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Israel quarantine enforced with GPS tracking system after a successful pilot period

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31 countries to boycott anti-Semitic UN conference in Durban, South Africa

09.30.21

Iran missile facility west of Tehran damaged by fire, Satellite pictures show

09.30.21

Iran research site damaged by fire is missile production facility, Satellite pictures show images show damage to facility west of Tehran in a fire that kills at least two and wounds a third according to Revolutionary Guard Corps statement; no word given as to cause of fire and the incident is not reported by local Iranian media

Yoav Zitun, Agencies | Published: 09.30.21, 23:06

An Iranian installation described as a "research center," that caught fire on Monday, is a missile storage facility for the Revolutionary Guard Corps, satellite pictures revealed on Thursday.

According to official Iranian reports, at least two people died in the fire and a third was wounded in the facility located west of the capital Tehran.

“With the efforts of the firefighters of this center, the fire was contained and the injured were taken to the hospital,” a statement issued by the Revolutionary Guards said.

Before & after: An explosion occurred (27 September 2021) at an #IRGC secret missile base of Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group pic.twitter.com/OYnsijeXiq

No reason for the fire in the facility was announced and it was not reported by local media.

The Guard said the fire erupted in a warehouse at what it described as a “research self-sufficiency center,” which is on the United States list of sanctioned companies since

2017, after the administration claimed it was "researching and developing ballistic missiles."

Other missile sites in Iran had suffered from fires, the most fatal occurred in 2011 when 17 people died in an explosion, including the Revolutionary Guards' chief of the missile development program, Hassan Tehrani Moghaddam.

The event was initially described as an accident but it was later revealed that the authorities believed it was carried out by Israeli intelligence operatives.

Monday's fire comes after a string of explosions, mishaps and sabotage in Iranian military installations over the past year.

Prominent among them was the devastating fire at the Natanz uranium enrichment plant in July 2020, and again last April causing damage and disrupting production.

Iran accused Israel of responsibility for both incidents. Following the April event which cut electric power from the enrichment plant, Tehran announced it would be increasing uranium production to 60%, nearly the level needed to produce a nuclear weapon.

09.30.21

The new Green Pass after October 3 valid for six months

09.30.21

The new Green Pass outline explained

Explainer: government's new Green Pass outlines revokes all previously issues passes, makes third jab a prerequisite for those inoculated over five months ago, allows children to receive temporary pass subject a negative PCR test

Nina Fox, Yaron Druckman | Published: 09.30.21, 20:42

The prerequisite to receive the "Green Pass" vaccination certificate will change on October 3 as per the government's directive.

The certificate - given to those who were inoculated against the pathogen or otherwise recovered from coronavirus - grants its holders access to events and venues.

Who will be eligible to receive the Green Pass starting October 3?

Those who received three doses of the Pfizer vaccine will receive the Green Pass a week after the third jab. The Pass will remain valid for six months.

Those who receive the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine after October 3 will receive the Green Pass a week after the jab, while those who receive the second dose of the Moderna vaccine will receive the pass two weeks after the jab. The pass will remain valid for six months.

Those who received only two doses of the vaccine and had the Green Pass for over five months prior to October 3, will have their pass revoked until they receive the booster.

What about a Green Pass issued before October 3?

Any Green Pass issued before October 3 will be **revoked** regardless of the person's immunization status. Those eligible to receive the certificate will have to issue a new one via the Health Ministry's website.

Are those who **recovered** from COVID also **eligible to receive** the **Green Pass**?

Those diagnosed positive for COVID in a PCR test are eligible to receive the Pass six months after the date of the test. Those who were diagnosed positive for COVID more than six months ago will have to receive a single jab to be eligible for the Green Pass after October 3.

Will a positive serological test grant the Green Pass?

Those who received a positive result on their serological test - which shows whether an individual contracted COVID at some point in the past via their **antibody levels** - will **receive the Green Pass only if they received** at least **one dose** of the vaccine after undergoing the test.

Is a person who contracted COVID after receiving either the first or second dose of the vaccine eligible for the Green Pass?

A person who recovered from COVID after receiving either dose will receive the Green Pass, which will remain valid for six months.

Are those who received the inoculation abroad also eligible to receive the Green Pass?

Those who have documentation that prove they received all vaccine doses will receive the Green Pass, subject to a positive serological test performed in Israel.

Those who have documentation that prove they received only the first vaccine dose, will be able to receive the second in Israel, thus becoming eligible for the Green Pass.

What are the benefits of the Green Pass?

Besides granting entry to certain events and venues, those in possession of the Green Pass will be exempt from isolation in case of contact with a verified patient, unless they suffer from symptoms.

The **Pass** also **grants** an **exemption from isolation** for returnees from most countries, subject to a negative COVID test at Ben Gurion Airport, with the exception of returnees from red countries.

How can one issue the Green Pass?

The Green Pass can be issued on the **Ramzor website**, via the "Ramzor" application, at the HMOs, through a representative at 5400 *, or via phone at 02-5082000.

Which places operate in accordance with the Green Pass?

Cultural and **sporting events, conferences and exhibitions, hotels, gyms and studios, pools and country clubs, houses of worship with over 50 people, halls and gardens, festivals, restaurants, bars, dining rooms and cafes (indoors and outdoors), museums and libraries, tourist attractions** And amusement **parks, universities** and institutions of higher learning.

To enter any of the above a **Green Pass must be shown** in either printed form or on the app, alongside a valid ID.

Can those who are **unvaccinated** enter these places?

Those who did not receive the inoculation **must present a recent negative COVID test**. It is important to note, a negative result from a **home testing kit does not grant entry** to such places.

How many times will unvaccinated individuals and children who want to spend time in a hotel be required to present a negative COVID test during the holiday?

A PCR which was done in a hospital and returned a negative result will remain valid for the entire vacation.

What about children **under the age of 12** who cannot yet be vaccinated?

Boys and girls aged 12 and under can undergo a PCR test at **testing sites** around the country at no cost. A **negative PCR test** will **grant them a Green Pass** which will remain valid for seven days.

Can children who recovered from COVID receive the Green Pass?

Children up to the age of 12 and 3 months who received a positive result on their serological examination will be eligible for the Green Pass, which will remain valid for six months from the date of the recovery certificate.

Where can parents issue the Green Pass for their children?

In the Ramzor website or app, on their parents' profile, under the tab "request documents".

