

The week ending May 27, 2016

U.S. – ISRAEL RELATIONSHIP

Bipartisan Letter Urges EU to Sanction Mahan Air

On May 23, 28 congressmen—led by Reps. Patrick McHenry (R-NC) and Brad Sherman (D-CA)—sent a bipartisan letter to the Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to the United States David O’Sullivan urging the EU to designate the Iranian airline Mahan Air as an “entity providing material support to terrorist organizations and lethal aid to Assad’s regime in Syria.” “Preventing Mahan Air from flying to Europe would send a clear message to Iran that the EU is committed to countering Iran’s support for terrorism and those that have caused such grave suffering in Syria,” wrote the congressmen. The letter also clarifies that American sanctions applying to Mahan Air for supporting terrorism were not lifted under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. In 2011, the United States Treasury Department sanctioned Mahan Air as an affiliate of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force. According to a Wall Street Journal report cited by the letter, Mahan Air has flown to destinations in Europe with the same planes that were used hours earlier to deliver arms to the Assad regime in Damascus. The Syrian civil war has claimed the lives of approximately 400,000 Syrians.

IRAN

Khamenei: U.S. ‘can’t do a damn thing’ about our missile program

Iranian supreme leader Ali Khamenei on Monday said the United States cannot “do a damn thing” about the Islamic Republic’s ballistic missile program. “They have engaged in a lot of hue and cry over Iran’s missile capabilities, but they should know that this ballyhoo does not have any influence and they cannot do a damn thing,” Khamenei said, according to the semi-official Fars News Agency. Iran in March tested ballistic missiles, including two with the words “Israel must be wiped off the earth” emblazoned on them, according to the U.S. and other Western powers. Under a nuclear deal signed last year between world powers and Iran, ballistic missile tests are not forbidden outright but are “not consistent” with a United Nations Security Council resolution from July 2015, U.S. officials say. According to the UN decision, “Iran is called upon not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology,” until October 2023. According to [The Times of Israel](#), the supreme leader, who has final say on state matters, lambasted the “arrogant” Western powers, arguing that efforts to shut down its nuclear program and missile tests were a pretext to meddle in Iran’s affairs. “The nuclear issue and missiles are excuses and of course excuses are useless and they can do no damn thing,” Khamenei said. “The point is Iran doesn’t follow arrogant powers.” “In this war, willpowers are fighting. The stronger willpower will win,” Khamenei added.

ISRAEL AND THE PALESTINIANS

Palestinian woman attempts to stab Israeli officer at Jerusalem checkpoint

A Palestinian woman was shot dead Monday afternoon after she attempted to stab security forces at a checkpoint north of Jerusalem, Border Police said. According to a Border Police statement, a Palestinian woman arrived at the Ras Bidu checkpoint near Givat Ze'ev around 2:30 p.m. and was approached by officers "who thought she appeared suspicious." The officers then asked her to stop and fired warning shots in the air, but she then ran toward them brandishing a knife and was shot by the officers, the statement read. The officer in charge of the team, named by the Border Police as "N," said in a statement: "I understood right away it was a terrorist attack," adding that the awareness of the police prevented any further casualties. According to [The Jerusalem Post](#), the woman was pronounced dead at the scene; no Israeli security forces or civilians were wounded in the incident. Police later released a photo of a large black kitchen knife they said the woman was brandishing, but gave no details as to her identity, saying she was not carrying papers.

ISRAEL AND THE WORLD

Israel says return of artefacts to Egypt shows warm relations

Israel on Sunday returned to Egypt two stolen sarcophagi lids, saying the repatriation of the millennia-old artefacts was a sign of warmer relations between the two countries. Israel Antiquities Authority investigators found the two artefacts, one dating back between 3,400 and 3,600 years and the second about 3,000 years-old, in an antiquity dealer's shop in East Jerusalem about five years ago. The Israeli foreign ministry said the wooden sarcophagi covers were stolen in Egypt and smuggled to East Jerusalem via a Gulf state. "The return of the Egyptian (artefacts) is symbolic, more than anything, of the changing relations (between) Israel and Egypt," Israeli Foreign Ministry Director-General Dore Gold told [Reuters](#).

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Two Israeli films win at Cannes

Cannes Film Festival judges honored two Israeli filmmakers with a Critics' Week award and the Cinéfondation student film competition honor at this year's movie event. According to [Israel21c](#), while Or Sinai, a graduate of the Sam Spiegel Film School in Jerusalem, and Asaph Polonsky, who was born in the U.S. but raised in Israel, didn't win the festival's biggest prizes, they nonetheless pocketed rave reviews for their works. Polonsky's debut feature-film *One Week and a Day* tells the story of a husband (played by Shai Avivi) and wife (played by Evgenia Dodina) and the different ways of coping with the death of their 25-year-old son. While the wife returns to her routine, the husband gets high with a young neighbor and sets out to discover that there are still things in his life worth living for. *One Week and a Day* won a standing ovation at its official screening at Cannes and won the GAN Foundation Award as well as a \$22,000 cash prize. Interestingly, Israeli actress Dodina plays the title role in Sinai's short film, *Anna*, as well. In this film, she plays a divorced mother who finds herself desperate for human touch. Sinai's 24-minute student film won the Cinéfondation award and a \$16,800 cash prize. The win ensures that her first full-length film will be screened at a future Cannes festival.