



SIGNS OF THE TIMES

News Articles for Episode 224

[Biden's east Jerusalem visit boosts Palestinian Authority claim to city - congressmen - The Jerusalem Post \(jpost.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #israel, #america, #jerusalem

Jul 13, 2022

The initiative to try and sway Biden not to make an unprecedented visit to the eastern part of the city was spearheaded by Rep. Beth Van Duyne of Texas.

President Joe Biden's scheduled visit to an east Jerusalem hospital on Friday will boost the Palestinian Authority's claim to that section of the city which is [under Israeli sovereignty](#), six Republican representatives said in a letter they addressed to the White House.

"A visit would be viewed as a continued sign of continued support [for] the Palestinians in their illegitimate efforts to claim east Jerusalem," the six representatives wrote.

The initiative to try and sway Biden not to make an unprecedented visit to the eastern part of the city was spearheaded by Rep. Beth Van Duyne of Texas.

It was signed by three other Texas Representatives; Randy Weber, Pete Sessions and Ronny Jackson. Representatives Bill Johnson of Ohio and W. Gregory Steube of Florida also signed the document.

Biden will be [the first US president to visit an east Jerusalem location](#) identified with the Palestinians and it is seen as a nod in the US acceptance of the Palestinian's right to have their capital there.

Former US president Donald Trump also crossed the Green Line during his 2017 visit, but he went to the Jewish holy site of the Western Wall, in a move that preceded his recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital and his relocation of the US Embassy to that city from Tel Aviv.

The United States Congress recognized Jerusalem as Israel's united capital in 1995 when it passed the US Embassy Act.

The six Republicans recalled that Biden had supported that Act when he was a senator.

"Palestinians see East Jerusalem as the capital of a future independent state. Israel considers the whole of Jerusalem – including the East, which it occupied in the 1967 Middle East War – as its indivisible capital," the representatives said.

They recalled that in October 1968 House republicans had signed a letter opposing any US moves to reopen the east Jerusalem Consulate General that had served as a de facto embassy to the Palestinians until Trump closed it in 2018.

Biden has promised to reopen that consulate but has yet to secure the needed permission from Israel. Friday's visit is seen as a gesture in lieu of that move.

"Israel has a sovereign capital, and just like no other nation has another consulate on its territory, neither should Israel," the representatives said.

Former Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Danny Danon wrote in an open letter that such a visit would symbolize support for the PA's efforts to divide Jerusalem.

In contrast, the left-wing Israeli NGO B'Tselem pushed Biden to [recognize Israel as an apartheid state](#).

[In Israel, Joe Biden Hails Dormant Two-State Solution as 'Best Way' to Peace \(breitbart.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #israel, #america

Jul 13, 2022

President Joe Biden said he will discuss the [dormant](#) two-state solution for solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict during his trip to Israel, the Palestinian territories and Saudi Arabia, calling it the “best way” for peace.

He made his remarks shortly after arriving at the Ben Gurion international airport in Tel Aviv on Wednesday afternoon, where he was greeted by Israeli Prime Minister Yair Lapid and Israeli President Isaac Herzog.

“Greater peace, greater stability, greater connection. It’s critical for all the people in the region which is why we will be discussing my continued support, even though I know it’s not a near term, for a two-state solution,” Biden said.

The two-state solution, which has been trumpeted by successive American administrations — with the [notable exception](#) of the last one — has long proved to be an abject failure.

For starters, there is no partner for peace in the Palestinian government in Ramallah with which to broker such a solution. Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas continues his sinister “pay-for-slay” scheme, paying monthly salaries convicted terrorists and their families, and the Biden administration rewarded him for doing so by resuming Palestinian aid.

But even if reaching a two-state agreement was feasible with the PA, it would never be accepted by Hamas, the terror group ruling the Gaza Strip which has vowed to annihilate Israel and all the Jews “from the river to the sea” and liberate all of “Palestine.”

It’s also worth noting that according to all the most recent polls, Hamas would win over Abbas’ Fatah party if Palestinian elections were held today.

Every Israeli attempt to offer land concessions has been met by terror waves, beginning with attacks under late PLO leader Yasser Arafat in the 1990s following the failed Oslo accords, to the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, to Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, that prompted 17 years (and counting) of rocket attacks.

