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Israel to donate 500,000 dollars to Afghan refugees through The United Nations

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PA summon Dutch envoy over aid cut; saying not responsible for employee terrorism

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Iran rocket launchers, machine guns & sniper rifles to Yemen; seized by US Navy

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Syria must answer 20 UN questions on continued use of chlorine & Sarin weapons

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Olmert in defamation suit stating; mental illness of Netanyahu, his wife and his son

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Israel to donate 500,000 dollars to Afghan refugees through The United Nations

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Israel to donate 500,000 dollars to Afghan refugees

Foreign Ministry approves first official Israeli aid to Afghan refugees, who fled Taliban rule after U.S. pullout, to provide health care, sanitation, shelter, education, food, and professional training

Itamar Eichner | Published: 01.10.22, 19:55

Foreign Minister Yair Lapid approved Monday a \$500,000 donation to help Afghan refugees who fled to neighboring Tajikistan following the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan and Taliban takeover.

This is the first time Israel addresses the issue in an official capacity, and the funds are expected to be transferred through The United Nations Refugee Agency.

So far, Israeli aid to Afghan refugees has been provided through nonprofits such as IsraAID, which funded rescue flights for Afghan refugees.

The Ultra-Orthodox Borough Park community in New York also aided the Afghan refugees by providing countless food packages stamped with the words "With love from the Jewish community."

According to the Foreign Ministry, the donation is intended to integrate with other international aid efforts in order to provide health care, sanitation, shelter, education, food, and professional training for refugees.

"Israel is proud to be a part of an international effort to assist refugees fleeing the Taliban regime in Afghanistan", Foreign Ministry Director-General Alon Ushpiz. "This cooperation with the UN organization for refugees, through our agency for International Development Cooperation Mashav, is the core of Israel's values."

01.10.22

PA summon Dutch envoy over aid cut; saying not responsible for employee terrorism

01.10.22

Palestinians summon Dutch envoy over NGO aid cutoff

Ramallah's protests come after EU member cuts ties with Palestinian group outlawed by Israel for alleged terror ties; two former employees convicted for deadly 2019 bombing that killed an Israeli teenager

Associated Press| Published: 01.10.22, 18:07

The Palestinian Authority summoned the Dutch representative on Monday to object to the Netherlands' decision to halt funding to a Palestinian civil society group that Israel controversially outlawed as a terrorist organization.

In a statement, the PA decried the "unjust and biased" decision to cut off funding to the Union of Agricultural Work Committees, one of six groups that Israel outlawed in October in what critics said was as an assault on Palestinian civil society.

The Palestinian Authority said UAWC provides vital aid to Palestinian farmers struggling to remain on their land in the face of Israeli settlement expansion.

The Dutch government based its decision on an independent audit of the UAWC that found no evidence the organization was involved in terrorism. It said the audit did however find a "worrisome" number of UAWC board members were linked to the terror group Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. Two former UAWC employees were arrested in connection with a bombing that killed an Israeli teenager in the West Bank in 2019.

The UAWC rejected the findings, saying it does not concern itself with the private political activities of its board members or employees. The PFLP has a political party as well as charities and an armed wing. Israel and Western countries consider the PFLP a terrorist organization because of attacks going back decades that have killed civilians.

Israel says the six groups are fronts for the PFLP but has provided little evidence to substantiate the allegations. The terror designation paves the way for the Israeli military to shut down the groups and arrest their members, but it has yet to do so. The rights groups deny the Israeli allegations, which they say are aimed at stifling civil society and pressuring Western donors to cut off funding.

01.09.22

Iran rocket launchers, machine guns & sniper rifles to Yemen; seized by US Navy

01.09.22

Report: Iran allegedly smuggling weapons to Yemen

Confidential UN report seen by Wall Street Journal says boats used to transport arms for Houthi rebels originating in China, Russia and Islamic Republic left from southeastern Iranian harbor of Jask

AFP| Published: 01.09.22, 12:35

The United Nations found thousands of weapons recently seized in the Arabian Sea likely came from a single port in Iran, evidence Tehran is exporting arms to Yemen and elsewhere, The Wall Street Journal reported Saturday.

Yemen has been wracked by civil war since 2014, pitting Iran-backed Houthi rebels against the internationally recognized government.

The United States as well as ally Saudi Arabia — which leads the military coalition backing the Yemeni government — have long accused Iran of supplying the Houthis with weapons, a charge Tehran denies.