Who is **exempt** from the Green Pass?

Children **up to the age of three**, and children **under the age of 12** and three months who have a disability certificate.

Will those who were vaccinated or recovered from COVID be forced into compulsory isolation upon returning from abroad?

Vaccinated and recovering returnees from red countries **will enter isolation for two weeks after landing in Israel**.

Those returning from yellow countries will enter isolation until they receive a negative COVID test or until 24 hours have passed since arriving in the country.

Vaccinated and recovering returnees from orange countries will not be required to enter isolation for the full period if one of the following conditions is met.

Less than six months have passed from the date on which they received a recovery certificate based on a PCR test performed or documented in Israel.

At least 7 days have passed since they received a vaccine dose in Israel

Vaccinated and recovering returnees from orange countries will not be forced into isolation provided at least 7 days have passed since they received a vaccine dose in Israel - that they received the third jab - or that less than six months have passed since the second jab.

Those who meet the aforementioned conditions must enter **isolation upon returning** to Israel **until a negative COVID test is obtained** or until **24 hours** have passed since their arrival in Israel.

09.30.21

Lapid & King of Bahrain set to open Israeli embassy, criticized by Hamas

09.30.21

Lapid, Bahrain's king hold historic meeting in Gulf nation

FM thanks King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa for his leadership and inspiration in first visit of Israeli minister to the country; **Lapid** set **to open** the Israeli **embassy in Manama** later; **Hamas slams Bahrain** for 'encouraging Israeli crimes'

Reuters, Ynet | Updated: **09.30.21**, 17:55

Foreign Minister Yair **Lapid** on Thursday **met** with the **King** Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa **of Bahrain**, during his first visit to the Gulf nation and the first time the King met publicly with an Israeli minister.

This was the **first visit of an Israeli minister to the kingdom** and the first time the king met publicly with a minister from Israel.

"His Majesty's leadership and inspiration have led to true cooperation and our meeting outlined the path forward for our relationship," Lapid said on Twitter after meeting the king.

Lapid's historic visit comes almost a year after Bahrain and Gulf neighbor United Arab Emirates normalized relations with Israel the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords. Sudan and Morocco followed suit.

The Foreign Minister landed at Bahrain's international airport on board an Israil flight with an olive branch painted on it.

He met with Crown Prince and Prime Minister Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa, as well as his Bahraini counterpart, Abdullatif bin Rashid Al Zayani, who had met with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett in New York earlier this week.

Lapid told his Bahraini counterpart that though he himself **supports a two-state solution to the Israeli Palestinian conflict**, not all of the Israeli government agrees.

"Israelis pursue peace," Lapid said, "and do not want conflict with anyone. We are committed to peace."

During his one day visit, Lapid will inaugurate the Israeli embassy in **Bahraini capital of Manama**. He will return to Israel later on Thursday.

"We see Bahrain as an important partner, on the bilateral level but also as a bridge for cooperation with other countries in the region," an Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesperson said.

The Foreign Ministry added that five memorandums of understanding will be signed in the course of the visit, including cooperation agreements between hospitals and water and power companies.

In Gaza, the Islamist Hamas criticized Bahrain for hosting the Israeli minister. Hamas spokesman Hazem Qassem said the visit represented "an encouragement" of what he described as Israeli "crimes against our Palestinian people and their sacred sites". The accords themselves have also been criticized by Bahraini opposition figures, speaking largely from abroad, as well as locals who stand against normalization with Israel.

09.29.21

US, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain sanction Hezbollah finance of terrorists

09.29.21

U.S., Qatar target Hezbollah financial network with sanctions
Qatari, Saudi, Bahraini nationals and Palestinian sanctioned for supporting Lebanese terror group in a move deemed 'one of the most significant joint actions Washington has taken with a member of the Gulf

Reuters| Published: 09.29.21, 21:18

The United States and Qatar took coordinated action on Wednesday targeting a Hezbollah financial network in the Arabian Peninsula, the U.S. Treasury Department said in a statement.

The Treasury said it designated individuals including Ali Reda Hassan al-Banai, Ali Reda al-Qassabi Lari and Abd al-Muayyid al-Banai are for having provided financial or material support to Hezbollah, the Lebanon-based Shi'ite Islamist group that Washington has designated as a foreign terrorist organization.

Qatar had also designated the network, the Treasury said, but it did not detail those actions.

"Hezbollah seeks to abuse the international financial system by developing global networks of financiers to fill its coffers and support its terrorist activity," said Andrea Gacki, director of the department's Office of Foreign Assets Control.

"The cross-border nature of this Hezbollah financial network underscores the importance of our continued cooperation with international partners, such as the Government of Qatar, to protect the U.S. and international financial systems from terrorist abuse."

The individuals include citizens of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, as well as a Palestinian, the department said on its website.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said the move was "one of the most significant joint actions" Washington has taken with a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council, and urged other governments to follow suit in targeting Hezbollah.

Bahrain had also concurrently frozen bank accounts related to the network and referred three individuals to its prosecutor's office, Blinken said in a statement.

09.29.21

Israeli settlers attack Palestinian village, as Israeli forces turn a blind eye

09.29.21

Israeli settlers attack Palestinian village, wound toddler

Video of incident released by an Israeli rights group shows several shirtless masked men hurling stones at a cluster of homes and vehicles, with locals saying assailants attacked shepherd and slaughtered 4 of his sheep

Associated Press | Published: 09.29.21, 14:18

Dozens of Israeli settlers attacked a Palestinian village south of the West Bank city of Hebron, hurling stones at cars and homes and leaving several people wounded, including a Palestinian toddler, activists said Wednesday.

Video of Tuesday's attack released by an Israeli rights group showed several shirtless settlers with scarves wrapped around their faces hurling stones at a cluster of homes and vehicles. Israeli troops stood among the settlers but did not appear to be taking any action to stop them.

The Israeli military declined to comment, saying it was still gathering information. Sami Hureini, a local Palestinian activist, said a group of Israeli settlers attacked a Palestinian shepherd near the village of Mufaqara and slaughtered four of his sheep. He said they then stormed the village itself, attacking residents with clubs and stones.

He said a four-year-old boy, Mohammed Bakr, was hospitalized with a head injury. The Israeli human rights group B'Tselem released a video of the attack and provided a similar account. It said Israeli troops fired tear gas at Palestinian residents and arrested at least one Palestinian. An Israeli soldier can be seen throwing a tear gas grenade at the Palestinian who filmed the attack and then shoving him.