But none of that bothers the president, who said confidently from the tarmac the two-state solution “remains in my view the best way to ensure the future of equal measure of freedom, prosperity, democracy for Israelis and Palestinians alike.”

During his remarks, Biden also made a *faux pas* by referring to the “truth and honor of the Holocaust,” before correcting himself and saying “horror of the Holocaust.”

As Breitbart reporter Charlie Spiering [noted](#), “it was an embarrassing stumble from the president of the United States on Israeli soil.”

Biden, who is on his tenth trip to Israel, told Herzog shortly after landing, “I am home.”

“It’s an honor to once again stand with friends and visit the independent Jewish state of Israel,” Biden opened his speech by saying.

“I’ll say again, you need not be a Jew to be a Zionist,” the American president declared.

Once again, Biden did not waste the opportunity to remind the world he has met every prime minister since Golda Meir in the 1970s.

He called the connection between Israelis and Americans “bone-deep.”

For his part, the newly appointed Israeli prime minister Lapid welcomed Biden as “a great Zionist and one of the best friends Israel has ever known.”

He applauded the visit as “historic and deeply personal.”

“It is historic because it expresses the unbreakable bond between our two countries,” Lapid continued. “Our commitment to shared values: democracy, freedom, and the right of the Jewish people to a state of their own.”

While Biden did not mention Iran in his remarks, Lapid said the two intended to discuss “the need to renew a strong global coalition that will stop the Iranian nuclear program.”

“Right now, we are simply happy to see you, Mr. President,” he concluded. “The simple, genuine joy brought by seeing a good friend once again.”

[Iran and Russia Expand 'Sanctions Busting' Network \(freebeacon.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #russia, #iran

Jul 7, 2022

Trade between Russia and Iran has topped \$4.5 billion as the two regimes integrate their economies to create a network capable of evading U.S. and international sanctions.

Russia is making major investments in Iran's ports, nuclear infrastructure, energy sector, and military machine. Iran's deputy roads and urban development minister, Shahriar Afandizadeh, this week valued this trade at \$4.5 billion.

Tehran and Moscow also recently inked an economic deal to carry some 10 million tons of goods from Russia into Iran through a land corridor. This deal "puts emphasis on transit in addition to imports and exports," according to a summary of Afandizadeh's comments [published](#) Wednesday in the country's state-controlled press. This relationship helps to keep Moscow afloat as international sanctions cripple Russia's economy as a result of its war in Ukraine.

Members of Congress and regional experts have warned for some time that Iran and Russia are ratcheting up relations to combat Western sanctions and boost each other's militaries. With the Biden administration's diplomacy aimed at securing a revamped version of the 2015 nuclear accord, warnings have swirled on Capitol Hill that a new deal will create a "sanctions evasion hub for Vladimir Putin based in Iran," the *Washington Free Beacon* [reported](#). Iran, Russia, and China also are slated to hold a series of major war drills in Latin America next month, highlighting the emphasis these countries place on combatting the United States in its own backyard.

Iran also recently announced that it will boost exports to Russia, including "construction materials," with an estimated worth of \$3 billion.

The total amount of trade between Iran and Russia last year totaled around \$2.5 billion, signaling that in the year since, trade between the countries has increased significantly.

Russian companies also stand to cash in on a new nuclear deal with Iran. Several of Russia's top state-controlled nuclear companies [would receive](#) billions of dollars in revenue once sanctions are waived as part of a new agreement.

Iran has [reportedly](#) already paid Russia more than \$500 million for its work building out Iran's nuclear plants. If a nuclear deal is inked, Iran and Russia will be free to continue building nuclear sites.

Sanctioned Russia ships also have been caught in recent months ferrying illicit Iranian oil, providing both regimes with financial lifelines. At least two Russian tankers sanctioned as part of U.S. efforts to isolate Russian businesses were seen carrying illicit Iranian oil from various ports. This type of sanctions-busting scheme is also employed between Iran and China.

Behnam Ben Taleblu, an Iran expert at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies think tank, said that Russia is learning sanctions evasion techniques from its ally Iran.

"Russia, which is now under increasing sanctions due to its invasion of Ukraine, stands to learn a lot from the Islamic Republic in the sanctions busting space," he said.

"Therefore, the value of Russo-Iranian collaboration will not just be quantitative as represented by the volume or value of trade, but qualitative, namely the industries as well as what contacts are made and experiences gained."

