

Ynet-News, May 20, 2020 – Monday

05.20.20 – We - - - News

PA issued a timetable to end security ties with Israel for Jihad activity

05.20.20 – We - - - News

UN France is working a plan for prevention and reprisal to Israel annexation

05.20.20 – We - - -

Court rejects PM's request to skip opening hearing of graft trial

05.20.20 – We - - - News

150 Israeli schoolgirls in fierce heatwave don shorts to protest dress code

05.20.20 – We - - -

Netanyahu's trial could last years or end up in a plea deal

05.20.20 – We - - - News

Abbas: PA declared absolved, as of today, of all agreements with Israel & US

05.19.20 – Tu - - -

Iranians clamor for Israel asylum, with no way to help these people

05.19.20 – Tu - - - News

70% of virus cases in Israel originated from US flights who disobeyed guidelines

05.19.20 – Tu - - - News Placed in May 20 spot – Wednesday

Palestinians received unexpected 14-tons of medical aid from first UAE flight

Overwriting May-20

American Israel Committee AIPAC stands with Democrats, opposing Trump peace plans

05.19.20 – Tu - - - News

Trump freeze of WHO funding for a sad job of handling virus disinformation

05.20.20 – We - - - News

Khamenei & Iran will support any nation or group who fights the Zionist regime

05.17.20 – Mo - - -

Unknown warplanes strike east Syria-Iraq border & kill 7 Iran fighters

05.20.20 – We - - -

PA textbooks incite violence, martyrdom, erasing Israel; under EU fund pressure

05.20.20

PA amends educational curriculum under EU pressure

Several European national governments convey opposition to incitement, anti-Semitic materials in textbooks; officials stress development of curricula would be 'independent Palestinian national decision'

i24NEWS| Published: 05.20.20 , 22:40

The Palestinian Authority (PA) cabinet has agreed to amend the educational curriculum in Palestinian schools on Monday, following pressure from the European Union and national European governments.

PA Education Minister Prof. Marwan Awartani provided a detailed report to a Cabinet meeting on the new proposed curricula and plans for their development, which emphasized the need for the "preservation and protection of the curricula as based in a sovereign Palestinian matter... as they relate to the Palestinian narrative and identity, and the strategic directions of the state, including the Declaration of Independence," according to a report in The Jerusalem Post.

An Arabic-language briefing on the council's website about the meeting stressed that any developments of the curricula would be an "independent Palestinian national decision." The PA's decision comes less than a week after the European Parliament passed a resolution criticizing "problematic materials" in Palestinian textbooks.

The European Union first announced last year it will scrutinize new Palestinian textbooks for content that incites hate and violence, out of concern that EU aid funds are being used to promote hatred.

The announcement followed an investigation and campaign by Israeli-based NGO IMPACT-se (Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education), which has been highly critical of the content in Palestinian textbooks.

CEO Marcus Sheff welcomed the Palestinian decision but warned that it may just as well be a facade to distract donor states. news, but sounded words of caution, "The question remains as to whether we will see the change in the textbooks that the donor countries are demanding and Palestinian schoolchildren need, or whether it is a further tactic to appease European donor states and play for time," quoted in the Post.

The Palestinian curriculum has frequently been criticized for rabid anti-Semitism, glorifying martyrdom, erasing mention of peace agreements, and wiping Israel off the map.

05.20.20 – We - - -

PA issued a timetable to end security ties with Israel for Jihad activity

05.20.20

Palestinian officials: security ties with Israel will end

Senior sources say Palestinians work timetable for end of security cooperation between Ramallah and Jerusalem as latter promotes plans to extend sovereignty over West Bank lands

Elior Levy | Published: 05.20.20 , 21:22

Palestinian Authority (PA) is expected to end the security cooperation with Israel following leader Mahmoud Abbas' Tuesday night announcement, senior Palestinian officials said on Wednesday.

Abbas announced late Tuesday night that Ramallah will no longer be bound by agreements it has signed with Israel and the United States.

