

## Weekly Top 10

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*Anti-Semitic vandalism at the Jewish cemetery of Malyn, Ukraine, November 2020.*

**WASHINGTON, D.C. November 13, 2020**

**TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties**

**FROM: James Schiller, Chairman;  
Mark B. Levin, Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO**

Dear Friend,

After the election on November 3, NCSEJ sent a congratulatory letter to President-Elect Biden and Vice-President-Elect Kamala Harris on their election victory. [Please see the link to our letter.](#)

We learned recently of an anti-Semitic desecration in a Jewish cemetery in Ukraine. We are in contact with the authorities and the Jewish community as well as the Special Envoy on Holocaust Issues to consult on this incident.

Recently there were reports from Belarus that the remains of a Jewish poet, Shmuel Yefimovich Plavnik were buried in a Christian cemetery in Minsk. We learned from our contacts in Minsk, that although the

community was critical of the Christian burial, the poet's son is an Orthodox Christian and so this was considered a private family matter. Belarus Progressive Rabbi Grisha Abramovich did however, light a candle, said a prayer, and put a stone on his grave.

Shabbat Shalom!

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin  
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

**If you enjoy these Newsletters, please consider making a donation to NCSEJ to help us support the Jewish communities of Eurasia during these uncertain times.**

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**NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10**  
**Washington, D.C. November 13, 2020**

**Headstones smashed at Jewish cemetery in Ukraine**  
**Cnaan Liphshiz**  
**The Jerusalem Post | November 10, 2020**

Multiple headstones were destroyed at the Jewish cemetery of Malyn in Ukraine. The damage at the graveyard, which is about 60 miles northwest of the capital Kyiv, was discovered last week, according to a Facebook post by Evgeny Gorodetsky, a Ukrainian Jew who has helped raise donations for renovating the cemetery.

Police have no leads in their attempt to identify the culprits.

Last month, headstones were desecrated at Jewish cemeteries in neighboring Moldova and Hungary.

One of the headstones smashed in Malyn was of Faina and Gregory Getz, a husband and wife who were buried in 1965 and 1947, respectively. A new marble headstone installed by their families on the joint plot featuring the couple's portraits and a Star of David was smashed to pieces.

The perpetrators also climbed into some fenced burial plots to smash headstones, which collapsed against the fencing

**[Read the full article here.](#)**

**Jewish poet given Christian burial in Belarus**  
**Cnaan Liphshiz**

**JTA | November 5, 2020**

(JTA) — The remains of a Jewish poet were reburied in Belarus under a crucifix in a ceremony that featured prayers by priests.

The reburial of Shmuel Yefimovich Plavnik, better known by his pen name Zmitrok

Byaduli, took place on Tuesday at a Christian cemetery in Minsk, promoting critics to complain that it erased the poet's Jewish origins and appropriated his memory.

After speeches, the coffin with Plavnik's ashes was lowered into the grave and a cross was installed on it, BELTA, the national news agency of Belarus, reported. The article did not mention that he was a Jew who inveighed against anti-Semitism in his writings. The Minsk-Novosti news agency also omitted this from its report, but did say that a rabbi, Grisha Abramovich, held "a small ceremony" after the Christian one.

Plavnik was a poet, writer and political activist who translated Yiddish literature into Belarusian. He died in 1941 in Kazakhstan after having been evacuated there in the face of the Nazi advance. He never converted to Christianity.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **The Truth about Jews and Kazakhstan Hadassah confirms Israel to receive Russia's 92% effective COVID vaccine**

**Maayan Jaffe-Hoffman**

**The Jerusalem Post | November 11, 2020**

Israel could soon have access to a proven coronavirus vaccine, after Russia announced on Wednesday that its Sputnik V vaccine is 92% effective at protecting people from COVID-19 according to interim trial results.

Hadassah-University Medical Center has already signed a memo of understanding with the country's sovereign wealth fund, Russian Direct Investment Fund, and the Gamaleya Research Institute of Epidemiology, who are collaborating on the production of the vaccine, according to Hadassah head Prof. Zeev Rotstein.

He told The Jerusalem Post that the hospital submitted the dossier to the Health Ministry to register the vaccine and has signed an MOU for 1.5 million doses of the vaccine candidate.

"We know that the chances of Israel enjoying vaccines from different countries are unclear," Rotstein said. "Different governments could decide to vaccinate their people first and only then send vaccines to other countries. We came to the agency early so we could get on the list."