"The longer Russia's invasion and war against Ukraine continues, the deeper its embrace of actors like the Islamic Republic, who are used to operating outside or abusing formal financial networks, will be," Ben Taleblu said.

[World Economic Forum: Gas Prices Must Go Even Higher -- to Save Democracy \(breitbart.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy #wef, #gasprices, #democracy

Jul 11, 2022

The World Economic Forum (WEF) released a position paper Monday that inexorably links two claimed global crises as one – “climate change” and the “decline of democracy.”

It says fighting the former can save the latter as long as consumers stop burning coal, oil, and gas in exchange for green renewables.

The WEF paper [argues](#) for the past 15 years, democracy has been in decline worldwide. To protect and promote freedom, “leading democracies must strengthen their economies and safeguard liberty.”

It goes on to say ignoring progress toward a “low-carbon economy could put democracies in greater economic peril, not less” while repeating the broader demand of environmental activists for companies to stop investing fossil fuels.

Activists are pressuring banks to stop investing in fossil fuels in the name of stopping “climate change” as gas and oil prices soar. <https://t.co/G80RqaGAm>

— Breitbart News (@BreitbartNews) [April 1, 2022](#)

Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has brought renewed focus on this economic weakness, the WEF says.

What is the answer for the U.S. and Europe? Pricing the alternatives to green energy out of the market. It says:

First, leading democracies should agree to end the underpricing of fossil fuels, which is the principal factor preventing a clean energy transition. The underpricing associated with producing and burning coal, oil and gas amounted to \$5.9 trillion in economic costs in 2020. Nearly a quarter of these losses – \$1.45 trillion – occurred in 48 major and smaller democracies.

The leading democracies of the G20 should collectively commit to phasing out cost and tax breaks for the production and consumption of fossil fuels. They should also phase in more efficient pricing of fossil fuels through taxes or tradable permits to cover the costs of local air pollution, global warming, and other economic damages.

The paper goes on to argue that compliance can and must be enforced.

Taxes can be imposed on carbon-intensive imports to reduce the risk of unfair competition for their domestic industries “and to deter companies from relocating overseas to avoid compliance at home.”

Forcing other economies to reform their under-pricing of fossil fuels to avoid the penalties imposed by the policy should also be actively pursued, according to the WEF, with U.S. President Joe Biden already committed to punishing the fossil fuel industry out of existence.

Democrat Joe Biden doubled down on his promise to eliminate the fossil fuel industry and, as a result, millions of energy workers' jobs. <https://t.co/tndJRAYxba>

— *Breitbart News (@BreitbartNews)* [October 24, 2020](#)

The paper concludes that by delaying a clean energy transition, “leading democracies are making their economies more vulnerable through continued reliance on fossil fuels.”

Collectively acting to foster a green transition “is not only good for the climate but also critical for protecting democracy,” the WEF paper concludes.

[New York Times slammed for being consistently biased against Israel \(israel365news.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #anti-semitism, #newyorktimes

Jul 14, 2022

As the largest newspaper in the US city with the largest Jewish population, the New York Times should not have a problem with an antisemitic bias in its reporting. But multiple media sources, including two media watchdogs, have recently called the NYT out for its antisemitism. It should come as no surprise that despite claims that anti-Zionism is not antisemitism, in this case, it is.

In a [recent exposé](#) published by the Hebrew language *Ma'ariv*, journalist Lilac Sigán wrote about the NYT's reporting on Israel in the first half of this year. Sigán concluded that the NYT "disproportionately focuses on Israel, is overly selective in which Israel-related stories it reports on, and fails to provide its readers with the proper context in its coverage of news surrounding Israel and the Palestinians."

"After six months, it can already be determined with confidence that there is an excessive preoccupation with incidents in which Israel harms Palestinians," Sigán wrote. "During the first half of 2022, Israel received 832 mentions in New York Times reports while other Middle Eastern nations received far less attention. Turkey was mentioned 619 times, Iran received 518 mentions, and Syria appeared 498 times."

"Meanwhile, the US-designated Hamas and Hezbollah terrorist organizations were mentioned only 37 and 22 times respectively."

"Not only does the New York Times seem to pay an inordinate amount of attention to Israel, but, from an examination of its Israel-related articles published in the first half of 2022, the publication seems to hold a predominantly negative view of the Jewish state."

