

## Weekly Top 10

**WASHINGTON, D.C. February 14, 2020**

**TO: NCSEJ Leadership and Interested Parties**

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

Dear Friend,

Please enjoy the following selection of stories from the past week. Shabbat Shalom!

Sincerely,



Mark B. Levin  
NCSEJ Executive Vice-Chairman & CEO

### **NCSEJ WEEKLY TOP 10** **Washington, D.C. February 14, 2020**

**Six ways the US can repair its relationship with Ukraine**  
**Dominik Istrate**  
**Emerging - Europe | February 12, 2020**

Now that the impeachment drama surrounding Donald Trump's shady Ukrainian activities has come to an end, his administration and the US Congress have a unique opportunity to regain Ukraine's trust by strengthening the strategic relationship between Washington and Kyiv.

After a historic trial in the United States Congress, Republican lawmakers in the US Senate have found Donald Trump not guilty of abusing his office by threatening to withhold 400 million US dollars of security aid for Ukraine unless the administration of Ukrainian president Volodymyr Zelensky investigated allegations about the activities of former US vice president Joe Biden, one of Mr Trump's chief political rivals in the upcoming 2020 presidential election.

The scandal has put US-Ukrainian relations under strain, not to mention the very fact that Mr Trump's actions significantly damaged Ukraine's international position at a time when the country's government was gearing up for peace talks with Russia over the Donbas war in eastern Ukraine. With the US president now acquitted, the end of the impeachment drama will open a new chapter in Mr Trump's presidency and presents an opportunity for his administration to show its commitment towards the strategic relationship it maintains with Ukraine.

[Read the full article here.](#)

**Ukraine may not yet escape US domestic politics**  
**Steven Piefer**  
**Kyiv Post | February 12, 2020**

Ukraine unhappily found itself at the center of the impeachment drama that played out in Washington last fall and during the first weeks of 2020. That threatened the resiliency of the U.S.-Ukraine relationship, a relationship that serves the interests of both countries.

With Donald Trump's impeachment trial now in the past, Volodymyr Zelensky and Ukrainians undoubtedly hope that their country will no longer feature so prominently in U.S. domestic politics.

That would be good, but it may not happen.

Last year, Trump sought to get senior Ukrainian officials to announce an investigation of a political rival and extorted Kyiv to do so by withholding military assistance and a White House visit. Revelations of those actions led to the third presidential impeachment in American history. Last week, Republican senators voted to find Trump not guilty, disregarding damning testimony, rejecting further witnesses, and ignoring a courageous floor speech by their colleague Mitt Romney.

The impeachment hearings and trial proved a difficult time for Ukraine and for its friends in America. It had to be especially painful for Ukrainians to hear reports that the U.S. president referred to their country as a “terrible place” with “terrible people” and one of the “most corrupt countries.”

Impeachment is now over, but Ukraine may find itself again an object in U.S. politics, as America ramps up for the November presidential election.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Unconsolidated: The Five Russian Elites Shaping Putin’s Transition**

**Tatiana Stanovaya**

**Carnegie | February 11, 2020**

President Putin has embarked on a renewal of Russia’s ruling regime to make sure it weathers the political transition of 2024 and to preserve his personal power-base. The elite can be divided into five distinct groups, two of which, the “protectors” and “technocrats” may end up in a fierce ideological fight.

Vladimir Putin’s January 15 announcement of constitutional changes and a government reshuffle launched the long-awaited period of Russia’s political transition. It is almost certain that Putin will not run for the presidency in 2024, when his current term ends. Not only will he back a chosen successor to be president, but he will reapportion the powers of the presidency and parliament while also carving out a new role for himself.

Despite an abiding predisposition to conservatism, the Russian regime has begun to modify itself, both institutionally and politically. The changes raise the significance of the balance among different factions of the Russian elite. Indeed, this balance will in the long run determine not only the fate of numerous leading personalities, but also the sources from which future leadership will be drawn, and ultimately the country’s vector of development.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Estonian formin: US-EU cooperation important in Mideast peace process**

**Editorial**

**Baltic Times | February 12, 2020**

TALLINN - In the discussion relating to the Middle East peace process, Estonia considers cooperation between the United States and the European Union as important, Estonian Foreign Minister Urmas Reinsalu said.

The UN Security Council discussed the Middle East peace process in an open meeting in New York on Tuesday. Before the start of the meeting, Belgian Foreign Minister Philippe Goffin read out to the members of the Security Council a joint statement by Estonia, Belgium, France, Germany, and former elected member Poland.

Reinsalu described the US initiative to revive the peace process that has been stalled already for years as welcome.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Yad Vashem: Blame us, not Russia, for ‘unfortunate’ video at Israel’s Holocaust event**

**Cnaan Liphshiz**

**JTA | February 10, 2020**

(JTA) — On one level, the recent event commemorating the 75th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz at Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust museum was a tour de force.

Dozens of world leaders traveled to Jerusalem for the event — among them Vice President Mike Pence, French President Emmanuel Macron and Russian President Vladimir Putin — and many spoke about the need to forever stand against anti-Semitism around the world. The host, Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, called it a “historic occasion not only for Israel, but for humanity.”

But two weeks later, the Jan. 23 event has come under intense scrutiny from prominent critics who say the prestigious institution promoted pro-Russian revisionist propaganda.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **In Warsaw, elderly Poles who rescued Jews during the Holocaust have a free taxi service**

**Cnaan Liphshiz**

**JTA | February 4, 2020**

WARSAW, Poland (JTA) — Outside one of this city's many brutalist apartment buildings, passersby stop to stare at and photograph a London-style taxi emblazoned with large Star of David symbols.

