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WEDNESDAY'S "NEWS IN REVIEW" ROUND-UP

Contents: | [Weekly Quotes](#) | [Short Takes](#) | [On Topic Links](#)

BARRY RUBIN, ISRAELI COLUMNIST AND PROFESSOR, DIES AGED 64 (Washington) — Barry Rubin, one of the most important, indefatigable, and prolific commentators on Middle East politics, international affairs, and world history – often touching on Jewish topics and Zionism – passed away on Monday morning after falling into a coma in his 18-month battle with cancer. Prof. Rubin was the director of the Global Research in International Affairs (GLORIA) Center at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya for nearly two decades and a long-time columnist for *The Jerusalem Post*. He also was the Middle East editor and featured columnist at *PJ Media*, editor of the Middle East Review of International Affairs (MERIA) Journal, and editor of the Turkish Studies Journal. American-born Rubin, a former Fulbright and Council on Foreign Relations fellow, received his Ph.D from Georgetown University in 1978 and taught both at major Israeli and American Universities. Most of his commentary was published on his widely read personal blog, *The Rubin Report*, a treasure trove of insight for thousands of followers. Moreover, Rubin authored and edited numerous books and thousands of articles. (*Jerusalem Post*, Feb. 3, 2014)

N.B.: Friday's Isranet Daily Briefing will be devoted to Barry Rubin's inspiring life and work -ed.

[On Topic Links](#)

[Kerry: Not an Equal Opportunity Threatener](#): David M. Weinberg, *Israel Hayom*, Feb. 3, 2014

[Dancing in the Nuclear Dark](#): Bret Stephens, *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 3, 2014

[How Europe is Speed-Dating Iran](#): Benjamin Weinthal, *Ha'aretz*, Feb. 5, 2014

WEEKLY QUOTES

"Today's status quo...absolutely to a certainty, I promise you 100 percent, cannot be maintained. It is not sustainable. It is illusionary. You see for Israel there is an increasing delegitimization campaign that has been building up. People are very sensitive to it, there is talk of boycott and other kinds of things. Are we all going to be better with all of that?" —U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry warned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Over the last 48 hours, Kerry has issued a series of apocalyptic warnings, threatening Netanyahu with boycott, isolation, and even (Palestinian) violence if Israel doesn't facilitate the continuation of Kerry's peace process by acceding to Kerry's terms. (*Israel Hayom*, Feb. 4, 2014)

“Attempts to impose a boycott on the state of Israel are immoral and unjust.” —Mr. Netanyahu, who strongly criticized groups who are threatening a boycott of Israel over its policies toward the Palestinians. The remarks were a sharp retort to Secretary of State John Kerry, who warned a day earlier that the risk of boycotts would intensify should the current Middle East peace effort fail. **“Moreover,”** Netanyahu continued, **“they will not achieve their goal. First, they cause the Palestinians to adhere to their intransigent positions and thus push peace further away. Second, no pressure will cause me to concede the vital interests of the state of Israel, especially the security of Israel’s citizens. For both of these reasons, threats to boycott the state of Israel will not achieve their goal.”**

“Israel cannot be expected to negotiate with a gun to its head.”—Israel’s minister of strategic affairs, Yuval Steinitz, was more direct than Netanyahu in his criticism of Mr. Kerry, telling *Israel Radio* on Sunday that Kerry’s remarks were **“hurtful,” “unfair”** and **“intolerable”** ([New York Times](#), Feb. 2, 2014)

“Personal attacks in Israel directed at Sec Kerry totally unfounded and unacceptable.” —U.S. National Security Advisor and former U.N. Ambassador Susan Rice, on her Twitter account Monday evening. Rice continued tweeting that **“John Kerry’s record of support for Israel’s security and prosperity rock solid.”** Rice then went on to reaffirm President Obama’s and Kerry’s commitment to Israel, saying, **“...Sec Kerry remain(s) committed to negotiations that can secure Israeli and Palestinian futures.”** Finally, Rice added, the **“U.S. Govt has been clear and consistent that we reject efforts to boycott or delegitimize Israel.”** ([JNS.org](#), Feb. 5, 2014)