Of the 118 pieces written about Israel, 53% portrayed Israel in a negative light, 34% were neutral, and only 13% were positive."

[Honest Reporting](#), a media watchdog website, added to Sigán's conclusions, citing the NYT's reporting on the death of Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh who was killed in the crossfire of a firefight between IDF troops and terrorists in Jenin. Despite accusations that an IDF soldier fired the fatal bullet, this has remained unproven, most notably because the PA refuses to cooperate with any investigation. This has not prevented the NYT from blaming Israel.

"During the month-and-a-half between Abu Akleh's death and the end of the period under analysis, The New York Times published 14 articles concerning the incident in

question, including a thorough “investigation” that found Israel responsible for killing Abu Akleh,” *Honest Reporting* wrote. The reporting on Abu Akleh represented 13% of all stories about Israel in the newspaper during that period.

“It was unusual for the NYT to invest resources in such a report after CNN, the AP, and The Washington Post had all released similar findings,” Sigan wrote.

When commenting on the NYT coverage of Abu Akleh’s death, Sigan noted that “16 journalists have been killed so far in 2022 (including Abu Akleh), with the NYT reporting on seven of these deaths. However, of these seven journalist deaths, the Times has devoted 14 articles to the killing of Abu Akleh while writing a total of 13 pieces about all the other journalists combined.”

But do expect more anti-Israeli PR added to an already over-exhausted story. I can understand why the Palestinian Authority would be interested in extending this, but why would @nytimes? Do these proportions make any sense to you? pic.twitter.com/mPLyJhVqob

— Lilac Sigan (@lilacsigan) [July 3, 2022](#)

Even more disturbing were the omissions of Israel-related stories. “

“There were 124 explicit threats against Israel, including rocket fire, aircraft infiltration, terrorist attacks and attempted terrorist attacks, violence, and vandalism carried out against Jewish holy sites,” Sigan wrote. “The story about the Iranian cell that tried to kidnap and murder Israelis in Turkey, for example, was reduced to one trial in an article that dealt with the dismissal of the Iranian intelligence chief. The Hezbollah drones from Lebanon that were sent to attack the Israeli gas fields and shot down were not reported, as were all of Hezbollah’s threats in the matter.”

Sigan cited 24 incidents of Palestinian terrorism, incitement, and violence against Israelis and another 64 stories that dealt with the Palestinian Authority and Hamas’ corruption and cruelty towards Palestinians that all went unreported by the NYT. This included the arrest of 64 journalists, the torture and murder of prisoners, and anti-American demonstrations. The NYT also did not report on the Palestinian Authority siding with Russia in its invasion of Ukraine, a story that indeed would have been immensely important to New York readers.

She also noted 122 mentions of “antisemitism” in the NYT during the first half of 2022, but not a single one dealt with Palestinian antisemitism.

Sigan also points out that, in contrast to the NYT’s negative portrayal of Israel, there were almost no negative articles about the Palestinians.

“The central problem, as previously stated, is that there are no negative stories about Palestinians,” Sigan wrote. “Not about terrorists who receive encouragement, not about the rotten and monstrous leadership, not about Hamas...there are no negative stories about Hezbollah.”

Sigan noted that when the newspaper had no choice but to report on Palestinian terrorism, it refused to describe the perpetrators as “terrorists,” referring to them as “Arab assailants.”

Sigan also focused on the NYT’s use of historical context. Sigán pointed out that in the first six months of 2022, the terms “Israel” and “1967” and “Israel” and “occupation” appeared a total of 101 times, giving context to the articles. There were no mentions of the illegal Jordanian occupation preceding 1967 or the Arab aggression leading up to the Six-Day War and Israel’s conquering of the region.

Sigan’s conclusion is grim, claiming that the extreme bias of media like the NYT “encourages both sides to stay in conflict and fixation” while misinforming the public.

“An opinion must be formulated on the basis of complete information, otherwise, it does not express knowledge and reason; only propaganda,” Sigán wrote. “When there is incomplete information, an opinion is not formed out of freedom. Any opinion is merely obsessive repetition and reflects inadequate education that the reader is not even aware of. Journalistic coverage driven only by an agenda does not educate the masses. It only produces ignorance, no matter which side of the political map it comes from.”

