

Ynet-News, January 08, 2021 – Friday

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(A very Leftist view)

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Israel goes into 'last push' lockdown as PM promises pandemic end in sight

Country tightens already existing restrictions two weeks into third nationwide closure amid warnings from overwhelmed hospitals of imminent collapse; Netanyahu says new measures, combined with vaccine drive, will 'bring us back to life'

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Israel tightened restrictions on movement, schools and trade for its third lockdown at midnight on Thursday, after almost two weeks of closures have failed to stop the coronavirus infection rate from rising.

The inability to stem the spread of the virus is in stark contrast to the success of the country's nationwide vaccine campaign, which has seen close to 2 million Israelis already in receipt of the first dose of the two-stage inoculation and made Israel a world leader in vaccinating its population.

"We are in the midst of a global epidemic that is spreading at record speed," Netanyahu told ministers on Tuesday. "We must immediately impose a full closure."

He urged Israelis "to make one last effort - a general closure in combination with the vaccination campaign is how we will come back to life."

His comments came shortly after he and Defense Minister Benny Gantz announced that Israel would go into a fuller, tighter lockdown that would now include the entire education system.

It was a response to health officials demanding urgent action over the soaring coronavirus infection rate that has left COVID-19 wards across the country on the brink of collapse. The country has already been already in its third lockdown since December 27, with restrictions on movement and the closure of entertainment venues, shops and gatherings but schools still allowing some students to attend class in person.

Coronavirus czar Prof. Nachman Ash also backed the new measures, saying he supported the total shutdown of the education system and warned that any delay in implementing a stricter lockdown would result in a loss of human life.

The police meanwhile, have warned that they would take a "less lenient" approach to enforcing the latest regulations, deploying thousands of officers across the country in anticipation of the new measures and planning to set up roadblocks on major highways to prevent unnecessary travel.

Pyrrhic vaccine victory

Israel's high-speed vaccine campaign has won international admiration - and envy - but the swiftness of the process has led to a shortage of doses of the Pfizer vaccine that was first administered in late December.

Health Minister Yuli Edelstein announced earlier this week that Israel would press pause on administering the first dose of the two-stage vaccine for a short while until new stocks arrived, which now appears to be much sooner than originally planned after the country signed a new and improved deal with U.S. drugmaker Pfizer.

Meanwhile, Moderna's Israeli chief medical officer, Tal Zaks, told Ynet on Wednesday that his company would be delivering its vaccine to Israel in the coming days.

A shipment containing more than 100,000 doses of the Moderna vaccine arrived on Thursday from Germany, which is only enough to fully vaccinate 50,000 people.

"I am very proud as an Israeli that Israel is one of the first countries in the world to mobilize for the early purchase of all vaccines, both ours and Pfizer's, and is at the forefront today in terms of the ability to vaccinate its citizens," he said.

Zaks praised Israel's vaccination drive, saying it could "set an example for many health ministries around the world."

Moderna says its vaccine was 94.5% efficient in clinical trials, similar to the efficacy rate of the Pfizer vaccine.

01.07.21

Netanyahu said storming of the Washington Capitol deserving all condemnation

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Netanyahu and Israeli leaders condemn D.C. riots

PM calls unrest in the U.S. capital 'disgraceful', says 'no doubt American democracy will prevail'; political rivals accuse him of hesitating to comment on the event in fear of close ally Trump's response

Itamar Eichner, Moran Azulay | Published: 01.07.21, 11:27

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and other Israeli leaders condemned on Thursday the storming of the U.S. Capitol by supporters of President Donald Trump during a Congress hearing to confirm Democrat Joe Biden's win in the November 2020 election.

During a joint press conference with U.S. Secretary of Treasury Steve Mnuchin, Netanyahu - a close ally of the Republican president - labeled the unrest in the U.S. capital that ended in **four deaths and 52 arrests** as "disgraceful."

"The **storming of the Capitol** Building in Washington was **disgraceful** and **deserving** of all **condemnation**," Netanyahu said.

"For generations, American democracy has been an inspiration to the world and Israel. This violent riot is the complete opposite of the values Americans and Israelis hold dear. I have no doubt that American democracy will prevail - as it always did."

