



Rabbinic Recap

The week of April 6, 2018

UNITED NATIONS

U.S. Blocks U.N. Resolution Condemning Israel for Deaths in Gaza Clashes

The United States on Saturday blocked a draft U.N. Security Council statement urging restraint and calling for an investigation of clashes on the Gaza-Israel border, diplomats said. Kuwait, which represents Arab countries on the council, presented the proposed statement, which called for an “independent and transparent investigation” of the violence. The [Times of Israel reported](#) that the draft council statement also expressed “grave concern at the situation at the border.” And it reaffirmed “the right to peaceful protest” and expressed the council’s “sorrow at the loss of innocent Palestinian lives.” The draft statement was circulated to the council on Friday, but on Saturday the United States raised objections and said it did not support its adoption, a Security Council diplomat told AFP. The U.S. mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

IRAN

Clouds Form Over Iran Deal as Trump Deadline Nears

Dark clouds are forming over the Iran nuclear deal, [The Hill reported](#), as the calendar marches toward a May 12 deadline set by President Trump to improve the accord or see the United States effectively withdraw from it. When Trump extended Iran’s sanctions relief in January, he pledged it would be the last time unless European allies agree to a supplemental deal to fix what the president sees as the fundamental problems with the nuclear pact negotiated by the Obama administration. And while negotiations with the Europeans are ongoing, hopes for a solution are increasingly fading. Trump came into office vowing to tear up the “worst deal ever negotiated.” Trump sees three main issues: several provisions sunset, inspectors can’t demand to see some military sites, and it does not address Iran’s ballistic missile program and support for terrorists.

SYRIA

Trump Drops Push for Immediate Withdrawal of Troops From Syria

According to [The New York Times](#), President Trump has instructed his military commanders to quickly wrap up the American military operation in Syria so that he can bring troops home within a few months, senior administration officials said on Wednesday. He dropped his insistence on an immediate withdrawal, they said, after commanders told him they needed time to complete their mission. The president’s decision to keep the 2,000 troops on the ground in Syria for the immediate future came in a meeting of the National Security Council in the White House

Situation Room on Tuesday, hours after Mr. Trump had told a roomful of reporters that “it’s time” to bring American forces home from a conflict that has been a crucial battlefield in the fight against the Islamic State.

SAUDI-ISRAEL RELATIONS

Saudi Crown Prince Recognizes Israel’s Right to Exist, Talks Up Future Ties

[The Times of Israel stated](#) that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, in an interview published Monday, recognized Israel’s right to exist and extolled the prospect of future diplomatic relations between his kingdom and the Jewish state. In an [extensive interview with The Atlantic’s Jeffrey Goldberg](#), Prince Mohammed laid out his vision for the future of the Middle East, including the possibility of cooperation with Israel. Asked whether he believes “the Jewish people have a right to a nation-state in at least part of their ancestral homeland,” he replied: “I believe that each people, anywhere, has a right to live in their peaceful nation. I believe the Palestinians and the Israelis have the right to have their own land.” However, in keeping with the terms of his kingdom’s regional peace proposal, the Saudi crown prince added that an agreement with the Palestinians was a prerequisite to formal relations. “But we have to have a peace agreement to assure the stability for everyone and to have normal relations,” he said.

AFRICA

Israel Releases Asylum Seekers Jailed for Refusing Deportation to Rwanda

[Haaretz reported](#) that on Wednesday, The Israeli government released 58 asylum seekers from prison who had been jailed for refusing to be deported to Rwanda. In a submission to the High Court of Justice, the state said these 58, who were held at Saharonim Prison, were offered a choice of deportation to Rwanda only and were jailed when they refused. They were not offered the choice of deportation to Uganda. But on Monday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced that the agreement with Rwanda had been canceled, meaning that deporting asylum seekers to that African country was no longer an option. Consequently, the state told the court, there is no longer any justification for keeping them in prison for refusing to go there.

ISRAEL IN THE NEWS

Israeli Space Team Still Shooting for the Moon

The Google Lunar X Prize competition expired on March 31 with no winner. Yet Israel’s team, the nonprofit SpacEL, is continuing its mission of landing an unmanned module on the moon – with plans to launch on a SpaceX Falcon 9 via Spaceflight Industries in the fourth quarter of 2018, even if Lunar X does not find another major sponsor. Newly appointed SpacEL CEO Ido Anteby told [Israel21C](#), “We are moving forward with the project, regardless of the terms or status of the Google Lunar X Prize.” He continued, “SpacEL and Israel Aerospace Industries are committed to landing the first Israeli spacecraft on the moon, and we plan to launch before the end of this year.” So far, only three world superpowers, the United States, Russia, and China, with their tremendous resources, have achieved controlled lunar landings.