

The week ending December 19, 2014

## U.S. – ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

### **New Federal Spending Bill Boosts Security Assistance to Israel**

On Dec. 13, Congress passed a \$1.1 trillion spending bill for the 2015 fiscal year that designated \$3.1 billion in security assistance to Israel. Bolstering the two-country alliance, the omnibus appropriations bill fully met America's commitment to the Jewish State in the U.S.-Israel Memorandum of Understanding. The aid signifies the seventh of the 10-year agreement on security assistance meant to ensure that Israel has the proper tools to defend itself from looming threats in the region. The spending bill included a total of \$619.8 million for U.S.-Israel missile defense programs, with \$351 million allocated for Iron Dome. The remaining \$268.8 million is allocated for cooperative programs, including David's Sling, Arrow-2 improvements, and Arrow-3. The bill also increased oversight of Palestinian aid and the ongoing nuclear negotiations with Iran. The legislation prohibits assistance "to Hamas or any entity effectively controlled by Hamas, any power-sharing government of which Hamas is a member, or that results from an agreement with Hamas and over which Hamas exercises undue influence." The bill also presses the Palestinians to halt anti-Israel incitement by explicitly linking economic aid to Palestinian efforts to counter incitement of violence against Israelis and to ensure that they are supporting activities aimed at promoting peace, coexistence and security cooperation with Israel. Tightening supervision over Iranian nuclear negotiations, the administration will now be required to submit reports to Congress every 30 days regarding Iran's compliance with the Joint Plan of Action (JPOA) and the progress of Iran's nuclear program.

### **Obama, at Hanukkah ceremony: Alan Gross' release shows freedom is possible**

U.S. President Barack Obama on Wednesday welcomed guests to the White House to celebrate Hanukkah, telling visitors that "one act of faith can make a miracle." Obama reflected on Hanukkah's meaning during the reception marking the second day of the eight-day Jewish holiday known as the Festival of Lights. According to [Haaretz](#), Obama tied the themes of Hanukkah to the return of Alan Gross, a Jewish-American released by Cuba after five years in captivity. Obama said that in prison, Gross never gave up. "I want to begin with today's wonderful news," Obama said. "I'm told that in the Jewish tradition, one of the great mitzvahs is pidyon shvuyim. My Hebrew is not perfect, but I get points for trying. But it describes the redemption, the freeing, of captives. And that's what we're celebrating today, because after being unjustly held in Cuba for more than five years, American Alan Gross is free." Obama and First Lady Michelle Obama also welcomed Inbar Vardi and Mouran Ibrahim, two students from the bilingual school in Jerusalem that was torched last month by Israeli extremists. "The Hanukkah story teaches us that our light can shine brighter than we could ever imagine with faith, and it's

up to us to provide that first spark," he said. Rabbi Bradley Shavit Artson lit the menorah and led the blessings at the ceremony.

## IRAN

### **Increase the Pressure to Give Negotiations a Chance**

After more than a year of intensive diplomacy and limited sanctions relief, the time has come to strengthen sanctions on Iran. Despite significant concessions by the P5+1—which would have allowed Iran to maintain most of its nuclear infrastructure—Tehran still refuses to take the steps needed to reach a good deal? Increased pressure offers the best chance to persuade Tehran to abandon its quest for a nuclear weapons capability. The Obama Administration should toughen sanctions enforcement, and Congress should quickly take up new bipartisan sanctions legislation. Iran came to the negotiations in large measure because U.S.-led sanctions were beginning to cripple the Iranian economy. A combination of sanctions relief and improved Iranian economic management reduced the pressure on Tehran to negotiate in good faith and accept a good deal. Tougher enforcement of existing sanctions, accompanied by prospective new bipartisan sanctions, will force Iran to confront a decision between compromise and economic pain. Without new pressure, Iran is unlikely to modify its course. It will continue its efforts to circumvent sanctions divide the international coalition and continue advancing its nuclear program.

[Click here to read more about the need for increased sanctions on Iran.](#)

## ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

### **Israeli-Born Architect Wins 2015 AIA Gold Medal**

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) announced on December 10 that Moshe Safdie would be the 2015 AIA Gold Medal recipient, reported [JSpace News](#). The AIA is honoring Safdie for his “comprehensive and humane approach to designing public and cultural spaces across the world has touched millions of people and influenced generations of younger architects,” and believes that Safdie’s work has had a lasting influence on the theory and practice of architecture. “Moshe Safdie has continued to practice architecture in the purest and most complete sense of the word, without regard for fashion, with a hunger to follow ideals and ideas across the globe in his teaching, writing, practice and research,” stated Boston Society of Architects president Mike Davis in his nomination letter. Safdie is an Israeli-born, Canadian and American architect who is best known for his stacked Habitat ’67 apartments in Montreal and who was mentored by Louis Kahn. Safdie has also served as an educator, most notably serving as the director of Harvard GSD’s urban design program from 1978-1984, and has established offices in Boston, Jerusalem, and Shanghai. Some of Safdie’s most notable projects include the Mamilla Center, The Hebrew Union College and Yad Vashem Holocaust History Museum all in Jerusalem. Most recently, Safdie revealed plans to build a massive glass “air hub” for Singapore’s Changi Airport. Safdie is the 71st AIA Gold Medalist, and in recognition of his legacy to architecture, Safdie’s name will be chiseled into the granite Wall of Honor in the lobby of the AIA headquarters in Washington, D.C. Safdie will also be honored at the 2015 AIA National Convention in Atlanta.