

Ynet-News, April 29, 2020 – Wednesday

04.29.20 – We - - - News

Israel sees spike in Jerusalem students COVID cases since Passover holiday

04.29.20 – We - - -

Flybys and founding fathers: Israel's lock-down Independence Day

04.28.20 – Tu - - - News

Israel celebrates 72 years of independence amid virus lockdown

04.28.20 – Tu - - -

200,000 tune in for joint Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day ceremony

04.27.20 – Mo - - -

Arab League to discuss Israel's plans Thursday to annex West Bank

04.28.20 – Tu - - -

Hillary Clinton endorses Joe Biden for November 3 presidential election

04.28.20 – Tu - - - News Placed in Apr 29 spot – Thursday

Virus found in pet dogs & cats, tigers & lions tested positive in Bronx Zoo

04.28.20 – Tu - - -

UK on track to become one of Europe's worst hit in COVID-19 pandemic

04.22.20 – We - - -

Dinner on a doorstep: reaching the Middle East's vulnerable in lockdown Ramadan

04.29.20

Israel sees spike in Jerusalem students COVID cases since Passover holiday

04.29.20

Israel sees spike in COVID-19 cases since Passover holiday

Haredi cities and neighborhoods have the highest increase of new cases of coronavirus while cities that observe health ministry directives reported a much lower number of confirmed patients

Yaron Drukman, Adir Yanko | Updated: 04.29.20 , 23:20

The Health Ministry reported on Wednesday that since April 12, 4,904 more cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed, more than half of them in Jerusalem and Bnei Brak, representing a rise of 45.1%.

The capital has seen the largest number of new cases with 1,462 confirmed in the past 18 days. This is a 74.6% increase in COVID-19 patients while some ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods in the city have been under partial closure and travel restrictions.

In Bnei Brak, 1,007 new cases were detected. A rise of 55.7% while other Haredi cities also saw an increase higher than the national average.

One such city is Beit Shemesh where police on Wednesday detained the managers of a religious school after 40 students were found studying on the premises despite government directives to close all educational institutions. There the rise in numbers in that city represented a 130% increase.

Other hotspots with rising numbers of cases were Deir al Asad in the north with 146 new cases, up from 6 and Hura in the South with 66 new cases up from zero.

The town of Netivot, near Sderot saw a 193% spike in new cases since mid-April.

In cities where Health Ministry directives have been adhered to such as Tel Aviv and Modi'in, the rise in new COVID-19 patients was much lower.

The number of tests now conducted around Israel remains around the 10,000 per day despite earlier assurances that that number would increase to 30,000.

For the first time since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in Israel, the total number of Israelis who recovered from coronavirus exceeded the number of active patients, the Health Ministry reported on Wednesday.

04.29.20

Flybys and founding fathers: Israel's lock-down Independence Day

04.29.20

Flybys and founding fathers: Israel's lock-down Independence Day

An Air Force display was dedicated to health workers, while musicians and performers sought to honor the generation of the country's founders by performing outside geriatric care facilities and retirement homes

Ynet| Updated: 04.29.20 , 18:08

The Israel Air Force (IAF) devoted its annual flyby to health workers with planes crisscrossing the nation and performing aerial acrobatics over hospitals and medical centers on Wednesday as Israelis remained at home under government restrictions aimed at fighting the spread of coronavirus.

Doctors and nurses, many wearing face masks, gathered on the rooftop of Holon's Wolfson Medical Center and waved Israeli flags.

"We wish for you and all the citizens of Israel robust and vigorous health and a happy Independence Day," one of the squadron pilots said in a message to health workers. Medical teams wave at a flyby in their honor outside the Sheba Medical Center near Tel Aviv

Musicians and entertainers paid tribute to the founders of the country, now the elderly and most vulnerable sector.

Residents of a retirement home in Rishon LeZion were surprised when musicians from the city's symphony orchestra, some standing on top a fire engine and some even lifted by crane performed for them while they were sheltering in place.

In the Mish'an retirement facility in Beer- Sheva, where 14 residents have already died from COVID-19, a sing-along with an old favorite, Sara Sharon, brought holiday cheer. Other events were to be broadcast online, with no live audience.

Local authorities across the country sought to replace the lavish traditional Independence Day events which feature live shows, street parties, and fireworks and may lead Israelis to gather in masses.

Some municipalities operated mobile stages that traveled down the streets and neighborhoods of their communities and blasted music as cheering citizens watched gleefully from their balconies.

A nationwide lockdown was imposed on Israel's cities and towns Tuesday evening in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19.

Traditional barbecues in local parks have been banned by the Health Ministry, while most municipalities canceled all firework shows, deeming it "inappropriate" at the time of the epidemic.