Citing a confidential report by a UN Security Council panel of experts on Yemen, the Journal wrote that boats and land transport were used to smuggle weapons made in Russia, China and Iran into Yemen.

The arms included rocket launchers, machine guns and sniper rifles, which had been seized by the U.S. Navy in recent months.

Boats used to transport the weapons had left from the southeastern Iranian port of Jask, the UN report found, based on interviews with the boat crew and data from the onboard navigational instruments, the Journal said.

The rebel group's deputy information minister denied Iran was smuggling weapons into Yemen, according to the Journal, and Tehran said the weapons were not sold or transported to the country.

In recent months, fighting in Yemen has seen Saudi-led coalition forces carry out airstrikes on the rebel-held capital Sanaa.

Riyadh has said its 2015 intervention in Yemen was aimed at preventing an Iranian ally from taking power on its doorstep.

The UN estimates Yemen's war will have directly or indirectly killed 377,000 people by the end of the year.

More than 80 percent of the population of around 30 million require humanitarian assistance.

01.06.22

Syria must answer 20 UN questions on continued use of chlorine & Sarin weapons

01.06.22

West: Syria must answer 20 questions on its chemical weapons

Damascus joined convention to destroy chemical arms program in 2013; Syria's UN envoy accuses council members of distracting attention from Israeli attack on declared chemical weapons facility

Associated Press | Published: 01.06.22, 12:09

Western nations accused Syria on Wednesday of refusing for eight years to clear up 20 outstanding issues about its undeclared research, production and possible weaponization of unknown quantities of chemical weapons.

U.S. Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told the UN Security Council the world "should not be fooled by Syria's veneer of cooperation" while it deliberately delays and obstructs answers to the international chemical weapons watchdog.

France's UN Ambassador Nicolas De Riviere went further, saying Syria is not only not cooperating with the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons but it has continued to use chemical weapons. "And these facts must be qualified as crimes against humanity," he said.

Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention in September 2013, pressed by its close ally Russia after a deadly chemical weapons attack that the West blamed on Damascus. A Security Council resolution adopted at that time endorsed the decision of the OPCW, which implements the convention, to destroy Syria's chemical weapons program and banned Syria's use, development, production or acquisition of chemical weapons.

By August 2014, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government declared that the destruction of its chemical weapons was completed, but Syria's initial declaration of its chemical stockpiles and chemical weapons production sites to the OPCW has remained in dispute.

UN disarmament chief Izumi Nakamitsu told the council Wednesday that 20 of the 24 outstanding issues in the declaration opened by the OPCW in 2014 remain unresolved.

They not only include the undeclared production and possible weaponization of toxic chemicals but the unknown whereabouts of significant quantities of chemical warfare agents and munitions.

Nakamitsu said the OPCW also has not received a requested declaration on undeclared nerve agents produced at a former chemical weapons facility that Syria declared "as never having been used to produce and/or weaponize chemical warfare agents," and other requested information.

She called on Syria to respond to the organization's requests "as soon as possible" and to allow all members of its team analyzing the declaration "unfettered access," citing the government's refusal to grant a visa to one member.

Last June, OPCW chief Fernando Arias told the council its experts investigated 77 allegations against Syria and concluded that in 17 cases chemical weapons were likely or definitely used. He called it "a disturbing reality" that eight years after Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention, many questions remain about its initial declaration of its weapons, stockpiles and precursors, and its ongoing program.

In April 2020, OPCW investigators blamed three chemical attacks in 2017 on the Syrian government, which it has vehemently denied.

The OPCW Executive Council responded by demanding that Syria provide details. When it didn't, France submitted a draft measure on behalf of 46 countries in November 2020 to suspend Syria's "rights and privileges" in the global watchdog. In an unprecedented vote on April 21, 2021, the OPCW suspended Syria's rights until all outstanding issues are resolved.

Nakamitsu said Wednesday that Syria hasn't completed any of the measures required by the OPCW for reinstatement.

She reiterated her call for Syria's government to cooperate with the chemical weapons watchdog.

Syria's UN Ambassador Bassam Sabbagh told the council his government "rejects any attempt to question the Syrian declaration and serious cooperation with the OPCW and its technical secretariat." He also denied blocking an OPCW visit.

As for the OPCW's findings, he said: "We reject any baseless accusations that rely on erroneous information and any attempts to jump into conclusions based on misinterpretations and probabilities without relying on accurate physical evidence."