Nearly 500,000 Jewish settlers live in the West Bank, which Israel seized in the 1967 Six-Day War. The territory is home to more than 2.5 million Palestinians, and the Palestinians want it to form the main part of their future state.

In addition to more than 120 authorized settlements, more radical settlers have established dozens of outposts in rural parts of the West Bank. Israeli authorities are reluctant to dismantle them because doing so usually ignites clashes between the settlers and security forces. The Palestinians and the international community consider all settlements to be illegal and an obstacle to peace.

B'Tselem said the settlers who took part in the attack came from two nearby outposts, Avigayil and Havat Maon. The area has seen a series of recent settler attacks. B'Tselem

and other rights groups say Israeli forces often turn a blind eye to settler violence or side with the settlers in clashes with Palestinians.

Mohammed Amr, a local Palestinian official, said the "unprecedented" attack was aimed at driving Palestinians off the land to make way for more settlement. "The goal is to force these citizens to leave their homes and lands," he said.

09.29.21

EU conditions PA funds on removing violence, martyrdom and jihad in textbooks

09.29.21

EU to condition UNRWA funds on removing incitement from PA textbooks

Budget panel approves amendment to strip Ramallah of 20 million Euros if immediate changes are not made to the curriculum to promote coexistence with Israel; funding would instead be sent to groups that don't vilify Israel

TPS| Published: 09.29.21, 10:01

The European Union parliament said it will condition the funds received by the UN Palestinian refugees' agency on removal of incitement against Israel from Palestinian textbooks.

The European Parliament's Budget panel approved on Tuesday an amendment to withhold 20 million Euros in aid to The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) if immediate changes are not made to the curriculum taught in its schools, which allegedly includes anti-Israel rhetoric and incitement of violence.

"The reserve of EUR 20 million will be released by the next academic school year if substantive positive changes are made in the Palestinian Authority curriculum that promote coexistence and tolerance with the Jewish-Israeli 'other and peace education with Israel in alignment with the goals of the two-state solution," the approved amendment 4083 said.

"Should there be no change, appropriations in reserve shall be used for funding Palestinian NGOs that have a proven track record of promoting educational initiatives in school settings for children designed to foster tolerance, coexistence and respect towards the Jewish-Israeli 'other,'" the amendment added.

"Hate speech, anti-Semitism and incitement to violence in Palestinian Authority and UNRWA textbooks have still not been removed. The EP decisions insisted that EU-funded salaries of education civil servants who draft Palestinian textbooks must be made conditional on material reflecting values of peace, tolerance, coexistence," the justification for the amendment noted.

Brussels is the PA's largest single donor - paying the salaries of its civil servants, including those who design PA curricula - and sent over \$157 million in aid to UNRWA in 2021.

In April, the European Parliament for the first time in its history passed a resolution condemning UNRWA for inciting hatred in its curricula and demanding that the content be "removed immediately."

The rare decision came after activity by the Israeli IMPACT-se research, policy and advocacy organization which published extensive studies on the negative and anti-Semitic nature of UNRWA's teaching materials. The studies show that UNRWA is teaching Arab students in its schools to reject the peace negotiations with Israel while promoting anti-Semitism, encouraging jihad, and glorifying terrorists and terrorism. A report by the watchdog from January showed that PA school textbooks have "consistently shown a systematic insertion of violence, martyrdom and jihad across all grades and subjects."

09.30.21

Egypt and Syria met Friday at UN, urging US to ease sanctions on Syria economy

09.30.21

U.S. says it won't normalize or upgrade diplomatic ties with Syria's Assad
Comments come after Jordan fully reopens main border crossing with Syria in move to boost countries' struggling economies and reinforce push by Arab states to reintegrate Damascus after shunning it during civil war

Reuters| Published: 09.30.21, 08:47

The United States has no plans to "normalize or upgrade" diplomatic relations with the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and also does not encourage others to do so, a State Department spokesperson said on Wednesday.

The comments came in response to Reuters questions on whether Washington was encouraging and supporting a rapprochement between Jordan and Syria after Jordan fully reopened its main border crossing with Syria on Wednesday.

The move was to boost the countries' struggling economies and reinforce a push by Arab states to reintegrate Syria after shunning it during its civil war.

"The United States will not normalize or upgrade our diplomatic relations with the Assad regime nor do we encourage others to do so, given the atrocities inflicted by the Assad regime on the Syrian people," a State Department spokesperson said in an email. "Assad has regained no legitimacy in our eyes, and there is no question of the U.S. normalizing relations with his government at this time."

It was among the strongest comments to date on Syria from the Biden administration, whose Syria policy has largely focused on ensuring the permanent defeat of Islamic State and providing humanitarian aid to Syrian people.

The United States has suspended its diplomatic presence in Syria since 2012.

The Trump administration last June imposed its most sweeping sanctions ever targeting Assad and his inner circle to choke off revenue for his government in a bid to force it back to United Nations-led negotiations and broker an end to the country's decade-long war.

Arab states cut ties with Syria during the civil war, which the United Nations says killed at least 350,000 people, and U.S.-allied Arab states, including Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates backed opposition groups fighting Assad.

The United Arab Emirates and Syria restored diplomatic ties in 2018.

The Egyptian and Syrian foreign ministers met on Friday on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York, in what Egyptian media said was the first meeting at that level for about a decade.

Officials in Jordan, a U.S. ally, and Lebanon have urged Washington to ease sanctions on Syria.

"We believe that stability in Syria, and the greater region, can only be achieved through a political process that represents the will of all Syrians and we are committed to working with allies, partners, and the UN to ensure that a durable political solution remains within reach," the State Department spokesperson said.

Assad has recovered most of Syria but some areas remain outside his control. Turkish forces are deployed in much of the north and northwest, the last rebel stronghold, and U.S. forces are stationed in the Kurdish-controlled east and northeast.

09.26.21

Germans polls end Merkel's 16 year term voting for Laschet or Scholz

09.26.21

Germans vote in close election to decide Merkel successor

With the end of Angela Merkel's 16 year term, Germany prepares for one of the most unpredictable elections in its recent history, with the conservatives and the center-left Social Democrats locked in a tight race

Reuters| Published: 09.26.21, 09:43

Germans went to the polls on Sunday in a national election too close to call, with the center-left Social Democrats (SPD) mounting a strong challenge to retiring Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives.