Abbas made the announcement during an emergency meeting of the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah to coordinate the PA's response to Israel's declared intentions to extend its sovereignty over West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley.

According to the officials, the security ties between Ramallah and Jerusalem will continue as usual for now, but a timetable for its end will be set during a Thursday meeting between PA Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh and senior Palestinian security officials.

The officials added that Abbas intends to cut all talks and meetings with Israeli officials immediately and that an announcement on the matter will be relayed to Israel after Thursday's meeting.

The officials did reassure that even if the security ties are severed, Palestinian security forces will continue to operate against Hamas forces, who are expected to take advantage of the political situation to strengthen and bring the West Bank's populace to their side.

The PA had issued a similar threat during the 2017 Temple Mount Riots, all the while bolstering its activity against Hamas and Islamic Jihad in the West Bank.

Related Search Topics

05.20.20 – We - - -

UN France is working a plan for prevention and reprisal to Israel annexation

05.20.20

Israel must abandon annexation threat, says UN Mideast envoy

Mladenov urges Security Council to act against actions which will hinder peace process; French Foreign Minister states France is working on joint European action plan should such move be made

Reuters | Published: 05.20.20 , 19:25

Israel must abandon its intention to extend its sovereignty over parts of the West Bank, the UN Middle East envoy said on Wednesday, branding such a plan as a serious violation of international law that would "close the door to a renewal of negotiations."

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said cabinet discussions would begin on July 1 on his plan to extend Israeli sovereignty to territory Palestinians want for their own state. There is no publicly stated deadline for the execution of the move.

"The continuing threat of annexation by Israel of parts of the West Bank would constitute a most serious violation of international law, deal a devastating blow to the two-state solution, close the door to a renewal of negotiations," UN Middle East envoy Nickolay Mladenov told the Security Council.

"Israel must abandon its threat of annexation. And the Palestinian leadership to re-engage with all members of the quartet," he said, referring to the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations.

Mladenov urged the 15-member council to back a push by UN chief Antonio Guterres against unilateral steps that would hinder diplomatic efforts to renew negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Such a statement by the council is unlikely as it has to be agreed by consensus and the United States traditionally shields its ally Israel from any action.

"This council cannot dictate the end to this conflict. We can only encourage the parties to sit down together to determine how they wish to make progress," U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Kelly Craft said.

The Palestinians have rejected a peace plan by U.S. President Donald Trump's administration.

Mladenov urged the quartet to "come forward with a proposal that will enable the quartet to take up its mediation role."

Also on Wednesday, French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian stated that a partial annexation of the West Bank would be a serious violation, adding that France is working with European partners to come up with a joint action plan for prevention and reprisal should Israel make such a move.

05.20.20 – We - - -

Court rejects PM's request to skip opening hearing of graft trial

05.20.20

Court rejects PM's request to skip opening hearing of graft trial

Judges insist defendants must be present for readout of charges against them, as is procedure; PM's confidants concede and say he will attend his trial on Sunday

Yael Freidson, Itamar Eichner | Published: 05.20.20 , 18:12

The Jerusalem District Court on Wednesday rejected a request by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's legal defense team to exempt the premier from appearing in front of the court at the opening hearing of his criminal trial due this Sunday.

Judges argued the law requires defendants to be present for the readout of the charges against them.

Netanyahu's attorneys argued that he has already read and understood the charges against him, and therefore may be excused from announcing it publicly in court.

The court insisted that this a standard part of every procedure and that the premier's attendance at the hearing is necessary.

The judges have noted that the law does allow a defendant to be absent from the hearing, but the prime minister's case did not meet the criteria to allow such an exception.

Netanyahu, who is constantly surrounded by five bodyguards, claimed that the court will not be able to adhere to Health Ministry's social distancing guidelines due to his extensive security detail and that exempting him from the hearing will save the taxpayer the massive costs involved in securing his arrival to the court.

