

Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. April 21, 2022

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

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

Dear Friend,

Wishing you a happy Chag as we continue to celebrate Passover.

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

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NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10 **Washington, D.C. April 21, 2022**

With Street Signs in Russian, an Israeli Town Wins Over Ukrainian Refugees

Allison Kaplan Sommer
Haaretz | April 20, 2022

Flora Bonzela sat exhausted, balancing her 9-day-old infant on her lap, in the dining room of a Moldovan refugee center in early March. Alongside her husband and three older children, they had managed to flee the bombs near their home in Vinnytsia, west-central Ukraine, into relative safety south of the border.

A month later, Bonzela's reality was transformed. Located on a hilltop in the northern Israeli city of Nof Hagalil, the family's new apartment is well organized. The bathroom and kitchen are completely stocked, every appliance in its place and working, and the children's toys are stored on the balcony.

Each day, her children head off to school – in first, fifth and 11th grade – and her husband Francisco heads to his factory job. Flora plans to look for a job herself once the baby is old enough for subsidized day care. While she feels fortunate compared to the many Ukrainians stuck in overcrowded refugee camps in Poland, Moldova and Romania, she still doesn't smile much.

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Polish-Jewish journalist quits newspaper after it demands different description of 'neo-Nazi' Ukrainian militia

Cnaan Liphshiz

Jewish Telegraphic Agency | April 15, 2022

One of Poland's most prominent journalists, Konstanty Gebert, said he is quitting what many regard as the country's newspaper of record after it demanded that he describe Ukraine's controversial Azov Battalion as "far-right" instead of "neo Nazi."

The Azov militia, a small subset of a few thousand soldiers within Ukraine's military, often sport Nazi imagery on their clothing and flags.

Gebert, who is Jewish, announced his resignation Thursday in his weekly column, "The Weather Forecast," which he has penned for many years and published in Gazeta Wyborcza, a left-leaning publication.

"If we cannot come to an agreement on the essentials, we will have to part ways," wrote Gebert. He may publish in Wyborcza in the future as a contributor rather than a columnist or staff writer, he added.

"We regret to acknowledge the decision of our colleague. We are pleased with the declaration that the end of a regular series of articles does not mean the end of our cooperation," Wyborcza wrote in a statement

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Israel's balancing act still not enough for Russi

KSENIA SVETLOVA/THE MEDIA LINE

The Jerusalem Post | April 18, 2022

Since the beginning of Russia's war on Ukraine, Israel has been struggling with a balancing act: tiptoeing between pleasing its Western allies and keeping in check its powerful Russian-influenced neighbor on its northern border, Syria.

Today it seems that Israel's attempt to stay as neutral as possible on the conflict between Russia and Ukraine – for example, Israel did not join the Western countries' sanctions against Russia and declined to sell weapons to Ukraine – has not succeeded in pleasing Moscow.

Earlier this month, Israel voted at the United Nations General Assembly in favor of removing Russia from the UN Human Rights Council.

"There was a poorly camouflaged attempt to take advantage of the situation in Ukraine to distract the international community's attention from one of the oldest unresolved conflicts – the Palestinian-Israeli one," Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement over the weekend, reacting to Israel's vote and to Foreign Minister Yair Lapid's statements regarding the suspension of Russia's membership in the UNHRC.

Lapid said Russia's "unjustified invasion" of Ukraine and the "killing of innocent civilians" were the reason that Israel voted in favor of the motion and that the vote "doesn't change our view of the UN Human Rights Council, which is a radical, morally flawed, biased and anti-Israeli body."

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In Iran, Russia's war on Ukraine is a political flash point

Nasser Karimi and Jon Gambrell

Associate Press | April 19, 2022

TEHRAN, Iran (AP) — During its 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran embraced the protest cry of “neither East nor West,” rejecting both the U.S. and the Soviet Union, then locked in the Cold War. The phrase to this day hangs over the doors of Iran’s Foreign Ministry.

Russia’s war on Ukraine, however, has exposed just how much Tehran has tilted toward Moscow in recent years as the collapse of its nuclear deal with world powers stoked decades-old, hard-line anger at America. Members of Iran’s paramilitary Revolutionary Guard train on Russian surface-to-air missile systems and aircraft. Hard-line President Ebrahim Raisi visited Russian President Vladimir Putin on one of his first trips abroad.

The war also exposes deeper fault lines even within Iran’s domestic politics. Among ordinary Iranians, there is a great deal of sympathy for Ukraine, a nation that staged a pro-democracy “Orange Revolution” similar to the “Green Revolution” that shook Iran more than a decade ago but was forcefully put down.

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'We Must Stay': The Ukrainian Jews Sheltering in a Historic Synagogue

David Saveliev and Jesse Kireyev
Haaretz | April 20, 2022

LVIV, Ukraine - “We can’t separate,” she says, teary. “The Torah forbids us to, so we must stay here.”

Elena Hordeeva, 34, an Orthodox Jew from Kyiv, looks at her husband, Nahon Hordeev, 44. Nahon is “military age,” which means Ukrainian border guards won’t let him out into the safety of the EU. The family is stuck in Lviv.

