

The week ending July 19, 2013

U.S.-ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Obama's U.N. pick to seek Security Council seat for Israel

President Barack Obama's nominee for UN envoy, Samantha Power, [slammed](#) the global body's "unacceptable bias" against Israel, and pledged to lobby hard to get America's closest Mideast ally a seat on the Security Council. Power, who also faulted the United Nations for failing to stop the slaughter in Syria, said in her testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that America enjoys a "special relationship" with Israel, whose "legitimacy should be beyond dispute, and its security must be beyond doubt." Power said that shielding Israel from unfair attacks by its political adversaries would be one of her top priorities. "The United States has no greater friend in the world than the state of Israel," she said. "I will stand up for Israel and work tirelessly to defend it."

IRAN

Rouhani scoffs at Israel, U.S. threats over nuclear program

Iranian president-elect Hassan Rouhani has dismissed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's threats of a military strike as laughable, according to [The Jerusalem Post](#). "When some say that all options are on the table and when a miserable regional country says such things, it makes you laugh," Rouhani said in an address to Iran-Iraq war veterans. "Who are the Zionists to threaten us?" he added. The comments come after Rouhani reaffirmed Tehran's support of Syrian President Bashar Assad's forces and Iranian-backed terrorist group Hezbollah, asserting that Iranian relations between the two groups demonstrated their determination to confront common enemies, especially Israel. As the Islamic Republic moves closer to acquiring a nuclear weapons capability, Netanyahu has warned that Israel will take any necessary measures to defend Israel. This past May, the United States Senate passed a resolution headed by Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC) and Robert Menendez (D-NJ), which stated that the United States will stand by Israel should the Jewish state feel compelled to take military action in its own defense against Iran.

GREATER MIDDLE EAST

Israel allows additional Egyptian troops into Sinai

Israel has granted permission to the Egyptian army to deploy two additional infantry battalions in the Sinai Peninsula, following an Islamist-led attack in Northern Sinai. The attack left three workers killed and 17 wounded after rockets were fired at a bus in the city of El Arish. According to [Haaretz](#), the additional troops have been deployed as a means of combating such terror activists in the Sinai, given the rise in tensions since the

removal of Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi. Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Benny Gantz said Monday that Israel is closely monitoring these developments, and that the IDF is monitoring the buildup of terrorist activities “on a daily basis.” Israel’s 1979 peace treaty with Egypt places limitations on the amount of Egyptian infantry allowed in the Sinai. This information is an update to the information contained in this week’s [Sermon Tidbits](#). To subscribe to Sermon Tidbits, click [here](#).

Egypt pushes ahead with plan for new constitution

As the interim government in Egypt continues with their plans of amending the country’s constitution, the Muslim Brotherhood’s Freedom and Justice Party continues protests in opposition to the military’s ousting of President Mohammed Morsi. Small but peaceful protests calling for the reinstatement of Morsi continue despite the continued progress in constructing a new constitution. [The Wall Street Journal](#) reported that a six month plan to amend the constitution and hold presidential elections was under way in response to what General Abdel Fattah al Sisi called the “popular demands for a new and more inclusive constitution, new presidential elections, and an interim leadership.” The interim government formed an inclusive civilian cabinet featuring women, Christians, and ministers headed by interim Prime Minister Belbalwi, but the Muslim Brotherhood continues to reject this newly formed government. The military intervention is still not being defined as a coup, as recognition as a military coup would force Congress to halt the \$1.5 billion in U.S. aid that is currently being given to Egypt each year.

Kerry meets with Syrian refugees at a camp in Jordan

Secretary of State John Kerry met with Syrian refugees for the first time as the violence in Syria continues to escalate, leading to increasing numbers of refugees fleeing for safety in surrounding countries. At Za’atri Camp in Jordan, where 115,000 Syrian refugees are now living, Kerry met with six frustrated refugees according to [The Washington Post](#). The refugee camp has grown so large that is the fifth most populated city in Jordan, causing the refugees to question why world powers have not stepped in to provide aid and instate a no-fly zone. While the international community is providing millions of dollars to keep the camp running, the Syrian refugees still feel this is not enough and expressed this in their meeting with Kerry. The United Nations run camp is moving towards replacing the tents with more permanent housing, which is troublesome because the camps were originally envisioned as strictly temporary, but the conflict continues to stretch on. The amount of electricity and water used by the camp is becoming increasingly troublesome as the resources are being quickly drained.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Israel leads the world in blindness prevention

Through advances in both prevention and treatment techniques, preventable blindness in Israel has been cut in half from 1999 to 2010. By focusing on prevention of blindness from the start and making it available to all citizens through their health care system, Israel is at the forefront of [blindness prevention](#). The Jewish state was able to successfully prevent and treat blindness in four areas including age-related deterioration, glaucoma, diabetes, and cataract. With 80 percent of blindness being preventable, the World Health Organization still reports blindness as a serious concern worldwide. The techniques used in Israel could be beneficial if emulated in other countries, their rates of blindness could too be significantly reduced. While genetic causes of blindness including glaucoma have not been reduced, Israeli innovation has seen an astounding 56 percent reduction in preventable blindness over the last decade.