

Top 12 Stories This Week From the Middle East You Might Not Have Heard

I'm told that the guaranteed way to make this blog a "viral blockbuster" hit is to do some sort of numbered list. That's what the social networking experts tell me, anyway. (How one becomes a social networking expert when social networking itself is only a few years old, I have no idea. But far be it from me to question them.)

I myself read content on Twitter or Facebook or various blogs that are about topics I'm interested in. I'm not magically hypnotized by seeing "Top 10" in the title. I like to think most readers aren't that Pavlovian.

But, hey, it's worked for David Letterman all these years. So if you can't beat 'em, join 'em (at least for one week).

So, without further adieu, here's my attempt at a hip, trendy, number-listing blog. Here are the top 12 stories about Israel (and the Middle East) you most likely didn't hear about this week. (I chose 12 to avoid being sued by the Letterman folks.)

12. Today (Friday) is "Gay Pride Day" in Tel Aviv. As I type this, tens of thousands of Israelis and tourists are gathering in Tel Aviv to have a parade celebrating "gay pride," whatever that means.

The wise King Solomon (who was the king of Israel, for those who forgot) once wrote, "Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18).

Please pray for Tel Aviv.

11. An Egyptian wrestler attacks an Israeli wrestler. In Italy this week, there was a disgusting display of unsportsmanlike

conduct. During a female wrestling tournament, an Egyptian wrestler viciously attacked an Israeli wrestler.

First Enas Mostafa refused to shake hands with Israeli Ilana Kartysh before the match. Then during the match, Mostafa broke two of Kartysh's fingers and then bit her in the neck, causing her to bleed!

Despite the attack, the Israeli went on to win the tournament.

10. Americans were found guilty of "illegally promoting democracy" in Egypt. Six Americans were convicted this week by an Egyptian court for what prosecutors said was "an illegally funded pro-democracy nonprofit group."

Five of the Americans (including the son of former U.S. Transportation Secretary Ray LaHood) already fled Egypt and were convicted in absentia. One American, Robert Becker, stayed in Egypt so as not to abandon his Egyptian co-workers who were also charged. He now faces two years in an Egyptian prison.

Reminder: The U.S. sends billions of dollars of aid to Egypt, which is now run by the Muslim Brotherhood.

9. Six-Day War anniversary. This past Wednesday marked the 46th anniversary of the start of what became known as the "Six-Day War" of 1967.

It was during this war that Israel won back the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

Much of the world continues to pressure Israel to return to the borders it had before this war. It should be noted that Israel gave back control of Gaza to the Palestinian Authority, only to have it be overtaken by Hamas terrorists. Israel also gave back control of Sinai to Egypt, only to have it be

overrun by Al Qaida-aligned Salafist terrorists.

As I type this blog, there is a very real and very fierce battle going on, on the Israeli-Syrian border in the Golan Heights. The Syrian army and rebels are vying for control of the Israeli-Syrian border crossing.

8. Austrian peacekeepers in the Golan Heights withdrew from the Syrian-Israeli border. This was reported by *Charisma* Friday, but here's some more info. As fighting intensifies between Syria's army and rebels, the U.N. peacekeepers who have acted as a "peace buffer" between Israel and Syria are now fleeing for their lives. Other U.N. peacekeepers have been taken hostage at various times during the Syrian civil war. If all the foreign peacekeeping troops leave the Golan Heights, it only raises the likelihood of an intensified spillover of the Syrian war into Israel.

It should be pointed out that this fleeing of U.N. peacekeepers gives an even stronger argument against those who seek to divide Jerusalem. It has long been suggested that to pacify the Palestinians, Jerusalem should be put under "international control" with U.N. or third-party troops ruling the city so it can be shared by both Israel and the Palestinians as a joint capital. Watching U.N. troops running for their lives in Syria, and also in southern Lebanon, only goes to prove that this idea of a foreign-held Jerusalem would be doomed to eventual failure.

7. Israel continues to treat Syria's war-wounded. As Syria's brutal army, Hezbollah's terror fighters and Iran's Revolutionary Guard continue to slaughter Syrians, Israel continues to give medical aid to our so-called Syrian enemies.

Not only has the Israel Defense Forces set up a field hospital near the Syrian border, but Israel also continues to take more seriously wounded Syrians to its civilian hospitals. In fact, this week one of the wounded Syrians being treated at Safed's

Ziv medical center was found with a hand grenade in one of his pockets. The emergency room had to be evacuated until the device was neutralized. That's only one example of how Israelis are putting their own lives at risk to help Syrians.

