

The week ending April 10, 2015

IRAN

Rabbi Eric Yoffie: To win broad U.S. Jewish support, Obama must truly tackle Iran

When polling data is available on what American Jews think of the agreement with Iran, most of them, I am betting, are not going to like it. The great majority will be profoundly skeptical, while a significant number will oppose it outright, states [Rabbi Eric Yoffie](#) in an editorial in [Haaretz](#). Even Obama admirers, such as myself, who generally applaud the president's tough-minded realism, will not be cheering this particular deal. Part of the reason, of course, is that it is not a very good deal, and in many ways, it is not a deal at all. Iran's nuclear infrastructure remains in place, the Iranians have walked away from long-standing commitments, and the Americans have compromised on long-standing demands. Absolutely critical arrangements on verifying compliance, without which the whole plan collapses, have yet to be negotiated. "Better than expected" and "better than the alternative" are the descriptions most frequently heard from supporters of the deal, and both claims have a measure of truth. But they hardly constitute a reason why American Jews should offer their enthusiastic endorsement. But in the final analysis, it is not the specific terms that will most bother U.S. Jews. The technical details of the deal are frustratingly complex. Instead, American Jews will make their judgments based on things that they do know. And after years of Iran watching, they know that Iran is an Israel-hating, Holocaust-denying theocracy, and the patron of Hezbollah and other radical groups that are in the business of killing Jews. From our long history, Jews are aware that such things matter. When in doubt about whether to trust virulently anti-Semitic nations and leaders, the general rule is: Don't. While American Jews can appreciate that others have had a role in creating the ominous threat that Iran poses, they look to their president to take the initiative. With a weak deal on the table, they want Obama to use the months ahead to forge a much tougher and more effective agreement.

Skeptical of Iran Nuclear Deal, Israel Calls for Changes

Clearly unsatisfied with assurances from President Obama about the provisions of the Iran nuclear deal, Israel on Monday listed specific requirements that it declared were necessary in any final agreement. According to [The New York Times](#), the list, produced by Yuval Steinitz, Israel's minister of intelligence and strategic affairs and one of the Israeli government's harshest critics of the negotiations, marked a change in direction for the government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Until now, Israel has argued, at least publicly, that the only good deal would halt all uranium enrichment by Iran, essentially rolling back the clock by 20 years. It has never before defined the "better deal" that Mr. Netanyahu told Congress the world needed. Mr. Steinitz said that the suggestion that there was no alternative to the framework, or that Israel had not put forward an alternative, "is wrong." "The alternative is not necessarily to declare war on Iran," he said, briefing international reporters at a Jerusalem hotel. "It is to increase pressure on Iran and stand firm and make Iran make serious concessions and have a much better deal."

Ayatollah Khamenei calls U.S. version of nuclear agreement "mostly false"

In his first official remarks about the framework agreement between Iran and Western powers, Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khamenei said on Thursday that nothing is finalized, and therefore the understandings remain non-binding, reports [Haaretz](#). "I'm neither for nor against the outcome of the recent talks. According to the Iranian officials involved no measure has been taken yet and there are no binding results," said Khamenei during a televised speech on Thursday. According to Khamenei, the United States published a document that was "mostly false" after the latest round of talks. "I gave President Rohani my list of principles and red lines. Beyond that, I don't intend to get involved in details," although he also noted that he instructed the negating teams to make it clear to the Western powers that Iran will not allow IAEA inspectors into military facilities under the pretext of supervision of its nuclear program. "We will not sign any agreement, unless all economic sanctions are totally lifted on the first day of the implementation of the deal," Iran President Hassan Rohani said. He spoke during a ceremony marking Iran's nuclear technology day, which celebrates the country's nuclear achievements. Rouhani described the framework deal in Switzerland as evidence that Iran has "not surrendered to a policy of pressure, sanctions and bullying." "This is our victory," said Rouhani.

[Click here for more examples of differing accounts of Iran framework.](#)

Iran gives Hamas tens of millions to rebuild tunnels, U.K. report says

Iran has sent tens of millions of dollars to the Hamas military wing to help reconstruct tunnels used by the terror group in its operations against Israel, and to replenish its rocket arsenal, the Sunday Telegraph reported, citing intelligence sources. The funding is to refurbish underground infrastructure in the Gaza Strip that was destroyed during the 2014 summer conflict with the IDF, reports [The Times of Israel](#). During the conflict, the army demolished over 30 tunnels in the coastal enclave. Hamas used the tunnels, many of which extended into Israeli territory, to launch deadly terror attacks against Israeli forces and civilian communities. In addition to the tunneling operations, the Iranian aid is also being directed toward a new stockpile of missiles for Hamas after its arsenal was depleted during the 50-day conflict, the Telegraph said. Israeli security sources in March said that Hamas has invested considerable effort in digging a new tunnel network within the coastal enclave, as well as several tunnels meant for eventual cross-border attacks. Local residents said evidence of digging can be seen from the Israeli side of the border and those in the Gaza periphery have documented the construction some several hundred meters from the border. The security sources maintained that only a few attack tunnels are being dug, rather than the dozens that were operational immediately before the summer conflict and during it.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Knesset is Earth's Greenest Parliament

According to [The Times of Israel](#), by undertaking measures that any environmentally friendly homeowner would take, the home of Israeli politics has recently become the greenest parliament in the world. On March 29, the Knesset unveiled a 4,560-square-meter (50,000 square feet) solar field on its roof and those of surrounding buildings. Although the 1,500 solar panels are the highlight and the most obvious aspect of the greening of the Knesset, they are by far not the only way in which the Knesset is conserving energy. The Green Knesset Project, launched in January 2014, involves 13 different ecologically conscious projects at a cost of NIS 7 million (\$1.8 million).