In war-torn Ukraine, Jewish communities find themselves in a quandary. Men can’t cross the border to safety unless they’re younger than 18, older than 60 or have a debilitating health condition. Fleeing the Russian invasion, many Jewish families are unwilling to leave their fathers, husbands and sons behind, so they’re forced to seek refuge in historically antisemitic western Ukraine, where Russia has not yet invaded.

The Hordeevs found refuge in Lviv’s Beis Aharon V’Yisroel Synagogue, one of the oldest in western Ukraine and one of only two synagogues in the city to survive the Holocaust.

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Despite the danger, Ukrainian Jews prepare to celebrate Passover in public seder

Cnaan Liphshiz
The Times of Israel | April 15, 2022

JTA — Between air raid sirens in Odesa, Svetlana Niselevitch, an 84-year-old Ukrainian Jewish Holocaust survivor, has been preparing to join a Passover seder for the first time in her life.

“We didn’t observe Jewish traditions in my family,” Niselevitch, a poet who was born in Kharkiv, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. But she said Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, convinced her that “every chance to practice Jewishness is important.”

Niselevitch, who will celebrate Passover at an event organized by the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, or JDC, is among the thousands of Ukrainian Jews who are preparing to celebrate the Jewish holiday in dozens of group seders both in Ukraine and outside it for Jewish refugees from Russia’s war.

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91-year-old Jewish survivor of Nazi-occupied Mariupol dies during Russian siege

Rachel Pannett

The Washington Post | April 21, 2022

Vanda Obiedkova was 10 years old when German troops occupied Mariupol, a strategic port city in the south of Ukraine, in 1941.

Nazi soldiers began rounding up the city's Jewish population, but the little girl escaped arrest by hiding in a basement, according to [Chabad.org](https://www.chabad.org), the official website of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. Thousands were removed from Mariupol and executed, including Obiedkova's mother. She survived the war.

More than eight decades later, once again trapped in a basement as Russian forces bombarded the city for weeks, Obiedkova lost her latest battle. She was 91. Before she died on April 4, she had asked her family: "Why is this happening?" according to Ukraine's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Before the Russian invasion on Feb. 24, Mariupol — located between Russian-annexed Crimea and areas of eastern Ukraine held by Russian-backed separatists — had a population of about 430,000. Officials in Ukraine say that up to 20,000 civilians in Mariupol have been killed since the start of the Russian invasion. (The Washington Post was not able to independently verify the death toll.)

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Biden Announces More Military Aid To Ukraine, Disputes Russia's Claim About Control Of Mariupol

Current Time

Radio Free Europe | April 21, 2022

Russian President Vladimir Putin said on April 21 that the Ukrainian city of Mariupol had been "liberated" after nearly two months of fighting, but U.S. President Joe Biden said this claim was "questionable" as he announced another \$1.3 billion in U.S. aid for Ukraine.

Biden said that, despite Putin's claim, "There is no evidence yet that Mariupol is completely fallen."

Speaking at the White House, Biden said a new package of \$800 million in military aid will go "directly to the front lines of defending freedom" to support brave Ukrainian forces and civilians who are fighting the Russian invasion in the region.

"We're in a critical window now, of time where they're going to set the stage for the next phase of this war," Biden said, adding that the United States and allies are "moving as fast as possible" to provide Ukraine with the equipment and weapons it needs.

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Ukrainian prime minister visits White House

Jerusalem Post Staff, Reuters

The Jerusalem Post | April 21, 2022

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal visited the White House on Thursday before President Joe Biden was due to deliver remarks on the next tranche of US aid for Ukraine, a US official said.

It was not clear if the Ukrainian prime minister was meeting with

Biden or whether he would be present at the upcoming announcement.

The Biden administration announced the same day that there will be a new program for Ukrainians who are interested in immigrating to the United States.

The program, called “Uniting for Ukraine,” is part of the US president's promise to accept up to 100,000 Ukrainian refugees. This initiative requires, however, that Ukrainian refugees have a sponsor living in the US who can support them, NBC reported citing a senior administration official, with an online portal opening on Monday to allow sponsors to upload documents “as part of a process to ensure Ukrainians can be sponsored.”

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Sanctioned Russian banks seeking way out of Kazakhstan

Almaz Kumenov

Eurasianet | April 21, 2022

The Kazakhstan-based subsidiary of a Russian lender targeted by international sanctions triggered by the war in Ukraine is set to be taken over by local peer CenterCredit.

The acquisition is highlighting how Russian-linked banks across Central Asia, as well as the customers of those institutions, are falling prey to the severity of Moscow’s self-induced isolation.

Under the agreement announced on April 21, CenterCredit will acquire a 100 percent stake in Alfa-Bank Kazakhstan.

“After the legal completion of the transaction, CenterCredit will rebrand [Alfa-Bank]. Thus, it will be a fully Kazakh bank providing a full range of banking services for individuals and legal entities,” Alfa-Bank Kazakhstan said in a statement.

Although the full range of sanctions being leveled at Alfa-Bank were not due to come into force until May 6, it was already showing signs of distress. Immediately after the sanctions were announced, customers began withdrawing the savings en masse. The rush was so great that the bank was forced to impose a 200,000 tenge (\$450) daily withdrawal ceiling to ensure it had enough hard cash to go around.

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