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **The Truth about Jews and Kazakhstan**

**Dr. Yvette Alt Miller**

**Aish | November 1, 2020**

Kazakhstan is a massive country in Central Asia. For years, it was sparsely inhabited by nomadic tribes; in fact, the word Kazakh comes from the Turkic word "Kaz," meaning wander. In ancient times, much of today's Kazakhstan was ruled by Persia; in the Middle Ages it was governed by Genghis Khan. Jewish merchants settled in the town of Turkestan in this period, and built a synagogue whose remains can still be seen today.

In the 1700s, Russia began advancing into Kazakh territory. The atmosphere in Russia was full of change: Czar Nicolas I fancied himself a reformer and wanted to make sweeping changes to Russia's large Jewish community. In 1827 he instituted a brutal draft forcing Jewish communities to provide boys for the Russian army. Numbers varied in different communities, but averaged about four boys each year per 1,000 Jews. Service in the Russian army was all-consuming; conscripts had to serve for 25 years. Unlike other soldiers who didn't have to join the army until age 18, for Jews the draft age was lowered to 12.

Though Jewish conscripts were technically allowed to practice their religion, the reality was very difficult. Taken from home, brought up among anti-Semitic soldiers and denied contact with Jewish communities, most Jewish soldiers in the Czar's army lost their connection to Jewish life. Even worse, if any soldier married and had children, their offspring became property of the Russian state and were mandated to attend Russian military schools.

Despite these incredible hardships, some Jewish Russian recruits who found themselves stationed in Kazakhstan did form Jewish communities. Clusters of Jews lived in several towns across Kazakhstan, praying in private homes and

living low-profile Jewish lives. In Almaty (then known as Verniy), the largest town in Kazakhstan, local Jews opened a synagogue in 1884 – Kazakhstan’s first since the Middle Ages. Located in a small wooden building, it served about a hundred Jews, most soldiers and veterans.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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## **Russia says its Sputnik V COVID-19 vaccine is 92% effective** **Polina Ivanova** **Reuters | November 11, 2020**

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia’s Sputnik V vaccine is 92% effective at protecting people from COVID-19 according to interim trial results, the country’s sovereign wealth fund said on Wednesday, as Moscow rushes to keep pace with Western drugmakers in the race for a shot.

Russia's results are only the second from a late-stage human trial, following on swiftly from data released on Monday by Pfizer Inc PFE.N and BioNTech BNTX.O, which said their shot was also more than 90% effective.

While experts said the Russian data was encouraging and reinforced the idea the pandemic could be halted by vaccines, they warned that the results were only based on a small number of trial volunteers who had contracted COVID-19. The analysis was conducted after 20 participants developed the virus and examined how many had received the vaccine versus a placebo. That is significantly lower than the 94 infections in the trial of the vaccine being developed by Pfizer and BioNTech.

“I assume there was political pressure after the press release from Pfizer and BioNTech earlier in the week to now draw level with their own data,” said Bodo Plachter, deputy director of the Institute of Virology at the Mainz University. “What is missing for now is an analysis of statistical significance.”

To confirm the efficacy rate of its vaccine, Pfizer said it would continue its trial until there were 164 COVID-19 cases.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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## **International community gives cautious welcome to Karabakh deal** **CommonSpace.eu | November 11, 2020**

There has been a cautious welcome to the agreement between Armenia, Azerbaijan and Russia to end the Karabakh war and lay down the way forward in resolving the conflict between Armenians and Azerbaijanis over the territory.

The European Union, the United States and the United Nations have given a cautious welcome to the deal hailing the end of hostilities but stopping short of commenting on the details of the plan.

For the EU, High Representative Josep Borrell issued a short statement saying:

"I welcome the cessation of hostilities in and around Nagorno Karabakh. The Russian-brokered ceasefire that has been agreed on Monday between Armenia and Azerbaijan will help to prevent the further loss of life and is hopefully a first step towards a comprehensive settlement. Negotiations will now need to ensure that any settlement is sustainable. The European Union continues to support the established, OSCE Minsk Group Co-chairs led, format and stand ready to contribute to these efforts and to the implementation of agreements for a peaceful and prosperous development of the entire South Caucasus region."

There were also statements welcoming the agreement by the UN, US and UK.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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## **Election clashes, COVID deepen crisis in Georgia** **Giorgi Lomsadze** **Eurasia.net | November 9, 2020**

Following weekend clashes with riot police, crowds gathered again in the center of Georgia’s capital on November 9 to demand fresh parliamentary elections, defying a fresh wave of COVID-19 cases and health officials’ pleas to stay at home.

