

Weekly Top 10

WASHINGTON, D.C. June 28, 2019

TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties

**FROM: Daniel Rubin, Chairman;
Aleksander Smukler, President;
Mark B. Levin, Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO**

Dear Friend,

June has been an eventful month in the region, with Kazakhstan inaugurating a new President and Moldova forming a new government. On June 12, former Chairman of the Senate of Kazakhstan Kassym-Jomart Tokayev assumed his role as the Central Asian nation's second leader since the fall of the Soviet Union. [The Kazakh Embassy in Washington published a congratulatory letter from NCSEJ](#), re-affirming NCSEJ's strong relationship with the country.

This week's update includes an interesting interview with Moldovan politician Maia Sandu, who on June 8 became her country's Prime Minister, at a time when the nation's government is undergoing rapid and substantive change. In her interview with openDemocracy, [Sandu is described as the politician at the heart of Moldova's quiet revolution](#).

June 20th officially marked [one month since the inauguration of Ukraine's first Jewish head of state, Volodymyr Zelenskyy](#). The TV-star-turned-President has dissolved Ukraine's parliament to trigger early elections on July 21. Zelenskyy hopes he will be able to form a majority coalition and consolidate power. Zelenskyy has remained true to his word by making the fight against corruption his top domestic agenda. His foreign policy has also stressed continuity, staying on the pro-NATO/EU path forged by the 2014 Euromaidan protests and championed by his predecessor, President Petro Poroshenko.

On Tuesday, the national security advisors for [Russia, Israel, and the United States met in Jerusalem for a first-of-its-kind trilateral summit to discuss regional issues](#). While disagreeing with the United States and Israel on issues related to Iran, Russia's top national security adviser Nikolai Patrushev said that "we pay special attention to ensuring Israel's security," calling it "a special interest of ours," because Israel is home to over a million emigres from Russia and the former Soviet republics.

In Ukraine this week, a district administrative court issued an [injunction against naming two streets in the capital city of Kyiv after nationalists who collaborated with the Nazis](#) during World War II.

Lastly, this week NCSEJ attended farewell receptions for Latvian Ambassador Andris Teikmanis and Embassy of Belarus chargé d'affaires Pavel Shidlovsky, who will shortly be returning to their countries. We developed a close working relationship with both diplomats, and wish them every success in their new positions.

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10
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In trilateral Jerusalem summit, Russia sides with Iran, against Israel and US
By Judah Ari Gross

Times of Israel, June 25, 2019

Russia's top national security adviser spoke out on behalf of Iran during trilateral meetings with his Israeli and American counterparts in Jerusalem on Tuesday, backing Tehran's claims against the United States and supporting its ongoing military presence in Syria, which Israel sees as a threat to its security.

The trilateral conference of Israeli, Russian, and US national security advisers was the first event of its kind to be held in Jerusalem and, according to Israel, was aimed specifically at countering Iran, including both its nuclear aspirations and its influence throughout the Middle East.

The meeting came amid escalating tensions between Washington and Tehran, following US President Donald Trump's decision to pull out of the Iran nuclear deal last year and put in place a series of crushing economic sanctions.

[Read the full article here.](#)

2 streets in Kiev will no longer be named for Nazi collaborators

By Cnaan Liphshiz

JTA, June 27, 2019

A court in Ukraine issued an injunction against the naming of two streets in Kiev after nationalists who collaborated with the Nazis during World War II.

The district administrative court of Kiev ordered the municipality to undo the 2016 renaming of two main streets for Stepan Bandera and Roman Shukhevych on Tuesday.

But Mayor Vitaly Klitschko on Wednesday wrote on Facebook that the city will appeal the ruling, the Regnum news agency reported. Bandera and Shukhevych were two of Ukraine's several Nazi collaborators. Some were SS volunteers and mass murdered Jews and Poles, and are now celebrated as anti-communist heroes in Ukraine and by its government.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Croatia's capital announces Holocaust memorial, but local Jews aren't satisfied

By Cnaan Liphshiz

JTA, June 27, 2019

Croatia's capital city pledged to erect a Holocaust memorial monument but local Jews said they'd have nothing to do with it because it does not mention the country's complicity with the Nazi regime.

"There is no place for a monument to six million Jewish in Zagreb and Croatia because such a monument already exists in Berlin," the Jewish Community of Zagreb said last week in a statement about the municipality's decision to erect the monument on June 4.

