



Rabbinic Recap

The week ending August 12, 2016

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Abbas rejected U.S. call to meet with Netanyahu

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas reportedly turned down an American request that he meet with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in a bid to jumpstart peace talks. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry made the request of the Palestinian leader at their July meeting in Paris, the Palestinian newspaper Al-Quds reported on Thursday. Abbas refused the meeting, the newspaper said, telling Kerry that he would only acquiesce after Netanyahu froze all settlement construction, including in Jerusalem, and released the last group of prisoners detained prior to the Oslo Accords. According to [The Times of Israel](#), in May, Netanyahu said he was willing “to meet President Abbas today in Jerusalem. If he’d like, in Ramallah. Right now. Today.”

Israel intercepts Gaza-bound shipment of commando knives

Israeli security personnel at the Kerem Shalom border crossing into the southern Gaza Strip earlier this week foiled an attempt to smuggle dozens of commando knives into the Palestinian enclave, the Defense Ministry said Wednesday. During a search of a vehicle, Defense Ministry guards and Shin Bet operatives uncovered two boxes containing professional-grade 30-centimeter (12-inch) commando knives hidden in a shipment of tools. The knives and graphite were confiscated, and Israeli security services have launched investigations into both smuggling attempts. Israel maintains tight control on the import to the Gaza Strip of electronics and other equipment it says could be used to carry out attacks against Israeli targets. In recent months, Kerem Shalom guards and Shin Bet operatives have seized concealed shipments to Gaza containing drones, explosive-making materials, rocket- and tunnel-building equipment and a number of wet suits concealed inside crates of sports gear, which the Defense Ministry at the time said could be to used in a seaborne attack against Israel, reports [The Times of Israel](#).

Eight Palestinian operatives injured in Gaza tunnel collapse

Eight Palestinian tunnel operatives were wounded in a tunnel collapse early Wednesday morning in the northern Gaza border town of Shuja’yya, according to Ma’an News Agency. All of the wounded tunnel operatives were transported to the Shifa hospital in Gaza City. Speaking to Ma’an, Ashraf al-Qidra, a Gazan Health Ministry spokesperson, said, “Eight wounded individuals from Shuja’yya arrived at the Shifa hospital as a result of an accident.” Qidra added that the tunnel operatives are in mild to moderate conditions. The report did not mention the affiliation of the tunnel operatives. A number of tunnels have collapsed on Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad tunnel operatives recently including four in the past month. According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), after the IDF uncovered a tunnel extending into Israeli territory in April, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu revealed that Israel has developed a cutting-edge tunnel technology to locate tunnels.

IRAN

Iran's minorities rise up against state discrimination

On June 15, two days of clashes broke out after the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) fired upon a platoon of Kurdish fighters affiliated with the Kurdistan Democratic Party of Iran (KDPI). At least six on both sides were killed. The incident was the first in a spate of home-grown attacks by Kurds and other restive minority factions against Iranian officials and infrastructure. Tehran has responded with repression to enforce unity on a nation split along ethnic and sectarian lines. The increasing violence signals growing discontent among Iran's non-Persian denizens, who regularly face human rights abuses as well as political and economic discrimination from Tehran. Iran's Shia Persian Islamist regime views ethnic—and to a lesser extent religious—diversity as a weakness. So, Tehran is trying to undermine and diminish pluralism through the imposition of a revolutionary religious ideology and narrow concept of ethnic nationalism on a variegated nation in order to maintain control. Iran's Kurds are spearheading the current violence against the state, which is a response to Tehran's longstanding repression of minority populations. The KDPI—although largely nonviolent—has still engaged in sporadic guerrilla warfare against oppressive regimes in Tehran (both secular and Islamic) since the group's creation in 1945. Headquartered in Iraqi Kurdistan since 1996, the KDPI changed its strategy last year when it dispatched fighters to western Iran's Kurdish provinces. In addition to the June clashes, there have since been reports of at least five other skirmishes and dozens of peshmerga (Kurdish military forces) and IRGC casualties.

[Click here to read more about Iran's minorities rising up against state discrimination](#)

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Bronze for judo is Israel's first Rio Olympics medal

Yarden Gerbi became the first Israeli to receive a medal at the Rio Olympics, bringing home a bronze in the women's 63-kg judo competition. Gerbi defeated Miku Tashiro of Japan on Tuesday for Israel's first Olympic medal since the 2008 Olympics in Beijing. She had also beaten China's Yang Junxia and lost to Brazil's Mariana Silva. "The medal is for all of Israel, for everyone who supported me and cheered me on," Gerbi said after her victory, according to [JTA](#). "I'm waiting for someone to wake me up. I gave my soul and it paid off. Whoever said you can't succeed in Israel is wrong," she added, posing for a flood of pictures proudly pointing at the Israeli flag embroidered on her kimono. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu tweeted: "Yarden, you did it. We're all proud of you." President Reuven Rivlin in a phone call to Gerbi called the Israeli athlete a "champion" and said that "today, you are our hero." Israel narrowly missed another medal in judo on Monday when Sagi Muki lost to Lasha Shavdatuashvili of Georgia in the bronze medal match.