Police set up 44 checkpoints across the country Tuesday afternoon ahead of the nationwide lockdown, which took effect at 5pm and is set to expire Wednesday 8pm, as part of government measures meant to curb coronavirus. Supermarkets were to remain closed as well throughout the lockdown.

As of Wednesday morning, there were 15,782 confirmed coronavirus cases in Israel, while 212 patients have succumbed to the virus.

Among the latest figures, are 120 people are in serious condition, four more than in the previous 24 hours, with 91 patients needing ventilator support.

04.28.20

## Israel celebrates 72 years of independence amid virus lockdown

04.28.20

### Israel celebrates 72 years of independence amid virus lockdown

Celebrations at Jerusalem's Mt Herzl have been majorly scaled down with the event taking place without an audience and most parts prerecorded; Benjamin Netanyahu and Benjamin Gantz, as he was called during ceremony, praise the resilience of Israeli people during epidemic

Ynet| Published: 04.28.20 , 21:23

Celebrations of Israel's 72st Independence Day began at Jerusalem's Mt Herzl late Tuesday with a traditional Torch-Lighting Ceremony, but this year without an audience and with most parts of the show pre-recorded, as the country battles coronavirus epidemic.

Earlier in the day a nationwide lockdown was imposed on Israel's cities and towns in an effort to curb the spread of COVID-19. Traditional barbecues in local parks have been banned by the Health Ministry, while most municipalities cancelled all firework shows, deeming it "inappropriate" at the time of the epidemic.

The ceremony kicked off with a video message from Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who said that Israel has never seen an Independence Day as the one this year. "Physically we are apart, we we're as close as we've ever been," he said. "Over the past few weeks, we have faced a historic test, we made decisions, taken steps and we have done it all together. We protected our moms and dads, grandmas and grandpas - because we have all internalized that in the coronavirus era, love is expressed by distance," he added.

"A day will come and embraces will come back into our lives, but we are not there yet because the epidemic is still here and the directives must be observed."

Speaker of the Knesset Benjamin Gantz, as he was called during the ceremony, also addressed the audience.

"We've been dealing with hard times, and we must prepare for even harder ones," he said. "For seven decades, there were tangible enemies that emerged and defined for us the common ethos of an existential struggle. The security forces are on the lookout, and I salute them.

"Now, we face an enemy we do not know. An enemy that does not differentiate among Jews, Arabs, Druze, Circassians, Haredi, religious, secular, right or left-wing," he added.

Gantz lit the first of the 12 torches, which symbolize the Twelve Tribes of Israel, followed by Israeli singer and songwriter Idan Raichel, who burst in tears out of excitement.

Another torch was lit by Prof. Galia Rahav-Rakover, a doctor who heads the department of infectious diseases at the Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer.

“I carry this torch in honor of my colleagues and friends - doctors, lab workers, medical researchers, and all the support staff of the Israeli health system, who over the recent weeks have been on the front line in the fight against the coronavirus,” she said.

The ceremony was followed by performances from Israel's top musicians, including Noa Kirel, Eden Hasson, Shiri Maimon and Itay Levy. At the end, the hosts urged Israeli public to continue the celebrations from their homes and balconies.

04.28.20

200,000 tune in for joint Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day ceremony

04.28.20

200,000 tune in for joint Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day ceremony

Online vigil broadcast from Tel Aviv and Ramallah calls for peace and reconciliation and features grieving family members from both sides of conflict; 'Our pain is the same,' says father of Palestinian killed in 2000

Itay Blumenthal | Published: 04.28.20 , 12:47

Bereaved Israeli and Palestinian families made an impassioned call for reconciliation and peace on Monday evening during a joint virtual Memorial Day ceremony viewed by nearly 200,000 people.

The Israeli-Palestinian Joint Memorial Day Ceremony was held without an in-person audience for the first time since its inception in 2006 due to the coronavirus, and instead was live-streamed from studios in Tel Aviv and Ramallah.

An Israeli host broadcast from the event's usual location in Tel Aviv in Hebrew and a Palestinian host hosted from Ramallah in Arabic.

UN Special Middle East envoy Nikolay Mladenov addressed the ceremony, thanking the participants and calling them “an inspiration to all of us.”

“We've seen operation, we've seen confrontation, but what we really need to see is Palestinians and Israelis coming together. Not just to fight the virus, but to fight for peace,” he said.

Speakers included Israelis Hagai Yoel and Tal Kfir, and Palestinians Yusra Mahfoud and Yaqoub Rabi — all of whom lost relatives in the past two decades of the conflict.

