

The week ending January 16, 2015

U.S. – ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Obama Reaffirms His Commitment to Israel in Call with Netanyahu

On Jan. 12, U.S. President Barack Obama and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke by phone to discuss the Palestinian's bid to join the International Criminal Court (ICC) and Iran's nuclear program. According to a White House press release, "The President reaffirmed to the Prime Minister that the United States is focused on reaching a comprehensive deal with Iran that prevents Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon." Obama also highlighted "the United States' enduring commitment to the security of Israel and the importance of continuing close cooperation with Israel on this issue." In the phone call, the president reiterated the U.S. position that the Palestinian Authority (P.A.) does not qualify for privileges given under the Rome Statute because it is not yet a state. Obama also emphasized his opposition toward the P.A.'s move to join the ICC, believing it was not best plan of action.

IRAN

Iran May Be Gaining Ground Amid Eased U.S. Sanctions, Casey Says

Iran is gaining momentum on the international stage after the U.S. extended relief from economic sanctions against the country until June 30 during talks over its nuclear program, Democratic Senator Bob Casey said today. "The Iranian regime is scoring points," said Casey of Pennsylvania, who served on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee for more than six years. "They frankly look better than they did a few months ago because they've been engaged in negotiations and dialogue." "I worry that over time that these current sanctions have less significance," Casey said at a [Bloomberg News](#) breakfast in Washington. "I worry that over time that these current sanctions have less significance." Some in Congress, including Casey, have supported stronger sanctions against the Islamic republic. Casey said he thinks there will be a vote on sanctions before the July deadline for the nuclear negotiations, and he contended that would help maintain pressure on Iran.

EUROPE

In Jerusalem, thousands gather for funeral of 4 Jewish men killed in Paris

Israeli leaders gathered Tuesday with the grief-stricken families of the four Jewish men killed by Islamist gunmen at a kosher supermarket in Paris last week in an emotional and solemn joint funeral in Jerusalem. The killings of Yohan Cohen, Yoav Hattab, Francois-Michel Saada and Philippe Brahahm last Friday at the Hyper Cacher supermarket in Paris by Islamist gunmen stunned France's half-million-strong Jewish community, the largest in Europe, reports [The Washington Post](#). The four men were killed in a tense hostage stand-off at the kosher supermarket on Paris' eastern edge during a three-day wave of attacks carried out by gunmen claiming allegiance to al-Qaeda and the Islamic State extremist groups. They were among 17 people who died in back-to-back attacks by the Islamic militants, who first killed 12 at the satirical newspaper, Charlie Hebdo. Rather than be buried in France, the families of the four men, who were not Israeli citizens, asked that they be buried in Israel, in one of Israel's largest cemeteries a mile from the Israeli parliament. It is not unusual for Jews who have lived outside of Israel for their entire lives to ask to be buried here. Some family members had expressed fears that their graves in France could be desecrated, news reports said.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Einstein postcard from Palestine trip up for sale

A rare Albert Einstein postcard note that includes a self-portrait, sketched during his sole visit to Palestine will be featured at a live auction event by Boston-based RR Auction this month. According to [Ynet](#), the unique autographed note is signed in German on the reverse of a 3.5 x 5.5 postcard picturing the Red Star Liner Belgenland, near Jerusalem, on February 5, 1923. Einstein writes to Zionist leader Arthur Ruppin: "To my dear Mr. Ruppin, we are having unforgettable days in Palestine. With the sun shining, in cheerful company. Your wife is standing next to me and looking at what I am writing about her. She is counting the days until you come back." Einstein's only visit to Palestine lasted two weeks. He arrived in Port Said on February 1, 1923, at the invitation of Arthur Ruppin, who at the time was on an extended fundraising tour in the United States. In Mr. Ruppin's stead, his wife Hanna apparently acted as Professor Einstein's guide. The first day of the physicist's official Zionist-organized tour was February 5, 1923, when the note and sketch was accomplished. The professor's first visit that morning was to the West Jerusalem suburb of Beit Hakerem, accompanied by Hanna Ruppin, Hadassah Samuel and Solomon Ginzburg. His tour continued with visits to Haifa and Tiberias, and ended in Jerusalem, where he departed for Port Said on February 14, 1923. Although Einstein would never again travel to Palestine, he continued to support Jewish settlements and the Hebrew University.