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Three EU-ICC political judges attempt again to assert jurisdiction over Israel

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Report: Israel draws up list of potential ICC war crime defendants

Some 200-300 IDF officers and defense officials could be targeted by prosecutors for their part in 2014's Operation Protective Edge; Netanyahu, Gantz, Ya'alon, among potential names

i24NEWS| Published: 07.16.20 , 22:41

Jerusalem has reportedly drawn up a list with the names of hundreds of military officers and government officials who may be at risk of prosecution from the International Criminal Court (ICC) for alleged war crimes committed against Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

According to Israeli news outlets, some 200-300 officers and defense officials could be targeted by prosecutors at The Hague who have been investigating Israel specifically for alleged war crimes committed during 2014's Operation Protective Edge.

Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left) stands with former Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon (center) and former Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Benny Gantz

The identities of the officers and defense officials have not been made public.

The list may include senior leaders as well, including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, then-IDF chief of staff and current Defense Minister Benny Gantz, former defense minister Moshe Yaalon, and chief of staff Aviv Kochavi, who was the military's intelligence chief at the time.

Yisrael Beitenu Chairman Avigdor Lieberman, New Right party leader Naftali Bennett, along with former and current heads of the Shin Bet security agency could also be on this list.

Three ICC judges are expected to decide in the coming days on whether to open an investigation against Israel and rule whether "the Palestinian territories fall within the jurisdiction of the court or not."

In June, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned the ICC that the United States would "exact consequences" against the ICC if it goes through with its investigation into the Jewish state.

"The International Criminal Court is a political body, not a judicial institution," Pompeo said in a statement.

"This unfortunate reality has been confirmed yet again by the ICC Prosecutor's attempt to assert jurisdiction over Israel, which like the United States, is not a party to the Rome Statute that created the Court."

07.16.20

Israel plans to hire one investigator for 30,000 to contact trace & break the virus chain

07.16.20

Report: Israel's virus contact tracing apparatus trails behind the West

Israel only allows medical trained staff to conduct epidemiological investigations, creating shortage in the much-needed service, while other Western countries recruit untrained volunteers

Roe Rubinstein | Published: 07.16.20 , 17:27

Israel's understaffed epidemiological investigations apparatus for coronavirus patients is lagging far behind other contact tracing systems in the West, according to a new report published Thursday by the Coronavirus Center for Knowledge and Information.

The report proposes to substantially increase the number of epidemiological investigators and adds that a current government plan to hire hundreds of additional investigators will be enough to meet the demand.

According to data, Israel currently has one epidemiological investigator for every 300,000 people. This number is expected to drop to one investigator for every 30,000 after the plan is executed.

The United Kingdom has one epidemiological investigator for every 2,200 people and Germany one for every 4,000 people.

In the United States – the State of New York has one investigator for every 6,200 people and Michigan has one for every 1,400 people.

Epidemiological investigations are necessary to track people who may have come in contact with a coronavirus patient and isolating them to break the chain of infection. An investigator must compile a dossier of the patient's recent whereabouts as soon as possible.

Epidemiological investigations in Israel are carried out by nurses and medical students while other countries in the West don't solely rely on medically trained staff.

Michigan and New York recruit volunteers to help carry out investigations. In the UK, only a third of investigators are medical professionals and the rest are volunteers.

Some 25,000 Americans were trained as investigators by the John Hopkins Hospital through a six-hour online course, while countries like Austria and the UK have instituted a government online investigative process to expedite investigations efficiently.

The report examined the geographic spread of epidemiological investigators around the world. Countries such as Japan, Singapore, Germany, and the Czech Republic have their investigators spread over hundreds of locations. Officials in those countries said that this method's major advantages are investigators' intimate knowledge of the local population, potential hazards in the area, as well as an understanding of the nuances of the local language and culture.

The report also notes that different authorities, such as healthcare, law enforcement, research, and the local government must communicate better between them.