[Sardinian farmers suffer worst locust invasion in over 30 years | Reuters](#)

#bibleprophecy, #italy, #locusts

Jul 13, 2022

- Summary
- Billions of locusts swarm across fields in Italy's Sardinia
- Invasion projected to affect around 60,000 hectares this year
- Dried fodder and alfalfa among crops most heavily hit
- Farmers already struggling with rising costs, drought

MILAN, July 13 (Reuters) - When farmer Rita Tolu saw "a big black wave storming across the horizon and taking over the fields" in April, she knew that little of her dried fodder and alfalfa crops would be left in the following days.

Tolu, 40, and other farmers working the central areas of the Italian island of Sardinia have seen swarms of billions of locusts ravage their land in the worst such invasion for more than three decades.

The invasion is projected to affect an area of around 60,000 hectares this year, double that of 2021 and compared with just 2,000 hectares in 2019.

Tolu said that many of her colleagues "might have to shut down their businesses" as the plague of locusts adds to the impact of drought and rising fuel costs on farmers.

She and her family run a dairy farm of 200 hectares near the village of Noragugume, where crops and animal fodder such as ryegrass and clovers are also grown and around 1,000 sheep graze.

This year, Tolu was able to collect just 200 stacks of hay – against 1,000 in 2021, she said, with some of it harvested early as a precaution and losing some of its nutritional quality.

"Here people farm the land to avoid purchasing fodder and other animal feeds," said Rita Zaru, the mayor of Noragugume, where over 70% of the around 280 inhabitants are employed in farming and shepherding.

Zaru said that anyone who had opted to farm grassland this year to boost milk production had lost the whole of their initial investment because of the locusts.

DRY FIELDS AND DEPOPULATION

The problem is not new in Sardinia.

In 1946, about 1.5 million hectares of land, accounting for two-thirds of the island's territory, were affected as locusts spread quickly across fields abandoned during World War Two.

Ignazio Floris, who teaches General and Applied Entomology at Sardinia's Sassari University, said depopulation and uncultivated lands were once again one of the main reasons behind this kind of natural event.

Rising temperatures and lack of rain also play a big role as dry and compacted soil makes it easier for locusts to lay their eggs. [read more](#)

Floris noted that this year's invasion has been affecting an area equal to 2-3% of the island, a swathe of territory that is much smaller compared to the 1946 catastrophe or 1988-89, when 81,000 hectares were hit.

The outlook is uncertain but Floris does not expect locusts to multiply as rapidly in 2023 in the light of planned remedies such as ploughing more fields and the deployment of a specific type of beetle that feeds on the locust's eggs.

He also ruled out the locusts endemic in Sardinia "making the jump" to other parts of Italy, noting that their particular species – the Moroccan locust - differs from the Desert locust that has ravaged African countries and Lebanon in recent years.

According to Tolu, Sardinian farmers were ready to play a more important role in helping to fight the plague by ploughing more of their land.

"We are worried...but we do not want to lose hope after so many years of crisis," she said. (\$1 = 0.9818 euros)

[Dangerous, extended heat wave threatens millions in Western Europe as highest level of heat alerts are issued - CNN](#)

#bibleprophecy, #heat, #europe, #climate

Jul 12, 2022

(CNN)After the second-warmest June on record, western Europe is bracing for its second dangerous heat wave of the summer.

Record heat in the United Kingdom

"Heat-health alerts have now been issued to the majority of the country, with temperatures set to remain consistently high throughout the duration of this week," reported Dr. Agostinho Sousa, head of Extreme Events and Health Protection at the UK Health Security Agency.

The UK's record high temperature is 38.7 degrees Celsius (101.7 degrees Fahrenheit), which could be surpassed as soon as this weekend, according to the met office.

"Some models have been producing maximum temperatures in excess of 40 degrees Celsius (104 degrees Fahrenheit) in parts of the UK over the coming weekend and beyond," the met office's Rebekah Sherwin said.

As the country prepares, officials are warning about the dangers to vulnerable communities.

"Population-wide adverse health effects are likely to be experienced, not limited to those most vulnerable to extreme heat, leading to potential serious illness or danger to life," the met office said. "Significantly more people are likely to visit coastal areas, lakes and rivers leading to increased risk of water safety incidents."

