

Newsletter Sunday September 9, 2018

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US cuts \$25M in aid to Palestinian hospitals in east Jerusalem

Move part of Washington's review of how aid to the Palestinians is spent, State Department official says • Funds to be diverted to "high-priority projects elsewhere" • PA: U.S. has "crossed all red lines," is trying to "liquidate the Palestinian cause."

Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff

U.S. President Donald Trump | Photo: AFP

U.S. President Donald Trump has ordered that \$25 million earmarked for the care of Palestinians in east Jerusalem hospitals be directed elsewhere as part of a review of aid, a State Department official said on Saturday.

Trump called for a review of U.S. assistance to the Palestinians earlier this year to ensure that the funds were being spent in accordance with national interests and were providing value to taxpayers.

"As a result of that review, at the direction of the President, we will be redirecting approximately \$25 million originally planned for the East Jerusalem Hospital Network," the State Department official said. "Those funds will go to high-priority projects elsewhere."

The aid cut is the latest in a number of actions by the Trump administration that have alienated the Palestinians, including the recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv.

Last month, the Trump administration said it would redirect \$200 million in Palestinian economic support funds for programs in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

And at the end of August, the Trump administration halted all funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees, a decision that further heightened tensions with the Palestinian leadership.

A statement from the Palestinian Foreign Ministry said Saturday that the latest aid cut was part of a U.S. attempt "to liquidate the Palestinian cause" and said it would threaten the lives of thousands of Palestinians and the livelihoods of thousands of hospital employees.

"This dangerous and unjustified American escalation has crossed all red lines and is considered a direct aggression against the Palestinian people," it said.

At the gates of two of the east Jerusalem hospitals affected, medical staff were aware of the decision but refused to comment.

One of the centers, Al Makassed Islamic Charitable Society Hospital, said in a statement the U.S. aid cuts come as the "hospital is going through a suffocating crisis as a result of the lack of flow of financial aid, and the piling up of debts and funds held back by the Palestinian government."

It said it had received \$12.5 million of the U.S. money to treat patients from the West Bank, Gaza and east Jerusalem. In the statement hospital CEO Dr. Bassam Abu Libdeh "questioned the justification behind mixing political issues with medical and humanitarian issues."

The last round of U.S.-brokered Palestinian-Israeli peace talks collapsed in 2014.

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#### Ancient Hungarian synagogue reopens after 332 years

Buda Castle's medieval Jewish prayer house was confiscated from the Jews following a pogrom in 1686 • Local Jewish leader: Seeing hundreds of people celebrating this event 70 years after the Holocaust, I can hear the footsteps of Israel's redemption.

Dan Lavie and Israel Hayom Staff

Buda Castle | Photo: AP

Ahead of the Rosh Hashanah holiday, an ancient Hungarian synagogue confiscated from the Jews following a pogrom in 1686 has been rededicated at a ceremony attended by Hungarian President Janos Ader.

The two-room Sephardic synagogue, known as the medieval Jewish prayer house, was built in 1364. Situated inside the Buda Castle, the synagogue was converted into residential housing and was all but forgotten until the 1960s, when renovators discovered Jewish markings on the ceilings of the rooms. Following the discovery, the rooms were opened to the public as a museum.

Speaking at the ceremony, Unified Hungarian Jewish Congregation executive Rabbi Shlomo Koves said, "Seeing this place 70 years after the Holocaust, seeing hundreds of people celebrating this special event in the Buda Castle with their heads held high, in the presence of the honorable president, I can hear the footsteps of Israel's final redemption."

He said it took years of negotiations with multiple bodies to reach a deal to allow a Jewish congregation to pray at the ancient synagogue.

**Budapest-born Asher Faith, who will serve as the synagogue's rabbi**, said that "we opened up an old synagogue in extraordinary circumstances, and we're looking forward to good things.

"We'll once again blow the shofar here this Rosh Hashanah, and maybe, in this merit, we will see the Messiah."

The Federation of Hungarian Jewish Communities expressed hope that the opening of the synagogue would bring new energy to Jewish life in the Central European country and help contend with problems facing the local Jewish community, such as emigration, assimilation, intermarriage and a growing sense of detachment from Israel among the younger generation.

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**Canada to apologize for turning away Jewish refugees in WWII**

In a phone call with Canadian Rabbinic Caucus, Canada's PM Justin Trudeau announces he will issue an apology for 1939 decision to turn away MS St. Louis • Of the 907 Jewish refugees on board the ocean liner, 254 were murdered in the Holocaust.

Erez Linn and News Agencies

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau | Photo: Reuters

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced he would issue an official apology on Nov. 7 at the House of Commons over his country's refusal to take in Jewish refugees **escaping Nazi Germany on the MS St. Louis ocean liner in 1939**.

Trudeau announced the date for the apology during a High Holidays phone call with the Canadian Rabbinic Caucus, according to a Thursday post to his Twitter account.

"The St. Louis was carrying German Jews looking for refuge in Canada, but they were turned away under the 'None is too many' policy of the time. 254 ended up being killed," he wrote.