[Read the full article here.](#)

U.S. Removes Uzbekistan From Nations With Worst Religious Tolerance

By Todd Prince

RFE/RL, June 21, 2019

The United States has removed Uzbekistan from a list of countries with the worst religious tolerance for the first time in more than a decade as its new president courts Western nations.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on June 21 highlighted the progress made by the Central Asian nation as he delivered the annual U.S. report on international religious freedom.

"In Uzbekistan, much work still remains to be done, but for the first time in 13 years it is no longer designated as a country of particular concern," Pompeo said at a conference in Washington.

[Read the full article here.](#)

The Holocaust Survivor Who Deciphered Nazi Doublespeak

By Gal Beckerman

New York Times, June 24, 2019

In August 1944, as soon as Soviet troops swept the Nazis out of eastern Poland, a group of Jewish intellectuals rushed to cities like Lublin and Lodz to begin collecting and recording, scouring for any trace of the still fresh horror that had taken their own loved ones. They wanted evidence.

Among them was Nachman Blumental, a philologist obsessed with the uses and misuses of language. He had escaped into the Soviet Union and now returned to find that his wife, Maria, and young son, Ariel, had been killed. Places once teeming with Jewish life were gutted. His whole world had effectively vanished.

In every Nazi document he came across, he circled and underlined innocuous terms like “abgang” (exit) or “evakuierung” (evacuation). He knew what these words actually meant when they appeared in memos and bureaucratic forms: They were euphemisms for death. A mission of his own took shape: to reveal the ways the Nazis had used the German language to obscure the mechanics of mass murder and make genocide more palatable to themselves.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Georgia’s Perpetual Street of Protest

By Thomas de Waal

Carnegie Moscow Center, June 21, 2019

Georgia is an angry democracy. A recent Gallup survey found that 27 percent of Georgians said they felt angry “yesterday.” That was more than enough to bring large numbers of protestors out onto Rustaveli Avenue, Tbilisi’s traditional arena of protest on the night of June 20 — who were then met with extreme violence in the form of tear-gas and rubber bullets from the Georgian police.

Russians may be surprised at how quickly and violently events unfolded in the Georgian capital in response to the appearance of one Russian Duma deputy in the parliament. After all, on a people-to-people level, relations between the two countries have improved markedly since the 2008 war. One million Russian tourists visited Georgia last year.

This does not reckon with how feelings of anger and humiliation towards the Russian state have persisted since 2008. Had Sergei Gavrilov been an ordinary participant in the parliamentary session on June 20, he would probably have got away with it. Yet the sight of him sitting in the speaker’s chair — “occupying” the speaker’s chair—in the parliament chamber was genuinely offensive to many Georgians.

[Read the full article here.](#)

Belarus-Russia Integration: No Decision Yet

By Grigory Ioffe

Eurasia Daily Monitor, June 26, 2019

Despite official declarations to the contrary, June 21 passed by with no joint memorandum on deeper political-economic integration between Belarus and Russia. And while government-linked media outlets in Russia evince equanimity and even satisfaction about how these talks are allegedly progressing, the fact remains that clearly a final deal remains elusive.

On May 29, Dmitry Peskov, the Kremlin’s press secretary, announced, “Russia’s and Belarus’s presidents instructed the governments of the two countries to prepare a roadmap for further integration by June 21.” On June 15, following the Moscow meeting with Belarusian Minister of Economy Dmitry Krutoy, Russian Economic Development Minister Maxim Oreshkin declared that the program of bilateral integration had been agreed 90 percent, and additional discussions at the level of prime ministers would take place in Minsk on June 21. “On that day,” he reiterated, “we will have two documents: the roadmap and a conceptual paper that will describe the principles of further integration.” Those assurances notwithstanding, it now appears both documents have been postponed until November.

[Read the full article here.](#)

The Secret to the Success of the Ivan Golunov Case

By Sergey Davidis

Riddle, June 17, 2019

Ivan Golunov is a Russian journalist whose investigations have uncovered countless wrongdoings within the Russian elite. On June 6th, he was arrested and detained in Moscow.

The official charge was for drug possession. But this was blatantly spurious. And on June 11, after a powerful public campaign, Golunov was released. The criminal case against him collapsed.

It is an example of public pressure having a strong bearing on Russia’s judicial system. Yet unfortunately, such success stories are rare. Hundreds of people remain victims of political

repression in Russia. Indeed, politically motivated deprivation of liberty on a false charge is not uncommon. The list of political prisoners recorded by the Memorial Human Rights Center includes at least 297 people.

