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### WEEKLY QUOTES

**"Donald Trump's decision to withdraw American troops from Syria shocked many in the United States and the Middle East. In Israel, most of the public discourse about this decision revolves around the challenges of this process, but we seem to be largely ignoring the question of what opportunities it may present: For one, could Israel, as compensation, secure a pledge from Washington to help it in times of war and on other vital diplomatic issues?... It is no secret that during the Obama administration, the United States lost some of its status in the region. The Trump administration has taken several steps – from striking Syrian assets in response to Syrian President Bashar Assad's use of chemical weapons to pulling out of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran – to improve this situation. A commitment to aid Israel would be a continuation of this policy of improvement, presenting multiple possibilities not only for Israel but also for the Trump administration..." – Michael Oren, a former Israeli ambassador to the U.S. ([Algemeiner](#), Dec. 25, 2018)**

**"Trump is God's gift that keeps on giving...Trump implements Russia's negative agenda by default, undermining the U.S.-led world order, U.S. alliances, U.S. credibility as a partner and an ally. All of this on his own. Russia can just relax and watch and root for Trump, which Putin does at every TV appearance." – Vladimir Frolov, a Russian columnist and foreign affairs analyst. President Trump blindsided his aides and the rest of the world by deciding to pull the full contingent of some 2,000 American troops out of Syria, helping confirm Putin's gamble that intervening in Syria would revive Russian influence in the Middle East. Trump followed that up by declaring that the U.S. would pull half its forces out of**

Afghanistan; the combined withdrawals prompted the resignation of Jim Mattis, the general who leads the Pentagon. ([New York Times](#), Dec. 21, 2018)

**"It's clear that a rapid pullout of all international forces could spark the collapse of the Afghan government and start a new civil war...Still, this partial withdrawal could send a useful message to all sides. This signals to the Taliban that the U.S. is serious about negotiating an exit." — Graeme Smith, a consultant with the International Crisis Group and a longtime observer of Afghanistan. On December 21, Afghan officials and Western diplomats woke to the unexpected news that Trump had ordered half of the 14,000 American troops in Afghanistan home, even as the war continues to rage and the Taliban threaten much of the country. ([New York Times](#), Dec. 21, 2018)**

**"Iran is not standing still with the defeat of the ISIS caliphate, but rather it seeks to fill the vacuum that has been created...The most tangible expression of the Iranian interest in Syria has been its plan to complete a land corridor from Iran through Iraq and Syria to Lebanon and the Mediterranean Sea...The land corridor would allow Tehran to re-supply Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria without being dependent on potentially vulnerable air transport of weapons and manpower across the Middle East." — Former Israeli diplomat Dore Gold, calling for the establishment of a NATO-like body in the Middle East to "guarantee that Iran's dreams of regional hegemony will never be realized." Gold — now the president of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs think tank — said the withdrawal of US troops from Syria could be viewed in "a larger regional context of the strategic struggle over postwar Syria between Israel and Iran." ([Algemeiner](#), Jan. 1, 2018)**

**"The victory of the Palestinian people in recent years has not meant the ability to form a government in Tel Aviv, which, of course, will also be realized with the grace of God, but the main victory was that the Zionist regime, which the Arab armies could not defeat, was brought to its knees by the Palestinian people and resistance groups, and bigger victories will be on their ways to you." — Iranian Leader Ayatollah Khamenei, in a meeting with Secretary General of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad resistance movement Ziad al-Nakhala in Tehran. Khamenei mentioned a clear equation regarding Palestine and said, "according to this equation, your resistance will result in your victory, and if you do not resist you will not be victorious. But thank God, the people of Palestine have resisted until now in the fight against the Zionist regime, and have been victorious." ([Mehr News](#), Dec. 31, 2018)**

**“Unfortunately, the Mediterranean is no longer a Western lake. Over the Obama years, the US significantly retreated from the Middle East. President Donald Trump has also displayed isolationist sentiments, despite a commitment to enhance US military power. A weakened American military posture is reflected in that the US Sixth Fleet no longer has a permanent aircraft carrier presence in the Mediterranean. (This is also true of the Seventh Fleet in the Indian Ocean.) European naval fleets have similarly lost some of their capabilities and reduced their presence in the eastern Mediterranean. Instead, the Russian eastern Mediterranean naval presence is growing. Russia secured for itself the naval base at Tarsus and the air base at Khmeimim in Syria, by intervening successfully in the Syrian civil war. Cyprus and Egypt also allow Russia use of their ports.” – Efraim Inbar. ([Jerusalem Post](#), Dec. 17, 2018)**

**“There’s something in standing and fighting diplomatically, always fighting your corner, and there are other parts of the United Nations that are bad also...But UNESCO has this, it’s kind of a brand, and it has this kind of public aura about it. It has a reputation and if it starts bashing Israel endlessly it’s not good. It’s not good for Israel. People listen to UNESCO. ... In the third world, it’s quite powerful.” – David Kornbluth, Israel’s UNESCO envoy from 2005-2009. “Maybe they will learn a lesson,” the former Israeli ambassador to UNESCO said, as the Jewish state officially left the global cultural institution. Kornbluth said the country was pulling out of the body now largely because the US had scheduled to leave by the end of 2018. ([Algemeiner](#), Jan. 1, 2018)**