In a follow-up tweet, Trudeau wrote, "This was an absolute moral failure on the part of the government, and though of course an apology can't bring the victims back, we're committed to doing what we can to right this wrong."

The German liner MS St. Louis was carrying 907 German Jews fleeing Nazi persecution.

The ship was also rejected by Cuba and the United States, and the passengers were forced to return to Europe.

In the run-up to World War II and the Holocaust, the Canadian government, headed by the Liberal party, which Trudeau now heads, yielded to anti-Semitic sentiments and severely restricted Jewish immigration. From 1933 to 1945, only about 5,000 Jewish refugees were accepted.

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#### Iranian president says US asks to resume nuclear talks 'every day'

The U.S. "tries to pressure the people of Iran" while "they send us messages every day through various methods that we should come and negotiate," Iranian President Rouhani says • "Trump regime flip-flops are truly comical," FM Mohammad Javad Zarif tweets.

Reuters and Israel Hayom Staff

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani | Photo: Reuters

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that the United States continually sends messages to Iran asking it to begin negotiations.

Tensions between Iran and the United States soared after President Donald Trump pulled out of a landmark nuclear deal with Iran in May, and then reimposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic last month.

Trump has said he would meet Iran's leaders.

"From one side they [the U.S.] try to pressure the people of Iran, on another side they send us messages every day through various methods that we should come and negotiate together," Rouhani said in a speech broadcast on Iranian state television.

"[They say] we should negotiate here, we should negotiate there. We want to resolve the issues. ... Should we see your message? Or should we see your brutish actions?"

Washington aims to force Tehran to end its nuclear program and its support of militant groups in Syria and Iraq.

Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif took aim at U.S. criticism of Iran's regional policy in a Twitter post on Saturday.

"Trump regime flip-flops are truly comical," he wrote.

"One week, its talking point is that we are 'squandering' our resources abroad, the next week it's that we've not financially supported the Palestinians enough."

U.S. sanctions targeting Iran's oil sector are scheduled to be reimposed in November.

Iran is facing an "economic, psychological and propaganda war," Rouhani said Saturday, pointing to the United States and Israel as the Islamic republic's main enemies.

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### Ahead of High Holidays, world Jewish population stands 14.7 million strong

World's Jewish population grows by 100,000 people since 2017, data shows • Israel's Jewish population reaches 6.6 million in 2018, while 8.1 million Jews live in the Diaspora • Jewish Agency pledges to further bolster bond between Israel, Jews worldwide.

Yori Yalon

Israel Day Parade participants wave Israeli and American flags on New York City's Fifth Avenue | Illustration: AP

The world's Jewish population stands at 14.7 million, an increase from 14.6 million in 2017, according to findings published by Israeli demographer and professor emeritus at Hebrew University of Jerusalem Sergio Della Pergola ahead of the Jewish New Year.

Israel's Jewish population increased to 6.6 million from the 6.5 million Jewish residents found to be living in the country last year. In addition, some 400,000 people living in Israel but not registered as Jews are eligible for citizenship under the Law of Return.

According to Pergola's data, 23.6 million people around the world are eligible to make aliyah under the Law of Return.

Some 8.1 million Jews live in the Diaspora, with 5.7 million of them living in the United States.

Other countries with large Jewish communities are France with a Jewish population of 430,000, followed by Canada with a Jewish population of 391,000 and Great Britain, with 290,000.

Argentina's Jewish population stands at 180,000; Russia's at 172,000; Germany's at 116,000; Australia's at 113,000 and Brazil's at 93,000. South Africa has 69,000 Jews, and Ukraine and Hungary have Jewish populations numbering 50,000 and 47,000, respectively.

There are 40,000 Jews living in Mexico, 30,000 in the Netherlands, 29,000 in Belgium, 28,000 in Italy, 19,000 in Switzerland, and 18,000 in Chile.

Some 27,000 Jews live in Arab and Muslim countries. There are 15,000 Jews in Turkey, some 8,500 in Iran, 2,000 in Morocco and around 1,000 in Tunisia.

Countries with a Jewish population of 500 or fewer include Bermuda, the Bahamas, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Jamaica, the Virgin Islands, Bolivia, Suriname, Cyprus, Malta, Slovenia, Macedonia, Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Congo, Botswana, Kenya, Madagascar, Namibia, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Yemen, Syria and Egypt.

In a Rosh Hashana greeting issued in several different languages, Jewish Agency Chairman Isaac Herzog invited Jews around the world to join him on a "joint journey to the shaping of Jewish identity."

He said the Jewish agency was working "to strengthen the connection and bond between Israel and the Jewish people worldwide, promoting Jewish identity and Zionist education, developing the next generation of Jewish leaders, helping vulnerable populations in Israel and as always, facilitate aliyah to Israel. Above all, we believe it is of utmost importance for every single Jew ... to be part of the great Jewish story of our time [no matter where they are]."

"In this new year, we will continue to do everything in our power to bring blessings to the lives of Jews all over the world, as people, as individuals, and I want to wish each and every one of you, and your families, a great year of happiness, of health of blessings. A new year, a new beginning. Happy holiday."