

The week ending August 8, 2014

## U.S. - ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

### **'I have no sympathy for Hamas,' Obama says**

US President Barack Obama sympathizes with the people of Gaza, he told journalists in Washington after the US-Africa Leaders' Summit on Wednesday, but reserves no such sympathy for its "extraordinarily irresponsible" Hamas government. According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), the president said the US goal was to ensure that the 72-hour cease-fire holds, so that the residents of Gaza could start rebuilding and "feel some sense of hope," and the people of Israel "feel confident that they're not going to have a repeat" of rocket attacks. "I think it is important to remember that Hamas acts extraordinarily irresponsibly," Obama said, "putting civilians at risk" with its taunting of Israel, and its placement of rocket launchers in civilian areas during conflict with the Jewish state. "I have said from the beginning that no country would tolerate rockets being launched into their cities," he continued. "And as a consequence, I have consistently defended Israel's right to defend itself, and that includes doing what it needs to do."

## ISRAEL & THE PALESTINIANS

### **Gaza cease-fire takes hold ahead of talks with Israelis in Cairo**

[The Washington Post](#) writes that over the coming days, Egyptian mediators plan to shuttle between Palestinian and Israeli delegations to try to work out an agreement. On Tuesday Israel withdrew its remaining ground forces from Gaza just ahead of the 72-hour truce's start time. Hamas still has at least several thousand rockets despite firing 3,300 and losing an additional 3,000 to Israeli attacks. There was little sense of triumph in Israel on Tuesday, and not only because many are still mourning 64 dead Israeli soldiers and three civilians. The cease-fire was greeted with scorn by hardline members of Israel's cabinet who want the [Israeli] government to put Gaza under an international mandate. "This situation of limbo—no war, no peace—is the worst scenario for Israel," Israeli Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman said in an interview. "We can't survive having another conflict every two or three years." On the other side of Israel's political spectrum, Labor Party leader Isaac Herzog said he, too, fears that the apparent end of this conflict could merely set the stage for the next [conflict].

### **Israel Makes First Arrest in Teens Murder Case**

Israel said on Wednesday it has detained an alleged Hamas member who authorities say helped organize the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens in the West Bank. [The Wall Street Journal](#) reports that the July 11 arrest is that of Hussam Qawasmeh, a resident of the West Bank city of Hebron who Israel says is a Hamas operative that confessed to serving as the "commander echelon" in the kidnapping. The arrest also

marks the first time Israel has detailed an alleged link between Hamas' military wing in the Gaza Strip to the West Bank kidnapping. Hamas' leadership has previously denied being involved in the murder. Israeli security authorities haven't located two other Palestinians it accuses of carrying out the June 12 abduction of Gilad Shaer, Eyal Yifrah, and Naftali Fraenkel. Israeli security authorities allege Mr. Qawasmeh received money from Hamas handlers in Gaza to purchase weapons that were given to one of the alleged kidnappers, Marwan Qawasmeh. The court document said the two Qawasmeh men buried the bodies of the boys in a field purchased by Hussam a few months earlier. The bodies were discovered on June 30.

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

## IRAQ

### **Islamic State 'now controls resources and territory unmatched in history of extremist organizations'**

It's a pattern of territorial expansion that has now become familiar. After the Islamic State captured Sinjar on Sunday, came the executions. Then arrived the orders to convert or die, the flash of the movement's black flag, the fleeing of thousands—and, finally, the jubilant and chilling images on social media. One showed a destroyed Shiite shrine, which had long sat in the ancient city of Sinjar in northwestern Iraq. Another depicted the executions of several blindfolded men. Then there was a picture showing a masked jihadist hoisting a gun at the desk of the town's mayor — a portrait of a famed Kurdish guerrilla leader looming behind. The armed movement, which has surged in wealth, manpower and resources in recent weeks, also just took the town of Wana on Sunday. "People were terrified," Ilias al-Hussani, 27, told [The Washington Post](#). "They are savages. We've seen what they've done to people of their own faith. Imagine what they would do to us non-Muslims."

## ISRAEL AND THE WORLD

### **Tourists Come Despite the War**

"If anything, the war only strengthened my resolve to be here," Annika Hernroth-Rothstein told [Israel21C](#) at a holiday rental near the beach in Tel Aviv. Hernroth-Rothstein, a political consultant and columnist from Sweden, was not deterred by the rockets over Tel Aviv in early July, when she brought her two young sons to Israel for a week-long trip. "At first it was frightening to hear the sirens and have to get my kids to the nearby shelter, without freaking them out in the process," Rothstein said. "But then we got used to it. It was a unifying experience meeting Israelis in the shelter." Furthermore, she added, "With the anti-Israel and anti-Semitic sentiment as high as it is in Sweden, Israel is actually relaxing for me. And my boys suddenly felt safe in a funny way." As soon as she and her children returned to Sweden, Hernroth-Rothstein made plans to come back by herself later that month. Packed and ready to embark, she found herself among the travelers whose flights got cancelled as a result of a two-day ban by many international airlines imposed after a Hamas rocket landed near Ben-Gurion Airport. Rather than forfeiting her trip, however, Hernroth-Rothstein found an alternate route involving train treks and long waits at airports. Nor did the war put a dent in the travel plans of New Yorker Vivian Lazar. She stated, "If I cancelled a trip [to Israel] because of the terrorist attacks of Hamas, I'd be giving them the victory they desire."