Yoel, whose brother Eyal was killed in Jenin during Operation Defensive Shield in 2002, addressed controversy surrounding the ceremony on both sides of the conflict for its equating of the victims on each side.

In 2016, far-right activists subjected ceremony attendees to verbal and physical harassment at a demonstration outside the event.

“After Eyal's death, I covered my ears, I closed my eyes and I shut my mouth,” Yoel said.

"I didn't feel I had anything of significance to say, until four years ago when I heard about the violent demonstrations against bereaved families at this ceremony — a ceremony which until that point I really did not identify with," he said.

"Something stirred in me. Something inside me revolted over the thought that [Israel's] defense minister believed that he could decide for me how I choose to remember Eyal," Yoel said, apparently referring to calls from right-wing activists for then-defense minister Moshe Ya'alon to scrap the event.

The ceremony has been an annual point of contention, particularly among the Israeli public, with critics accusing it of legitimizing terrorism and equating Israel's fallen soldiers to those who attacked them.

Supporters say it represents an effort by those who have lost the most in the conflict to give meaning to the deaths of their loved ones by turning away from violence.

Palestinian speaker Mahfoud spoke on behalf of the Parents Circle-Families Forum grassroots organization of bereaved families. The group organized Monday's ceremony along with **Combatants for Peace**, which is made up of **Palestinians and Israelis who say they have taken part in the conflict's cycle of violence**. Combatants for Peace said the event was **broadcast** by some **45 online channels**.

"At first I rejected the possibility of sitting face to face with the enemy who murdered my son, but today I came as an active member of the Forum. They taught me that their pain is the same as mine," Mahfoud said.

"I want to address all the Israeli mothers watching," said Mahfoud, whose son was shot dead by IDF troops in the al-Arroub refugee camp near Hebron in 2000.

"Bereavement is bereavement. Let us educate our children against violence... May we all live in peace."

Jerusalem resident Tal Kfir, whose sister Yael was killed in a 2003 terrorist attack in Tsrifin, called on the bereaved families listening to do everything in their power to prevent others from enduring the "disasters" that they had experienced.

"Ensure that no one gets torn apart like we were torn apart. Ensure that we don't live in a world of defeat, elimination, wiping out and conquering, but one in which we help and hold each other," Kfir said.

The last bereaved family member to speak was Yakoub Rabi, whose wife Aisha was killed in 2018 when a rock allegedly hurled by an Israeli teen struck her in the head while she was driving with her husband and 9-year-old daughter in the northern West Bank.

Describing the terror attack's impact on his family, Rabi said that after he buried his wife, his daughter who had witnessed the attack "took her colorful clothes out of the closet and to this day one knows where she hid them."

Still, Rabi preached against vengeance. "I am not a man of conflict. I have never taken part in the struggle, and even today, after paying such a high price, I will not let the anger in me lead me to seek revenge."

"I want to convey to Israeli society and the world a message stemming from my deep, bleeding wound: This conflict has taken victims from all of us, and it does not distinguish between combatants and civilians, between men and women, between adults and children," he said.

"So I say to you: Enough hatred and resentment. Let's live in peace and love because we [Palestinians],

04.27.20

Arab League to discuss Israel's plans Thursday to annex West Bank

04.27.20

Arab League to discuss Israel's plans to annex West Bank

22-member organization to convene emergency meeting as its head accuses Israel of exploiting the world's preoccupation with the coronavirus in order to 'impose a new reality on the ground' in territory captured in 1967

AFP, Ynet | Published: 04.27.20 , 19:55

The Arab League said Monday it will convene an urgent virtual meeting this week to discuss how to galvanize opposition to Israeli plans to annex parts of the occupied West Bank.

The extraordinary meeting scheduled for Thursday at the request of the Palestinian leadership will bring together Arab foreign ministers via video conference, rather than a face-to-face meeting, due to the global coronavirus pandemic.

The Arab League's deputy secretary Hossam Zaki said the ministers will "discuss in their virtual meeting providing political, legal and financial support to the Palestinian leadership to confront the Israeli plans."

It comes after Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his political rival Benny Gantz of Blue & White signed a deal for a unity government that could accelerate plans to annex parts of the West Bank in the coming months.

Those plans, while subject to caveats including the need to maintain "regional stability" and uphold the peace agreement with Jordan, have drawn wide criticism including from the United Nations and the European Union.

Netanyahu said Sunday that he is "confident" Israel will apply its sovereignty over its settlements in the West Bank and the Jordan Valley in "a few months from now." President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu during peace plan reveal

Arab League chief Ahmed Ahmed Aboul Gheit had last week sent a message to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warning against Israel's plans saying they risk "igniting tension" in the region.

