

Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. April 8, 2022

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

A small NCSEJ Officers delegation just completed a mission to Poland. We had the opportunity to meet with government officials, members of the Polish Jewish community, and representatives from international Jewish relief organizations.

It was an emotional visit, particularly going to the border witnessing firsthand the welcoming by volunteers and professionals to the many evacuees crossing from Ukraine into Poland.

I would like to share one experience we had visiting the Warsaw Jewish Community Center. Since the first day Ukrainian evacuees began to arrive in Warsaw, the JCC went into action. They are involved in many different projects, including welcoming dozens of young children everywhere day to learn and play. When these children first arrive they are traumatized by having to flee their homes. The JCC provides a warm and friendly environment and within a few days they begin to act like any other kids in any other part of the world.

In the coming days, we will share a more complete summary of our trip including reflections from the members of our delegation.

Poland is one of many countries opening its borders to more than two million evacuees from Ukraine. Their assistance is going to require a long term commitment of support from the US and other governments, NGOs and our own community.

Sincerely,
Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

CEO MARK LEVIN AND CHIEF RABBI MICHAEL SCHUDRICH



MEDIAK BORDER CROSSING



NCSEJ LEADERSHIP WITH ISRAEL AMBASSADOR TO POLAND YACOV LIVNE



ISRAEL AMBASSADOR TO UKRAINE MICHAEL BRODSKY



CHARGE D'AFFAIRES TO UKRAINE KRISTINA KVLEN



ON THE BORDER WITH ISRAELI VOLUNTEER



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NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10
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How Jews in Ukraine will celebrate Passover
Menachem Posner
Jewish News Syndicate | April 6, 2022

They will be in shelters, private homes, refugee camps, synagogues and military bases. But come what may, when night falls on Passover eve on April 15, the Jews of Ukraine will pause to eat matzah and bitter herbs, drink four cups of wine, recall the miracles of the Exodus and look forward to better times.

After all, even during the harshest of times—when Stalin’s minions hunted down and shot Jews caught passing on Judaism to the next generation—millions of Soviet Jews, half of whom lived in Ukraine, clung to these precious Passover rituals.

Now, amid a devastating war, they’ll be doing it again. In light of the fact that most people will not be able to leave their homes, Chabad-Lubavitch’s Federation of Jewish Communities of Ukraine, directed by Rabbi Mayer Stambler, has prepared more than 50,000 seder kits, replete with *shmurah* matzah, grape juice, bitter herbs, Haggadah booklets and everything else needed to celebrate the “Festival of Freedom.”

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How 80 years ago, Jewish teens rescued the Kaunas Ghetto’s holy books

Matt Lebovic

The Times of Israel | April 5, 2022

Before Jews in Lithuania’s Kaunas Ghetto took up arms to resist the Nazis, the community’s adolescents helped rescue Torah scrolls and other books in response to the Germans’ so-called “Books Aktion.”

At the end of February 1942, the Nazis ordered the Jew of Kaunas — or Kovno, in Yiddish — to hand over every book in their possession. Torah scrolls and other religious texts were to be put aside for Germany’s future “museum of the destroyed Jewish race,” while secular literature would be recycled into paper.

“The Germans confiscated a lot of books, about 100,000, but quite a lot of books were hidden,” historian Samuel Kassow, an expert on Jewish resistance in the Kaunas Ghetto, told The Times of Israel.

By all accounts, adolescents were at the forefront of hiding and smuggling books. Some teenagers were already doing work suited to rescuing books, such as pushing wagons with supplies into and out of the ghetto.

“Many of the youth movements hid books, including burying books in the ground,” said Kassow.

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West Adds Heft To Sanctions Against Russia In Wake Of Civilian Deaths Outside Kyiv

RFE/RL

Radio Free Europe | April 6, 2022

The United States and Britain have imposed new and tougher sanctions against Russia in response to the killings of civilians in towns near Kyiv, and the European Union planned similar steps as U.S. President Joe Biden denounced the widespread killing of Ukrainian civilians as “war crimes.”

The United States targeted Russia's largest bank, a private investment bank, and oligarchs in a new package of sanctions that includes a ban on all new U.S. investment in Russia. The fresh sanctions also targeted President Vladimir Putin's two adult daughters.

The sanctions against Sberbank and Alfa Bank mean the United States is "locking down" any accounts or funds those banks have in the United States, Biden said in a speech on April 6 to a labor-union conference in Washington.

Biden said the new sanctions were in response to the killings of civilians in towns near Kyiv, whose bodies he said were left "for all the world to see, unapologetically."

[Read the Full Article Here](#)

Op-Ed: Ukraine can find inspiration from its resilient Jewish community

Larry Tye

Los Angeles Times | April 3, 2022

There weren't supposed to be any Jews left in Dnipro.

Not after Bohdan Khmelnytsky rallied the Cossacks 350 years ago to rise up against Poland and, along the way, to massacre the Jews. Ukrainians still celebrate him as a liberator and folk hero, displaying his statue in public squares and his picture on vodka bottles. Russians toast him for reuniting Ukraine with Mother Russia. But what Jews in that part of the world remember are stories of how "Khmel the Wicked" burned, beheaded or strangled their ancestors, denouncing them as footmen of Polish nobility. And how he burned their synagogues, except the holy Torahs, which his soldiers laid out in the streets to be trampled.

Adolf Hitler brought more advanced appliances of extermination to Dnipro, an isolated city of 1 million southeast of Kyiv. In October 1941, during the harvest festival of Sukkot, Nazi troops and Ukrainian police marched 11,000 Jews to a ravine on what is now the campus of the Dnipropetrovsk State University of Internal Affairs, then mowed them down with machine guns. A band played throughout to mask the screams. All told, 20,000 Jews were executed in the city during World War II.