The court dismissed the claim and instructed the relevant authorities to prepare the court hall to meet both the Health Ministry's coronavirus guidelines and Netanyahu's security demands.

Netanyahu's confidants announced later Wednesday that the prime minister will attend his trial on Sunday.

The prime minister is being investigated in three separate cases: Case 1000 concerns illicit gifts Netanyahu allegedly received from business moguls Arnon Milchan and James Packer.

Case 2000 concerns alleged discussions Netanyahu and Yedioth Ahronoth publisher Arnon Mozes had over a quid pro quo of positive media for the prime minister in return for Netanyahu weakening Yedioth's main rival newspaper Israel Hayom.

05.20.20 – We - - -

150 Israeli schoolgirls in fierce heatwave don shorts to protest dress code

05.20.20

Israeli schoolgirls don shorts to protest 'sexist' dress code

Hundreds of female students in Ra'anana, Kfar Saba, Gedera, Modi'in and other cities wait outside for hours as they're barred from entering school and even threatened with suspension after they break dress code in protest

Ro'i Rubinstein, Raanan Ben Tzur | Published: 05.20.20 , 14:59

Hundreds of female students were barred from entering schools across Israel on Wednesday after putting on short shorts in protest over discriminative and sexist dress code.

The protest comes after a group of girls from from the Alon Middle School in Ra'anana in central Israel were barred on Monday from entering school grounds because they were wearing shorts, despite the fierce heatwave hitting the country.

The protest began in Ra'anana where the initial incident occurred and spread to the central cities of Kfar Saba, Modi'in, Gedera and others. On Tuesday, dozens of school girls from The Hefer Valley Regional Council arrived at school wearing short shorts in protest and had been banned from entering the premises.

Some 150 students from Darca Menachem Begin High School in Gedera who initially had been barred from entering their classrooms, were allowed to rejoin their classmates after persistently waiting outside for three hours.

"The feeling is that we have won," 10th grader, Netael Barak, told Ynet. "We've been called for a meeting with the school principal on Sunday and we have already received letters warning us about a suspension," she added.

"Will they suspend 150 girls? I don't know. But the issue is on the agenda and they're talking about it."

Sixteen-year-old Shira Bendelman from Yitzhak Navon School in Modi'in said she and her classmates had been told to go home and change, but they waited outside the school grounds for hours.

"Every year we talk to the management [about the dress code] who only laugh at our faces," she said. "A lot of teachers didn't even understand what we were doing."

05.20.20 – We - - -

Netanyahu's trial could last years or end up in a plea deal

05.20.20

Ahead of opening hearing: Why is Netanyahu facing trial?

In-depth: Although bribery charges carry a sentence of up to 10 years in jail plus fine, it's unlikely that PM's fate will be known anytime soon as the trial could last years or end up in a plea deal entirely

Reuters| Published: 05.20.20 , 12:57

A week after being sworn into office for a fifth term, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will go on trial on May 24, charged with corruption.

WHAT ARE THE CHARGES AGAINST NETANYAHU?

Bribery, fraud and breach of trust. Netanyahu, 70, was indicted in three criminal cases last November. He denies all wrongdoing.

CASE 4000 alleges that Netanyahu granted regulatory favours worth around 1.8 billion shekels (about \$500 million) to Israeli telecommunications company Bezeq Telecom Israel.

In return, prosecutors say, he sought positive coverage of himself and his wife on a news website controlled by the company's former chairman, Shaul Elovitch.

In this case, Netanyahu has been charged with bribery, fraud and breach of trust. Elovitch and his wife, Iris, have been charged with bribery and obstruction of justice. The couple deny wrongdoing.

CASE 1000, in which Netanyahu has been charged with fraud and breach of trust, centres on allegations that he and wife Sara wrongfully received almost 700,000 shekels worth of gifts from Arnon Milchan, a Hollywood producer and Israeli citizen, and Australian billionaire businessman James Packer.

Prosecutors said gifts included champagne and cigars and that Netanyahu helped Milchan with his business interests. Neither Packer nor Milchan face charges.

