

The week ending April 18, 2014

## ISRAEL AND THE ARAB WORLD

### **Israel says close to forging new ties across Arab world**

[Reuters](#) reports that Israel is holding secret talks with some Arab states that do not recognize it, looking to establish diplomatic ties based on a common fear of Iran, Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said on Monday. Amongst the countries he was in contact with were Saudi Arabia and Kuwait, Lieberman told newspaper Yedioth Ahronoth - the first such disclosure by a senior Israeli official. The two nations swiftly denied the existence of any talks with Israel. Both these states, along with most other Arab nations, have traditionally been highly hostile towards Israel, which has only signed peace deals with two neighbors - Egypt and Jordan. However, anti-Israeli sentiment was being superseded by a growing concern over Iran's nuclear program, Tehran's regional allies, and the menace of Islamist militancy, Lieberman said.

## IRAN

### **Iran's oil exports surge above West's sanctions cap: IEA**

[Reuters](#) reports that Iran's crude oil exports have surged to their highest in 20 months, far exceeding a 1 million barrel-per-day limit set by the West under an interim deal on curbing Tehran's nuclear program. The International Energy Agency's monthly report revised February's global crude imports from Iran upwards by 240,000 bpd to 1.65 million barrels per day, the highest since June 2012. Under an interim deal signed in November between Iran and six world powers - known as the P5+1 - that came into effect on January 20, Iran's exports are supposed to be held to an average 1 million bpd through July 20. Tough international sanctions over the past two years have cut Iran's oil exports by about half. "The question is whether they are going to continue to test the sanctions," said Antoine Halff, head of the IEA's oil industry and markets division.

## SYRIA

### **Israelis treating Syria's wounded confront complex injuries, cultural gaps**

[JTA](#) reports When an Israeli army ambulance brought an injured Syrian man to Ziv Medical Center in this northern Israeli city two months ago, the doctors didn't know where exactly he was from. They saw that his leg had been amputated, and based on his own fragmented account and the physical evidence, the doctors surmised he had been hit by a shell. But they didn't know exactly how he had gotten there. And when he leaves the hospital later this month, they don't know where he's going. "I'm not scared," said the Syrian, whose name was

withheld by the hospital because Israel and Syria are in a state of war. “Nothing worse will happen to me, so who cares if I’m in Israel?” Despite decades of hostility between Israel and Syria, hundreds of victims of Syria’s 3-year-old civil war have received life-saving treatments in Israeli hospitals. Israeli medical personnel say that while they’re happy to treat Syrians, the wounded pose a unique set of challenges. For one, their injuries are often complex, owing to the heavy artillery used in the conflict. They sometimes arrive at the hospital as much as days after suffering the injury, complicating treatment. And the wounded often are wary of Israelis they have been taught to despise, making it hard for Israel to address their emotional traumas in addition to their physical ones.

## **Syrian opposition fighters obtain U.S.-made TOW antitank missiles**

[The Washington Post](#) reports that Syria’s opposition fighters have been supplied with U.S.-made antitank missiles, the first time a major American weapons system has appeared in rebel hands. It is unclear how the rebels obtained the wire-guided missiles, which are capable of penetrating heavy armor and fortifications and are standard in the U.S. military arsenal. The United States has sold them in the past to Turkey, among other countries, and the Pentagon approved the sale of 15,000 of the weapons to Saudi Arabia in December. Both countries aid Syrian opposition groups. U.S. officials declined to discuss the origin of the weapons but did not dispute that the rebels have them. Their appearance in Syria coincides with a U.S. commitment this year to escalate a CIA-run program to supply and train vetted “moderate” rebel groups and to improve coordination with other opposition backers. “The United States is committed to building the capacity of the moderate opposition, including through the provision of assistance to vetted members of the moderate armed opposition,” said National Security Council spokeswoman Bernadette Meehan. “As we have said, we are not going to detail every single type of our assistance.”

## **ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS**

### **Arab rioting shuts down Temple Mount to Jews, tourists**

[JTA](#) reports that Israeli police closed the Temple Mount to Jews and tourists following rioting by Arabs. The closure was imposed Thursday morning as police arrested six Arabs who are suspected of taking part in riots and stone throwing on visitors in recent days, Army Radio reported. During the arrests, security forces discovered two homemade rifles, a magazine and ammunition. Israeli police detectives confiscated the firearms for further analysis, according to the news site nrg.co.il. Several dozen Palestinian protesters and an Israeli policeman were wounded Wednesday on the Temple Mount after rioting broke out over the site’s opening to Jewish visitors. The site is overseen by the Muslim Wakf, which generally does not permit visiting Jews to pray or bring any ritual objects to the Temple Mount.