Ukraine's Jewish story has always blended the horrific and heroic. Consider what happened in the wake of the Khmelnytsky massacres in the mid-1600s. That brutality, and the savage Russian-Swedish war that followed, helped produce Sabbateanism, the largest messianic movement in Jewish history. The cycle repeated itself from the 1880s through the early 1900s, as violent pogroms encouraged Jews to launch Zionist and socialist organizations.

We're witnessing an equally heroic effort now in Jewish Dnipro, turning tragedy into triumph — an effort that is inspiring the world as well as local residents, who are choosing to stay rather than emigrate.

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Two Holocaust memorials smeared with antisemitic, pro-Russian slurs

Zvika Klein

Jerusalem Post | April 6, 2022

Lithuania's major Holocaust memorial at Ponary, where the mass murder of some 70,000 Jews took place, was smeared with antisemitic graffiti on March 31 and April 3, the Simon Wiesenthal Center said Thursday. The graffiti ostensibly expressed support for the Russian military campaign in Ukraine and is cause for grave concern, it said.

Linking the local Jewish community with the Russian invasion of Ukraine is a completely false and very dangerous accusation that can only inspire the spread of antisemitism and encourage attacks

on Jews and Jewish institutions, said Dr. Efraim Zuroff, the center’s director for Eastern European affairs and a Holocaust historian.

“These incidents are reminiscent of the false accusations of Judeo-Bolshevism, which fueled the collaboration of tens of thousands of local Nazi collaborators in Eastern Europe during World War II and their active participation in the mass murder of hundreds of thousands of Jews,” he said. “We urge the local authorities to apprehend and punish the perpetrators of these ugly incidents as quickly as possible.”

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Israel’s Yair Lapid condemns ‘horrific images’ emerging from Bucha, as Israeli balancing act on Ukraine continues

Shira Hanau

Jewish Telegraphic Agency | April 4, 2022

Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid has joined an international chorus condemning what appears to be mass civilian casualties in areas of Ukraine where Russian troops are pulling out.

Lapid’s comments came hours after his ministry downplayed similar condemnation from Israel’s ambassador to Ukraine amid ongoing efforts by Israel to navigate a fine line in responding to Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

“It is impossible to remain indifferent in the face of the horrific images from the city of Bucha near Kiev, from after the Russian army left,” Lapid tweeted Sunday evening. “Intentionally harming a civilian population is a war crime and I strongly condemn it.”

Lapid’s comment was in line with that of leaders from around the world who say that what happened in Bucha and other Ukrainian cities should be investigated as war crimes. Journalists have documented mass graves and corpses in streets, corroborating claims by Ukraine’s defense ministry that civilians had been executed in the suburbs of Kyiv where heavy fighting occurred since Russia invaded Ukraine Feb. 24.

Hours earlier, a spokesperson for Lapid’s ministry appeared to walk back a similar comment by Israel’s ambassador to Ukraine.

In a tweet Sunday morning, the ambassador, Michael Brodsky, said he was “deeply shocked” by the photos emerging from Bucha. “Killing of civilians is a war crime and cannot be justified,” he wrote.

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Baltics cut off Russian gas, but Germany, EU face struggle

Sharon Udasin

The Hill | April 4, 2022

Pressure is mounting on the European Union to abandon Russian gas supplies as individual countries begin turning off the tap.

The Baltic states of Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia became Europe’s first region to abandon Russian gas supplies entirely this weekend, and they urged other nations on the continent to do the same.

Lithuania, the first individual EU nation to make the move, declared on Saturday that the country was acting “in response to Russia’s energy blackmail in Europe,” according to a news release from the country’s Energy Ministry.

But whether this leads to other countries in Europe abandoning

Russia's gas is a big question.

German Finance Minister Christian Lindner on Sunday said Russia's crimes could not go unanswered, but on Monday argued a full-scale embargo would hurt Germany more than Russia.

"We must plan tough sanctions, but gas cannot be substituted in the short term," Lindner told reporters before meeting with the Eurogroup, the informal body of EU finance ministers.

"We would inflict more damage on ourselves than on them," Lindner said.

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Poland has worked a refugee miracle. But how much longer can it last?

Mark Rice-Oxley

The Guardian | April 6, 2022

Smokehouse, a restaurant in Chisinau, the capital of the Eastern European country of Moldova, has become a distribution point for food, diapers and other supplies for refugees fleeing the war in neighboring Ukraine.

Smokehouse used to serve American-style Tex-Mex and BBQ, including pulled pork sandwiches with sides of mac and cheese, baked beans and corn succotash.

"That's where all the Americans go," Elaine Marshall, the N.C. Secretary of State, said in an interview. "And all the Tar Heels in particular, we go there. You would not be a stranger at this restaurant."

Marshall has visited Moldova more than a dozen times over the last 20 years. She's the driving force behind an unusually deep relationship between a state and a foreign country, one that many North Carolinians would be hard pressed to find on a map.

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Opinion: Orban's victory might not make sense to the West. But it's what Hungary wants.

Henry Olsen

Washington Post | April 5, 2022

Western elites no doubt find Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's landslide victory on Sunday distasteful. To some extent, this is justified: Independent election observers faulted Orban's party, Fidesz, for tilting the playing field in its favor.

But it's also true that Orban was reelected because of his combination of market economics, nationalism and social conservatism. This is what a majority of Hungarians want.

The history of Hungarian politics since the fall of communism makes this clear. The country's first free election, in 1990, was won by a nationalist Christian democratic party, the Hungarian Democratic Forum, with about 25 percent. Three other conservative parties, including Fidesz, combined for an additional 27 percent. The nationalist center-right, therefore, had roughly 52 percent support.

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