



Rabbinic Recap

The week ending November 28, 2014

IRAN

U.S. Congress skeptical of Iran nuclear talks extension

According to [Yahoo! News](#), U.S. House and Senate members reacted coolly Monday to an extension of international negotiations over Iran's nuclear program, with skeptical lawmakers demanding Congress "tighten the economic vice on Tehran" through new sanctions. "Now more than ever, it's critical that Congress enacts sanctions that give Iran's mullahs no choice but to dismantle their illicit nuclear program," Republican Senator Mark Kirk, who supports new sanctions, said in a statement. Kirk has drawn up tough legislation with Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman Robert Menendez, a Democrat that would see sanctions kick in should Iran violate terms of the temporary agreement or future deal. House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce said Obama should support new sanctions as a way to increase leverage on Iran. "This seven-month extension should be used to tighten the economic vice on Tehran—already suffering from falling energy prices—to force the concessions that Iran has been resisting," Royce said in a statement. Royce was backed by panel Democrat Brad Sherman, who said new sanctions are the "best hope for a good agreement."

Members of Congress Respond to Extension of Iran Nuclear Talks

On Nov. 24, the P5+1 announced that talks with Iran would be extended until June 2015. Speaker of the House John Boehner (R-OH) states, "Every day these negotiations go on is another day this administration fails to address Iran's role as lead state sponsor of terrorism with an abysmal human rights record and no interest in a strong, stable Iraq. Instead of giving Iran more flexibility, we should be holding this regime accountable for the threat it poses to the region and our allies." Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) states, "I support this extension because it maintains a strong sanctions regime, keeps Iran's program frozen in place and subject to rigorous inspections, and continues talks toward a peaceful end to Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons, which is in the best interests of America and the world." "The goal has always been—and must continue to be—to ensure that Iran never achieves a nuclear weapons capability. That is why I have concerns about continued extensions of these negotiations," says House Democratic Whip Steny Hoyer (D-MD). Chairman of the Senate Republican Policy Committee John Barrasso (R-WY) articulates that "Instead of endless discussion, we need security. President Obama should immediately call on Congress to impose increased sanctions on Iran before the end of the year. We stand ready to increase sanctions and stop Iran from building a nuclear weapon."

[Click here for additional statements from members of Congress.](#)

House Condemns Iran's Human Rights Record

On Nov. 19, the House approved a resolution that condemns Iran for its “gross human rights violations.” The bipartisan resolution was introduced by House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Ed Royce (R-CA) and showcases the spectrum of human rights abuses by the current Iranian regime. The resolution passed by a voice vote. “While Iran pursues its nuclear ambitions with relentless determination, it continues to repress millions of Iranians yearning for basic freedoms,” said Royce after the resolution was passed. “Today’s resolution stands for the principle that U.S. foreign policy can and must pursue strategic objectives, like the dismantling of Iran’s nuclear program, while promoting democracy and human rights.” The resolution discusses the continued suppression of Iranian women and minority groups, highlighting the recent execution of Iranian woman Reyhaneh Jabbar. Jabbar was convicted after killing a man in self-defense during a sexual assault. According to the legislation, Jabbar’s death exemplifies “the dramatic rise in executions of Iranian citizens by authorities since the election of President Hassan Rouhani in June 2013.” “The resolution urges the administration to use every tool at its disposal to target, expose, and punish those who violate the human rights of the Iranian people,” said Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY). “Because at the end of the day...despite the sharp differences between our governments, we have no ill will towards the people of Iran, toward the citizens of Iran. They are, unfortunately, oppressed by a government that calls itself their government, but is really a brutal oppressor of the Iranian people. “This designation occurred even while the P5+1 is negotiating with Iran on its illicit nuclear program,” said Engel. “And even as those negotiations continue, we cannot, must not turn a blind eye to the horrific abuses taking place in Iran every single day.”

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Tel Aviv dubbed ‘world’s smartest city’

The city of Tel Aviv won the World Smart Cities Award on Wednesday, trumping over 250 other cities bidding for the title. The award, given as part of the annual Smart City Expo World Congress held this week in Barcelona, recognized the White City’s initiative in undergoing what Mayor Ron Huldai hailed as a “digital revolution.” The flagship project of the city’s efforts is the pioneering Digi-Tel platform, a residents’ membership club and app that provides individually tailored, location-specific information and services. The platform creates a direct connection between the city and its residents, providing services ranging from neighborhood road works alerts to discounts, offers and information based upon individual interests. The city’s efforts to position itself as the Start-up City also included opening up municipal databases to the public in an attempt to increase transparency, as well as offering free WiFi throughout the city – even at the beach, reported [The Times of Israel](#). The Smart City Expo, established three years ago, is a leading international convention aimed at fostering municipal innovation. Last year, Rio de Janeiro was the recipient of the Smart Cities Award.