Netanyahu's **rivals condemned his hesitance to comment on the unrest**. The premier was also criticized for hesitating to comment when U.S. media projected Biden to become the next president. Donald **Trump has contested the results**, raising **claims** of widespread **voter fraud** and irregularities that **tipped the scale** in favor of the former Delaware senator.

Defense Minister Benny **Gantz said** that the images from Washington "**hurt** the hearts of **everyone who believes in democracy**."

"I did not believe I would see such scenes in the most powerful democracy in the world," he added.

The incident "is proof that before political rivalry, we must agree on the rules of the game: Maintaining the rule of law, respecting democratic procedures and respectful discourse," he said.

"I was shocked to see the attack on the American Congress, a global bulwark of democracy, and this must be roundly condemned from sun-up to sun-down," Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi said. "The **United States, our great and strong friend**, is a **lighthouse** for democracy and for values of **freedom, justice and independence**."

"I am sure that the American people and their elected representatives will know how to fend off this attack and will continue to defend the values on which the United States was founded," he added.

New Hope leader **Gideon Sa'ar said** that the images coming from Washington D.C. show the **dangers of polarization and fragility of democracy**.

"I was saddened to see the pictures from Washington D.C. last night. Order has been restored and I am sure there will be an orderly transition of power in the United States, **our greatest friend in the world**," **Sa'ar said** on Twitter.

"The events serve as an important reminder of the **dangers of polarization and extremism** in society. We must never take democracy and its institutions for granted."

"I'm deeply **saddened and shocked by the images** from the United States," opposition leader and Yesh Atid Chairman Yair Lapid said on Twitter. "My thoughts are with all my friends in Washington tonight. We hope to see order restored and the transition of power completed. America needs to go back to being a role model for democracies across the world."

Leader of the Israelis Party and Tel Aviv Mayor Ron **Huldai lambasted Netanyahu for keeping mum on the events in the U.S. capital**.

"It is not by chance that Netanyahu is not responding to the horrifying events in Washington," Huldai said.

"In Netanyahu's mind, [he] is more important than the state. Israel will have a change of government, too. Israelis will know how to do it right. Democracy always wins." Huldai also said that **Tel Aviv city hall's facade will be illuminated the U.S. flag** Thursday evening to "strengthen and respect the Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave."

01.08.21

Trump finally concedes -- amid talk of ouster from office

(A Leftist view)

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Trump finally concedes -- amid talk of ouster from office

Trump's statement is a complete reversal from the one he put out just 24 hours earlier in which he said to the violent mob, 'We love you. You're very special' sparking a firestorm of criticism while talk of invoking the 25th Amendment or alternatively impeaching his again, persists

Associated Press| Published: **01.08.21** , 06:21

With **13 days left** in his term, President Donald **Trump finally bent to reality** on Thursday amid growing talk of trying to force him out early, acknowledging he'll peacefully leave after Congress affirmed his defeat.

Trump led off a video from the White House by **condemning the violence** carried out in his name a day earlier at the Capitol. Then, for the first time, he **admitted** that his presidency would soon **end** -- though he **declined to mention** President-elect Joe **Biden by name** or explicitly state that he had lost.

"A new administration will be inaugurated on **Jan. 20**," Trump said in the video. "My focus now turns to ensuring a smooth, orderly and seamless transition of power. This moment calls for healing and reconciliation."

The address, which appeared designed to stave off talk of a forced early eviction, came at the end of a day when the cornered president stayed out of sight in the White House. Silenced on some of his favorite internet lines of communication, he watched the **resignations of several top aides, including a Cabinet secretary.**

And as officials sifted through the aftermath of the pro-Trump mob's siege of the U.S. Capitol, there was **growing discussion of impeaching him a second time** or invoking the 25th Amendment **to oust him from the Oval Office.**

The invasion of the Capitol building, a powerful symbol of the nation's democracy, rattled Republicans and Democrats alike. They struggled with how best to contain the

impulses of a president deemed too dangerous to control his own social media accounts but who remains commander in chief of the world's greatest military.

"I'm not worried about the next election, I'm worried about getting through the next 14 days," said Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, one of Trump's staunchest allies. He condemned the president's role in Wednesday's riots and said, "If something else happens, all options would be on the table."

Democratic House Speaker Nancy Pelosi declared that "the president of the United States incited an armed insurrection against America." She called him "a very dangerous person who should not continue in office. This is urgent, an emergency of the highest magnitude."

