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NGO Monitor: UN Agency Manipulates Data to Misrepresent Israel

Israelis Told to Leave Turkey Immediately Due to Terror Threat

Israel has issued a travel advisory urging its citizens to leave Turkey "as soon as possible." This is the second warning to be issued by the counter-terrorism bureau in the Prime Minister's Office. The office said that a recent security assessment prompted the counter-terrorism bureau to raise the travel advisory from "level 3," a basic concrete threat, to "level 2," which signifies a high concrete threat.

The travel warning comes days after the Turkish government issued an alert for attacks against Jewish and Christian targets in the country. "The deadly attack in central Istanbul, in which a group of Israeli tourists was hurt, once again demonstrates the high threat in Turkey posed by ISIS elements to tourist sites and shows a high capability to carry out more attacks," the counter-terrorism bureau said in a statement.

The statement noted that the threat exists "throughout Turkey" and specifically mentions a threat to Israeli tourists. "We recommend avoiding visiting Turkey, and to those in the country to leave as soon as possible."

Three Israeli tourists and an Iranian were killed recently in a suicide bombing in Istanbul by a suspected ISIS militant. Prime Minister Netanyahu said after the attack that Israel was looking into whether it deliberately targeted Israeli nationals. [Haaretz]

NGO Monitor has released a report highly critical of a UN agency deemed so biased in Jerusalem that the Foreign Ministry, according to diplomatic sources, stopped cooperating with it in any meaningful way several years ago. The organization is the Jerusalem-based UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OCHA oPt). NGOs are nongovernmental organizations.

According to the NGO Monitor report, the group "regularly presents data in a manipulative way that erases the context of terrorism and distorts law and morality." OCHA fails to distinguish between Palestinian civilians and attackers, thereby amplifying Palestinian casualty claims, and drawing a false symmetry between legal Israeli self-defense and illegal attacks by terrorists, the report stated.

As an example the report highlighted OCHA's weekly "protection of civilians report" for the period of February 2-8. "OCHA presents pie charts purporting to show the number of 'Palestinian fatalities by Israeli forces in the oPt.' Yet, this data as presented does not provide any information as to how the fatalities took place, including how many of the fatalities occurred while Palestinians were attempting to murder Israeli civilians or engaged in violent confrontations with Israeli law enforcement," the report said. "As a result, it is impossible to make any meaningful assessments from OCHA's figures."

According to the report, OCHA is "one of the primary coordinators of NGO funding and activity in the Arab-Israeli conflict. OCHA oversees and facilitates government funding to some of the most biased and politicized regional NGOs, including a number that are very active in promoting BDS (boycotts, divestment and sanctions) and 'lawfare' campaigns against Israel. Some even engage in blatantly anti-Semitic activities."

OCHA then uses the data in its reports collected from these organizations, which NGO Monitor said lack credible methodologies for analysis of such things as casualty claims, "parroting the false and distorted claims of these NGOs, thereby seeking to give credence and credibility to highly misleading accusations."

As a UN agency, the NGO Monitor reported, OCHAs reports are then repeated by diplomats and journalists and feature prominently in other UN documents.

Furthermore, the report stated, "OCHA rarely, if ever, cites relevant Israeli government information, including detailed statistics published by

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the Coordination of Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), the Israel Defense Forces, or the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs.”

The report added that “OCHA’s website also highlights a number of biased videos reflecting the Palestinian narrative, including ‘How long does it take to demolish a house,’ ‘Gaza: Only Rubble Where Homes Once Stood’ and ‘Walled Horizons.’ These videos show scenes of destruction and despair, while completely omitting Palestinian terror, including rocket attacks against Israeli population centers and tunnels running beneath the border into Israel. The videos are devoid of all context and are aimed solely at demonizing Israel.”

Israel has formally protested OCHA’s activities in the past.

David Carden, head of OCHA oPt, issued the following statement in response to the report: “OCHA’s office in the oPt carries out its operations in line with our global mandate to coordinate principled humanitarian assistance and protection to people in need, in line with General Assembly Resolution 46/182. We have just received the report and we are examining its contents. From a preliminary review it appears that OCHA’s work in the oPt is misrepresented. [JPost]

Weizmann Institute Drug May Be Speedy Prostate Cancer Cure

Scientists at the Weizmann Institute in Israel may have found the cure for prostate cancer, at least if it is caught in its early stages – via a drug that doctors inject into cancerous cells and treat with infrared laser illumination. Using a therapy lasting 90 minutes, the drug, called Tookad Soluble, targets and destroys cancerous prostate cells, studies show, allowing patients to check out of the hospital the same day without the debilitating effects of chemical or radiation therapy or the invasive surgery that is usually used to treat this disease.

The drug has been tested in Europe and in several Latin American countries, and is being marketed by Steba Biotech, an Israeli biotech start-up with R&D facilities in Ness Ziona.

Based on principles of photosynthesis, the drug uses infrared illumination to activate elements that choke off cancer cells, but spares the healthy ones. The therapy was recently approved for marketing in Mexico, after a two-year Phase III clinical trial in which 80 patients from Mexico, Peru and Panama who suffered from early-stage prostate cancer were treated with the Tookad system. Two years after treatment, over 80% of the study’s subjects remained cancer-free. [TimesofIsrael]

Israeli Advances Counter Aerial Attacks

Israeli company, Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, has unveiled the Drone Dome, a system to detect and neutralize hostile drones. The Drone Dome uses radar and cameras to detect and track the movements of enemy drones flying in prohibited areas and then disrupts its electronic systems, thereby ending its flight. The Israeli defense company said the system stops intrusions by drones “used by terrorists to perform aerial attacks, collect intelligence, and other intimidating activities.”

“Drone Dome has 360-degree circular coverage and is designed to detect, track and neutralize drones classified as threats flying in no-fly zones. Drone Dome has a very fast response time, [and] it causes minimal collateral interruptions to the surrounding urban environment, with maximum safety to friendly aircraft,” the company said.

Using its sensors, the system is able to detect drone intrusions, and issue an alert to the unmanned vehicle’s operator. It can then initiate an “automatic inference operation” in the drone’s ability to navigate. System users can also activate satellite navigation interference and radio frequency jamming systems to prevent the drone from being able to move further, Rafael said.

Separately, the IDF Home Front Command has reportedly finished work on a new radar that will improve the warning system of incoming mortar shells for residents of southern communities adjacent to the Gaza Strip. The system will shorten the time between the launch of a shell and when warning sirens are triggered, giving residents of communities near the Palestinian enclave a 15-second warning of incoming shells, Army Radio reported.

Though Israel’s current alert, based on the Iron Dome radar, warns of incoming rockets and gives communities about 15 seconds to reach shelters, it has proved less effective against short-range shells, often leaving residents little to no warning of attacks. Alon Schuster, the head of the Sha’ar Hanegev Regional Council, welcomed the new warning system, saying the improvements could save lives. “Those 15 seconds are important. They improve the response time for anyone who needs to find shelter,” he told Army Radio. “People come to live here because they know that Israel does whatever it can to protect its citizens from existential threats, whether they come from the sky or from underground,” Schuster said, alluding to Hamas efforts to tunnel under the border.

Development of the system began after Israel’s war with Hamas in 2014, when the Gaza-based terror organization lobbed hundreds of rockets and mortars at Israeli cities and towns. During the 50-day conflict, mortars proved to be one of the deadliest means of attack, claiming the lives of 10 IDF soldiers in a single week, three Israeli civilians and a Thai national. The project, which cost an estimated NIS 500 million (\$132 million) was delayed due to budget constraints. [TimesofIsrael]