Merkel has been in power since 2005 but plans to step down after the election, making the vote an era-changing event to set the future course of Europe's largest economy.

A fractured electorate means that after the election, leading parties will sound each other out before embarking on more formal coalition negotiations that could take months, leaving Merkel, 67, in charge in a caretaker role.

Campaigning in his home constituency of **Aachen** alongside Merkel, conservative **candidate** Armin **Laschet** said on Saturday that a leftist alliance led by the SPD with the Greens and the hard-left Link party would destabilize Europe.

"They want to pull us out of NATO, they don't want this alliance, they want another republic," said Laschet, who is 60. "I don't want the Link to be in the next government." Running against Laschet is Olaf **Scholz** of the SPD, the finance minister in Merkel's right-left coalition who **won all three televised debates** between the leading candidates.

Scholz, 63, has not ruled out a leftist alliance with The Left but said NATO membership was a red line for the SPD.

After a domestic-focused election campaign, Berlin's allies in Europe and beyond may have to wait for months before they can see whether the new German government is ready to engage on foreign issues to the extent they would like.

The splintered political landscape means a three-way coalition is likely. Final opinion polls gave the Social Democrats a narrow lead, but the conservatives have reduced the gap in recent days and many voters were still undecided.

The most likely coalition scenarios see either the SPD or the conservative CDU/CSU bloc - whoever comes first - forming an alliance with the Greens and the liberal Free Democrats (FDP).

Scholz told supporters in his own constituency in Potsdam near Berlin that he was still hoping the SPD and **Greens** would secure a **majority** to rule alone without a third partner. "The stronger the SPD, the easier it will be to form a coalition," Scholz said. "I don't know what will be possible but maybe it is possible for example to form an SPD-Greens coalition. I believe it is possible. We'll see."

Both the conservatives and the FDP **reject a European "debt union"** and want to ensure that joint European Union borrowing to finance the bloc's coronavirus recovery package remains a one-off. The SPD has talked about taking steps **towards a fiscal union**.

The Greens favor a common European fiscal policy to support investment in the environment, **research, infrastructure and education**.

09.22.21

Iran president Raisi at UN calls US sanctions 'crimes against humanity'

09.22.21

Iran's president slams U.S. in first speech to UN

Ebrahim Raisi **calls U.S. sanctions on Iran during a pandemic 'crimes against humanity'**; says Tehran not against returning to the 2015 nuclear agreement despite mistrust of 'any promises made by the U.S.'

Associated Press| Updated: **09.22.21**, 09:32

Iran's new **president slammed U.S. sanctions** imposed on his nation as a mechanism of war, using his first U.N address since his swearing-in to forcefully call out Washington's policies in the region and the growing political schism within America.

President Ebrahim Raisi on Tuesday delivered a far more critical and blunt take on American foreign policy than his moderate predecessor, Hassan Rouhani, had done in previous speeches to the U.N. General Assembly.

Raisi, who was sworn in last month after an election, is a conservative cleric and former judiciary chief seen as close to Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. His speech espoused Iran's Islamic political identity and where the Shiite-led nation sees its place in the world, despite crushing U.S. sanctions that have hurt its economy and ordinary Iranians.

"Sanctions are the U.S.' new way of war with the nations of the world," Raisi said, adding that such economic punishment during the time of the COVID-19 pandemic amounts to "crimes against humanity."

U.S. sanctions, while allowing for humanitarian aid, have made international purchases of medicine and equipment much more difficult. Iran has endured multiple waves of the coronavirus, with nearly 118,000 deaths recorded - the highest in the region.

In taking aim at the United States, Raisi also referenced the shocking Jan. 6th insurrection on Capitol Hill by supporters of then-President Donald Trump, and the horrific scenes at Kabul airport last month as desperate Afghans plunged to their deaths after clinging to a U.S. aircraft evacuating people.

From the Capitol to Kabul, one clear message was sent to the world: "The U.S.' hegemonic system has no credibility, whether inside or outside the country," Raisi said. The Iranian president said "the project of imposing Westernized identity" had failed, and added erroneously that "today, the U.S. does not get to exit Iraq and Afghanistan but is expelled."

The perseverance of nations, he said, is stronger than the power of superpowers. In a dig at the political slogans used by Trump and his successor President Joe Biden, Raisi said: "Today, the world doesn't care about "America First" or "America is Back."

Despite the criticism aimed at Washington, Raisi appeared not to rule out a return to the negotiating table for the nuclear accord, saying Iran considers talks useful if their ultimate outcome is the lifting of all sanctions. Still, he stated: "We don't trust the promises made by the U.S. government."

A senior U.S. State Department official said Washington had taken note of Raisi's speech but was looking to Iran for actions, rather than rhetoric.

In that context, the official said the U.S. also noted an Iranian foreign ministry statement earlier Tuesday that said Iran is willing to return to the indirect nuclear talks in Vienna in the coming weeks.

"We continue to believe that we need to re-engage in the Vienna context as soon as possible," said the official, who was not authorized to publicly discuss the matter and spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity.

Biden has made clear he wants to salvage the nuclear deal with Iran that Trump withdrew the U.S. from, but indirect talks between Washington and Tehran in Vienna have stalled as tensions in the Persian Gulf persist.

The Biden administration and allies like Israel and Gulf Arab states also want to see Iran's missile development and support for regional militias addressed.

"The United States remains committed to preventing Iran from gaining a nuclear weapon," Biden said in his own U.N. speech, delivered in person earlier Tuesday. Raisi insisted that atomic weapons have no place in Iran's defense doctrine and deterrence policy. First published: 09:27, 09.22.21

09.27.21

Bennett warns UN; Iran seeks to dominate with nuclear bombs & drones

09.27.21

Bennett warns of Iranian threat in UN address, says it seeks to 'dominate region' PM in his first ever General Assembly singles out COVID, his government, Iran and critics of Israel, saying slamming Jewish state 'doesn't make you woke'; says some view Iran's acquisition of nuclear bomb as 'inevitable'

Ynet| Published: 09.27.21, 15:30

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett addressed the United Nations on Monday in a speech that emphasized the Iranian military entrenchment in the Middle East and urged action against the Islamic Republic's apparent efforts to acquire a nuclear bomb.