“This narrative which frankly has been pushed by some people who have an interest in trying to suggest that the U.S. is somehow on a different track.” —Secretary of State Kerry, speaking at the Munich Security Conference, the most important trans-Atlantic security gathering, presented an emotional defense of the Obama administration’s engagement in international crises in the face of widespread European and Middle Eastern criticism that the United States was retreating from a leadership role. Kerry went through a litany of American involvement in places like Afghanistan, Libya and the Middle East, saying, **“I can’t think of a place in the world where we’re retreating.”** Kerry also gave a passionate defense of his deep involvement in the search for Israeli-Palestinian peace, rejecting remarks by Israel’s defense minister, Moshe Yaalon, who characterized Mr. Kerry’s efforts as “an obsession.” The status quo will not hold, according to Kerry, who said **“we’re working hard, because the consequences of failure are inconceivable...we all have a powerful, powerful interest in resolving this conflict...we think it can be a game changer for the region.”** ([New York Times](#), Feb. 1, 2014)

“Iran's economy is showing signs of recovery after years of sanctions, due in no small part to the recent sanctions relief...and a perception that the Obama administration may no longer be committed to ratcheting up the economic pressure.” —Mark Dubowitz of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, which has advised Congress on Iran sanctions. Critics of the interim deal with Iran for limited sanctions relief in exchange for heightened international scrutiny of Iran's nuclear program., including members of Congress, have complained that Tehran has reaped significant economic benefits from the deal, in addition to the sanctions relief. They cite the strengthening of Iran's currency, the rial, since the agreement was announced in late November. And outside economic analysts estimate Iran's economic growth is expected to stabilize in the current fiscal year after contracting by 6% during the previous one. ([Wall Street Journal](#), Jan. 31, 2014)

“Now the administration is pressing for an agreement with Iran based on the conceit that the intelligence community will give policy makers ample warning before the mullahs sprint for a nuclear weapon. That is not true. Iran could surprise the world with a nuclear test at least as easily as India

did in 1998, when the intelligence community gave the Clinton administration zero warning that New Delhi was about to set off a bomb—and a South Asian arms race. That failure is especially notable given that India, unlike Iran, is an open society.” —*Wall Street Journal* columnist Bret Stephens. ([Wall Street Journal](#), Feb. 3, 2014)

“On the brighter side, an idea did occur to me about how to make the world a safer place while listening to Canada's Prime Minister address the Israeli Knesset the other day. It was a pretty good speech and it would have been perfect if Barack Obama had delivered it. Couldn't we have them switch jobs for the duration? We have pretty much everything Obama wants already on the books. He can't do us much harm. Harper, on the other hand, may do America and the world some good.” —*National Post* columnist George Jonas (*National Post*, Feb. 1, 2014)

“For us, this family is finished from the memory of the Syrians, all that is left is blood, fire and terrorism.” —Syrian opposition chief Ahmad al-Jarba, who said Assad was pressed by his Russian backers to take part in the peace talks, held last week in Geneva, but could not engage toward finding a real solution because “he knows that would be his end.” Al-Jarba said the opposition will never accept having Assad — whose family has ruled Syria since 1970 — stay in power. “We will not accept for this man or anyone from his family to rule the country again,” Al-Jarba said. ([Global News](#), Jan. 31, 2014)

"I don't know what to do or where to go." —Qusai Zakarya, speaking from a rebel-held suburb of Damascus, Syria. Zakarya, who uses a pseudonym to protect his family elsewhere in Syria, added: "the regime are doing their best to turn civilians against the opposition...they have sent a message to the residents of Moadamiya telling them, 'If you stay with these people starvation will be your only reward. Give them up and you will be fed'". Syrian troops that surround the rebel-held Moadamiya, once home to 50,000 people, are implementing a strategy known as "submit or starve." The Assad regime has insisted on one concession after another in exchange for limited food. First residents were told to raise the regime flag, then to give up their captured regime equipment, next to surrender 100 low-level fighters. As food supplies have dwindled, the children have been reduced to emaciated, skeleton-like figures. Zakarya has little hope his situation will improve: "pray for me. I am afraid that it is just a matter of time until I am arrested or handed to the government." (*Telegraph*, Feb. 3, 2014)

