

## Weekly Top 10

**WASHINGTON, D.C. August 2, 2019**

**TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties**

**FROM: Daniel Rubin, Chairman;  
Aleksander Smukler, President;  
Mark B. Levin, Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO**

Dear Friend,

On Saturday, July 27 more than 20,000 Russians took to the streets of central Moscow. This demonstration, referred to as "Towards an honest election" wasn't permitted by Russian authorities. However, Russian police say there were limits on the number of protestors which could be arrested. According to independent monitor OVD-Info, 89 people had been detained by 2 pm, when the demonstrations began – that figure rose to 1373 by the evening hours. The protests were spurred by a decision by election authorities to bar several opposition candidates from running for Moscow's City Council, asserting that they had falsified signatures on petitions to run — a charge that the candidates denied.

Notably, opposition leader Alexey Navalny was detained on July 24 for 30 days due to a post of his on Facebook, where he called for people to take part in the unauthorized protests. On Sunday morning, July 28, he was hospitalized due to an alleged allergy attack. Navalny has been quoted as saying that he was poisoned on Sunday while in jail. Navalny was reincarnated a day later after Russian authorities escorted him out of the hospital – against the wishes of his doctor.

Last week, Vilnius' city council voted to re-name a controversial street, previously bearing the name of Kazys Skirpa – an envoy of pro-Nazi Lithuanians to Berlin during World War II who called for the ethnic cleansing of Jews. This past Saturday, Vilnius Mayor Remigijus Šimašius – who supported last week's decision – ordered the removal of a plaque honoring Jonas Noreika from an external wall of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences. Noreika was a high-ranking police officer who is believed to have personally overseen the murder of Jews. He has been glorified in Lithuania as a hero for fighting against the Soviet Union alongside the Nazis.

Immigration to Israel rose by more than a quarter in the first half of 2019. Immigration from Russia rose a staggering 73 percent between January and June, making up for declining immigration from other countries such as the U.S. and France. In total, Russian immigrants made up 51% of total Oleh for 2019 thus far. This falls in line with 2018's Aliyah numbers, in which 50% of all new Oleh were from Russia.

Lastly, I would like to bring your attention to an excellent character vignette published in the Forward by Mariana Bolotnikova – "As Russian Jews, We Are Characters in Someone Else's Story". Bolotnikova describes living as an outsider in her new American community among her fellow Jews in the mid-1990's. She details the difficulties and challenges of being placed into a homogenous Jewish community – something that was brand new to her as a Russian immigrant.

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin  
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

**NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10**  
**Washington, D.C. August 2, 2019**

**Aliyah Numbers Surge, Fueled by Wave of Russian Immigration to Israel**  
**By Judy Maltz**  
**Haaretz, August 1, 2019**

Immigration to Israel rose by more than a quarter in the first half of 2019, fueled almost entirely by a

continued surge in aliyah from Russia, according to internal Jewish Agency figures. In all of 2018, immigration showed a modest gain of 5 percent.

A 73 percent increase in the number of individuals moving to Israel from Russia between January and June more than compensated for drops in aliyah from many other countries — most prominently France and the United States. Indeed, Russian immigrants accounted for more than half (51 percent) of the total. In 2018, the increase in emigration from Russia was just under 50 percent.

[Read the full article here.](#)

---

### **Moscow Protests Are Good News for the Opposition — And the Hardliners**

**By Tatyana Stanovaya**

**The Moscow Times, July 30, 2019**

In the five years that followed the 2011–2012 protests, the non-systemic opposition posed no threat to the Kremlin. Even its most prominent face, Alexei Navalny, lacked popular support and the backing of elites and faced fierce internal competition, seen as a pro-Western white-collar criminal by the public and suspected of collaborating with the authorities by fellow liberals. Other Kremlin critics simply did not rise to the level of national political figures.

Inside the Kremlin, Sergei Kiriyenko, the former prime minister who in 2016 became the presidential administration's first deputy chief of staff, viewed the non-systemic opposition with scorn. They did not deserve a place in Russia's political system, Kiriyenko felt, and for a while it seemed that official politics was protected from infiltration by non-systemic elements, who failed time after time to overcome barriers to participation such as the so-called municipal filter.