The speech at the General Assembly would be Bennett's first as prime minister and the Israeli leader's spokesperson said ahead of the event that it would be "different" than speeches given by his predecessor Benjamin Netanyahu. "There will not be visual aids, poster boards, drawings."

Bennett began his speech by calling Israel a "lighthouse in a stormy sea, a beacon of democracy".

"For way too long, Israel was defined by wars with our neighbors. But this is not what Israel is about. This is not what the people of Israel are about. Israelis don't wake up in the morning thinking about the conflict.

"Israelis want to lead a good life, take care of our families and build a better world for our children. Which means that from time to time, we might need to leave our jobs, say goodbye to our families and rush to the battlefield to defend our country."

He then went on to praise his coalition as being "the most diverse in history".

"About a hundred days ago, my partners and I formed a new government in Israel. What started as a political accident, can now turn into a purpose. And that purpose is unity. Today we sit together, around one table... What we have proven is that even in the age of social media, we can debate without hate."

The prime minister added that Israel "pioneered" the COVID vaccine booster shot as most of the world still grapples with the pandemic.

"We faced a choice to either drag Israel into yet another set of lockdowns [and] further harm our economy and society, or to double-down on vaccines. We chose the latter.

"Two months in I can report that it works: With a third dose, you're seven times more protected than with two doses, and 40 times more protected than without any vaccine."

During his speech Bennett also called for action against Tehran's atomic activities to ensure that it does not produce weapons and warned about its entrenchment in the Middle East.

"Iran's great goal is crystal clear to anybody who cares to open their eyes: Iran seeks to dominate the region - and seeks to do so under a nuclear umbrella."

"Just this year, Iran made operational a new deadly terror unit — swarms of killer UAVs armed with lethal weapons that can attack any place any time. They plan to blanket the skies of the Middle East with this lethal force.

"Iran plans to arm its proxies in Yemen, Iraq, Syria and Lebanon with hundreds and then thousands of these deadly drones."

He added some world leaders view Iran's potential acquisition of nuclear weapons as "inevitable" but Israel "does not have that privilege".

"Evidence which clearly proves Iran's intentions for nuclear weapons in secret sites in Toorkooz-abad, Teheran and Marivan - is ignored.

"Iran's nuclear program has hit a watershed moment, and so has our tolerance. Words do not stop centrifuges from spinning ... We will not allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon."

The prime minister finished his speech by touting the Abraham Accords, thanked the U.S. for approving additional funding for the Iron Dome air defense system and slammed those who single out Israel for its alleged violations.

"Attacking Israel doesn't make you morally superior, fighting the only democracy in the Middle East doesn't make you 'woke,' adopting clichés about Israel without bothering to learn the basic facts, well... that's just plain lazy."

The Likud Party denounced Bennett's UN General Assembly address as "empty platitudes" and made a comparison between the leader and his predecessor, Benjamin Netanyahu.

"Netanyahu's speeches at the UN sent shock waves through the world and pushed Israel's interests to the international forefront," a statement read.

"Unlike him, Bennett gave an empty speech in front of an empty hall and wasted empty platitudes instead of taking advantage of an important international stage."

The current opposition leader, a conservative strongman and himself an Iran hawk, is famed for his fiery, attention-grabbing speeches in front of the annual international forum.

His speech at the 2012 edition of the UN General Assembly is mostly remembered for a diagram he presented that featured a cartoonish drawing of a bomb he used as a prop to illustrate what he sees as Iran's drive for an atomic weapon.

Netanyahu then took out a marker and dramatically drew a red line just below a label reading "final stage" to a bomb, in which Iran would be 90% along the path to having sufficient weapons-grade material.

09.27.21

Gaza to rebuild 1,800 damaged homes destroyed in Israeli air strikes

09.27.21

Gaza to begin rebuilding homes destroyed in May conflict

Israel limits construction materials vital for rebuilding of the Strip from entering the territory, saying Hamas uses them to build weapons to wage attacks; an estimated \$479 million needed Hamas says

Reuters| Updated: 09.27.21, 10:44

The reconstruction of homes in Gaza that were destroyed or damaged in the May conflict between Israel and Hamas will begin in the first week of October using aid from Qatar, a senior Palestinian housing official said on Sunday.

Gaza's Hamas-run government says Israeli air strikes destroyed about 2,200 homes in the enclave during the 11-day conflict and damaged 37,000 others. Some homes in Israel were damaged by rockets launched by Islamist organization Hamas and other Gaza militant groups.

About 1,800 destroyed or damaged homes will be rebuilt in the first phase of work, according to Naji Sarhan, Gaza's deputy minister for housing and public works.

09.26.21

Israel teachers & students won't enter schools without negative test

09.26.21

'Israeli students won't enter schools without negative COVID test'

Education Ministry DG Yigal Slovik tells Ynet education system is ready to reopen after High Holidays break, trusts parents to get their children tested, supports denying pay from unvaccinated teachers who refuse to get tested

Attila Somfalvi| Published: 09.26.21, 15:00

Israeli children will not be allowed to enter schools without presenting a negative COVID test, a senior Education Ministry official said Sunday as the system is preparing to reopen following the High Holidays.

Education Ministry Director-General Yigal Slovik told Ynet that the national education system ready to reopen following almost a month-long hiatus.

Afternoon childcare centers are set to reopen Wednesday, while Thursday the entire education system will return to usual activity as COVID-19 infection rate appears to be stable.

"We're ready for the reopening of the school year, I think it's going to be similar to September 1st", said Slovik.

He added that he trusts parents to perform home COVID tests on their children ahead of sending them back to school.

"I think we have no other way to manage the pandemic but to trust the public, trust the parents and pass on as much responsibility as possible. Not the responsibility for managing the pandemic, but the responsibility over their children.

"The responsibility for managing the pandemic and the police of quarantine is at the hands of the Health Ministry," he added.

When asked what will happen if a student arrives at school without a test, Slovik replied that no "untested" students will enter the school's premises. "In this situation, his or her parents will be informed, and they will have to come and pick him up from school."

Slovik also said he backs the decision to deny pay unvaccinated teachers who decline COVID-19 testing. "I think we do all that we can so teachers could come to school, they can be vaccinated, if they decline, then they can bring a negative COVID-19 test. If they decline both options, that's their choice."

He added the number of teachers who have declined both options currently stands at 300, and that they are well prepared to address this issue if the need arises.