The UK could also experience road closures due to melting surfaces, as well as delays to rail and air travel in the thick of the extreme heat.

Spain, Portugal, France and Italy

Before the heat advances into the UK, it will bring blistering heat to Spain and Portugal, where "extreme" heat alerts, the highest level, were [issued for 14 states](#) across both countries. Lisbon and Santarém could see temperatures reaching [45 degrees Celsius](#) (113 degrees Fahrenheit) as soon as Wednesday.

The heat wave is expected to continue until at least the end of the week on the Spanish mainland, Spain's national weather service said on Monday.

It's not just the Iberian Peninsula sweltering in the heat. France will remain hot through the end of the week as well, reaching temperatures in the mid 30s. Heat alerts cover parts of eastern France, including Toulouse and Bordeaux.

The European region is all too familiar with this. Last month Europe reached record high temperatures and their second-warmest June on record.

"Daily maximum temperatures in Spain, France, and Italy soared above 40 °C and the extreme heat exacerbated the ongoing [drought](#) conditions in the Po River basin," [Europe's Copernicus Climate Change Service](#) said.

Much of Italy has also been experiencing a summer heat wave. Verona will see highs reaching [38 degrees Celsius](#) (100 degrees Fahrenheit) by Friday.

Eleven died on July 3 following an [ice avalanche on the Marmolada glacier](#) in the Italian Alps. Italian Prime Minister, Mario Draghi, blamed the collapse on the "deterioration of the environment and the climatic situation."

The Italian government last week declared a state of emergency for five northern regions of Italy under extreme drought conditions.

"Most of us can enjoy the hot weather when it arrives, but it is also important to keep yourself hydrated and to find shade where possible when UV rays are strongest, between 11 a.m. and 3 p.m.," Dr. Sousa said. "If you have vulnerable family, friends and neighbors, make sure they are aware of how they can keep themselves protected from the warm weather."

The threat of wildfires

Several hydrographic basins in Portugal are currently showing clear signs of the consequences of the ongoing drought. One example is the Aldo Lindoso reservoir, which is currently at only 15.8% of its capacity.

Thirty-five wildfires in Portugal have left 29 people injured so far, the Portuguese Civil Protection department said in a news conference on Saturday.

The European Commission has [mobilized its firefighting fleet](#) to help Portugal, and according to CNN Portugal, more than 80 municipalities in 10 districts are at maximum risk of fire for the next few days.

The [Ourém fire](#), 80 miles north of Lisbon, Portugal, has torn through nearly [5,000 acres since July 7](#). It is currently the largest in the region, while hundreds of firefighters are working to contain it.

The heat will increase the risk for fires with progressing dry conditions. The Portuguese government [declared a "state of contingency"](#) to reinforce emergency services ahead of the heat wave. Most of the country has "extreme" to "very extreme" fire danger throughout the week, according to the [European Forest Fire Information System](#).

Coruche, Santarém could see a 48-degree high (118 degrees Fahrenheit) on Thursday, which would break an all-time record for Portugal, according to the [Portuguese Institute of the Sea and the Atmosphere](#) (IPMA).

The IPMA also said more than 96 percent of the country is experiencing "[severe](#)" to "[extreme](#)" drought, the highest two levels, which creates a dry environment that can easily spark wildfires.

Portugal's Critical Fire Period runs from July 1 to September 30. During extreme fire risk, burning recreational bonfires, waste piles, fireworks or fires of any kind is prohibited. Some forest spaces may also be restricted to unauthorized persons.

[The Pandemic Fueled a Superbug Surge. Can Medicine Recover? | WIRED](#)

#bibleprophecy, #superbug, #pandemic, #medicine

Jul 14, 2022

The desperate need to save the lives of Covid patients during the pandemic's first waves, coupled with shortages of hospital personnel and protective equipment, drove a shocking reversal in progress against deadly superbugs, according to a [new analysis](#) by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

The report, released July 12, synthesizes lab and hospital-admission data to reach a grim conclusion: From 2019 through 2020, the number of antibiotic-resistant infections occurring in hospitals, and resulting deaths, each increased by at least 15 percent. For some of the most hard-to-treat pathogens, the increases shot up 26 percent to 78 percent. And those figures are even worse than they appear, because in the years immediately preceding the pandemic, resistant infections in hospitals across the US had been forced down by almost a third—meaning that Covid wiped out years of progress in reducing one of health care's most stubborn threats to patients.