CASE 2000 alleges that Netanyahu negotiated a deal with Arnon Mozes, owner of Ynet's sister publication - newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth - for better coverage. In return, the prime minister allegedly offered legislation that would slow the growth of a rival newspaper. Netanyahu has been charged with fraud and breach of trust. Mozes has been charged with offering a bribe, and denies wrongdoing.

Netanyahu says he is the victim of a politically orchestrated "witch hunt" by the media and the left to oust him from office.

Loyalists in Netanyahu's right-wing Likud Party have accused the justice system of bias, and Netanyahu has said receiving gifts from friends was not against the law.

His legal team says criminal investigations into relations between politicians and the news media threaten press freedom.

Unlikely. The trial could take years. Netanyahu could also seek a plea deal rather than go through the trial process.

Bribery charges carry a sentence of up to 10 years in jail and/or a fine. Fraud and breach of trust carry a prison sentence of up to three years.

05.20.20 – We - - -

Abbas: PA declared absolved, as of today, of all agreements with Israel & US

05.20.20

Abbas: PA no longer bound by agreements with Israel, U.S.

Palestinian president says decision also extends to security cooperation with Israel; announcement believed to be in response to Jerusalem's declared plans to declare sovereignty over West Bank settlements, Jordan Valley

Ynet, i24NEWS|

Published: 05.20.20 , 00:03

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced late Tuesday night that Ramallah will no longer be bound by agreements it has signed with Israel and the United States.

Abbas made the announcement during an emergency meeting of the Palestinian leadership in Ramallah to coordinate the PA response to Israel's declared intention to extend its sovereignty over West Bank settlements and the Jordan Valley.

The announcement is believed to be in response to Israel's plans to declare sovereignty over the territories after July 1.

Abbas added that the declaration extends to Ramallah's security cooperation with Israel, seen as vital to keeping violence at a minimum across the area.

"The Palestine Liberation Organization and the State of Palestine are absolved, as of today, of all the agreements and understandings with the American and Israeli governments and of all the obligations based on these understandings and agreements, including the security ones," the Arab-language Wafa news agency quoted Abbas as saying during the meeting in Ramallah.

"The Israeli occupation authority, as of today, has to shoulder all responsibilities and obligations in front of the international community as an occupying power over the territory of the occupied state of Palestine, with all its consequences and repercussions based on international law and international humanitarian law," Abbas said.

"We hold the American administration fully responsible for the oppression befalling the Palestinian people and we consider it a primary partner with the Israeli occupation government in all its aggressive and unfair decisions and measures against our people."

The Palestinian Authority cut off ties with the White House in December 2017 after the U.S. declared it was to move its embassy in Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, which it did in May 2018.

The PA has also rejected Washington as a mediator in peace talks with Israel, claiming the Trump administration is biased in favor of the Jewish state.

U.S. President Donald Trump, who released his controversial vision for Middle East peace earlier this year, has tentatively given his blessing for Israel to begin annexing large swathes of the West Bank if the Palestinians refuse to engage in negotiations.

Moreover, as part of a new coalition agreement struck between Israel's two largest parties, the government will be able to move forward on annexation plans after July 1, in accordance with the Trump administration.



05.19.20 – Tu - - -

Iranians clamor for Israel asylum, with no way to help these people

05.19.20

Iranians clamor for Israel asylum in coronavirus crisis

Foreign Ministry receiving growing numbers of requests pleading for way to escape the ayatollahs' regime, with one person claiming two of his politically active uncles were executed and he and his father jailed

Itamar Eichner | Published: 05.19.20 , 19:33

Requests by Iranians for political asylum in Israel have increased considerably since the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Iran has been hard hit by the virus, which has claimed the lives of more than 7,000 of its citizens.

The Foreign Ministry said it had been receiving thousands of requests for asylum on its Farsi digital platforms.

One man wrote that his family was politically active and two of his uncles had been put to death by the regime, while his father had spent eight years in prison.