“The letter from Tom Perkins comparing the "demonization of the rich" to "fascist Nazi Germany" and the persecution of German Jews during *Kristallnacht* ("Progressive *Kristallnacht* Coming?," [Wall Street Journal](#), Jan. 25) offers a vivid case in point of how American discourse is being cheapened and coarsened by facile comparisons to the Holocaust. Mr. Perkins is entitled to his views, but he discredits himself and his argument by leaping to the absurd conclusion that class differences in America are stirring up sentiments similar to the virulent anti-Semitism that led to the deaths of six million Jews and millions of others in the Holocaust. This is historical trivialization of the worst kind imaginable. This month we mark the 69th anniversary of the liberation of the Nazi concentration camp Auschwitz. As we remember those who lost their lives as a result of Hitler's Final Solution, let's hope that cooler heads will prevail and America's business and political leaders can learn to avoid the temptation of indulging in such warped and overheated rhetoric. —Abraham H. Foxman, National Director, Anti-Defamation League ([Wall Street Journal](#), Jan. 31, 2014)

“What you guys are gonna have to figure out is ... what are you gonna do when I'm gone?” —U.S. President Barack Obama, speaking on *Fox News* interviewer Bill O'Reilly's taped program aired Super

Bowl Sunday. After leading questions about “health care not working” and a “wholly corrupt IRS,” the president continued, **“This is okay. If you want to be president of the United States, then you know that you’re going to be subject to criticism. I think regardless of whether it’s fair or not ... it has made Fox News very successful.”** Obama, clearly, has the chutzpa and the conceit to take the credit for helping reporters to sell their newspapers, and he genuinely feels sorry for himself. In three years *Fox News* (and CIJR) won’t have Obama to kick around anymore, but he always will have the *New York Times* to kiss him where he has been kicked. ([Jewish Press](#), Feb. 4, 2014)

[Contents](#)

SHORT TAKES

DEAL SEES 80% OF SETTLERS STAYING IN WEST BANK (Jerusalem) —Up to 80 per cent of Jewish settlers would be allowed to remain in the West Bank under a proposed framework for the U.S.-backed Arab-Israeli peace deal, sources say. Closely guarded details of how Washington sees the terms of a final settlement were disclosed in a meeting between American Jewish leaders and Martin Indyk, a senior U.S. official, and former U.S. ambassador to Israel, involved in the negotiations. The outline envisions that settlers, whose presence is seen by some members of the international community as an illegal incursion on “Palestinian” land, would remain where they are as part of a proposed land-swap deal with the Palestinians. The deal would redraw borders so that about 80 per cent of settlers’ homes would be re-designated as being in Israel, while other parcels of land would be handed back to Palestinian control. ([Montreal Gazette](#), Feb. 1, 2014)

SYRIA BARREL BOMBS 'KILL DOZENS OF CIVILIANS' IN ALEPPO (Aleppo) —The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR) says about 90 people - most of them civilians - died when helicopters dropped barrel bombs on Saturday. Aleppo has been the focus of bitter fighting between President Bashar al-Assad's forces and rebels. Meanwhile militants linked to al-Qaeda are reported to have killed the leader of a rival Islamist militia there. Fighters from the Islamic State of the Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) killed Adnan Bakkour during a raid on the base of rivals, the Tawheed Brigades, according to SOHR, a UK-based group that monitors the conflict. Attacks using barrel bombs and Scud missiles by President Assad's forces are believed to have killed hundreds of people in Aleppo since the conflict began almost three years ago. ([BBC](#), Feb. 2, 2014)

U.S. SAYS SYRIA DELAYING CHEMICAL DISARMAMENT (Washington) —The U.S. blamed Syria's Assad regime for intentionally delaying efforts to remove chemical arms from the country for destruction, suggesting that the goal of liquidating the arsenal by midyear is in jeopardy. The comments on Thursday mark a sharp change of tone from the Obama administration, which would face a stark choice if it concludes President Bashar al-Assad isn't cooperating with the disarmament process. Until now, diplomats have praised the regime for destroying some arms-making gear and for cooperating with inspection efforts. ([Wall Street Journal](#), Jan. 30, 2014)

