

Weekly Top 10

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Chanukah Menorah in Kyiv, Ukraine on December 10, 2020



Snow falls on a Chanukah Menorah made of ice in Tomsk, Russia on Dec. 8, 2020. (Levy Kaminetsky)

WASHINGTON, D.C. December 11, 2020

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

NCSEJ held its Annual Board of Governors Meeting on Tuesday. We were joined by Dr. Karen Donfried, President of the German Marshall Fund (GMF), Senator Jacky Rosen (D-NV), and Olena Sotnyk, Director of International Relations at the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center. To view the complete program, [please click here](#).

This week 33 years ago, on the eve of a summit between President Reagan and Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev, a quarter-million Americans gathered together on the National Mall for the Freedom Sunday march to demand freedom for Soviet Jewry. Ella Kagan, former refusenik and founder of the Shalom School in Rockville, MD, recently [published an article commemorating the march, which I recommend you read](#).

Yesterday, after members of the Conservative Jewish community installed a Menorah in the Kyiv neighborhood of Podol, an unknown man lifted and pushed the Menorah off from its base to the ground. The Police and Security Services are investigating the incident. At the same time, representatives of the Chabad community lit candles at another Menorah in central Kyiv.

NCSEJ works to promote and protect the well-being of Jewish communities in the second-largest Jewish diaspora. Please remember to support our work as part of our yearly Chanukah Appeal by clicking [HERE](#).

Happy Chanukah! | Веселой Хануки вашим друзьям и близким!

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. December 4, 2020

Russian envoy: Israel-Arab issues - not Iran - main problem in Middle East

Lahav Harkov

The Jerusalem Post | December 8, 2020

Israel destabilizes the Middle East more than Iran, Russian Ambassador Anatoly Viktorov told The Jerusalem Post on Tuesday.

“The problem in the region is not Iranian activities,” Viktorov said at the Russian Embassy in Tel Aviv. “It’s a lack of understanding between countries and noncompliance with UN resolutions in the Israel-Arab and Israel-Palestinian conflict.”

Asked if the relatively limited scope of Israel’s conflict with the Palestinians destabilizes the region more than Iran does through proxies around the Middle East, like the Houthis in Yemen and Hezbollah in Lebanon, Viktorov balked at the notion of Iranian funding the Shi’ite terrorist group.

“Israel is attacking Hezbollah; Hezbollah is not attacking Israel,” he added, referring to Israel bombing Iranian and Hezbollah and weapons convoys in Syria. Viktorov said he has seen the tunnels from Lebanon into Israel, which Hezbollah operatives have used to attempt to attack Israel, and argued there is “no proof Hezbollah created the tunnels.”

The ambassador said Israel must “not attack the territories of sovereign UN members.”

[Read the full article here.](#)

Farmers desecrate Jewish cemetery in Ukraine

Cnaan Liphshiz

JTA | December 8, 2020

(JTA) — Part of a Jewish cemetery in Ukraine was desecrated by farmers who added it to their adjacent fields, a local television station reported.

The desecration happened three years ago in Hulyaipole, a town situated about 300 miles southeast of Kyiv, according to the TCN report Tuesday. About half an acre from the Jewish cemetery of Hulyaipole, where today no Jews live, was desecrated.

Although desecrating a burial site is a criminal offense in Ukraine, authorities ignored complaints about the farmers and refrained from intervening for three years, according to the report.

The earthwork brought to the surface multiple bone fragments, which some locals saved out of respect for the dead for a future reburial, the report said.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Romania's Pro-Western PM Resigns After Disappointing Election Results

Radio Free Europe | December 7, 2020

Romania's pro-Western Prime Minister Ludovic Orban has resigned after his National Liberal Party (PNL) came second in parliamentary elections at the weekend, despite the party appearing well-placed to stay in power.

Orban's announcement late on December 7 came after a stronger-than-expected showing by the leftist opposition in elections marred by absenteeism prompted in part by the coronavirus pandemic.

With some 95 percent of the vote counted as of December 7, the populist and corruption-prone Social Democrats (PSD), who have dominated Romanian politics since the collapse of communism, have some 30 percent of the vote, with the reformist center-right PNL trailing by about 5 percent.