[Read the full article here.](#)

---

### **Chernivtsi: Memorial monument placed on mass grave of pogrom victims**

**FJC FSU, August 1, 2019**

The Jews living in Sadhora [Sadigura], a small shtetl in Ukraine knew no reprieve when the Russians were victorious over the German army. The Red Army, who had just returned home after their victory over the Wehrmacht in 1941, still had the fire of war and destruction burning in their hearts. Government officials, who understood that they needed an outlet for their blood lust, allowed them a 24 hour window to do whatever they wanted to the Jews living in the shtetl.

Those 24 hours were filled with unimaginable terror as 1200 Jews were murdered in the most brutal ways imaginable. The Jews were thrown into a mass unmarked grave. Some of them were buried alive.

This past weekend the Rabbinical College of Europe unveiled a memorial monument and tombstone at the site of the mass grave.

[Read the full article here.](#)

---

### **2,300 Jewish Athletes Gather in Budapest for European Maccabi Games**

**By Cnaan Liphshiz**

**Jerusalem Post, July 31, 2019**

BUDAPEST — More than 2,000 Jewish athletes from 42 countries and thousands of spectators gathered at a stadium in the Hungarian capital for the opening of the 15th European Maccabi Games.

With 180 athletes, Israel sent its largest ever delegation to Tuesday's opening ceremony of the event, which is the 15th edition of a tournament that take place every four years at a different European city.

This year's games, which takes place at several venues, includes 20 categories, including swimming, chess, fencing, soccer and boxing. It was the first time since the first European Maccabi Games in 1929 in Prague that Central Europe hosted the event.

[Read the full article here.](#)

---

### **Ukraine To Launch Russian-Language TV To Counter Russian State Media**

**Radio Free Europe, July 30, 2019**

A senior aide to Ukraine's president says Kyiv plans to launch a worldwide Russian-language television channel in an attempt to counter Russian state-controlled media broadcasts to people

living in separatist controlled parts of eastern Ukraine and in Russia.

Ukraine's new President Volodymyr Zelenskiy won a landslide election victory this year promising to end the conflict between Ukrainian government troops and Russian-backed separatist forces.

More than 13,000 people have been killed by the conflict in eastern Ukraine in the five years since Russia seized and illegally annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula and started giving military support to pro-Russia separatists.

[Read the full article here.](#)

---

### **Russians in the Catskills**

**By Maxim D. Shrayer**

**Tablet, July 29, 2019**

On that particular day in August 1988, Styopa Agarun and Simon Reznikov were sitting on the balcony of the Reznikovs' rental apartment overlooking a fire station, and Simon was telling his childhood friend how it was summer, he had no vacation plans of his own, and this would have never happened back in Moscow. Styopa listened silently as a fire engine backed into the garage, moaning like an old gigolo.

"I got it," Styopa suddenly said, slapping himself on the thigh. "You should go to Bluebell Inn."  
"Where's that?" Simon asked.

"In the Catskills."

"The Castiles?" Simon compulsively punned. "All the way in Spain?"

"Hilarious. Not the Cas-teels but the Cat-skills," Styopa replied, unperturbed. "They used to call it 'Borscht Belt.'"

"Why the hell 'Borscht Belt?'" asked Simon.

"There used to be a lot of Jewish resorts there," Styopa explained.

"'Borscht Belt' doesn't sound Jewish at all," Simon said. "Russian, Ukrainian, but not Jewish."

"Well, perhaps to you it doesn't," Styopa conceded. "But here it used to sound Jewish. Like Jewish deli food. So the name stuck."

[Read the full article here.](#)

---

### **Vilnius mayor orders removal of contested plaque honoring alleged war criminal**

**By Cnaan Liphshiz**

**Jewish Telegraph Agency, July 27, 2019**

(JTA) — City workers in Vilnius, Lithuania removed a plaque honoring a Nazi collaborator that has been at the center of lawsuits and numerous protest campaigns.

Ordered by Mayor Remigijus Šimašius, the removal Saturday of the plaque honoring Jonas Noreika from an external wall of the Lithuanian Academy of Sciences follows last week's vote by the city council to change the name of a street honoring another collaborator, Kazys Skirpa, the website Defending History noted.

Both decisions reflect the mayor's growing willingness to anger nationalists amid tenacious action by Jewish groups and individuals pressuring Lithuanian politicians over the glorification of alleged perpetrators of the murder of more than 90 percent of the country's Jewish population during the Holocaust.

