

The week of April 5, 2013

IRAN

Iran to insist on enrichment right at nuclear talks: Jalili

Iran will insist that its right to enrich uranium is recognized in talks this week with world powers on its disputed nuclear drive, Tehran's chief negotiator [said](#). "We think that they can open up tomorrow's (Friday's) talks with one phrase—and that is to accept Iran's right, particularly its right to enrich," Saeed Jalili said in a speech at an Almaty university ahead of the negotiations in the Kazakh city. Jalili also appeared to downplay the chances of a one-on-one meeting with chief US negotiator Wendy Sherman—talks Washington has been seeking for years. Iran and the so-called P5+1 nations—the five permanent U.N. Security Council members and Germany—will sit down in Almaty from Friday for their fifth round of negotiations in the past two years. The last talks held at the same venue in February saw the six nations present Iran with a proposal that would ease some sanctions in exchange for concessions on uranium enrichment. The P5+1 grouping is particularly concerned about Iran's enrichment to levels of up to 20 percent and the Fordo fortified bunker where such activity is conducted. The powers also want Iran to ship out its existing stockpile of 20-percent enriched material.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

South wakes to rockets from Gaza, Code Red siren

A rocket hit an open area in southern Israel on Thursday, marking a third straight day of projectile fire after several months of calm, [The Jerusalem Post](#) reported. No Gaza militant group claimed responsibility for the latest launch. IDF Spokesperson Avital Leibovich tweeted: "Not such a good morning to residents of southern Israel where another rocket was fired from Gaza." No casualties or damage were reported. Tensions have risen rapidly in the West Bank and Gaza Strip following the death from cancer on Tuesday of Maysara Abu Hamdeya, 64, who was serving a life sentence in an Israeli jail. The five-month truce between Israel and Hamas hung delicately in the balance on Wednesday, after a small global jihadi group in Gaza again targeted the town of Sderot with rocket fire, just as parents were bringing their children to schools and kindergartens.

New push for Mideast peace: John Kerry heads back

Secretary of State John Kerry is making his third trip to the Middle East in a span of just two weeks in a fresh bid to restart long-stalled peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Though expectations are low for any breakthrough on Kerry's trip, which begins Saturday, his meetings with Israeli and Palestinian leaders represent some of the Obama administration's most sustained efforts at engagement in a part of the world that has frustrated American administrations for the past six decades. "His diplomacy will be based on what he hears from the parties," State Department spokeswoman Victoria Nuland [said](#) Wednesday. Kerry, she said, will be making clear that both sides have to

want to get back to the negotiating table and that compromises and sacrifices are going to have to be made if we're going to be able to help.

GREATER MIDDLE EAST

New Rebel Gains Reported in Southern Syria

Syria's insurgency appeared to make further territorial gains in the south on Wednesday, antigovernment activists reported, saying that rebel fighters had seized a military base near the city of Dara'a, where the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad first began more than two years ago. According to [The New York Times](#), the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said rebel groups had seized the air defense base of the 49th battalion near the town of Alma on the northern outskirts of Dara'a, near the Jordanian border. The government remains in firm control of most major cities, including Damascus, but it has become ever more difficult for the strained Syrian military to retake contested areas. Antigovernment activists in Syria reported clashes elsewhere on Wednesday, including what they described as a rebel raid on a checkpoint at the Adra central prison in the Damascus suburbs and fighting outside the nearby Iben Sina hospital for mental and nervous disorders. Andrew Harper, the top official for the United Nations refugee agency in Jordan—where two-thirds of the more than 300,000 refugees are from the Dara'a area—said he had seen two new trends in recent days in response to the changing situation there. More Syrian refugees are expressing interest in returning home. This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To learn more about Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

Since fierce clash, Egypt's crisis takes new turn

The [Associated Press](#) reported, the riot on March 22 revealed a new readiness of some in the anti-Brotherhood opposition to turn to violence, insisting they have no choice but to fight back against a group they accuse of using violence against them for months. The fight featured an unusual vengefulness. Young protesters were seen at one point pelting a Brotherhood member with firebombs and setting him aflame. Others chased anyone with a conservative Muslim beard, while Islamists set up checkpoints searching for protesters. Each side dragged opponents into mosques and beat them. Since the fight, Islamists enraged by what they saw as aggression against their headquarters have for the past week hiked up calls for wider action against opponents—and the media in particular—accusing them of trying to overthrow Islamist President Mohammed Morsi.

INTERNATIONAL ISRAEL

Israel treats wounded Syrians who approach border

The IDF [provided medical care](#) to seven wounded Syrians who approached the Golan border fence on Wednesday, evacuating two of them to Israeli hospitals for further treatment, after which they will be returned to Syria, the IDF Spokesman's Office said. IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. Benny Gantz approved the treatment, which was provided for humanitarian reasons. The Golan Heights' eastern foothills, under Syrian control, have seen increased fighting between the sides. Israel treated four wounded Syrians last week, evacuating two of them to Israeli hospitals for further treatment. In February, Israel took in seven wounded Syrians for treatment, admitting them to Ziv Hospital in Safed. This information is an update to the information contained in this week's [Sermon Tidbits](#). To learn more about Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).