Neither option to remove Trump seemed likely, with little time left in his term to draft the Cabinet members needed to invoke the amendment or to organize the hearings and trial mandated for an impeachment. But the fact that the dramatic options were even the subject of discussion in Washington's corridors of power served as a warning to Trump. Fears of what a desperate president could do in his final days spread in the nation's capital and beyond, including speculation Trump could incite more violence, make rash appointments, issue ill-conceived pardons -- including for himself and his family -- or even trigger a destabilizing international incident.

The president's video Thursday -- which was released upon his return to Twitter after his account was restored -- was a complete reversal from the one he put out just 24 hours earlier in which he said to the violent mob, "We love you. You're very special." His refusal to condemn the violence sparked a firestorm of criticism and, in the new video, he at last denounced the demonstrators' "lawlessness and mayhem."

As for his feelings on leaving office, he told the nation that "serving as your president has been the honor of my lifetime while hinting at a return to the public arena. He told supporters "that our incredible journey is only just beginning."

Just a day earlier, Trump unleashed the destructive forces at the Capitol with his baseless claims of election fraud at a rally that prompted supporters to disrupt the congressional certification of Biden's victory. After the storming of the Capitol and the eventual wee-hours certification of Biden's win by members of Congress, Trump released a statement that merely acknowledged he would abide by a peaceful transfer of power on Jan. 20. The statement was posted by an aide and did not originate from the president's own Twitter account, which has 88 million followers and for four years has been wielded as a political weapon that dictates policy and sows division and conspiracy.

Trump couldn't tweet it himself because, for the first time, the social media platform suspended his account, stating that the president had violated its rules of service by inciting violence. Facebook adopted a broader ban, saying Trump's account would be offline until after Biden's inauguration.

Deprived of that social media lifeblood, Trump remained silent and ensconced in the executive mansion until Thursday evening. But around him, loyalists headed for the exits, their departures -- which were coming in two weeks anyway -- moved up to protest the president's handling of the riot.

Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao became the first Cabinet member to resign. Chao, married to Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, one of the lawmakers trapped at the

Capitol on Wednesday, said in a message to staff that the attack "has deeply troubled me in a way that I simply cannot set aside."

Others who resigned in the wake of the riot: Deputy National Security Advisor Matthew Pottinger, Ryan Tully, senior director for European and Russian affairs at the National Security Council, and first lady Melania Trump's chief of staff Stephanie Grisham, a former White House press secretary.

Mick Mulvaney, Trump's former chief of staff-turned-special envoy to Northern Ireland, told CNBC that he had called Secretary of State Mike Pompeo "to let him know I was resigning. ... I can't do it. I can't stay."

And Mulvaney said that others who work for Trump had decided to remain in their posts in an effort to provide some sort of guardrails for the president during his final days in office.

"Those who choose to stay, and I have talked with some of them, are choosing to stay because they're worried the president might put someone worse in," Mulvaney said.

Mulvaney's predecessor in the chief of staff job, retired U.S. Marine Corps general John Kelly, told CNN that "I think the Cabinet should meet and have a discussion" about Section 4 of the 25th Amendment -- allowing the forceful removal of Trump by his own Cabinet.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer joined Pelosi in declaring that Trump "should not hold office one day longer" and urged Vice President Mike Pence and the Cabinet to act. But Chao's departure may stall nascent efforts to invoke the amendment.

Staff-level discussions on the matter took place across multiple departments and even in parts of the White House, according to two people briefed on the talks. But no member of the Cabinet has publicly expressed support for the move -- which would make Pence the acting president -- though several were believed to be sympathetic to the notion, believing Trump is too volatile in his waning days in office.

In the West Wing, shell-shocked aides were packing up, acting on a delayed directive to begin offboarding their posts ahead of the Biden team's arrival. The slowdown before now was due to Trump's single-minded focus on his defeat since Election Day at the expense of the other responsibilities of his office.

Most glaringly, that included the fight against the raging coronavirus that is killing record numbers of Americans each day.

Few aides had any sense of the president's plans, with some wondering if Trump would largely remain out of sight until he left the White House. White House press secretary Kayleigh McEnany read a brief statement in which she declared that the Capitol siege was "appalling, reprehensible and antithetical to the American way."

But her words carried little weight. Trump has long made clear that only he speaks for his presidency.