In his live statement on television, Orban, whose government came under criticism from the PSD for its handling of the coronavirus pandemic, said he was leaving knowing that he had fulfilled his duty.

President Klaus Iohannis, who is set to hold consultations with the parties, later

appointed Defense Minister Nicolae Ciuca as acting prime minister.

[Read the full article here.](#)

A Siberian synagogue has a 10-foot menorah made of ice **Cnaan Liphshiz** **JTA | December 8, 2020**

(JTA) — A synagogue in Tomsk, a Siberian city in Russia, has unveiled a giant Hanukkah menorah made of ice.

The 10-foot menorah was erected Tuesday inside the synagogue yard. Tomsk, a city of roughly 500,000, is located about 2,000 miles east of Moscow.

The menorah was made by Seva Mayorov, a local non-Jewish artist whose work also features regularly at the annual Tomsk Ice Park exhibition, which attracts thousands of tourists to the city annually.

Tomsk carries symbolism for Russian Jewry. In 1876, it saw the erection of a different synagogue, built by Jews who were conscripted as child soldiers, often against their will, to serve in the czar's army.

This year is the second time that Tomsk has boasted an ice menorah, but it features some upgrades to last year's version, including colorful LED lights that run through it and elaborate crown-shaped tips, according to the local rabbi, Levy Kaminetsky, a Chabad emissary who moved with his wife, Gitty, to Tomsk in 2004. The tips are removable and can be fitted with candles, making the menorah kosher.

Temperatures in Tomsk dip below the freezing point in September and do not rise again until the end of March. A temperature of 22 degrees below zero Fahrenheit is normal for Tomsk in winter.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Poland and Israel sign deal on cooperation in cybersecurity **TheFirstNews| December 9, 2020**

Poland's Ministry of Defence and the Israel Defense Forces have signed an agreement on cooperation in cyber-security info-sharing.

According to a National Cyber Security Centre (NCBC) statement, the two countries will work together to implement projects in the area of cyberspace security, in particular the exchange of information, experiences and working groups, cooperation in training and education, as well as the joint planning of operations.

The Polish defence ministry was represented by General Karol Moleda, the head of the NCBC, and the IDF by its Chief Signal Officer, Brigadier General Yariv Nir.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Georgia's COVID outbreak grows from molehill to "Everest" **Giorgi Lomsadze** **Eurasia.org | December 7, 2020**

With growing competition for hospital beds, a rising death toll, and delays in ambulance services, Georgia is buckling under the weight of COVID-19.

Once a global success story, Georgia is now suffering the world's worst outbreak of coronavirus: It is recording around 4,000 new infections and nearly 40 deaths per day. Measured per capita, those rates are both the worst in the world. As one top health official, Paata Imnadze, put it: While the bumps in Georgia's infection curve were mere molehills until late summer, now they amount to an "Everest." In response, the country has instituted a new lockdown, scheduled to last until February.

In the early days of the coronavirus pandemic Georgia enjoyed one of the most enviable rates in the world, thanks to a strong government response and widespread public adherence to sound epidemiological practices.

Things began to fall apart in late summer, however, as Georgians let their guard down on their seaside vacations and the disease began to spread rapidly. By late October, Georgia had outpaced Armenia, its neighbor to the south which had for some time suffered one of the worst outbreaks in the world - Georgia was even offering Armenians aid to help combat the coronavirus. By early December,

Georgia had topped both Armenia and their larger neighbor, Azerbaijan, in terms of total reported infections, with 164,976.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Netanyahu sees Slovenia as a key to more pro-Israel EU

Lahav Harkov

The Jerusalem Post | December 8, 2020

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has added Slovenia to the list of European Union states that can vote in Israel's favor in Brussels, he hinted in remarks at the start of the meeting with Slovenian Prime Minister Janez Janša on Tuesday. After years of taking a more pro-Palestinian stance, Slovenia has shifted towards Israel in recent years under the leadership of Janša, who has been nicknamed "the Slovenian Trump" for his right-wing populist positions.