BLOODY JANUARY IN IRAQ (Baghdad) —At least 733 Iraqis were killed during violence in January, even when leaving out casualties from an embattled western province, the United Nations said Saturday. The figures issued by the UN mission to Iraq show 618 civilians and 115 members of the security forces were killed in January. But the UN statement excluded deaths from ongoing fighting in Anbar, due to problems in verifying the “status of those killed.” The figures also leave out insurgent deaths. The United Nations also said at least 1,229 Iraqis were wounded in attacks across the country last month. Baghdad was the worst affected province, with 297 killed and 585 wounded. The

government and its tribal allies are besieging rebelheld areas, with fighting reported daily. ([New York Post](#), Feb. 2, 2014)

EGYPTIAN AIRSTRIKE KILLS 13 SUSPECTED ISLAMIST MILITANTS (Cairo) — Egyptian military aircraft pounded suspected positions of al-Qaeda-inspired fighters in the Sinai Peninsula, killing 13 people, officials said Friday, as fears rise over an increasingly well-armed insurgency that is striking with increasing regularity in the capital. In the latest attack, bombs on a highway on Cairo's outskirts hit a police truck. At the same time, protests by Islamist supporters of ousted President Mohammed Morsi brought further violence, with clashes in several provinces. Islamists have been protesting nearly daily for months demanding the reinstatement of Morsi, and have been met with a heavy crackdown that has killed hundreds and led to the arrests of thousands since army chief Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi removed the president on July 3. ([CTV](#), Jan. 31, 2014)

CANADIAN MOHAMED FAHMY AMONG AL-JAZEERA STAFF CHARGED IN CAIRO (Cairo) —Canadian-Egyptian Mohamed Fahmy is among 20 journalists from the Al-Jazeera TV network who will be tried in Cairo on charges of allegedly joining or assisting a terrorist group and spreading false news that endangers national security. Egypt's chief prosecutor on Wednesday referred 20 journalists from the *Al-Jazeera* TV network, including four foreigners, to trial on charges of allegedly joining or assisting a terrorist group and spreading false news that endangers national security. It was the first time authorities have put journalists on trial on terror-related charges. The charges by Egypt's chief prosecutor demonstrate the expanding reach of the authorities' heavy crackdown on the Muslim Brotherhood since the military's ouster of Islamist President Mohammed Morsi on July 3. ([CBC](#), Jan. 29, 2014)

JEWISH 'REFUGEE DAY' PROPOSAL ADVANCES IN KNESSET (Jerusalem) —A bill to establish an official day for commemorating the fate of Jewish communities who fled Arab lands and Iran passed its first of three readings in the Knesset plenum on Monday, and looks set to become law in the coming weeks. The Bill to Commemorate the Flight and Expulsion of Jews from Arab Lands and Iran, proposed by Morocco-born MK Shimon Ohayon (Yisrael Beytenu), would designate November 30 — the day after the November 29 commemoration of the 1947 United Nations partition vote that gave formal international recognition to Jewish statehood — as the day for commemorating the former Jewish communities of Muslim lands and the tribulations they endured with their flight and expulsion from those lands in the 1940s and 1950s. Between 1947 and 1972, some 856,000 Jews fled ancient communities from Iran to Morocco for Israel, according to the explanatory section of the bill. That wave of immigration and its descendants constitute roughly half of Israel's present-day Jewish population. ([Times of Israel](#), Feb. 4, 2014)

SENATE BOOSTS EFFORTS TO KEEP IRAQI JEWISH ARCHIVE OUT OF IRAQ (Washington) —Efforts to keep a significant collection of artifacts seized from Iraq's Jewish community by Saddam Hussein from being returned to the Gulf nation by the United States may be picking up steam on Capitol Hill. With just months to go before a June deadline mandates the return of the religious archive, U.S. Sens. Pat Toomey (R-PA), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT) and Chuck Schumer (D-NY) are shepherding a resolution that asks the State Department to renegotiate an earlier agreement reached with the Iraqi government. Comprising community records, Jewish books and sacred items belonging to the Baghdadi Jewish community, the archive was discovered on May 6, 2003, when the U.S. Army's Mobile Exploitation Team Alpha raided the headquarters of the Mukhabarat, the Iraqi secret police. The building's basement was flooded with around four feet of water, damaging many of the artifacts and kicking off a decade-long process by U.S. authorities to salvage and restore whatever they could. ([JNS.org](#), Feb. 3, 2014)

