



Rabbinic Recap

The week of December 29, 2017

IRAN & SYRIA

Syrian Army and Iranian Proxies Demand Surrender of Rebels Near Israel Border

Syrian rebels pinned down in a strategic area where the Israeli and Lebanese borders meet with Syria were handed an ultimatum by the Syrian army and its Iranian-backed militia allies to either surrender or face certain military defeat, rebels said on Tuesday, [Reuters reported via The New York Times](#). The Syrian army backed by local militias financed and equipped by Iran alongside Druze fighters from the area have been escalating a fierce assault against Sunni rebels in an enclave in the foothills of Mount Hermon, close to both the Israeli and Lebanese borders. "They were given 72 hours to surrender with fighters to go to Idlib or those who want to stay have to reach a settlement," said Ibrahim al-Jebawi, a Free Syrian Army (FSA) official familiar with the situation on the ground. Another rebel official who asked not to be named said they were told either to "surrender or a military solution." The rebels have now been left encircled in Beit Jin, their main stronghold after losing strategic hills and farms around it this week after over two months of near daily shelling and aerial strikes. Iran-backed Lebanon's Hezbollah's media unit said insurgents had agreed to negotiate surrender terms and said negotiations had already begun over their evacuation in the next few days to rebel-held Idlib. The Syrian army has used similar tactics of pushing opponents to rebel areas further from the Syrian capital after a twin tactic of siege and months of strikes on residential areas. There were also more than 8,000 civilians who have been trapped in the remaining enclaves with their plight worsening, according to rebel spokesman Sohaib Alraheel. Israel, which Syria accuses of helping the rebels, is alarmed at the growing Iranian military influence in the Golan Heights and has stepped up its strikes against pro-Iranian targets inside Syria. Israel has been lobbying both big powers to deny Iran, Lebanon's Hezbollah and other Shi'ite militias any permanent bases in Syria, and to keep them away from the Golan, as they gain ground while helping Damascus beat back Sunni-led rebels.

JERUSALEM

Israel in Talks With 'More Than 10 Countries' on Jerusalem Recognition, Officials Say

Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely on Monday told Israel's Kan Bet public radio that Israel is talking with more than 10 countries about potentially moving their respective embassies to Jerusalem following Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales's announcement that he would move his country's embassy to Jerusalem. Hotovely told [Haaretz](#) that these discussions are initially focusing on recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital, rather than on immediately moving their respective embassies. On December 7, U.S. President Donald Trump formally recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, adding that the U.S. embassy would be eventually be moved there from Tel Aviv. Hotovely refused to identify the countries, but noted that several of the talks are

just beginning, while others are further along. Foreign Ministry officials confirmed Hotovely's statements, adding that these conversations are taking place "with more than 10 countries, but not many more." Israeli diplomats estimated on Monday that Honduras is likely one of the next countries to take a similar step.

PALESTINIANS

Israel Foiled 400 Major Terror Attacks in 2017, Shin Bet Chief Says

Israel foiled 400 potential major terror attacks in 2017, Shin Bet chief Nadav Argaman disclosed on Sunday, as reported by [Haaretz](#). Speaking at a Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meeting, Argaman noted that 13 were planned suicide attacks and eight were planned kidnappings. A further 1,100 potential lone wolf attacks were thwarted. The Shin Bet chief noted that there were 54 attacks carried out in 2017, a decrease from the 108 carried out in 2016. Argaman qualified the decrease, however, stating that "the calm we are experiencing is misleading, and Hamas is trying with all its might to carry out attacks and undermine the stability of the Palestinian Authority."

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Massachusetts Police Chief Travels to Israel for Training

[The Associated Press reported via U.S. News & World Report](#) that in a 40-year law enforcement career spent in three states, Haverhill police Chief Alan DeNaro has had a lot of training. But nothing compares to the experience he and 14 other Massachusetts law enforcement officials received in Israel earlier this month. Selected to go on the trip in August, DeNaro joined police chiefs from communities such as Somerville, Watertown, Worcester, and Foxborough, state police officials and U.S. Attorney Carmen Ortiz for an intensive, nine-day trip which took them all over the 8,000-square-mile nation, which is home to roughly 9 million people. The Massachusetts delegation was in Israel from Dec. 3-12. During the annual trip, which the Anti-Defamation League has funded for more than a decade, DeNaro and his fellow Bay State lawmen were briefed by commanders in the Israeli military and police forces on law enforcement and terror suppression tactics they employ. [...] Traveling around Israel for a little over a week, DeNaro, who has been Haverhill's police chief for 15 years, got to see firsthand the daily realities of the Israeli people, the lone majority Jewish state in the Middle East. One of the focal points of the trip was to share techniques and methods for combating terrorism, a daily reality for Israel. The Massachusetts delegation was also able to visit Israel's municipal police academy to see how officers are trained and the trip allowed for an exchange of ideas between Israeli and Massachusetts law enforcement.