

The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

Israelis Demonstrate Against Turkish Invasion of Kurdish Region of Syria

Benjamin Kerstein, Algemeiner, October 12th 2019

Recap:

Israelis gathered to protest the Turkish campaign against Syrian Kurds. Within 72 hours, a reported 200 Kurds had been killed and Islamic State detainees were reportedly escaping by the hundreds [1].

The Context:

- With a population of 35 million living mostly in Turkey and northern Syria, the Kurds are the world's largest nation without a country. They were integral partners in the fight against the Islamic State and have helped stave off Syrian forces backed by Russia and Iran [2]. The Kurds have long sought independence and a sovereign country of their own.
- US President Donald Trump announced the US military withdrawal from northern Syria, effectively green lighting a Turkish invasion into Kurdish areas in which Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been threatening for months.
- The Kurdish Syrian Democratic Forces said America's withdrawal was tantamount to betrayal [3] and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell criticized the move saying, "abandoning this fight now would recreate the very conditions that we have worked hard to destroy [4]."
- Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu denounced Turkey adding that "Israel is prepared to extend humanitarian assistance to the gallant Kurds." A group of over 100 IDF officers urged the government to provide food, clothing, medicine, intelligence and military assistance to the Kurds [5].
- Turkey deems its invasion self-defense against the Kurdistan Workers' Party, a group engaged in a 35-year conflict with Turkey. Following bipartisan and international backlash, Trump issued new sanctions against Turkey, halting trade negotiations and raising steel tariffs [6].

Conversation Points:

- What does America's Syrian withdrawal mean for Israel?
- Why is Israeli leadership aligned with the Kurds?
- Who will reap the benefits of America's departure from Syria?
- Why are Palestinians beneficiaries of multiple opportunities for statehood while the Kurds are not?

Woman Busted for Marijuana at Center of Three-Way Diplomatic Wrangle

Oren Liebermann, CNN, October 14th 2019

Recap:

Naama Issachar, a 26-year-old American Israeli woman arrested in Moscow for holding ten grams of marijuana, was sentenced to seven and a half years in prison.

The Context:

- Russia seeks the release of Aleksey Burkov, an IT specialist arrested at America's request for bilking millions from consumers in a credit card scheme [7]. Burkov was arrested at Israel's Ben Gurion airport in December 2015 and is awaiting extradition. His family reportedly suggested a prisoner swap- an offer Israel has refused [8].
- While Netanyahu enjoys strong a relationship with both the US and Russia, he has little room to maneuver with an American warrant out for Burkov and the Russians holding Issachar as a form of collateral.
- Russia is accused of having used prisoners in the past for political leverage. American Paul Whelan has been imprisoned since December for charges of espionage. The arrest came 15 days after the United States arrested Maria Butina, a Russian national who pleaded guilty to a charge of conspiracy to act as a foreign agent.

Conversation Points:

- What are the implications of negotiating with Russia for Naama's release?
 - How should Israel balance its strategic objectives and its duty to protect its citizens?
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Open Sukkah Offers A Holiday Home to Weary Travelers, City Dwellers in Israel

Luke Tress, Times of Israel, October 10th 2019

Recap:

The Open Sukkah platform connects Jews with 200 sukkahs worldwide including ones in Ho Chi Minh City, Tasmania and Saskatoon.

The Context:

- Canadian Israeli Aaron Taylor launched Open Sukkah three years ago while living in Tel Aviv with limited space for the temporary dwelling. "I didn't have a place to go and thought there must be people who have sukkahs who would be happy for me to use it."
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- The first version of Open Sukkah launched in 2017 as a shared Google Map. The updated platform now connects 5,000 users.
- Open Sukkah is a free service and Taylor is considering expanding to include Shabbat dinners.

Conversation Points:

- What other Jewish ideas might make their way into the sharing economy?
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Notes:

1. [Trump's rash exit from Syria emboldens Russia and horrifies Israel](#), TRACY WILKINSON, Los Angeles Times, October 11th 2019
2. Ibid.
3. [RESERVISTS: WE, AS ISRAELIS AND JEWS, MUST NOT STAND BY](#), ANNA AHRONHEIM, Jerusalem Post, OCTOBER 11th 2019
4. [Trump's rash exit from Syria emboldens Russia and horrifies Israel](#), TRACY WILKINSON, Los Angeles Times, October 11th 2019
5. [RESERVISTS: WE, AS ISRAELIS AND JEWS, MUST NOT STAND BY](#), ANNA AHRONHEIM, Jerusalem Post, OCTOBER 11th 2019
6. [Trump announces sanctions against Turkey over Syria invasion](#), Times of Israel, October 14th 2019
7. [Netanyahu asks Putin to pardon Israeli backpacker jailed on drug charges](#), Times of Israel, October 15th 2019
8. [Mother of Israeli Held in Russia on Drug Charges Visits Her, Says She Hopes Putin Will Pardon Daughter](#), Bar Peleg, Haaretz, October 14th 2019

The Sabra Report is a newsletter intended to stimulate conversation about Israel by recapping major events & providing context. Our conversation points are meant to encourage discussion amongst friends and family.

The Sabra Report is written by Irving Safdieh.

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