

The week ending August 1, 2014

ISRAEL & THE PALESTINIANS

Gaza Tunnel Network Threat Leaves Israelis Shaken

The [Los Angeles Times](#) reports that beneath the wheat and watermelon fields surrounding Kibbutz Nir Am, which is just outside of the Gaza Strip, lays a threat that helps explain the overwhelming public support in Israel for the war against the Palestinian militant group Hamas. A little over a week ago, assailants dressed in Israeli military uniforms clambered out of an underground passageway about halfway between this hamlet of 400 or so people and the neighboring kibbutz. The specter of such assaults via a large and sophisticated network of subterranean passageways has profoundly shaken Israelis long accustomed to a different threat from the coastal strip, that of rocket and mortar fire. Four such infiltrations have taken place since the start of the Gaza offensive, killing at least 11 Israeli soldiers and haunting the collective psyche. "From this, you can't protect yourself," said Ruti Sheves, 64, who has lived in Kibbutz Erez for 40 years. "You don't have a shelter where you can run and be safe. You can't be safe from this." Troops operating in and near Gaza have tracked 36 tunnels with dozens of access points, Deputy Foreign Minister Tzachi Hanegbi said Wednesday. Reserve Brig. Gen. Shimon Daniel, a former head of the army's combat engineering corps, said "Most threats you hear and see," he said. "But this has the element of surprise, of the unknown, and that's very frightening to people."

U.S. - ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Senate Passes Resolution Supporting Israel

The Senate passed a resolution Tuesday that states the Senate's support of Israel's right to defend itself from Hamas rocket attacks and condemns a "bias" United Nation's report. According to [The Hill](#), S.Res.526 was passed through a unanimous consent agreement. The resolution also condemns a United Nations Human Right Council report that stated Israel had committed human rights violations against the Palestinian people. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.) said of the report, "I've always been a supporter of the U.N. but what I saw last week disgusted me, it was so one-sided." Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell (R-Ky.) stated, "Republicans are united in our support of Israel's defense, and this morning my colleagues will explain our opposition to any effort to force a ceasefire on Israel that does not further its security objectives." "Israel's right to defend itself should be affirmed." "I condemn Hamas terrorism," Reid said. "We stand with Israel and its right to defend itself."

For the latest information on the situation in Israel please click [here](#).

EUROPE

Anti-Jewish Slogans Return to the Streets in Germany as Mideast Protests Sweep Europe

According to [The Washington Post](#), the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is echoing on the streets of Europe, sparking a rash of protests—both peaceful and violent—and ratcheting up tensions across the continent. Saturday in London, 45,000 protesters gathered outside Israel's embassy, chanting "Free Palestine." In France, a nation already facing an uptick in anti-Semitic violence before the Israeli strikes on Gaza, pro-Palestinian youths last week looted and set fire to Jewish businesses in a suburb of Paris. French authorities have banned anti-Israel protests, but thousands of young demonstrators have defied the edict, engaging police with rocks and bottles. Yet perhaps nowhere are the deeds of protesters sparking more discomfort than in Germany, where the most radical protest chants are rattling through the streets of Berlin like disturbing ghosts of the past. Last week, a group of about 30 Muslims gathered outside an empty Berlin synagogue and hurled anti-Semitic abuse from the street. [German] Jewish leaders have condemned them as a revival of anti-Semitic myths that paint Jews as child killers who used their victims' blood in religious rituals. On Tuesday night in the German city of Wuppertal, a molotov cocktail was thrown at a synagogue (it landed in the street, causing no damage). Last Thursday night, Israel Daos, a shy, 18-year-old Orthodox Jew, was punched in the face on his way to a synagogue in central Berlin. "I heard what the protesters had been saying, because they march not far from here, and I have heard them shout, 'Death to Jews!'" said Daos Kai Diekmann—chief editor of Germany's influential Bild tabloid. The Holocaust engineered by Nazi Germany, they claim, has robbed Germany of its ability to be objective on Israel.

SYRIA

Syrian Casualties Surge as Jihadists Consolidate

More than 2,000 Syrians — almost half of them pro-government forces — have been killed in just under two weeks of fighting in Syria, marking one of the worst death tolls in the country's three-year civil war, opposition activists said Monday. The reports reflect a recent surge in deadly attacks by the al-Qaeda-breakaway Islamic State group targeting President Bashar al-Assad's forces, signaling shifting priorities as Sunni militants seek to consolidate their hold on territory and resources in northern Syria. [The Washington Post](#) reports that the recent attacks came after Assad was reelected last month to a third, seven-year term in a vote that was confined to government-controlled areas and dismissed by the opposition and its Western allies. In his inauguration speech July 16, he declared victory and praised his supporters for "defeating the dirty war." Since then, Islamic State fighters have attacked army positions in three provinces in northern and central Syria. In the past week alone, the militants captured a government-controlled gas field and two major army bases. Militants last week also overran the sprawling Division 17 military base in northern Raqqah province, killing at least 85 soldiers. Amateur videos posted online by activists showed more than a dozen beheaded bodies in a busy square said to be in Raqqah.