He also accused Israel of "exploiting the world's preoccupation with the novel coronavirus to impose a new reality on the ground."

Israel captured the West Bank in the 1967 Six-Day War and has since extended its control by expanding its settlements there.

On Wednesday, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said a decision regarding the annexation of West Bank territories was up to Israel's new unity government.

Earlier this year, the U.S. unveiled Donald Trump's long-awaited and controversial Middle East peace plan that would allow Israel to retain control of the contested city of Jerusalem as its "undivided capital" and annex settlements.

Arab states rejected Trump's plan, saying it favored Israel and failed to grant Palestinians their basic rights.

The Palestinians, as well as the EU, have likewise criticized the plan, saying it effectively closes the door to a two-state solution.

04.28.20

Hillary Clinton endorses Joe Biden for November 3 presidential election

04.28.20

Hillary Clinton endorses Joe Biden's presidential bid

Former presidential candidate becomes the latest democrat to back the 77-year-old former vice president's White House bid; 'This is a moment that we need a leader, a president like Joe Biden,' she said

Reuters| Published: 04.28.20 , 22:41

Former U.S. presidential candidate Hillary Clinton endorsed fellow Democrat Joe Biden's campaign for the office she once sought on Tuesday.

"This is a moment that we need a leader, a president like Joe Biden," she said during a joint event online with the former vice president.

The endorsement, while no surprise, marks the latest in a series of high-profile Democrats lining up behind Biden ahead of what is expected to be a tight Nov. 3 election rematch between their party and Republican President Donald Trump.

Clinton, a onetime U.S. secretary of state, former senator from New York and wife of past President Bill Clinton, lost the 2016 presidential race against Trump in an election that is still the source of anger and consternation among many liberals who expected to elect the first female president but also wrestled with whether they chose the right candidate.

The endorsement came at a Biden campaign town hall focused on the impacts of the novel coronavirus on women, who are expected to play a critical role in the most competitive swing states in the election. Biden introduced Clinton as the woman who should be president now.

Biden is already his party's presumptive nominee after his rivals dropped out, including Senator Bernie Sanders, who bitterly clashed with Clinton when they contested their party's 2016 primary.

Biden was Barack Obama's vice president, and Clinton his first secretary of state. Both simultaneously considered presidential runs, but Biden ultimately decided against

mounting a campaign then as he grieved over the death of his son Beau. Obama endorsed Biden's current campaign two weeks ago.

Trump's campaign manager, Brad Parscale, said in a statement, "There is no greater concentration of Democrat establishment than Joe Biden and Hillary Clinton together. President Trump beat her once and now he'll beat her chosen candidate."

04.28.20

Virus found in pet dogs & cats, tigers & lions tested positive in Bronx Zoo

04.28.20

Coronavirus social distancing rules apply to pets, CDC says

After 2 New York cats tested positive for COVID-19, U.S. health officials urge owners to treat pets as 'family members,' by keeping them indoors, maintaining 2-meter distance on walks and not letting them interact from anyone outside households

Ynet| Published: 04.28.20 , 17:56

Health officials in the United States on Tuesday urged pet owners to take precaution and treat their pets like "family members," including applying social distancing rules in order to avoid them contracting coronavirus.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention issued the statement after two cats from New York tested positive for COVID-19 last week, becoming the first pets in the U.S. to be infected with the pathogen.

The cats, from separate areas of New York state, had mild respiratory illness and were expected to make a full recovery. It is believed that they contracted the virus from people in their households or neighborhoods.

According to the CDC, owners must follow four recommendations in an effort to keep their pets out of harm's way since COVID-19 testing for animals is a very invasive procedure and should not be conducted on a regular basis.

The recommendations include not letting pets interact with people outside their respective households, keeping them indoors, maintaining social distancing while going on walks and avoiding dog parks or public places.

In addition, four more tigers and three lions tested positive for coronavirus at New York's Bronx Zoo, bringing the zoo's total to eight. The zoo reported its first case of COVID-19 on April 15 when a tiger named Nadia tested positive for the pathogen.

04.28.20

UK on track to become one of Europe's worst hit in COVID-19 pandemic

04.28.20

UK on track to become one of Europe's worst hit in COVID-19 pandemic

Discrepancies in reporting shows that far more people have died from COVID-19 in Britain when counting fatalities outside of hospitals in England and Wales, with the death toll already topping 20,000 by April 17

Reuters| Published: 04.28.20 , 15:16

Britain is on track to become one of Europe's worst-hit countries in the coronavirus pandemic, according to data on Tuesday that showed deaths from COVID-19 had already topped 20,000 by April 17, including a fast-rising toll in care homes.

