



Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. September 20, 2019

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

On the eve of President Zelenskyy's first visit to the UN as President of Ukraine, he has asked for the resignation of Volodymyr Viatrovych – the Director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory. This is a positive development for Ukraine and hopefully a step towards a clearer understanding of the historical place of the holocaust in the context of Ukrainian history.

Russian President Vladimir Putin this week extended the so-called 'compatriot status' to Russian-speaking Israelis, saying "over 1½ million immigrants from the Soviet Union live in Israel. We always considered them our people, compatriots." This is an interesting phenomenon as it comes at a time where Russian emigration to Israel (and Jewish emigration outside of Russia on the whole) is increasing. Since 2015, nearly 40,000 Russian-Jewish immigrants made aliyah to Israel. In the entire decade prior to 2015, only 36,784 Russian Jews had come.

After an 11 year hiatus in diplomatic relations, there are signs of improving relations between the United States and the Republic of Belarus. This week, it was announced that the U.S. and Belarus will re-instate Ambassadorial posts in each other's countries. The appointees have yet to be announced.

Armenia announced on Thursday that it intends to open an embassy in Tel Aviv, a move expected to bring the once cool ties between the two countries to a different level. Armenia is the 90th country to open a diplomatic post inside Israel. Israel's Foreign Minister, Israel Katz, said that the development "attests to the constant increase in the strength of Israel's position in the world." The Armenian Quarter is one of the four distinct quarters of the Old City of Jerusalem.

On Tuesday, a Holocaust memorial was vandalized in Golovanevsk commemorating the murder of some 900 Jews from the village between late 1941 and early 1942. On Sunday, anti-Semitic graffiti including swastikas and a note threatening another Holocaust were found on a Holocaust memorial in Bogdanovka near Odessa. The note threatened both Zelenskyy and Ukrainian Jewish Committee director-general Eduard Dolinsky, saying "the sale of Ukrainian land will quickly lead you to a second Holocaust." At the end of last month, a third Holocaust memorial near the town of Vradievka in northwestern Ukraine was also vandalized. The site marks the area in which 7,000 Jews were murdered in the fall of 1941.

This week as well, U.S. Senators Marco Rubio (R-FL), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Cory Gardner (R-CO), Dick Durbin (D-IL), and Chris Coons (D-DE) introduced the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom Act of 2019 (USCIRF). Among other things, the bill reauthorizes USCIRF for four years and increases authorized appropriations.

Lastly, I recommend listening to The Genesis Philanthropy Group's [latest podcast on Russian-speaking Jews](#) – hosted by the organization's President and CEO, Ilia Salita.

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

Putin says Israel is a 'Russian-speaking state'

By Cnaan Lipshiz

JTA, September 19

Russia considers Israel a Russian-speaking nation, President Vladimir Putin said.

Putin made the statement, his strongest public expression of kinship with the Jewish state to date, during a speech Tuesday in Moscow at an event organized by the United Israel Appeal, a Zionist organization responsible for collecting funds.

"Citizens of Russia and Israel are connected by ties of family, kinship and friendship. This is a real network, a common family, I say without exaggeration. Israel has almost 2 million Russian-speaking citizens. We consider Israel a Russian-speaking state," he said.

[Read the full article here.](#)

With Putin cracking down on democracy, Russian Jews are increasingly moving to Israel

By Cnaan Lipshiz

JTA, September 17

Less than a year after he immigrated to Israel from Russia, Dima Eygenon has already voted twice in his adopted country.

In April, Israeli voters cast ballots in an election that resulted in a virtual tie between the longtime incumbent prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and political newcomer Benny Gantz. On Tuesday, they were back at the polls because Netanyahu couldn't cobble together a governing coalition.

[Read the full article here.](#)

With An Eye On Russia, U.S. And Belarus To Bring Back Ambassadors After 11 Years

By Todd Prince

RFE/RL, September 17

MINSK -- The United States and Belarus plan to resume hosting ambassadors after an 11-year hiatus amid mutual growing concern over Russia's foreign-policy adventures.