The ruling Georgian Dream party took more than 50 percent of seats in the October 31 parliamentary polls, enough to unilaterally form a government. But all

other parties that passed the threshold to enter the legislature have refused to accept the results, accusing Georgian Dream of stealing the vote through bribery, intimidation and falsification.

International observers said that while they did detect a number of irregularities, including the use of administrative resources by Georgian Dream, they said the results were nevertheless generally free and competitive.

Outside the Central Election Commission headquarters on November 8 riot police fired pepper spray and water cannons, sweeping many protesters off their feet as temperatures plummeted to about 6 degrees Celsius (43 Fahrenheit). At least 19 people were arrested and several hospitalized.

Rights activists blasted the authorities for what they call excessive force. “The use of water cannons in cold temperature is tantamount to inhumane treatment, especially given that we saw its use on people who were not resorting to violence,” Ombudsman Nino Lomjaria told media from the sidelines of the clashes early on November 9.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Israel Delivers Aid to Azerbaijan: Background and Implications** **Rahim Rahimov** **The Jamestown Foundation | November 10, 2020**

After a month and a half of fierce fighting over Karabakh and surrounding Armenian-occupied districts, Azerbaijan and Armenia agreed to a final ceasefire on November 10 (Daily Sabah, November 10). The deal leaves all areas Azerbaijani forces recaptured under Baku’s control. Azerbaijan’s decisive battlefield victories owe to multiple factors (see EDM, October 8, 19, 29, November 3), but among them was use of advanced weaponry purchased from Israel as well as the country’s political support to Baku.

On October 25, Israel’s ambassador to Azerbaijan, George Deek, visited Ganja city to offer condolences to civilian victims of Armenian rocket attacks targeting areas beyond the Karabakh conflict zone. Simultaneously, Israel delivered humanitarian aid, including medical equipment, to Azerbaijan. Notably, the only other country that made the same gesture was Turkey, whose relationship with Azerbaijan is formulated as “one nation, two states” (Ynetnews.com, Arminfo.am, October 25).

Armenia, in turn, rejected Israel’s offers of humanitarian aid. In a recent interview with the Jerusalem Post, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan angrily declared, “I propose that Israel should send that aid to the mercenaries and to the terrorists as the logical continuation of its activities.” He baselessly (see EDM October 13) accused Israel of siding with “mercenaries, Islamic terrorists, and Turkey” and “active engagement in the [Karabakh] conflict” (Jerusalem Post [1] [2], November 3).

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Azerbaijan-Armenia peace deal could be the diplomatic breakthrough the region needs** **Matthew Bryza** **The Atlantic Council | November 11, 2020**

The November 10 peace agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia outlines a viable political solution of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict, setting the stage for a potential durable settlement to the Caucasus’ most dangerous flashpoint. The agreement not only ends one of the world’s longest-standing conflicts, but also could catalyze other diplomatic and economic agreements that can restore peace, prosperity, and stability throughout the region.

Perhaps counterintuitively, this possibility for peace resulted from an Azerbaijani military victory. Previously, Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan lamented there was “no diplomatic solution” to the conflict, and accused Azerbaijan and Turkey of plotting genocide of Armenians in Nagorno Karabakh. Then, on November 8, Azerbaijan regained the strategically vital town of Shusha, which commands heights above Nagorno Karabakh’s capital, Stepanakert (or Khankendi for Azerbaijanis), and is of tremendous cultural significance for Armenians and Azerbaijanis alike. From Shusha, Azerbaijani forces could have shelled Stepanakert with ease and cut off the main road linking Armenia with Nagorno Karabakh. The day after regaining the town, however, Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev ceased military operations and resumed negotiations with Pashinyan. Within a few hours, Russian President Vladimir Putin brokered the peace agreement.

Nationalistic Azerbaijanis were angry, demanding that Azerbaijan's army capture Stepanakert by force, and then liberate three additional Azerbaijani areas still occupied by Armenian troops.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **The 'paradiplomacy' of Russia's regions**

**Denis Stremoukhov**

**Ridle.io | November 11, 2020**

'The President of France himself is now behaving like a terrorist', said Ramzan Kadyrov, expressing disapproval at Emmanuel Macron's condemnation of the beheading of Samuel Paty, a school teacher. The next day, the Russian President's Press Secretary, Dmitry Peskov, reminded Kadyrov that foreign policy was outside the purview of the heads of Russia's federal subjects. Kadyrov responded that he made his statement as a Muslim, not as a politician. This is not the first time that the head of Chechnya has made such a statement. During the 2015 crisis around the Rohingya ethnic minority in Myanmar, he officially disagreed with Moscow's foreign policy.