6. A Palestinian prisoner released from jail returns to his terrorist ways. This week it was revealed that one of the terrorists released by Israel in 2011, as part of the deal to free kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit, has returned to his terrorist ways.

Hashem Ibrahim Hajaz was serving 10 life sentences for his part in killing 10 Israelis. But he was let go and sent to Qatar as part of the Shalit deal. The Israel Security Agency says Hajaz is running a terrorist recruiting operation from Qatar, working with terrorists in the West Bank to plan kidnapping and shooting attacks in Israel.

Coincidentally, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas continued to pressure U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry this week to pressure the Israelis to free 120 more Palestinian terrorists being held in Israeli prisons. Abbas says it would be a "goodwill gesture" by Israel and that until Israel does so, the Palestinians refuse to return to peace negotiations.

5. The Palestinians have a new prime minister. This week, President Abbas appointed a new Palestinian prime minister. (What the difference is in these two posts, I cannot tell you.)

The new prime minister is Rami Hamdallah. He had been running the largest university in the West Bank but has no government experience. Most are calling him an irrelevant "yes man" who will take his marching orders from Abbas.

Hamdallah's predecessor, Salam Fayyad, quit because he could no longer work with Abbas. Fayyad was credited with cracking down on corruption in the West Bank and helping build the infrastructure needed for a future Palestinian state.

4. President Obama's new U.N. ambassador nominee hasn't always been a friend to Israel. Even before President Obama officially nominated Samantha Power to be his new ambassador to the United Nations, a 2002 video of Power began circulating online. The video of an interview with Power includes a shocking proposal. Power called for the U.S. government to shift Israeli military aid to the Palestinians. She called for the deployment of troops to protect the Palestinians from Israel. Let me repeat that: She wanted U.S. troops to protect Palestinians ... *from Israel!*

No doubt those comments will be brought up during her Senate confirmation hearings. Or, maybe not.

3. Turkey arrests Twitter users. You likely heard about the surprise political uprising in Turkey this week. At least a thousand people were arrested for protesting against Islamic Prime Minister Erdogan. Some protesters were also killed.

But you might not have heard that another 25 Turkish citizens were arrested for "calling on people to protest." Specifically, they were detained by Turkish police for "tweeting misinformation, encouraging rebellion and spreading propaganda."

This is the same Turkish prime minister who broke off relations with Israel and rallied the international community against us when Israel tried to stop a Turkish ship from illegally entering Gaza. Some Turkish terrorists were killed when they attacked Israeli soldiers who tried to board the ship.

I wonder if the international community will now condemn Turkey for its recent behavior?

2. Muslims reject Holocaust denial. These week two stories caught my eye about groups of Muslims having experiences with Holocaust survivors and making strong public statements against those who would deny the slaughter of 6 million Jews.

One story came from Warsaw, Poland, where a group of Muslim leaders from around the world gathered for an “anti-genocide” program. The group was made up of 14 Islamic leaders from Bosnia, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Palestinian territories, Saudi Arabia, Morocco, Nigeria, Turkey and the U.S.

After touring Holocaust sites and meeting with survivors, 10 out of the 14 leaders signed a statement condemning denial of the Holocaust and rejecting anti-Semitism in any form.

Meanwhile, in Haifa this week, a group of Iranian young people visited with Holocaust survivors. The group of 15 young men and women were born in Iran but currently live in the U.K. and have converted from Islam to Christianity.

The team leader, Darius Zrian, told *Ynet News* that as a child he was raised to hate Israel. “I am from Hamadan in southern Iran. Every morning at school the day was opened with the shout, ‘Death to Israel,’” he said. Only years later, when he became a Christian, did Zrian realize Israel was the land of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Other group members spoke of their shock and embarrassment over the ignorance of Iran’s leaders who deny the Holocaust.

And the No. 1 story you may not have heard ...

1. An Israeli family donates a kidney from their dead child to a Palestinian boy. Sarit and Avi Naor lost their 3-year-old son, Noam, after he fell out of a window and died. But this week that tragedy offered a new lease on life for a 10-year-old Palestinian boy. The Naor family decided to donate Noam’s organs. One of his kidneys went to the Palestinian boy who had been on dialysis for several years.

President Shimon Peres calls the Naor’s decision “one of the most moving contributions to peace.”

“According to Jewish tradition,” Peres says, “every person is created in God’s image, and whoever saves a human being serves

the essence of Judaism. ... You have made us all proud.”

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