07.16.20

Cabinet may approve 6 billion shekel stimulus package for nine million people

07.16.20

Netanyahu faces pushback over money-for-all coronavirus grants plan

Bank of Israel Governor Amir Yaron tells Army Radio the government should focus on helping the poorest citizens instead of payments to all Israeli citizens, which PM say will bolster consumer spending

Reuters| Published: 07.16.20 , 12:34

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu got a lukewarm reception on Thursday from his main coalition partner and the head of the central bank to a plan to grant money to all Israelis to kickstart the economy during the coronavirus crisis.

Netanyahu announced the 6 billion shekel (\$1.75 billion) package on Wednesday, amid public anger over his handling of a pandemic in which contagion has surged and promised state aid to businesses has been slow to arrive.

The payments of 750 shekels for individuals and up to 3,000 shekels to families, Netanyahu said, would boost consumer spending and employment. The plan still requires cabinet approval.

Bank of Israel Governor Amir Yaron and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi of the centrist Blue and White party that has partnered with Netanyahu's Likud in the government, said the money should instead be targeted at the poorest citizens.

In an interview with Army Radio, Yaron said it was very important to help "but even more important to aid those in need. There are more effective ways to help increase demand," he said, adding that more cash could be given to the unemployed.

Yaron had supported a previous 100 billion shekel (\$29 billion) stimulus package and a second one announced last week, even though they are expected to drive this year's budget deficit up to 13% of gross domestic product.

The economy is set to contract 6% in 2020. Unemployment soared to 27% after a partial lockdown in March but is now running at 21% as people have come back from furlough.

Ashkenazi said on Army Radio that while he was not opposed to grants for Israelis hit by economic hardship, Blue and White would try to amend Netanyahu's plan so that the money would go "to those who are hurting and not to those who don't need it".

Netanyahu said doing so would be too time-consuming.

Polls show less than 30% of the public trusts Netanyahu's handling of the crisis.

Thousands took part in anti-Netanyahu rallies last week.

Israel, with a population of around nine million, has reported more than 44,000 coronavirus cases and 377 deaths. (\$1 = 3.4218 shekels)

07.16.20

Russia hackers suspect of techniques to pursue vaccine data, say UK, US and Canada

07.16.20

Russia trying to steal COVID-19 vaccine data, say UK, U.S. and Canada

UK cybersecurity organization says Russian-backed hacker group is behind series of attacks on Canadian and British institutions working on COVID-19 vaccine

Reuters| Published: 07.16.20 , 21:56

Hackers backed by the Russian state are trying to steal COVID-19 vaccine and treatment research from academic and pharmaceutical institutions around the world, Britain's National Cyber Security Center (NCSC) said on Thursday.

A coordinated statement from Britain, the United States and Canada attributed the attacks to group APT29, also known as 'Cozy Bear', which they said was almost certainly operating as part of Russian intelligence services.

"We condemn these despicable attacks against those doing vital work to combat the coronavirus pandemic," said NCSC Director of Operations, Paul Chichester. Russian news agency RIA cited spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying the Kremlin rejected London's allegations, which he said were not backed by proper evidence. In a separate announcement, Britain also accused "Russian actors" of trying to interfere in its 2019 election by trying to spread leaked documents online. Russia's foreign ministry said those accusations were "foggy and contradictory". Britain is expected to publish a long-delayed report into Russian influence in British politics next week.

British foreign minister Dominic Raab said it was "completely unacceptable" for Russian intelligence services to target work on the pandemic.

"While others pursue their selfish interests with reckless behavior, the UK and its allies are getting on with the hard work of finding a vaccine and protecting global health," he said in a statement. He said Britain would work with allies to hold perpetrators to account.

The NCSC said the group's attacks were continuing and used a variety of tools and techniques, including spear-phishing and custom malware.

"APT29 is likely to continue to target organizations involved in COVID-19 vaccine research and development, as they seek to answer additional intelligence questions relating to the pandemic," the NCSC statement said.

Canadian authorities said the attacks were hindering response efforts and that risks to health organizations were elevated. Canada's signals intelligence and cyber threat center advised institutions to take action to protect themselves.

Britain and the United States said in May that networks of hackers were targeting national and international organizations responding to the pandemic. But such attacks have not previously been explicitly connected to the Russian state.