Whatever official documents say, international cooperation is not solely the prerogative of national states. The interests and actions of subnational units – regions and cities – cross national boundaries. Their international activity is usually referred to as 'paradiplomacy'.

The regions of the Russian Federation differ dramatically when it comes to the number and quality of their paradiplomatic contacts. Paradiplomacy is often the most exemplary manifestation of the remnants of regional autonomy and the structure of incentives offered to the heads of the federal subjects of the Russian Federation (governors). Not all can boast of the scope of freedom that Kadyrov has.

The nineties was the heyday of Russian paradiplomacy. The weakness of the federal authorities and the lack of effective control mechanisms allowed some governors to pursue a foreign policy that often diverged from Russia's official diplomatic stance. The inability of the centre to effectively redistribute resources and, as a result, the need for the regions to seek funds from abroad, prompted governors to establish international contacts. In this way, they also wanted to get symbolic capital and use international connections to construct regional and national identities. Of course, the latter factor was most prominent in ethnically distinct republics. Some took steps to expand their autonomy to such an extent that the prospect of disintegration seemed quite real.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Kyrgyzstan and Belarus - USSR 2.0 failed**

**Maksym Skrypchenko**

**The New Eastern Europe | November 6, 2020**

On October 4th, the people of Kyrgyzstan participated in parliamentary elections. As a result, four parties climbed to power, with three of them being directly related to the current government of the country and declaring pro-Russian politics. Oddly to say, not a single major opposition party crossed the 7 per cent threshold. 12 parties reported massive electoral fraud and bribery. After just one day, large protests broke out in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan's capital, which were initially peaceful but instantaneously escalated into clashes between protesters and the police. As the confrontation intensified, the White House (where the parliament and presidential administration are located), the mayor's office and the government building were occupied by the protesters. Demonstrators released former President Atambayev and a number of ex-officials who were subjected to political repression. The current pro-Russian president, Jeenbekov, denounced an attempt to seize power (like Lukashenko did). But the Central Electoral Commission declared the election results invalid (new elections will be held within 2 weeks) and thus sided with ordinary citizens of the republic. Considering the abovementioned events, it's clear that in just one day protesters managed to achieve the key goal — cancellation of the election results. Furthermore, people still demand the resignation of the president and changes to the government. Over the past 15 years, this is not the first revolution in Kyrgyzstan, but the third (an overthrow of presidents took place in 2005 and 2010). Accordingly, people know exactly what they need to do and how to convey their messages to the authorities. Judging by the lightning speed of the revolution, nothing will stop the demonstrators, and impeachment of the president is only a matter of time. On October 7th, Kyrgyz parliamentarians launched the procedure of impeachment,

and now it's up to the deputies — they either support the start of the process or face the consequences.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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**A Precarious Peace for Karabakh**  
**Thomas de Waal**  
**Carnegie Moscow Center | November 11, 2020**

After weeks of bloody fighting in the new Karabakh conflict, everything happened suddenly, in the space of a few hours. The conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan was declared to be at an end, and in the middle of the night of November 9-10, Russian peacekeepers started arriving through the Lachin Corridor into Karabakh.

Only a short time before, Armenian leaders had been broadcasting the message that they were still fighting for Shusha, the hilltop town in the heart of Karabakh that they call Shushi.

Then Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan announced what was effectively a capitulation to Azerbaijan's demands.

Pashinyan was fiercely criticized in Yerevan and he may not survive this crisis. But it is worth noting that this was a joint decision made with Karabakh Armenian leader Hraik Harutyunyan. Harutyunyan justified the decision by saying that the Armenian military was weakened by disease and poor morale, and the alternative was even worse.

"Battles were already taking place on the approaches to [the region's capital] Stepanakert and if military action had continued at the same pace, then we would have lost the whole of Artsakh [the unrecognized Nagorno-Karabakh republic] in a few days and suffered heavy casualties," he said.

The Armenian side is the big loser in this outcome, and the repercussions will be felt for years to come. The Armenian public was completely unprepared for this swift collapse and there is already strong resistance to the deal from opposition politicians. But it is hard to see how, even if Pashinyan loses his post, the next Armenian leader could make a different decision.

[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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