"I too am often put in jail for political reasons and I would like to escape this slow death. Israel is my dream," he added as he pleaded for help.

Others asked how they could actually enter Israel in order to request asylum, saying they were trying to escape the ayatollahs' regime.

Sharon Avginsaz, who runs the Farsi social media pages for the Foreign Ministry said there has been a constant increase in requests from Iranians wishing to migrate to Israel across all its digital platforms.

"I had been answering each and every request personally but have not been able to keep up recently. We have no way of helping these people," she said.

05.19.20 – Tu - - -

70% of virus cases in Israel originated from US flights who disobeyed guidelines

05.19.20

Study: 70% of coronavirus cases in Israel came from U.S.

Tel Aviv University research finds hardly any infections imported from China, South Korea or Singapore while flights from United States were not suspended and dozens were reported to have arrived with symptoms of COVID-19

Ynet, i24NEWS |

Published: 05.19.20 , 18:14

More than 70 percent of COVID-19 coronavirus patients in Israel were infected by a strain that originated in the United States, according to a new study by Tel Aviv University.

The study published on Monday shows that the rest of the infections in Israel were imported from Belgium (8%), France (6%), England (5%), Spain (3%) followed by Italy, the Philippines, and Russia.

Dr. Adi Stern of Tel Aviv University's School of Molecular Cell Biology and Biotechnology told The Jerusalem Post that Israelis who returned from the U.S. created "transmission chains."

Researchers reached this conclusion after comparing genomic sequences of Israeli patients to 4,700 genomic sequences from different areas around the world. Israel witnessed hardly any infections imported from China, South Korea, or Singapore. The country began suspending flights from Europe and other nations between February 26 and March 4. However, Israel's borders were not shut down to all foreign arrivals unable to self-isolate for 14 days until March 9.

The study also showed that "super spreaders" - individuals who disobeyed Health Ministry guidelines and attended "super-spreading events, such as large parties or other social gatherings," contributed to mass infections, the report said. In March, a group of 65 members of the Haredi Habad movement arrived from New York after a year of studies in Crown Heights, having been infected by COVID-19, and were isolated in a Jerusalem hotel.

Flag-carrier El Al said they were not aware that there were suspected carriers of the virus among their passengers and their aircraft was not prepared for that eventuality.

Dozens of passengers traveling from the United States were also allowed entry to Israel on April 9, despite regulations requiring any non-nationals to enter a 14-day quarantine at a state-run facility.

The travelers who arrived from New York were greeted by Magen David Adom teams who checked them for coronavirus-related symptoms and then allowed entry into the country after they signed a form declaring they would remain in self-isolation for the next two weeks.

One of the travelers told Ynet that he did not have a place to self-isolate despite declaring so at the airport.

On another date In April, passengers on United Airlines Flight UA90 from New Jersey worried that some of those on the flight may have had coronavirus.

One of the passengers told Ynet that a man from Brooklyn had boarded the plane despite being ordered to remain in quarantine while waiting for COVID-19 test results.

05.19.20 – Tu - - -

Palestinians received unexpected 14-tons of medical aid from first UAE flight

05.19.20

Etihad makes first known flight between UAE and Israel

Flight to Ben-Gurion Airport described as humanitarian mission to deliver aid provided by Gulf state to Palestinians through World Food Program, and was coordinated in advance with Israeli government

Associated Press, Reuters | Published: 05.19.20 , 21:25

United Arab Emirates flag-carrier Etihad Airways said Tuesday it is flying aid for the Palestinians amid the coronavirus pandemic into Israel, marking the first known direct commercial flight between the nations.

The flight comes as the United Arab Emirates, home to Abu Dhabi and Dubai on the Arabian Peninsula, has no formal diplomatic ties to Israel.

However, it marks an open moment of cooperation between the countries after years of rumored back-channel discussions between them over the mutual enmity of Iran.

Etihad, a state-owned, long-haul carrier, confirmed it had a flight Tuesday to Tel Aviv's Ben-Gurion International Airport.