Sabbagh also accused council members of distracting attention from an Israeli attack on a declared chemical weapons facility, which led to the destruction of two chlorine cylinders that had been linked to a 2018 deadly attack on the Syrian town of Douma.

Russia's deputy ambassador Dmitry Polyansky claimed there has been "no scientifically-based evidence" refuting that Syria's chemical potential was eliminated. He also denounced the OPCW's investigative methods and accused the organization and Western nations of politicizing the issue and "turning a blind eye to the topic of the use of chemical weapons by terrorists in Syria and neighboring states."

Britain's UN Ambassador Barbara Woodward countered that expert investigations confirmed that Syria used chemical weapons including chlorine and Sarin on at least eight occasions since its conflict began in 2011, attacks that killed and injured hundreds of innocent people. Islamic State terrorists were found to have used chemical weapons on three occasions, she said.

Alluding to Russia's threatened veto on any council action to hold Syria accountable and its "concerted disinformation campaign to malign and undermine the OPCW findings," Woodward called on council members to "put aside narrow political motivations and unite behind the full implementation" of the 2013 resolution in 2022.

01.10.22

Israel scraps last months Green Pass requirement at malls after retailers' outcry

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Ministers from coronavirus cabinet vote to scrap requirement of presenting a vaccination or recovery certificate at entrances to large stores, instead approving outline that puts a cap on number of customers allowed in each shop

Itamar Eichner | Published: 01.10.22, 11:06

Israel's coronavirus cabinet approved Monday the scrapping of the Green Pass mandate in shopping malls after retailers complained of challenges in enforcing the rule.

Last month, Israel expanded its stringent Green Pass restrictions to include shopping malls all around the country, in a bid to stem the rapid spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant of coronavirus. Green Pass acts as a coronavirus vaccination or recovery certificate.

The ministers were supposed to vote on the proposal at the cabinet meeting on Sunday, but it was postponed due to the opposition of some of the ministers. On Monday morning the new outline was approved via a telephone vote.

In accordance with the cabinet's decision, stores measuring more than 100 square meters will no longer be required to ask customers to present a Green Pass before entering, however large stores will be obliged to have no more than one shopper per 15 square meters.

Stores smaller than 100 square meters will allocate seven square meters per customer.

It was also decided to allow a mall operator to decide whether to demand that a Green Pass be presented at each individual food stall, or require the certificate to be presented at the entrance to the entire food court.

Stores considered "essential," such as supermarkets and pharmacies, will be exempt from the restrictions on the number of customers per meter.

01.10.22

Olmert in defamation suit stating; mental illness of Netanyahu, his wife and his son

01.10.22

Netanyahu, Olmert face off in court in defamation suit

Former premier is suing his predecessor for nearly \$270,000 in damages over remarks, claiming the Netanyahu family suffers from 'mental illness'; 'I consulted with experts about behaviors of what is called crazy,' says Olmert

Associated Press, Ynet | Published: 01.10.22, 10:14

Two former prime ministers faced off in a Tel Aviv courtroom as Benjamin Netanyahu's defamation suit against Ehud Olmert got underway on Monday.

Netanyahu, his wife and son appeared in the Tel Aviv Magistrate's court for the opening of their case against Olmert, Netanyahu's predecessor as prime minister.

Netanyahu had threatened to sue Olmert for remarks he made last year, during the aftermath of the 2021 Israeli parliamentary elections and while Netanyahu refused to step down while on trial for fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes.

Olmert last April leveled criticism at Netanyahu and said that "what is irreparable is the mental illness of the prime minister, his wife and his son."

For that remark the Netanyahus have sued Olmert, seeking nearly \$270,000 in damages.

In his defense in court on Monday, Olmert claimed he had "followed [the Netanyahus'] expressions and their actions," as a justification for his claim.

"I also listened to the recordings of the family members. I consulted with experts and their associates about behaviors that definitely went into the definition of what is popularly called crazy and abnormal behavior," he added.

Olmert preceded Netanyahu as prime minister, but resigned in 2008 before he was formally indicted on corruption charges.

Olmert was convicted of fraud in 2014 and served most of a 27-month prison sentence.

As for Netanyahu, he is on trial for fraud, breach of trust and accepting bribes, but denies any wrongdoing. He was ousted from the prime minister's office after a coalition of parties opposing him succeeded in forming a government without his once-dominant Likud party last June.