Some seem puzzled by the out-of-place sight. Others look delighted to encounter something they've seen or heard about in the news: One of Warsaw's four limousines that for the past year have been providing free transportation to dozens of senior citizens who risked their lives to save Jews during the Holocaust.

The project, called the Silent Hero Taxi Service, has changed the lives of many of these aging rescuers. They're making daily use of an amenity that has become indispensable in a sprawling, congested city with relatively poor public transportation services.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Holocaust memorial center asks to rename Kyiv metro station after Babyn Yar**

**Toma Istomina**

**Kyiv Post | February 11, 2019**

The nonprofit behind a planned Holocaust memorial center in Ukraine has suggested renaming Kyiv's Dorohozhychi metro station after Babyn Yar, the nearby ravine where German Nazis and local collaborators murdered 33,771 Jews on Sept. 29-30, 1941.

The mass killing was likely the largest single massacre of the Holocaust. In the ensuing two years, massacres continued at the site. Up to 100,000 people were murdered at Babyn Yar, according to the memorial center.

On Feb. 11, the Babyn Yar Holocaust Memorial Center announced that it had sent an official request to Kyiv Mayor Vitali Klitschko to rename the Dorohozhychi metro station "Babyn Yar."

"Transforming the sight of oblivion into a place of memory is our duty to Kyiv, to the whole world and to generations to come," the center's CEO, Max Yakover, said in a statement published on the project's website.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Historical Museum Opens in Azerbaijan's All-Jewish Town**

**Ilham Karimli**

**Caspian News | February 8, 2020**

Azerbaijan — a country of 10 million, where nearly 97 percent are Muslim — spotlights the very best example of the Jewish-Muslim coexistence, as thousands of Mountain Jews have been living there side by side Muslims for centuries.

On February 3, the Museum of the History and Culture of Mountain Jews opened in the all-Jewish Krasnaya Sloboda (Red Village) settlement in the northeastern Guba region of Azerbaijan.

The museum is located in the building of the Karchog synagogue, which was closed during the Soviet years and was restored to its original appearance prior to being introduced as a museum. Russian businessmen and philanthropists of Jewish descent God Nisanov, Zarakh Iliev, and German Zakharyaev — all from Krasnaya Sloboda — are the initiators and sponsors of the museum's launch.

The Russia-based Regional Public Charitable Foundation of Mountain Jews STMEGI, which is the largest organization uniting Mountain Jews from all over the world, created the general conception and collected exhibits for the museum. Exhibits that have been donated to the museum by the Jews living in different corners of the world include clothes, jewelry, ritual utensils, manuscripts, books, and ancient household items.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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### **Putin Rejects Oil Deal With Belarus, Increasing Pressure for Merger**

**Andrew Higgins**  
**NYTimes | February 7, 2020**

MOSCOW — Ratcheting up pressure on Belarus to join it in a “union state,” Russia rejected pleas from its increasingly balky ally on Friday to provide it with cut-rate oil supplies, insisting that it could not provide any discount.

The Belarusian leader, Aleksandr G. Lukashenko, emboldened by a visit last weekend to his country by Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, pushed hard for cheap energy during what he called a “moment of truth” meeting in Sochi, Russia, with President Vladimir V. Putin. Mr. Putin has used Belarus’s dependence on Russian oil and gas to revive a moribund plan to merge the two countries.

But a senior Kremlin official, Dmitri Kozak, told journalists late Friday that Russia, which temporarily suspended oil deliveries to Belarus last month, could offer only market rates with no discount. He added that negotiations between the two countries on oil sales would continue on a “commercial basis.”

[Read the full article here.](#)

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**Ukraine declines to appoint ambassador to Russia**  
**Vyacheslav Hnatyuk**  
**Kyiv Post | February 10, 2020**

Ukraine and Russia will leave the top jobs at their respective embassies empty for the time being.

According to an official letter from Ukraine’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the agency “has not submitted any recommendations... for the appointment to the position of ambassador [to Russia] for the President of Ukraine’s consideration.”

The letter, written in response to a request by Violetta Chaykovska, a journalist with the Ukrainian News Agency, was published on Feb. 10, the same day Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said his country “would not mind” if Ukraine appointed an ambassador in an interview with the state publication Rossiyskaya Gazeta.

The letter also states that, while Russian media claimed Moscow was selecting candidates to serve as the ambassador to Ukraine in January, Ukraine’s foreign ministry did not receive any official requests regarding the appointment.

Ukraine and Russia recalled their respective ambassadors in 2015 and 2016 after Russia annexed Crimea and backed militants who seized control of parts of the country’s eastern Donbas region.

[Read the full article here.](#)

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**Polish Jewish museum director offers to step down to break stalemate with Culture Ministry**  
**Katarzyna Markusz**  
**JTA | February 12, 2020**

WARSAW, Poland (JTA) – The former director of the Polin Museum of the History of Polish Jews was chosen last year to return to the position he held for six years. But Dariuz Stola says he won’t take back the post due to a stalemate that his rehiring has caused.

Stola was museum director from 2014 to 2019. In May 2019, a search committee recommended keeping Stola, but the minister of culture, Piotr Glinski, has not yet approved the appointment. In September, Glinski said he would not reappoint Stola because he “had a very aggressive political policy at the museum.”

In 2018, the Polin Museum organized an exhibition on the anti-Semitic campaign of March 1968, which forced several thousand Jews to leave Poland. The exhibition also showed examples of contemporary anti-Semitism, including online entries by two journalists working in public television.

[Read the full article here.](#)

## 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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