The Russian government-linked group Cozy Bear is widely suspected of hacking the Democratic Party before the 2016 U.S. election

07.15.20

Cambridge, Massachusetts Moderna Phase 3 vaccine trial July 27 in 30,000 volunteers

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Moderna Phase 1 results show coronavirus vaccine safe, induces immune response
Trial shows promising results despite mild or moderate side effects; U.S. disease expert
Dr. Anthony Fauci says if vaccine can induce a response comparable with natural
infection, 'that's a winner'
Reuters| Updated: 07.15.20 , 09:43

Moderna Inc's experimental vaccine for COVID-19 showed it was safe and provoked
immune responses in all 45 healthy volunteers in an ongoing early-stage study, U.S.
researchers reported on Tuesday.

Volunteers who got two doses of the vaccine had high levels of virus-killing antibodies
that exceeded the average levels seen in people who had recovered from COVID-19, the
team reported in the New England Journal of Medicine.

No study volunteers experienced a serious side effect, but more than half reported mild or
moderate reactions such as fatigue, headache, chills, muscle aches or pain at the injection
site. These were more likely to occur after the second dose and in people who got the
highest dose.

Experts say a vaccine is needed to put an end to the coronavirus pandemic that has
sickened millions and caused nearly 575,000 deaths worldwide.

Advertisement

Moderna was the first to start human testing of a vaccine for the novel coronavirus on
March 16, 66 days after the genetic sequence of the virus was released.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases,
whose researchers developed Moderna's vaccine candidate, called the results "good
news," noting that the study found no serious adverse events and the vaccine produced
"reasonably high" levels of virus-killing or neutralizing antibodies.

"If your vaccine can induce a response comparable with natural infection, that's a
winner," Fauci said in a telephone interview. "That's why we're very pleased by the
results."

Moderna shares jumped more than 15% in after-hours trading on Tuesday.

The U.S. government is supporting Moderna's vaccine with nearly half a billion dollars
and has chosen it as one of the first to enter large-scale human trials. A successful
vaccine could be a turning point for Cambridge, Massachusetts-based Moderna, which
has never had a licensed product.

Moderna's shot, mRNA-1273, uses ribonucleic acid (RNA) - a chemical messenger that
contains instructions for making proteins. When injected into people, the vaccine
instructs cells to make proteins that mimic the outer surface of the coronavirus, which the
body recognizes as a foreign invader, and mounts an immune response against.

The results released Tuesday involved three doses of the vaccine, tested in groups of 15
volunteers aged 18-55 who got two shots, 28 days apart. The groups tested 25, 100 or 250
micrograms of the vaccine.

Adverse events after the second dose occurred in seven of the 13 volunteers who got the
25-microgram dose, all 15 participants who received the 100 microgram dose and all 14

who got the 250 microgram dose. In the highest-dose group, three patients had severe reactions such as fever, chills, headache or nausea. One of these had a fever of 103.28 Fahrenheit (39.6 C).

"We didn't see any events that are characterized as serious adverse events," said lead author Dr Lisa Jackson of Kaiser Permanente Washington Health Research Institute in Seattle, referring to reactions that require hospitalization or result in death. In June, Moderna said it selected the 100-microgram dose for its late-stage study to minimize adverse reactions.

At that dose, Moderna said the company is on track to deliver about 500 million doses per year, and possibly up to 1 billion doses per year, starting in 2021, from the company's internal U.S. manufacturing site and strategic collaboration with Swiss drugmaker Lonza. "It's a good first step," said Dr William Schaffner, a vaccine expert at Vanderbilt University Medical Center who was not involved in the study.

"There's nothing here that would inhibit one from going ahead to the Phase 2/Phase 3 trials," he said.

In April, Moderna expanded the Phase 1 trial to include adults over 55, who are more at risk of serious disease, with the aim of enrolling 120 volunteers. Moderna said it will follow study volunteers for a year to look for side effects and check how long immunity lasts.

Moderna started its phase 2 trial in May and expects to start a phase 3 trial on July 27. Related Search Topics

Phase 1 trials aim to ensure a treatment is safe and help determine an effective dose. Phase 2 trials test a treatment in a larger group and get an early read on effectiveness. Phase 3 trials are conducted in a large group of individuals to confirm efficacy and identify rare side effects. Moderna's Phase 3 trial will be conducted in 30,000 volunteers.