Slovenia will also be one of three presidents of the Council of the EU in the second half of 2021.

Netanyahu remarked that Slovenia has taken a different view on the Abraham Accords, in which Israel established diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Sudan, compared to other EU states.

"This is a new reality, completely different from what is commonly thought of in the foreign ministries and chancelleries of Europe. And some of our European friends already get it. I'm glad you've always seen it," Netanyahu said. The prime minister added: "I hope that you can facilitate, in your role in the EU presidency, to have the EU understand that this is a different world and there are different opportunities, different alliances for the good, for the better."

Netanyahu's remarks in his first-ever meeting with Janša fits with his longstanding strategy to foster relations with Central and Eastern European countries – such as the Visegrad Group of Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic and Slovakia – that can create positive diplomatic leverage for Israel within the EU.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Supreme Court Hears Arguments on Jewish Property in Nazi Germany and Hungary

Jess Bravin

The Wall Street Journal | December 7, 2020

WASHINGTON—Germany and Hungary appeared before the Supreme Court on Monday, asking the justices to bar Holocaust-era victims from seeking compensation in U.S. courts for property allegedly confiscated by the Nazi government and its allied regime in Budapest.

The cases are separate, involving different procedural arguments over distinct forms of property. Germany is defending the 1935 acquisition of the Welfenschatz or Guelph Treasure, a trove of medieval religious artifacts held by a Berlin museum, while Hungary is opposing claims against the state railway MAV for items seized from Jews transported to death camps.

But both cases boil down to this: The former Axis nations contend that these claims should be resolved through the German and Hungarian legal systems rather than U.S. federal courts. In general, foreign governments can't be sued in U.S. courts, but there are exceptions for certain types of claims, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit found that both cases could proceed.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Belarusian Crisis Through the Prism of Virtual Realities

Grigory Ioffe

The Jamestown Foundation | December 9, 2020

At the December 2 virtual summit of the Moscow-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO), President Alyaksandr Lukashenka once again expressed his view that the protest movement in his country is a rebellion masterminded by the West. He called the behavior of Poland and Lithuania particularly unbridled. Furthermore, he suggested that the COVID-19 pandemic boosted social tensions all over the world. But whereas, in the West, he contended, the authorities do not hesitate to use brutal force to crack down on rallies, they employ a double standard when castigating Belarus for achieving the same ends. In response, Russian President Vladimir Putin suggested that Belarusians themselves have enough "political maturity to calmly [...] build an internal political dialogue with

all political forces and resolve all their issues on their own, without pressure and outside interference. I have no doubt that it will work out, especially bearing in mind the political experience of the President of Belarus.” Putin then delivered his “verdict on Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus. That is, I [Putin] once again invited him to leave calmly and without delay” (Kommersant, December 3).

One day later, Belarus hosted the 18th annual Minsk Forum, an unofficial dialogue platform funded by Germany that has regularly brought together potential Western investors and representatives of the Belarusian government and opposition. This year, the proceedings were also conducted virtually. But notably, the only representative of Belarus in attendance last week from any state-linked structure was Victor Shadursky, the dean of the International Relations School of Belarusian State University. At the Forum, Shadursky surprisingly was willing to comment on what he believes precipitated the current crisis: “...Minsk used a well-known political technique of assigning responsibility for aggravating domestic problems to external forces. At first, the eastern neighbor [Russia] was assigned the role of the responsible party; but after a while, sharp criticism was redirected westwards. Poland and the Baltic countries are especially aimed at” (Tut.by, December 3).

[Read the full article here.](#)

A New Exhibit on the Jews Who Fought Back against the Nazis
Robert Philpot
Mosaic | December 8, 2020

While the basic facts of the 1943 Warsaw Ghetto uprising are relatively well known, few are aware of the numerous other instances of Jewish resistance against the Third Reich. Thus the myth persists that millions of Jews went “like sheep to the slaughter”—a biblical phrase famously invoked by a leader of one of those resistance movements. A new exhibit at the Wiener Holocaust Library in London aims to set the record straight, writes Robert Philpot.

[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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