[Read the full article here.](#)

---

### **As Russian Jews, We Are Characters in Someone Else's Story**

**By Mariana Bolotnikova**

**Forward, July 29, 2019**

As far back as I can remember, I knew that I had to hide everything about my life from my friends at school. Kids absorb secrecy around class and money like sponges, and for a small child who barely paid attention to what we were learning in school, I was amazingly sentient of what I was and wasn't supposed to reveal.

I was one of the few kids in my Orthodox Jewish day school in St. Louis, Missouri, who was from a recently arrived Russian family, which meant that I wasn't Orthodox and my family hardly knew what it meant to be Jewish. My mom put me in the preschool there within weeks of our landing in America in 1996; I was among the hundreds of thousands of Soviet and post-Soviet Jews who were allowed to come to the U.S. because of the lobbying efforts of the organized Jewish community. We made up a respectable share of American Jewry, but in that school, growing up among affluent fourth- and fifth-generation American Jews, my overriding sense was that I was alone. Russians had no real place in the American Jewish story other than as refugees who had just come from somewhere very bad, and thus we were in a position to be reformed and taught to do Judaism properly. We were useful to American Judaism, and to Orthodoxy especially.

[Read the full article here.](#)

---

### **As Russia cracks down on dissent, Netanyahu campaign ads feature Putin** **By Sam Sokol** **Jewish Telegraph Agency, July 28, 2019**

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud Party has launched a new ad campaign featuring Russian President Vladimir Putin, coinciding with one of the Kremlin's largest crackdowns on political dissent in years.

Large multi-story banners featuring Netanyahu with Putin, as well as others featuring President Donald Trump and Indian premier Narendra Modi, were unfurled on three sides of the party's Tel Aviv headquarters on Sunday. The banners were part of a new campaign showcasing the Israeli leader's relations with heads of state.

An accompanying video sent to reporters featured clips of Netanyahu chatting with the three leaders. Netanyahu frequently boasts of his diplomatic skills and close relationships with his counterparts abroad.

[Read the full article here.](#)

---

### **Russian Hospital Says Tests Exclude Navalny Poisoning** **Radio Free Europe, July 31, 2019**

The head of a Russian medical center says laboratory tests performed on unspecified biomaterial taken from opposition politician Aleksei Navalny have excluded poisoning as a reason for his recent hospitalization.

Aleksei Tokarev, chief physician of the Moscow Sklifosovsky Medical Center, said on July 31 that Navalny's samples had been delivered to the center's lab on July 29 and that the results state "no substances that could cause poisoning have been found."

The Kremlin critic, who is currently serving a 30-day jail sentence for calling a protest last weekend where almost 1,400 people were detained by police, was taken to hospital late on July 28 with severe swelling of the face and a rash, sparking fears he had been the victim of a poisoning attempt, though hospital officials characterized the illness as "a generalized allergic reaction."

[Read the full article here.](#)

---

### **Jordan shuts gravesite where Jewish pilgrims prayed** **By Cnaan Liphshiz** **Jewish Telegraph Agency, August 2, 2019**

(JTA) - Jordan's religion minister, Abed al Nasr abu Bassel, ordered a gravesite holy to Jews closed following prayers there.

The closure Friday of the presumed gravesite of Aharon the Cohen, a biblical figure who according to the Torah had acted as an aide and spokesperson to Moses, followed a mass prayer there earlier this week by 500 pilgrims from Israel at the gravesite, located about 100 miles north of Eilat.

A statement by the ministry called the pilgrimage "illegal" and stated that the Jordanians responsible for allowing pilgrims access to the site will be "held accountable," Ynet reported Friday.

[Read the full article here.](#)

[Read full articles here](#)

1120 20th Street NW, Ste. 300N Washington, DC 20036-3413  
Telephone: +1 202 898 2500 | [ncsejinfo@ncsej.org](mailto:ncsejinfo@ncsej.org)

### About NCSEJ

Founded in 1971, the National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry represents the organized American Jewish community in monitoring and advocating on behalf of the estimated 1.5 million Jews in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, including the 15 successor states of the former Soviet Union.

 JOIN OUR EMAIL LIST

 FORWARD THIS EMAIL