The Office for National Statistics said the death toll involving COVID-19 in England and Wales was 52% higher than the daily figures for deaths in hospitals released by the government as of April 17, according to official data that include deaths in the community.

A member of the military tests a person at a coronavirus test centre in the car park of Chessington World of Adventures, Chessington, Britain

A member of British Army tests a person at a coronavirus test center in the car park of a fairground in Chessington, near London (Photo: Reuters)

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) said 21,284 people overall had died as of April 17 with mentions of COVID-19, the respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus, on their death certificates.

That was some 52% higher than the 13,917 people who died in hospitals, as published by the government on April 18.

That takes the United Kingdom's total death toll as of April 17 beyond those reported by France - which also includes deaths in care homes - and Spain, according to Reuters calculations, though lower than Italy's total toll.

A trebling of deaths in care homes in England and Wales within the space of a few weeks contributed to a far higher toll.

The ONS said that overall 7,316 people had died in care homes overall during the 16th week of 2020, almost treble the number reported in the 13th week.

According to figures released by the health ministry on Monday, 21,092 people had died in hospitals across the United Kingdom after testing positive for COVID-19.

04.22.20

Dinner on a doorstep: reaching the Middle East's vulnerable in lockdown Ramadan

04.22.20

Dinner on a doorstep: reaching the Middle East's vulnerable in lockdown Ramadan

As some 320 million Muslims face enforced separation at a time when socializing is almost sacred, region's countries and communities find new ways to reach those in need  
Reuters| Published: 04.22.20 , 22:18

Ramadan is a time of year when homeless and isolated people in the Middle East can count on hot meals and friendly conversations with strangers.

Many could experience neither this Ramadan because of coronavirus lockdowns. And those who do will depend on volunteers willing to risk their health to reach the vulnerable.

Shuttered mosques, curfews, and bans on mass prayers from Iraq to Morocco have overshadowed Islam's holiest month which begins on Thursday.

Some 320 million Muslims in countries like Iran and Tunisia will face enforced separation at a time when socializing is almost sacred.

Restrictions on gatherings have forced those organizing community iftars - the evening meal in which Muslims break their fast - to find new ways to reach those in need from Syrian refugees to laid-off migrant workers in Gulf Arab states.

In the United Arab Emirates, where summer temperatures climb above 50 degrees, Ramadan fridges stocked by residents are normally placed in car parks and shopping malls allowing laborers to grab food and drinks as needed. Not this year.

Roadside Ramadan tables that would groan under the weight of samosas and meat dishes for passersby unable to afford their own meals are banned in many North African countries to curb the virus.

In Egypt, where ten million people live in slums and survive on the streets, the meals can be a lifeline.

"I went through one Ramadan while I was on the street and thank God I managed to fast," said 40-year-old Hamdi Ali of the homeless Cairo charity, Together to Save a Human.

"There were kind souls who would come to me at iftar and give me food. There were Ramadan tables where I could eat, and a mosque where I could go to use the bathroom. This year will be harder for homeless people than ever before," Ali said.

Across the Arab world, people are using hashtags like #Feed\_Your\_Brother to encourage others to help the hungry and to leave home-cooked Ramadan meals on their doorsteps for the homeless.

In Morocco, dozens of informal workers renting rooms in the southern city of Inezgane found themselves living on the streets when coronavirus measures forced their employers to close shop.

A local homeless charity acted fast: turning a disused gym hall into a shelter to house the workers during Ramadan.

"With transport halted, they weren't able to return to their own cities so we rounded them up and gave them shelter, medical care, and other basic needs," said Ibrahim Naja, president of the Association for Good.

Others are turning to bicycles with hundreds of volunteers in Cairo heading out on donated bikes to deliver meals to those in need in the Arab World's largest city.

Beyond cities, travel restrictions make reaching people in remote farming villages nearly impossible.

Hurghada Gives, an Egyptian charity that organizes donations to poor rural families, is headquartered in a seaside city where well-stocked supermarkets prepare Ramadan donation bundles containing rice, sugar, and pasta.

But the communities the group serves are a five-hour drive down highways that are blocked by police.

"Ramadan traditionally has been very busy for us - unfortunately not this year," said founder Zoe Shutler.

Millions in the Middle East living on the edge of poverty will depend on neighbors and friends to get by, said Alaa Hamed, founder of New Life, an online movement that helps Egypt's homeless.

"There are people who would rather have a free meal instead of spending they could save for other necessities," said Hamed.

"Poverty is so widespread these days, there are people who will rummage through garbage to eat. But Ramadan brings out people's kindness - everyone will do something to help."