"Etihad Airways operated a dedicated humanitarian cargo flight from Abu Dhabi to Tel Aviv on 19 May to provide medical supplies to the Palestinians," the airline said. "The flight had no passengers on board."

The UN coordinated a 14-tonne shipment of "urgent medical supplies" from the UAE to help curb the spread of COVID-19 in the Palestinian territories, according to a statement from the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process.

"The aid includes personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical equipment. Most notably, it includes 10 ventilators that are acutely needed," the statement added.

It was not immediately clear whether the 14 tonnes of aid were transported on the Tuesday Etihad cargo flight. Etihad was not mentioned in the UNSCO statement.

Emirati government officials did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

The Israel Airports Authority confirmed the cargo flight would be landing at Ben-Gurion on Tuesday evening. An official at Ben-Gurion said the flight was to arrive at 9 p.m.

An Israeli official said the flight would be delivering humanitarian aid provided by the UAE to the Palestinians through the World Food Program, and that the cargo flight was coordinated with the Israeli government. The official spoke on condition of anonymity due to the sensitivity of the subject.

Palestinian Authority officials in the West Bank had no immediate comment. Health officials in the Gaza Strip, which is ruled by the Iran-backed Hamas terror group, said they had no knowledge of any aid shipment for Gaza from Abu Dhabi.

The extent of **Gulf Arab ties with Israel** is still **mostly kept private**, though. Saudi Arabia and the UAE have allegedly used Israeli spyware to go after government critics.

**Oman**, which has **ties with Iran**, hosted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a surprise visit in 2018 that served to remind Washington of its **unique ability to be a conduit for talks**.

But **such ties remain highly contentious among the Arab public**, particularly as the **Palestinians remain without a state** of their own despite decades of talks.

Israel and the PA imposed sweeping **lockdowns in mid-March** aimed at **containing the virus**, limiting travel and public gatherings, and forcing nonessential businesses to close. Many of the restrictions have been **lifted in recent weeks** as the **rate of new infections** has **declined**.

Israel has reported more than 16,600 cases and around 270 deaths, with more than 13,000 of the patients having recovered. The **Palestinian Authority** has reported around 390 cases and **two fatalities**, with around 340 people having recovered.

The Al-Aqsa Mosque in **Jerusalem**, the third holiest site in Islam, **will reopen next week** after the conclusion of a major holiday marking the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan. It follows weeks of closure aimed at preventing the spread of the coronavirus. It had been **closed since March over the virus**.

05.19.20 – Tu - - -

**Trump freeze of WHO funding for a sad job of handling virus disinformation**

05.19.20

**Trump threatens permanent freeze of WHO funding**

U.S. president demands 'substantial improvements' to probe announced by group into its **mismanagement of pandemic** that stops short of looking into China's role

Reuters| Published: 05.19.20 , 10:57

U.S. President Donald **Trump threatened on Monday to permanently halt funding for the World Health Organization (WHO) if it did not commit to improvements within 30 days**, and to reconsider the membership of the United States in the body.

Trump **suspended U.S. contributions to the WHO last month, accusing it of promoting China's "disinformation" about the coronavirus outbreak**, although WHO officials denied the accusation and China **said it was transparent and open**.

"If the **WHO does not commit to major substantive improvements within the next 30 days**, I will make my temporary **freeze of United States funding to the WHO permanent and reconsider our membership**," Trump told its chief, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, in a letter posted on Twitter.

Earlier, Trump said the WHO had **"done a very sad job"** in its **handling of the virus** and he would make a decision soon on U.S. funding.

In his letter, Trump said the only way forward for the body was **if it could demonstrate independence from China**, adding that his administration had already started reform discussions with Tedros.

On Monday, the **WHO** said an **independent review** of the global virus response would begin as soon as possible and **it had received** backing and a hefty pledge of **funds from China**, in the spotlight as the origin of the pandemic.