[Read the full article here.](#)

New Balance of Power Takes Shape in Kazakhstan, Defying Assumptions

By Nikita Shatalov

Carnegie Moscow Center, June 18, 2019

Kazakhstan's early presidential election on June 9, which followed President Nursultan Nazarbayev's resignation after nearly thirty years at the helm, was notable for several reasons. There were rallies by the banned Democratic Choice of Kazakhstan political party, and reports that 500 people had been arrested in the newly renamed capital Nursultan and largest city Almaty. Amirzhan Kosanov, Kazakhstan's leading opposition politician, wasn't pushed out of the race: he was given the opportunity to participate in debates on state television, and was able to get 16 percent of the vote, which is a record for any opponent of the regime in Kazakhstan's post-Soviet history.

Despite the tense atmosphere, the authorities did not block the Internet as they have done so many times before, and observers were free to publish videos of ballot-stuffing on social networks. This was the scene as Kassym-Jomart Tokayev celebrated his victory. He received 70.74 percent of the vote, which is also a record of sorts: Nazarbayev never scored less than 80 percent.

The transfer of power in Kazakhstan is not complete now that the elections are over, and will not be until Nazarbayev, now 78, fully withdraws from the political arena. Only then will the ruling elite and the state completely adjust to operating without the man who set the rules of the game for the past thirty years. For now, Nazarbayev, who has the lifelong title of Father of the Nation, is trying to build a new balance of power, and its outlines are taking shape.

[Read the full article here.](#)

One Month into the Zelenskyy Presidency and Ukraine's Still Here

By Steven Pifer

Atlantic Council, June 17, 2019

Volodymyr Zelenskyy became Ukraine's sixth president on May 20. The political neophyte's election raised a host of questions about lack of governing experience, connections to oligarch Ihor Kolomoisky, the composition of his inner circle, and his priorities once in office. One month into Zelenskyy's presidency, those questions still require answers, and we have yet to see much in the way of policies as the political focus has turned to the parliamentary elections. However, his pronouncements largely have been reassuring. The US government appears cautiously optimistic and has invited him to visit Washington.

Many questioned whether Zelenskyy's entry into the presidential campaign was serious. A well-known actor, Zelenskyy had virtually no political experience. He ran an untraditional campaign, offering few interviews, seemingly preferring to let his TV persona shape the views of voters. The strategy worked. He trounced incumbent Petro Poroshenko by a 50 percent margin.

In the month since he took office, Zelenskyy hasn't had time to enact new policies. He dissolved the Rada, which triggered early parliamentary elections that were set for July 21. The legality of that action has been challenged in the Constitutional Court, though the main political parties seem ready for an early ballot. Polls suggest a large majority of Ukrainian voters favors early elections.

[Read the full article here.](#)

An interview with Maia Sandu, the politician at the heart of Moldova's quiet revolution:

By Maxim Edwards

openDemocracy, June 25, 2019

After inconclusive parliamentary elections this February, Moldovan politics was left in limbo as the country's three major political forces jockeyed to form a ruling coalition. And then the unexpected happened: the pro-Russian Socialist Party of Moldova and pro-European ACUM alliance joined forces to create an "anti-oligarchic" alliance, removing the ruling Democratic Party of Moldova (DPM) and its junior partners from power.

For a week in June, the two forces were at loggerheads. Democratic Party supporters blockaded government buildings and many institutions refused to recognise the new government. Eventually, international pressure forced the Democrats to concede defeat.

Russian deputy prime minister Dmitry Kozak started the ball rolling, while Plahotniuc appeared to realise the game was up after a closed meeting with US Ambassador Derek Hogan. He left the country shortly after, and Moldova's most powerful man is now believed to be in London.

Cautious optimism now reigns in Moldova's capital of Chişinău. The alliance between the Socialists and ACUM is not a natural one, and Plahotniuc's DPM is still believed to have extensive influence in many state institutions. Everybody knows what, or rather who, the new government stands against.

But what does Moldova's new order stand for? I sat down with Moldovan Prime Minister Maia Sandu to find out.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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About NCSEJ

Founded in 1971, the National Coalition Supporting Eurasian Jewry represents the organized American Jewish community in monitoring and advocating on behalf of the estimated 1.5 million Jews in Eastern Europe and Eurasia, including the 15 successor states of the former Soviet Union.

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