Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert has publicly announced that Israel and Syria have launched indirect negotiations over the future of the Golan Heights. The dramatic announcement was made simultaneously in Jerusalem, Damascus and Ankara today. It follows weeks of speculation after Syrian officials revealed that the two states have been engaged in secret negotiations under the mediation of Turkey. It also follows years of quiet diplomacy between Israel and Syria, which was briefly interrupted by the Second Lebanon War. Syrian President Bashar Assad recently claimed that he had received assurances from Olmert that Israel was willing to return the Golan Heights to Syria, and Olmert's silence on the matter only served to increase suspicion that this was true. The Syrian President also demanded that Olmert produce a written guarantee that Syria would receive the entire territory in return for peace. But Assad later said that Syria would never sever ties with Iran in order to achieve peace with Israel.

Quote: *""The two sides have declared their intention to hold the negotiations in good faith and openly, and hold a serious and continuous dialogue in order to reach a comprehensive peace deal in accordance with the framework set at the (1991) Madrid Conference." Following the announcement, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Moallem said that Israel had agreed to fully concede the Golan Heights. Sources at the Prime Minister's Office told Ynet in response, "The negotiations are being held on the basis of the Madrid Conference principles. We do not recall an Israeli commitment at the conference to fully cede the Golan Heights."*

Today's news comes just a day after Olmert lost his appeal against a pre-trial deposition of his financial benefactor Morris Talansky, leading some to believe that recent announcements of progress in the peace process with the Palestinian Authority and Syria are timed so as to distract the public from his political scandals. Or worse yet, that the Prime Minister is willing to sacrifice the security of the country in return for saving his own career. As we have seen from the recent Hizbullah coup in Lebanon, the ceding of the Golan to Syria could prove to be disastrous for Israel, if the Islamic terrorist organization were to gain a foothold in the region. Israel would completely surrounded by hostile enemy states, bent on the destruction of the 'Zionist regime'. Hizbullah in the north, Syria in the Golan Heights, the Fatah in Judea and Jerusalem, and Hamas in Gaza. It doesn't bear thinking about. It's not clear how much confidence we can put in today's announcement. But what is clear is that the Middle East is well on its way towards peace and

all-out war. What do I mean by that? A peace agreement between Israel and the surrounding nations will eventually come (Daniel 9:27), but it will be followed by the greatest period of trouble the Jewish people have ever experienced. For the Bible states that "
when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape
", 1st Thessalonians 5:3.

When the Pharisees came to see John the Baptist in the wilderness, he asked them a question, "Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?", Luke 3:7. For John was calling the nation to repentance to prepare them for the coming of the Messiah, but the religious leaders of John's day did not recognize that they were sinners in need of salvation. When the Messiah arrived, the nation rejected Him, and as a result God's wrath fell upon Israel (Luke 21:20-24). Today the Jewish people are back in their land. As John did nearly 2000 years ago, we must warn people of their need to repent of their sins and to prepare for the coming again of the Lord Jesus. As the prophet Amos once said, "
Prepare to meet thy God
", Amos 4:12. Jesus Christ is coming back, first for those who have trusted in Him for salvation, and then to bring judgement upon this wicked world (Acts 17:31). Have you repented of your sins? Have you trusted in the One that John pointed out on the banks of the Jordan (John 1:29), the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world? Flee from the wrath to come (1st Thessalonians 1:10), through believing on on the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation today.

Isaiah 26:19-21
Thy dead [men] shall live, [together with] my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew [is as] the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead. Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast. For, behold, the LORD cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.

Source YNet News , Press TV , YNet News