus outbreak, officials said Friday.

Each year, thousands of worshippers flock to Jerusalem's Old City and pack into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre -- built on the site where Christian tradition holds that Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected -- for the pre-Easter ceremony.

Top Eastern Orthodox clerics enter the Edicule, the small chamber marking the site of Jesus' tomb, and exit with candles said to be miraculously lit with "holy fire" as a message to the faithful.

The flame is normally shared with candle-holding pilgrims and even sent in special containers to Orthodox Christian communities around the world.

Details of the flame's source are a closely guarded secret.

Due to a ban on large public gatherings this year because of the virus pandemic, officials say the April 18 ceremony will be limited to about 10 religious leaders from various Orthodox denominations. They have also developed a creative way to deliver the flame to overseas communities.

Because anyone entering Israel must go into quarantine, foreign dignitaries coming to pick up the flame will receive it on their plane and immediately return home.

The coronavirus causes mild to moderate symptoms in most patients, who recover within a few weeks. But it is highly contagious and can be spread by people showing no symptoms. It can cause serious illness and death in some patients, particularly the elderly and those with underlying health issues.

Akiva Tor, who heads the Foreign Ministry's department for world religions, said the arrangement has been discussed with local church leaders and coordinated with several foreign countries with large Orthodox populations, including Greece, Russia, Georgia and Ukraine.

Tor said church officials have been understanding.

"We have the same goal in mind, which is to enable the continuation of this miraculous event while being respectful of the medical emergency which is taking place," he said.

World News

04.10.20 – Fr - - -

Global death toll hits 100,000, with over 1.6 million COVID-19 cases

04.10.20 – Fr - - -

Global coronavirus death toll hits 100,000, cases over 1.6 million

North America now accounts for more than 30% of cases, Europe has reported a disproportionate number of fatalities, as countries with older populations like Spain and Italy have been severely affected

Reuters| Published: 04.10.20 , 21:44

The number of deaths linked to the novel coronavirus reached 100,000 on Friday, as the tally of cases passed 1.6 million, according to a Reuters tally.

The first death came in the central Chinese city of Wuhan on Jan. 9. It took 83 days for the first 50,000 deaths to be recorded and just eight more for the toll to climb to 100,000.

The toll has been accelerating at a daily rate of between 6% and 10% over the past week, and there were almost 7,300 deaths globally reported on Thursday.

The death toll now compares with that of London's Great Plague in the mid-1660s, which killed an estimated 100,000 people, about a third of the city's population at the time.

But it is still far short of the so-called Spanish flu, which began in 1918 and is estimated to have killed more than 20 million people by the time it petered out in 1920.

The novel coronavirus is believed to have emerged in a Wuhan market where wild animals were sold late last year. It quickly spread through China and around the world. Much remains to be determined about it, including just how lethal it is. Estimates vary widely.

Friday's figures - 100,000 deaths of out 1.6 million cases - would suggest a fatality rate of 6.25% but many experts believe the actual rate is lower given that many mild and asymptomatic cases, when infected people don't show symptoms, are not included in case totals.

Some countries, including Italy, France, Algeria, the Netherlands, Spain, and Britain are reporting that more than 10% of all confirmed cases have been fatal.

One of the largest studies of the fatality of the disease, involving 44,000 patients in China, has put the rate at about 2.9%.

The same study reported that 93% of recorded fatalities were people over the age of 50, and more than half were over 70.

Despite that, there are growing numbers of young adults and teenagers included in the global toll.

While North America now accounts for more than 30% of cases, Europe has reported a disproportionate number of fatalities, as countries with older populations like Spain and Italy have been severely affected.

Southern Europe alone accounts for more than a third of global deaths, despite recording just 20% of cases.

In many countries, official data includes only deaths reported in hospitals, not those in homes or nursing homes.