09.23.21

US to provide \$1 billion for Iron Dome, intercepting 4,350 rockets from Gaza

09.23.21

Bill to provide \$1 billion for Israel's Iron Dome system introduced in U.S. Congress

After provision removed from broader spending legislation due to progressive pressure, House Appropriations chair says 'commitment to the security of our friend and ally is ironclad,' with voting expected later Thursday

Reuters| Published: 09.23.21, 08:07

The leader of the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Committee introduced legislation on Wednesday to provide \$1 billion to Israel to replenish its "Iron Dome" missile-defense system, a day after the funding was removed from a broader spending bill.

Some of the most progressive House Democrats had objected to the provision and said they would vote against the broad spending bill. This threatened its passage because Republicans were lined up against the plan to fund the federal government through Dec. 3 and raise the nation's borrowing limit.

The removal led **Republicans** to **label Democrats as anti-Israel**, despite a long tradition in the U.S. Congress of strong support from both parties for the Jewish state, to which **Washington sends** billions of dollars in **aid every year**.

The United States has **already provided** more than **\$1.6 billion for Israel to develop** and build the **Iron Dome** system, according to a Congressional Research Service report **last year**.

Some progressive Democrats have voiced concerns this year about U.S.-Israel policy, citing among other things the **many Palestinian casualties** as Israel responded to Hamas rocket attacks in May.

Israel said most of the **4,350 rockets fired from Gaza** during the conflict **were blown out of the sky by Iron Dome** interceptors, with the defense system **saving many lives** along the country's northern and southern frontiers.

The bill introduced on Wednesday by **Representative Rosa DeLauro provides \$1 billion to replace missile interceptors** used during that conflict. **Voting is expected on Thursday**. “The United States’ commitment to the security of our friend and ally Israel is ironclad. Replenishing interceptors used to protect Israel from attacks is our **legal and moral responsibility**,” the Connecticut Democrat said in a statement.

“While this funding would ordinarily be included in a year-end spending package, we are advancing this legislation now to demonstrate **Congress’ bipartisan commitment to Israel’s security** as part of a Middle East with lasting peace.”

House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer had said on Tuesday evening **he would bring the Iron Dome bill** to the House floor **later this week**.

09.25.21

34 UN countries boycott anti-Semitic Conference in Durban South Africa

09.25.21

U.S. support for Israel-led boycott of UN conference proves pivotal

Expansive effort by successive Israeli, American governments in boycott of Durban anniversary conference leads 34 countries to skip anti-Israel hate fest

Mike Wagenheim/The Media Line| Published: **09.25.21**, 19:04

Israel claimed a diplomatic **victory** on Wednesday, as **34 countries**, including over a dozen in the final hours, **openly boycotted** a **United Nations conference** marking the 20th anniversary of the World Conference **Against Racism in Durban**.

The boycott, which included a number of world powers and even, at the last minute, **Poland** — which currently **is at severe odds with Israel’s government** — was the result of a focused, intensive year-long campaign spanning two Israeli and American governments, and brought to bear using the full weight of Washington and Jerusalem.

“Gilad Erdan initiated and has led the diplomatic campaign, with Yair Lapid and the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs heading the global campaign,” according to a source with intimate knowledge of the effort, who spoke exclusively to The Media Line about the substance of the effort.

Erdan, who was named Israel’s ambassador to the UN and U.S. by then-Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, stayed on when the country’s new government took over in the spring. He is expected to depart his role as ambassador to Washington at the end of this month, following the Jewish High Holidays, but will stay on at the UN in New York, in an agreement struck with Foreign Minister Lapid.

Erdan started work last year on a boycott of Durban IV, the latest installment of the original 2001 event in Durban, South Africa, which was marred by inflammatory speeches against Israel, blatantly anti-Semitic texts and images distributed in the conference halls and a pro-Hitler march that took place outside the venue. Israel and the U.S. walked out of the conference in protest. The conference was overseen by then-UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and former Irish President Mary Robinson and was largely blamed for killing Robinson’s hopes for becoming UN secretary-general. The Durban Declaration, which singled out only Israel for criticism and listed no other global conflict other than the Israel-Palestinian one, was reaffirmed on Wednesday in New York.

Iterations of the Durban Conference since 2001 have been dogged by Holocaust-denying speeches by then-Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. Fourteen countries boycotted the last Durban Conference in 2011.

“Erdan and Kelly Craft (then-U.S. Ambassador to the UN under President Donald Trump) voted together against the UN budget, which included funding for this year’s Durban Conference. The Biden administration agreed to continue the effort after initial discussions,” said the source, who noted there was some initial hesitation by the Biden White House, which was concerned that boycotting the conference might conflict with its outsized and vocal focus on human rights, including racism.

“Israel was able to convince (current U.S. Ambassador to the UN) Linda Thomas-Greenfield that the Durban Conference, at its heart, wasn’t and isn’t about human rights. The key goal was to draw a straight line between Durban and anti-Semitism,” the source said.

Thomas-Greenfield and the U.S. agreed not only to boycott the event, but to lobby and pressure other nations to do so, which was critical to the overall plan. Erdan was in contact with fellow ambassadors at the UN, utilizing face-to-face meetings and a letter-writing campaign, in step with parallel efforts by Thomas-Greenfield’s office. The Foreign Ministry, meanwhile, led an in-country campaign, pressuring foreign ambassadors in Israel to report back to their capitals Jerusalem’s concerns with Durban. Erdan and other Israeli officials also briefed dozens of heads of Jewish organizations globally, with a focus on European hotbeds of anti-Semitism. Erdan and the ministry coordinated on social media and press initiatives regarding the boycott.

The countries boycotting Durban IV were Albania, Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Dominican Republic, Estonia, France,

Georgia, Germany, Greece, Honduras, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Moldova, Netherlands, New Zealand, Poland, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the U.S. and Uruguay. The number of European countries is notable, though Belgium and Ireland still took up the invitation to attend the conference.

“Belgium and Ireland choosing to go only makes the job easier for Israel. European countries that often take a critical tone toward Israel like Holland, France and Germany only retain credibility when they can take a step back from an event like Durban. They realize they can’t simply turn a blind eye,” Jenny Aharon, director of Golden Gate Public Affairs and a political adviser on EU-Israel affairs who works with European Union institutions in Brussels, told The Media Line.