“The pandemic created the perfect storm for this to happen,” says Arjun Srinivasan, a physician and associate director of the CDC's health-care-associated infection-prevention programs. “You had large numbers of patients needing very advanced care, oftentimes in intensive care units—needing central lines, needing urinary catheters, needing mechanical ventilation; all of those increasing risks for infection, all of those increasing risks for infections with antibiotic-resistant organisms.”

But medical experts say that hidden within the dismaying trend—and this isn't present in the CDC's report—is a surprising bright spot. Some US hospitals managed to reduce their patients' vulnerability to superbugs because they kept supporting prevention programs they had set in motion before the pandemic started, and especially because they kept those programs' personnel from being diverted to different tasks.

Any use of an antibiotic carries the possibility of provoking resistance, because bacteria adapt to defend themselves. So hospitals run programs, broadly known as antibiotic stewardship, that monitor which drugs are being used and reserve the most precious compounds as last-report options. Simultaneously, they maintain infection-prevention teams to protect patients against infections that can arise when medical devices accidentally conduct bacteria inside the body, or drug treatments suppress the immune system, or pathogens are carried between patients on staffers' gowns or hands.

When masks and protective equipment [ran short](#) during the first waves, health care workers couldn't swap out their gear as they normally would have. In deluged wards, they may have skipped safety steps to try to save lives. And as desperately ill

patients [overwhelmed ICUs](#), clinicians preemptively put them on antibiotics—not to control Covid, because the virus isn't affected by these drugs, but to ward off other infections. The CDC analysis finds that in 2020 almost 80 percent of Covid patients received at least one antibiotic during their hospital stay, a far higher percentage than normal.

Uneasy predictions during the past two years suggested this might happen. In the first months of the pandemic, multiple experts, including a former CDC director, [published warnings](#) that broad use of antibiotics among the earliest Covid patients was lighting the fuse on a time bomb. In March 2021, a project of the Pew Charitable Trusts predicted that resistance rates were sure to rise, because so many Covid patients were [receiving antibiotics](#). And by the end of that year, evidence began to arrive that they were right. A CDC analysis last September revealed that Covid's pressures on health care [reversed years of progress](#) in reducing infections in already-hospitalized people. This May, researchers from pharmaceutical giant Merck and medical-technology company Becton Dickinson presented [preliminary data](#) showing that rates of resistant infections in 271 US hospitals rose in 2020 and 2021—in patients with and without Covid—compared to 2019.

[Nuclear attack PSA leaves New Yorkers asking, 'Why now?' \(nbcnews.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #psa, #nuclear, #newyork

Jul 13, 2022

New York City residents are accustomed to warnings about all kinds of potential threats — severe weather, public health, mass shootings.

But a new PSA on surviving a nuclear attack has rattled some cages.

Released this week by the city's emergency management agency, the [90-second video](#) advises citizens to stay indoors and wash off any radioactive dust or ash. It opens on a computer-generated street, devoid of life. Damaged skyscrapers can be seen in the background.

Looking into the camera, a spokesperson says: “So there’s been a nuclear attack. Don’t ask me how or why. Just know that the big one has hit.”

Many New Yorkers were left asking, “Why now?”

Christina Farrell, the city's emergency management deputy commissioner, said the video isn't tied to any specific threats. She said it's about raising awareness of something most people haven't given much thought.

“There’s no overarching reason why this is the time we sent this out,” Farrell told The Associated Press on Tuesday. “It’s just one tool in the toolbox to be prepared in the 21st century.”

She said the agency's goal is to empower people regarding a scary subject, and despite the mixed reactions to the video, “people have thanked us that we are approaching this topic.”

“I don’t know if there’s ever the perfect moment to talk about nuclear preparedness,” she added, saying city officials have discussed implementing nuclear guidelines for quite some time. New York's emergency response program, Ready New York, has been around since 2003.

Mayor Eric Adams has said he doesn't believe the video was alarmist, [telling reporters](#) Tuesday “I’m a big believer in better safe than sorry.”

[Supreme Court rules for former coach in public school prayer case \(nbcnews.com\)](#)

#bibleprophecy, #prayer, #kennedy, #supremecourt

Jun 27, 2022

WASHINGTON — The [Supreme Court](#) ruled Monday that a former Washington state high school football coach had a right to pray on the field immediately after games.