Geneva-based **WHO, a UN specialized agency**, is leading a global initiative to develop safe and effective vaccines, tests and drugs to prevent, diagnose and treat COVID-19. More than 4.75 million people have been reported to have been **infected globally** and **314,414 have died**, according to a **Reuters tally**.

The United States contributed more than **\$400 million to the WHO in 2019**, or roughly **15% of the organization's budget**.

And **this year**, Washington has already paid the WHO about **\$58 million**, senior Trump administration officials said last month, half of what it is required to pay for 2020 - known as an assessed contribution.

The United States traditionally provides several hundred million dollars annually in voluntary funding tied to specific **WHO programs** like **polio eradication**, vaccine-preventable disease, **HIV and hepatitis**, **tuberculosis**, and maternal, **newborn**, child and **adolescent health**.

It was **not clear how much voluntary funding** the United States had already provided for WHO **programs in 2020**.

05.20.20 – We - - -

**Khamenei & Iran will support any nation or group who fights the Zionist regime**

05.20.20

**Iran: will support any nation or group that fights Israel**

Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei launches **threat in a post on his official** English-language **Twitter account**, says Iran's enmity toward Israel not the same as hostility toward Jewish people

Reuters| Published: **05.20.20** , 23:54

**Iran will support any nation or group that fights Israel**, Supreme Leader **Ayatollah Ali Khamenei** said on Wednesday, ahead of this week's annual observance of Quds (Jerusalem) Day **to express support for Palestinians**.

**"We will support and assist any nation or any group anywhere who opposes and fights the Zionist regime**, and we do not hesitate to say this," Khamenei said in a post on his official English-language Twitter account.

Iran, Israel's arch-enemy in the Middle East, has been a key supporter, along with Russia, of President Bashar al-Assad during Syria's civil war, sending military advisers as well as material and regional Shi'ite militias.

According to foreign media, Israel has carried out hundreds of airstrikes in neighboring Syria targeting suspected arms and troop movements by Iran and the Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas that Tehran sponsors.

Separately, Khamenei said on Wednesday that Iran's enmity toward Israel was not the same as hostility toward Jewish people.

"The elimination of the government of Israel does not mean the elimination of Jews. We don't have an issue with Jewish people," Khamenei said in a post on his official Farsi-language Twitter account.

"Elimination of Israel' means the Muslim, Christian and Jewish people of #Palestine choose their own government themselves and push out foreigners and thugs like [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu," the post added.

Khamenei is scheduled to speak on Friday to commemorate Quds Day.

05.17.20 – Mo - - -

Unknown warplanes strike east Syria-Iraq border & kill 7 Iran fighters

05.17.20

Airstrikes in east Syria kill Iran-backed fighters

The strikes late Saturday targeted a base near the border town of Boukamal, killing seven fighters, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor

Associated Press| Updated: 05.17.20 , 22:22

Unknown warplanes attacked Iran-backed fighters in eastern Syria near the Iraqi border, killing several of the Iraqi militiamen, Syrian opposition activists said Sunday.

The strikes late Saturday targeted a base near the border town of Boukamal, killing seven fighters, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, an opposition war monitor.

Omar Abu Laila, a Europe-based activist from Syria's eastern Deir el-Zour province, confirmed a strike hit Iran-backed Iraqi fighters in the area but had no exact word on casualties.

The strikes came days after reinforcements were brought into the area from Iraq, the Observatory and Abu Laila said.

Abu Laila, who runs Deir Ezzor 24, an activist collective that reports on news in the border area, said Israel was most likely behind the attack but gave no evidence.

Israel rarely comments on such reports, although it has acknowledged carrying out airstrikes inside Syria on numerous occasions over the course of **Syria's nine-year conflict**, saying it was going after Iranian military targets in the country.

There have recently been **several reports of** suspected **Israeli strikes inside Syria**, **including** one on **May 4** that left 14 Iranian-backed fighters dead, according to the Observatory.

First published: 22:18 , 05.17.20