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### Israel braces for extreme weather as temperatures set to soar

With temperatures reaching some 40 celsius in some parts of the country, the Health Ministry urges the public to take precautionary measures to avoid heatstroke; meteorological services say the heatwave will be 'unusually' brief

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An unexpected extreme heatwave expected to hit Israel on Wednesday, with temperatures possibly skyrocketing to 40 celsius in some parts of the county, warned the Health Ministry.

"We call on the public, especially elderly people and those who suffer from chronic illnesses, to avoid sun, heat exposure and unnecessary physical effort," said the ministry in a statement on Tuesday, adding that people should remain in air-conditioned spaces and drink plenty of water.

In the northern city of Haifa, the temperatures will rise from 24 degrees celsius early Wednesday to 38 degrees during the day. In Tel Aviv, the weather will be similar with a range of 24 degrees in the early hours and 38 degrees during the day. In the southern city of Be'er Sheva, temperatures will range from 26 degrees in the early morning to 42 degrees in the afternoon. In Jerusalem, the weather will also be hot with temperatures reaching 25 degrees in the pre-dawn hours to 38 degrees during the day.

"It's an unusual but a very brief occurrence," said Giora Frenkel from the Meteo-Tech meteorological company. He added that excessively hot weather is due to a system of high atmospheric pressure moving into Israeli territory from Egypt, made worse by low humidity levels across the country.

In coastal areas, humidity levels will decrease to below 40% while in inland areas they will fall to below 25%, an unusual occurrence for mid-summer climate.

Despite the overwhelming heat the skies will be cloudy, the winds will accelerate throughout the day and parts of the country will be shrouded in early mist and fog. In the afternoon hours, the heat will gradually begin to subside, while humidity levels will begin to rise.

The extreme weather has prompted the Fire and Rescue Services to issue a statement banning fires from being lit in open areas - where strong winds can lead to the flames spreading beyond control - and forests.

### Dispute in Old City endangers Israel's relations with Russia

Sale of three assets in Jerusalem's Old-City to settler group could harm the Jewish state's ties with Orthodox Christians and subsequently lead to a crisis with Moscow, warns former head of National Security Council

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The National Security Council is to discuss Tuesday the intention of the Ateret Cohanim organization, that works to settle Jews in the Old City of Jerusalem and East Jerusalem, to evacuate tenants from two buildings it recently acquired from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in the capital.

The deal included two hotels — Imperial and Petra — located near Jaffa Gate, and another building near Herod's Gate, and was revealed in Yedioth Ahronoth last Friday.

The Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, initially denied the sale ever took place and said it involved acts of bribery and was illegitimate; however, both the Jerusalem District Court and recently the Supreme Court denied their claims and approved the legality of the sale.

In Yedioth Ahronoth's reporting, it was revealed that former manager of the Petra Hotel, Ted Bloomfield, had received funds for years from the **Ateret Cohanim organization** in order to push for the deal to take place, and holds recording that prove it. In light of this new evidence, the Greek Patriarchy means to file a request to cancel the earlier verdict.

Former head of the National Security Council Major General Giora Eiland (res.) warned of a possible crisis between Israel and the Orthodox Christian world in case the buildings are indeed evacuated of their tenants and the sale approved. He added that such a crisis could affect Israel's relationship with Russia among other ties with the Orthodox world.

Eiland gave his opinion to the council and recommended that the evacuation of the buildings' tenants be postponed until after all claims from the Greek Patriarchy are investigated.

"This conflict around assets of the Orthodox Church could anger Christian countries and organizations that are naturally pro-Israel," Eiland said, and added that Israel's relationship with Russia and with its president Vladimir Putin could also be affected.

The evacuation of the Old City assets could also have an impact on other lands under dispute in the capital; the Patriarchy is the original owner of massive lands within Jerusalem's Rehavia and Talbiye neighborhoods, leased to the Israel National Fund for a period of 99 years, set to end soon.

Hundreds of Israelis could lose their homes in case the church reclaims its lands in these central West Jerusalem neighborhoods.

According to an unnamed government official, both the Ministries of Internal and Foreign Affairs have asked the National Security Council to discuss the sale and evacuation ordeal; the **Ateret Cohanim Organization refused to comment on the affair.**