"It is my honor to announce that we are prepared to exchange ambassadors as the next step in normalizing our relationship," U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs David Hale said on September 17 during a meeting with Foreign Minister Uladzimer Makey in Minsk.

[Read the full article here.](#)

ANTISEMITIC INCIDENTS RAMPANT IN RECENT WEEKS ACROSS UKRAINE

By Ilanit Chernick

The Jerusalem Post, September 19

Desecration of Holocaust memorials, Nazi salutes at a football game and threats against Jewish leaders – including newly elected President Volodymyr Zelensky – are just some of the antisemitic incidents that have taken place across the Ukraine in the last few weeks.

A Holocaust memorial was vandalized on Tuesday afternoon in Golovanevsk (also known as Holovaniv'sk) commemorating the murder of some 900 Jews from the village between late 1941 and early 1942.

[Read the full article here.](#)

HOLOCAUST SURVIVORS LOBBY CONGRESS TO SUE EUROPEAN INSURANCE FIRMS

By Aaron Reich

The Jerusalem Post, September 18

Miami resident and Holocaust survivor David Mermelstein is lobbying for survivors to be able to sue European insurance companies for policies that Nazi Germany violated – and this time, he might have the White House on his side, The Miami Herald reported.

Mermelstein is the only member of his family to survive the Holocaust. After being sent to Auschwitz, he immigrated to the United States in 1948. Now at the age of 90, he is lobbying for legislation that would allow survivors to take legal action against European insurance companies to get owed payouts.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Flier threatening 2nd Holocaust posted on vandalized monument in Ukraine for the genocide

By Cnaan Lipshiz

JTA, September 19

A Holocaust monument in Ukraine was vandalized with graffiti and a note threatening another genocide.

The graffiti appeared last week on a plaque commemorating Holocaust victims in Bogdanovka, a killing site near the southern port city of Odessa, Eduard Dolinsky, director of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, wrote on Facebook Sunday.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Swastika of dirt and flowers placed in front of Lithuanian Jewish community headquarters

By Cnaan Lipshiz

JTA, September 15

A swastika made of freshly dug earth and flowers was laid out in front of the headquarters of the Jewish Community of Lithuania in Vilnius, the country's capital city.

The incident Sunday is rare for Lithuania and it follows acrimonious debate in Lithuania about the honoring of collaborators with the Nazis, some of whom are widely seen as anti-Soviet heroes in Lithuania despite their role in the near annihilation of Lithuanian Jewry.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Russian passports for Donbas residents: 60,000 mines planted under Ukrainian statehood

By Oleksandr Mykhelson

UNIAN, September 16

Last week, the so-called "DPR" interior ministry released some curious stats, claiming 15,800 Russian passports have been issued to residents of the "republic". In total, 36,695 applications have been submitted. This information draws attention to one of the many instruments of the hybrid war Russia has been waging against Ukraine, of which many seem to have forgotten.

[Read the full article here.](#)

ARMENIA ANNOUNCES IT WILL OPEN EMBASSY IN ISRAEL

By Herb Keinon

The Jerusalem Post, September 20

Armenia announced on Thursday that it intends to open an embassy in Tel Aviv, a move expected to bring the once cool ties between the two countries to a different level.

“Israel is an important player in the Middle East,” Foreign Minister Zohrab Mnatsakanyan was quoted as saying in a cabinet meeting. “The opening of the embassy will contribute to the deepening of bilateral relations and protection of Armenia’s interests in the region.”

[Read the full article here.](#)

Cabinet sacks Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance Director Viatrovych Unian.info, September 18

Ukraine's government has sacked Director of the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance Volodymyr Viatrovych. "Guys, some insight. Viatrovych has just been fired," MP from the Servant of the People Maksym Buzhanskiy wrote on Facebook.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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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.

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