UN GROUP COMPARES BOYCOTT OF ISRAELI ACADEMICS TO NAZI PRACTICE

(Geneva) — Of all the surprising opponents of the boycott of Israeli academic institutions by the American Studies Association, perhaps the most surprising is one that has not yet received any attention. A small but official organization of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) came out with an unabashedly strong criticism of the ASA boycott in one of the very first waves of condemnations. And, unlike most of the university presidents' condemnations, this one aimed its spear directly at, and through, the double standard towards the Jewish State, otherwise known as antisemitism, that really is the foundation upon which the boycott movement in general, and the ASA's boycott in particular, rests. The statement comes from the Board of Trustees of the American Unit of the International Network of the UNESCO Chair in Bioethics, also known as the American Bioethics Culture Institute. The statement, issued on Dec. 27, immediately after the ASA stated its boycott intentions, expresses the views of the group starting with being "appalled" by the boycott as "contrary to the fundamental principles of academic freedom." ([Jewish Press](#), Feb. 4, 2014)

CANADIAN MINISTER 'THANKS OXFAM' AND BUYS SODASTREAM MACHINE (Ottawa)

—Canada's Employment minister Jason Kenney has countered the BDS 'Boycott SodaStream' campaign by buying one of the company's soda-making machines and crediting Oxfam for the idea. Oxfam has dumped Scarlett Johansson as an ambassador because she signed up to promote SodaStream whose 20 factories around the world include one in the industrial area of Maaleh Adumim, located in Greater Israel, Post-1967 Israel, or the "Occupied Territories," depending on your political point of view. BDS has been promoting the boycott, but its vocal protests have caused rumbles that are turning into an avalanche of positive publicity for SodaStream and Israel because of the company's policy of equal opportunity for Palestinian Authority Arabs. ([Jewish Press](#), Feb. 4, 2014)

ISRAEL BREWS UP A SUCCESS (Tel Aviv) — In 2008, Ori Sagy retired after 25 years as an Israeli air force pilot and thought about the next stage of his life: brewing. He shipped in a copper kettle from a brew pub in Bolton, Ont., and resolved to prove that Israelis could make high quality beer. Israel hasn't had a brewing culture since the Babylonians. Annual consumption per capita is just 15 litres, compared to Canada's impressive 98.5 litres. Mr. Sagy watched the renaissance in local Israeli wines and tried to replicate their success, attempting to interest investors with small batches of a blonde and an amber ale. The beer was good, the investor interest was there and so the Alexander Brewing Company was born. Mr. Sagy plans to bring his Alexander beers to Ottawa this summer, along with Palestinian brewer, Nadim Khoury, of Taybeh Brewing Company, near Ramallah, to promote friendship through beer. "I view beer as the furthest away thing from wars and politics," said Mr. Sagy. "It's about friendship, peace and people. If we can advance friendship between people in Israel and Palestine that would be great." ([National Post](#), Feb. 1, 2014)

[On Topic Links](#)

[Kerry: Not an Equal Opportunity Threatener](#): David M. Weinberg, *Israel Hayom*, Feb. 3, 2014 —Over the last 48 hours, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry has issued a series of apocalyptic warnings.

[Dancing in the Nuclear Dark](#): Bret Stephens, *Wall Street Journal*, Feb. 3, 2014—Where do federal government reports go once they've been published and (lightly) chewed over by second-tier officials, congressional staffers and think-tank wonks?

[How Europe is Speed-Dating Iran](#): Benjamin Weinthal, *Ha'aretz*, Feb. 5, 2014—European companies were astonishingly quick to seek new business with Iran following the interim nuclear agreement the P5+1 states and Tehran reached in November 2013.

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