“In Belgium, people chanted, ‘Death to Jews’ in the streets during the last round of conflict between Israel and Hamas in May. The government in Brussels didn’t issue a word of condemnation. You can’t then go to New York and speak credibly on racism,” said Aharon.

Belgium, which generally follows France’s lead on foreign policy, differed when it came to Durban, though its government refused to send a ministerial-level representative. Other countries took a similar tack, refusing both an all-out boycott or full-throated support of the conference by sending a low-level diplomat.

Only a few heads of state, including those from South Africa and Cuba, addressed the conference, with the Palestinian Authority, Iran and just a handful of others sending foreign ministers. Palestinian Authority Foreign Minister Riyad al-Maliki said the Palestinians criticized those boycotting the event, calling attacks on Durban unwarranted, and took a thinly veiled swipe at the U.S. for its problems in dealing with racism at home. This year’s Durban theme was: “Reparations, racial justice and equality for people of African descent.”

In fact, none of the 28 members of the UN regional Western European and Others Group accepted an invitation for its head of state or government to give a speech or to have a representative lead one of two roundtable discussions planned for the conference. The diplomatic source cited this as an example of where Israel stands now diplomatically, compared with 2001’s Durban Conference.

France was one of the first countries to announce a boycott. The number was at 20 early in the week, but went up nearly 75% by Wednesday.

“There is safety in numbers. Some governments might have been wary about participating in the boycott. Every country that joined provided more cover for another country to add their name to the list,” said the source with knowledge of the diplomatic strategy behind the boycott, explaining the tidal wave of boycott announcements as the conference drew near.

Notably, none of the countries connected to the Abraham Accords — a series of normalization agreements between Israel and Arab and Muslim-majority nations, joined the boycott. While the diplomatic source wouldn’t comment on that fact directly, the implication seemed to be that Israel was grateful for the support of the countries who joined, and would keep a positive focus on them, rather than grumble about who attended Durban.

09.21.21

Palestinians want Abbas to resign for doing nothing against Israel occupation

09.21.21

Poll finds nearly 80% of Palestinians want Abbas to resign

The death of Nizar Banat, a harsh critic of the PA who died after being beaten by Palestinian security forces during a late-night arrest in June, ignited protests in the West Bank and seen as cause of plummeting public support

Associated Press | Updated: 09.21.21, 19:38

A new poll has found that nearly 80% of Palestinians want President Mahmoud Abbas to resign, reflecting widespread anger over the death of an activist in security forces' custody and a crackdown on protests over the summer.

The survey released Tuesday found support for Abbas' Hamas rivals remained high months after the 11-day Gaza war in May, when the Islamic militant group was widely seen by Palestinians as having scored a victory against a far more powerful Israel while the Western-backed Abbas was sidelined.

The latest poll by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research found that 45% of Palestinians believe Hamas should lead and represent them, while only 19% said Abbas' secular Fatah deserved that role, showing only a slight shift in favor of Fatah over the last three months.

"This is the worst polling we've ever seen for the president," said Khalil Shikaki, the head of the center, who has been surveying Palestinian public opinion for more than two decades. "He has never been in as bad a position as today."

Despite his plummeting popularity and refusal to hold elections, the international community still views the 85-year-old Abbas as the leader of the Palestinian cause and a crucial partner in the peace process with Israel, which ground to a halt more than a decade ago.

His Palestinian Authority administers parts of the West Bank under interim agreements signed with Israel at the height of the peace process in the 1990s. Hamas drove Abbas' forces out of Gaza when it seized power there in 2007, a year after winning parliamentary elections.

Abbas' latest woes began in April, when he called off the first Palestinian elections in 15 years as Fatah appeared to be headed for another embarrassing loss. Hamas' popularity soared the following month amid protests in Jerusalem and the Gaza war, as many Palestinians accused the PA of doing nothing to aid their struggle against Israeli occupation.

The calling on Abbas to resign. His security forces launched a crackdown in response, beating and arresting several demonstrators.

The poll found that 78% of Palestinians want Abbas to resign and just 19% think he should remain in office.

It found that 63% of Palestinians think Banat was killed on the orders of PA political or security leaders, with only 22% believing it was a mistake. The PA recently announced that 14 security officials who took part in the arrest will stand trial. Sixty-nine percent of those polled felt that was an insufficient response.

Sixty-three percent of Palestinians support the demonstrations that broke out after Banat's death, and 74% believe the PA's arrest of demonstrators was a violation of liberties and civil rights, the poll found.

The PCPSR says it surveyed 1,270 Palestinians face-to-face in the West Bank and Gaza, with a margin of error of three percentage points.

09.19.21

Netanyahu suggests on Facebook that Biden dozed off while meeting Bennett

09.19.21

Netanyahu suggests on Facebook that Biden fell asleep meeting Bennett

Opposition leader jokingly says U.S. president was 'very attentive' during White House meeting last month after which he let his head fall in a swift motion to mimic someone snoozing

Reuters| Published: 09.19.21, 23:09

Opposition Leader Benjamin Netanyahu suggested in a Facebook video posted on Sunday that U.S. President Joe Biden had fallen asleep when meeting Prime Minister Naftali Bennett last month.

A Reuters fact check previously debunked the idea that Biden dozed off, after social media users shared a video clip of the U.S. president that they said showed him looking down and nodding off as Bennett spoke in the Oval Office.

The clip that was shared around was misleadingly cropped, according to the Reuters fact check. Seconds after the clip was cut, longer footage showed Biden responded to Bennett. In a video Netanyahu posted on his Facebook page on Sunday, an off-camera voice says: "You know, Bennett met with Biden."

"I heard. I heard that Biden was very attentive at this meeting. He dropped his head in agreement," Netanyahu replied, letting his own head fall in a swift motion, as if to mimic someone falling asleep.

Netanyahu, 71, and head of the right-wing Likud party, was largely in lockstep with the Middle East policies of Democrat Biden's Republican predecessor, Donald Trump.

Netanyahu insinuating Biden fell asleep during his meeting with Bennett last month

Netanyahu's reference to the Biden meeting was a brief segment in a nearly 26-minute video that touched on a variety of political issues. But it drew headlines on Israeli news websites, several of which accused Netanyahu of mocking Biden. In June, a new government of left-wing, centrist, right-wing and Arab parties led by Bennett replaced Netanyahu's administration, ending the conservative politician's 12-year run as Israel's longest-serving leader. Now in opposition, Netanyahu has promised to govern again.