07.13.20

Palestinian lobby in Sweden agency transfers 164 million USD to protest organization

07.13.20

Sweden transfers funds to an anti-Israeli organization

Palestinian Swedish lobby previously called to boycott 2019 edition of Eurovision Song Contest held in Israel, hosted representatives of terrorist factions, and praised 'martyrs' Itamar Eichner | Published: 07.13.20 , 20:34

Sweden has recently transferred 1.8 million krona (nearly \$200,00) to a Palestinian Swedish organization acting against Israel under the guise of humanitarian aid.

As part of a 1.5 billion krona (164 million USD) aid plan, the Swedish government agency SIDA transferred the funds to the Palestine Solidarity Association of Sweden - an organization that openly supports the BDS movement that calls to boycott and impose sanctions on Israel due to the conflict with the Palestinians.

Members of the Palestine Solidarity Association of Sweden calling to boycott the Eurovision contest in Israel

The organization is effectively a Palestinian lobby in Sweden and often holds protests against Israel. The organization has previously called to boycott the 2019 Eurovision Song Contest that was held in Israel and also tried to prevent Israeli tennis players from participating in the Davis Cup games held in the Swedish capital.

Members of the organization, many of which are Palestinians living in Israel, have also often called for the liberation of Palestine, hosted representatives from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine terrorist faction, and praised Islamic "martyrs."

The SIDA website states that the organization has applied for aid to "continue their public relations work, with the aim of providing Palestinians living under occupation or in refugee camps outside Palestine, a voice in Sweden, and to give them additional knowledge about their rights as Palestinians, international law and global goals. The purpose of the project is that the increased knowledge will lead to an increased involvement among the target groups for a just peace and that the image of the Israel-Palestine conflict will be more multifaceted/nuanced, especially in the media."

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BDS rally against Israel

Despite the Swedish government's generous aid package to the organization, Sweden does not officially support the BDS movement.

Israeli officials called to expose the purpose of the transaction to the Swedish public.

"The Swedish taxpayer needs to know that their money goes to an organization that openly supports the BDS and works actively within Sweden and that there is nothing between this and humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people whatsoever."

07.16.20

Student sways college donors to redirect pledges from leftist causes on campuses
Founder Charlie Kirk, Turning Point USA at Harvard and Baylor

07.16.20

Turning Point USA Calls on Alumni to 'De-Commit' College Donations
a collage of college campuses

(AP)

By Brian Trusdell | Thursday, 16 July 2020 05:10 PM

A conservative non-profit student group has initiated a new project aimed at starving colleges of alumni donations, hoping "to combat rampant leftism at universities by striking colleges where they are most vulnerable: their wallets."

Turning Point USA said Thursday it already convinced donors to "de-commit" \$7 million of pledged money to Harvard and Baylor University through its "DivestU" initiative, according to Fox News.

"For decades the radical left has used divestments as a tactic to try to push for divisive, Marxist ideas – conservatives have never used divestments as a tactic," Turning Point founder Charlie Kirk said. "We're telling donors they should no longer be writing these seven-figure checks to institutions that are, essentially, the root causes for a lot of the cultural regression we have seen in recent months."

Kirk said Turning Point is not asking donors to give the money to its activities, but asks them to redirect their money to other philanthropic endeavors.

"Some donors are just recommitting the money and putting it toward a hospital or a local food bank – they have lots of different types of plans," he said. "Some want to divest their dollars and then fund conservative speakers to come onto campuses. Whatever they decide to do with their money is within their own volition, but once the university no longer has that capital under their umbrella, it really does send a powerful message and a powerful signal that they are giving a vote of disapproval."

Among those who have joined DivestU's efforts is plastic surgeon and Baylor University alum Dr. Keith Rose.

"I could no longer be a spectator in the education of my kids," Rose writes on the Turning Point website. "I had to get involved."

Kirk told Fox News his organization was planning "dozens" of other university announcements of major gifts and finalizing those figures right now.