The 6-3 ruling was a victory for Joseph Kennedy, who claimed that the Bremerton School District violated his religious freedom by [telling him he couldn't pray so publicly](#) after the games. The [district said](#) it was trying to avoid the appearance that the school was endorsing a religious point of view.

"Both the Free Exercise and Free Speech Clauses of the First Amendment protect expressions like Mr. Kennedy's," Justice Neil Gorsuch wrote in the majority opinion. "Nor does a proper understanding of the Amendment's Establishment Clause require the government to single out private religious speech for special disfavor. The Constitution and the best of our traditions counsel mutual respect and tolerance, not censorship and suppression, for religious and nonreligious views alike."

In recent years, a more conservative Supreme Court has been inclined to view government actions it once considered to be neutral and necessary to maintain separation of church and state as [hostile to religious expression](#).

One issue in the case was whether the coach's decision to pray in such a prominent place, on the 50-yard line, amounted to a private moment of giving thanks or a public demonstration of his religious faith that his players may have felt compelled to join.

Kennedy [urged the Supreme Court](#) to find that he was acting on his own behalf, expressing his own religious views, not speaking as a mouthpiece for the school. But the school district said the students on the football team looked up to their coach and felt coerced into doing as he did.

In a dissent joined by the two other liberal justices, Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan, Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote that the court "consistently has recognized that school officials leading prayer is constitutionally impermissible" and said the ruling did a "disservice" to schools, students and "the nation's longstanding commitment to the separation of church and state."

"Today's decision is particularly misguided because it elevates the religious rights of a school official, who voluntarily accepted public employment and the limits that public employment entails, over those of his students, who are required to attend school and who this Court has long recognized are particularly vulnerable and deserving of protection," Sotomayor wrote. "In doing so, the Court sets us further down a perilous

path in forcing States to entangle themselves with religion, with all of our rights hanging in the balance."

Further, the majority misrepresented some key points in the case, she wrote.

In the majority opinion, Gorsuch wrote that "Kennedy lost his job" "after he knelt at midfield after games to offer a quiet personal prayer.

But Sotomayor wrote, "To the degree the Court portrays petitioner Joseph Kennedy's prayers as private and quiet, it misconstrues the facts. The record reveals that Kennedy had a longstanding practice of conducting demonstrative prayers on the 50-yard line of the football field. Kennedy consistently invited others to join his prayers and for years led student athletes in prayer at the same time and location. The Court ignores this history. The Court also ignores the severe disruption to school events caused by Kennedy's conduct," she wrote.

Kennedy became an assistant coach of the varsity football team at Bremerton High School in 2008 and later began offering a brief prayer on the field after games ended and the players and coaches met midfield to shake hands. The school district eventually told him he should find a private location to pray.

But he declined and continued his practice of dropping to one knee and praying on the 50-yard line. He later invited journalists and a state legislator to watch. The district gave him a poor performance evaluation, and he did not apply to renew his contract after the 2015 football season. Kennedy sued, claiming violations of his right to free expression and religious freedom.

Lower federal courts said that because he chose to say his prayers in such a prominent place, he was acting as a public employee and his conduct was therefore not protected by the First Amendment. Those rulings cited past Supreme Court decisions that said when public employees act in their official capacities, they are speaking more for the government than for themselves.

Former Vice President Mike Pence praised Monday's ruling in a statement, saying, "Americans of faith do not turn their devotion off and on like a light switch, and we must reject any attempt by the government to control private religious expression — especially those who call on their faith when answering the call to participate in public service." The nonprofit conservative advocacy group he founded, Advancing American Freedom, filed a friend of the court brief in the case.

Katy Joseph, the director of policy and advocacy at the advocacy group Interfaith Alliance, said the decision "dismantles decades of progress."

"Exploiting his position of authority, coach Joseph Kennedy pushed players to participate in prayer in the middle of the field immediately after games," Joseph said. "This was no private expression of devotion, as he and his lawyers claim. Instead, Mr. Kennedy forced students to choose between their religious freedom and being part of the team — an agonizing decision that no student should ever be forced to confront."

Kennedy now lives in Florida but has said that if the Supreme Court ruled in his favor, he would return to Bremerton and seek to regain his job as a part-time football coach.