09.19.21

Commando raid closure apprehending fugitives in West Bank without casualties

09.19.21

Israeli commando recounts successful raid that ended prison break saga

Little over two weeks after six Palestinian prisoners manage to break out of maximum-security penitentiary, all inmates once again in Israeli custody; 'we feel like we've reached a closure,' says spec-ops commander

Elior Levy, Itamar Eichner | Published: 09.19.21, 17:53

After Israeli security forces apprehended the two remaining fugitives who tunneled out of a high-level penitentiary in northern Israel earlier this month, the commander of the police counterterrorism unit sat down with Ynet and laid down his account of the events that led to the capture of the runaways.

Iham Kamamji, 35, and Munadil Nafiyat, 26 — both members of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ) terrorist group — were captured in the early morning hours in a home in the northern West Bank city of Jenin, according to police.

Commander H. told Ynet that higher-ups have set their sights on Jenin — the prisoners' hometown and a PIJ stronghold — from the get-go and were certain that at least one of the fugitives may have made their way across the border into the West Bank.

Ultimately, police managed to zero in on the location of the two and they were arrested in a pre-dawn raid on a house in the eastern section of the city in which they were staying. Meanwhile, a separate military force entered a different section of Jenin to distract locals from the ongoing foray.

"We had intelligence that pointed to the building where the fugitives were hiding," H. said. "After we were given the go-ahead, it took us no more than 20 minutes to head out. We wanted them to be in that building and for this saga to end."

A little over two weeks after they managed to break out of the maximum-security Gilboa Prison, all six inmates were once again in Israeli custody. The other four prisoners were busted near the northern city of Nazareth on two separate occasions last weekend.

"We feel like we've **reached a closure**," H said. "When we arrived at the hideout, the fugitives realized they were surrounded and surrendered without a fight.

"At first, we were not sure that those were the men we were chasing after and only when they approached us could we confirm their identity. We were thrilled that **there were no casualties** and the operation wrapped up the way it did. It is a fantastic feeling."

Palestinian sources reported that **another local was taken** in by security forces **for providing the fugitives shelter**.

Prime Minister Naftali **Bennett thanked the forces** for their relentless efforts to capture the remaining fugitives.

"I wish to thank all the forces for their precise and professional work and their determination during these past weeks," **Bennett said at a memorial service for** the fallen IDF soldiers killed in the **1973 Yom Kippur War**.

09.19.21

Israel quarantine enforced with GPS tracking system after a successful pilot period

09.19.21

Israel stepping up virus quarantine enforcement with GPS tracking system

Tens of thousands of quarantined Israelis receive text messages asking them to provide GPS location; police minister calls service 'essential' for 'streamlining' enforcement of self-isolation

i24NEWS| Published: **09.19.21**, 23:23

Ramping up its efforts to stave off the spread of coronavirus, Israel launched on Sunday a new **GPS tracking system** to better **monitor quarantined Israelis**.

According to a Public Security Ministry statement, tens of thousands of quarantined people received a text message from Israel Police with a link **asking them to provide their GPS location**.

The tracking system — developed by Israel Police in tandem with the Public Security Ministry — was expanded after a **successful pilot period in recent weeks**.

Israel in recent months has come to grips with an unprecedented resurgence of COVID-19 cases driven by the highly transmissible Delta variant, prompting the Israeli government to introduce new pandemic measures.

In case an individual chooses to opt out of using the system, police "will shore up monitoring activities around the location of quarantine," according to the terms of the system listed on a government web page.

Public Security Minister Omer Barlev called the service "essential" for **"streamlining" the enforcement of quarantine** and saving law enforcement trips to homes of self-isolating individuals.

"I recommend anyone who receives a message to click on the link and confirm the activation of the temporary location," Barlev said in the statement, further adding that all information provided to the system will not be stored.

Israel requires all travelers arriving from abroad to enter a seven-day self-isolation period, at the end of which they will have to present a negative PCR test. Israelis who have received a third COVID-19 shot are exempt from quarantining, as well as those who have recently recovered from the disease and those who received their first two doses within the last six months.

09.20.21

31 countries to boycott anti-Semitic UN conference in Durban, South Africa

09.20.21

In major win for Israel, 31 countries to boycott anti-Semitic UN conference Nations convinced to shun Durban Conference under Israeli diplomatic pressure, spearheaded by Lapid; FM says move demonstrates Israel's political power on the world stage

Itamar Eichner | Published: 09.20.21, 10:33

Thirty-one nations have so far decided to boycott a UN meeting marking the 20th anniversary of the Durban World Conference on Racism later this week due to the event's anti-Semitic nature in the past, marking a major diplomatic win for Israel.

The first conference was held in Durban, South Africa from August 31 through September 8, 2001, and covered several controversial issues, including redress for transatlantic slavery and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The United States and Israeli delegations withdrew from the event over objections to a draft document equating Zionism with racism.

The conference's goal was to tackle the issue of racism, but quickly devolved into an openly anti-Israel event, led by Palestinian and boycott groups.

Since then, a follow-up conference has been held at the UN General Assembly every five years. Former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was invited to speak as a guest of honor in the event's 2009 edition and called for the destruction of Israel.

Earlier this year, the United States and Israel voted against the approval of the UN budget for 2021 in protest of the organization's decision to hold the rally at this year's General Assembly.

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of anti-Semitism includes general hatred toward Jews, Holocaust denial and "claiming that the existence of a State of Israel is a racist endeavor."

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid led the efforts to boycott the commemorative event, having spoken to dozens of his counterparts around the world. Other Israeli diplomats also took part in the boycott campaign, spearheaded by Israel's Permanent Representative to the UN Gilad Erdan.

"Unlike the previous government that raised its hands ahead of this conference, we were able to take this thing and prove that the world is not as against us as we think," Lapid said.

"Reaching a situation where 31 countries boycott the Durban Conference is proof of a political power that has not been around for a long time, and that [former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu's] whole theory that everyone is against us is incorrect."

As of Sunday, 20 countries have already officially announced their intentions to boycott the conference, including the United States, Canada, Australia, the UK, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Israel, France, Bulgaria, Croatia, Italy, Cyprus, Greece, Romania, New Zealand, Slovenia and Slovakia.

Eleven other nations have also decided to pull out from the event but have yet to issue an official statement.

Other nations that will take part in the conference, such as Belgium, were convinced to downgrade their delegates participating in the event.