**“What’s important tonight is honoring those #Jews across #Arab lands who lost their possessions, their homes, and...their lives all for the sake of preserving their faith, their beliefs, and their identity.” – Miss Iraq, Sarah Idan. Miss Iraq courageously honored Jews who were kicked out of Arab Lands. Miss Iraq and Miss Israel took a “selfie” together which grabbed the attention of the international world. So many were in awe of the touching friendship between the two women from “opposite” sides. And those who hate Israel were outraged. Miss Iraq knew the consequences of her actions, and she still chose to stand with Israel. ([Israel Unwired](#), Dec. 25, 2018)**

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## SHORT TAKES

**NETANYAHU HEADS TO BRAZIL ON HISTORIC VISIT (Sao Paulo) – Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Brazilian President-elect Jair Bolsonaro will relocate the Latin American country's mission to Jerusalem. The statement came after Netanyahu and Bolsonaro met on Friday, and after an Israeli government source insisted that Brazil's embassy move to Jerusalem was merely "a matter of time." Bolsonaro said he expects to visit Israel by March 2019, after accepting an invitation by Netanyahu. Netanyahu's is the first-ever visit by an Israeli prime minister to Brazil. ([Times of Israel](#), Dec. 30, 2018)**

**MORE HAMAS VIOLENCE AT GAZA BORDER WITH ISRAEL (Jerusalem) –Thousands of Gazans led by Hamas attacked Israel's security fence and military forces as they defended the border on Friday. During the clashes at least one rioter was killed and five more were injured, according to Arab media. Also on Friday an incendiary balloon was found in the Sdot Negev Regional Council district near a kindergarten. It was the first such incident to occur in weeks. A police sapper was summoned to the site to defuse the homemade bomb that was attached to the balloon. ([Jewish Press](#), Dec. 28, 2018)**

**PA COURT SENTENCES AKEL TO LIFE FOR ATTEMPTING LAND SALE TO JEWS (Jerusalem) – A court in Ramallah sentenced Issam Akel, a Palestinian American and a resident of East Jerusalem, to life in prison for attempting to sell land to Jewish Israelis in Jerusalem. A report said an individual with the same initials as Akel was sentenced to life in prison for attempting "to annex part of the Palestinian lands to an alien state." Palestinian law considers selling land to Israeli Jews a punishable offense. Punishments for trying to sell or selling land to Jewish Israelis include various degrees of hard labor and imprisonment as well as execution. However, the law requires that President Abbas approve any death sentence, and he has not signed off on any executions since 2006. ([Times of Israel](#), Dec. 31, 2018)**

**OHIO HOSPITAL EX-RESIDENT SAID SHE WOULD GIVE JEWS 'THE WRONG MEDS' (Cleveland) – A hospital in Ohio said it has fired a doctor after it emerged she had been making antisemitic remarks on social media. Lara Kollab was a resident at Cleveland Clinic from July until September 2018. In dozens of tweets she called for violence against Jews, called them "dogs," minimized the Holocaust, likened Israel to the Nazi regime and claimed Zionists control US media and schools. In 2012 she wrote that she would "purposely give all the yahood the wrong meds," using the Arabic word for Jews. She also expressed hope that "Allah will kill the Jews." A BDS supporter, Kollab has also said that "jewish settlers in palestine**

are the descendants of the nazis." ([Times of Israel](#), Jan. 1, 2018)

**MK MICHAEL OREN LEAVES KULANU (Jerusalem)** – Deputy Minister in the Prime Minister's Office, MK Michael Oren, who served as Israel's ambassador to the U.S. between 2009 and 2013, announced his decision to leave Moshe Kahlon's Kulanu party. The Kulanu party, which won 10 seats in the 2015 elections, is currently tittering on the precipice of the vote threshold, and according to many polls is expected to win between four and six Knesset seats. Oren announced that he does not rule out joining another party. He is likely to be recruited by Netanyahu for the Likud list. ([Jewish Press](#), Dec. 30, 2018)

**EX-ISRAELI MILITARY CHIEFS IN TALKS ON POTENTIAL JOINT TICKET (Jerusalem)** – Two former heads of the Israeli military are said to be in talks to run together on a joint slate in the April 9 Knesset general election. Moshe Ya'alon and Benny Gantz were reportedly in "advanced contacts" and the chance of them establishing a united front were very high. The 68-year-old Yaalon was the IDF chief of staff in the early 2000s while Benny Gantz, 59, served in the role during Operation Cast Lead in 2014. Ya'alon entered politics as a Likud member and was named defense minister in 2013. He resigned from the position in 2016 after a falling out with Netanyahu. ([Algemeiner](#), Dec. 26, 2018)

**BENNETT'S, SHAKED'S 'NEW RIGHT' PARTY TO CHALLENGE NETANYAHU (Jerusalem)** – Habayit Hayehudi chairman and Education Minister Naftali Bennett, and Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked announced the establishment of a new party, The New Right, appealing to the secular and religious right-wing voters. The two said The New Right party would be "for the land of Israel without compromises and against a Palestinian state." According to Bennet and Shaked, "had this party existed 13 years ago, the disengagement [from Gaza] would not have happened." ([Jewish Press](#), Dec. 29, 2018)

**MANCHESTER STABBINGS SUSPECT DETAINED DUE TO MENTAL HEALTH (Manchester)** – The sole suspect in the New Year's Eve stabbings of three people at a train station in Manchester has been detained under Britain's Mental Health Act, police said. Police are treating the assault at Manchester's Victoria Station as a terrorist attack. The train station is next to Manchester Arena, the site of a May 2017 suicide bombing that killed 22 people at a pop concert. Police said the 25-year-old man arrested at the scene was assessed by medical staff before the decision was reached. He is accused of stabbing a British Transport police sergeant

and two others while shouting Islamic extremist slogans. ([CTV](#), Jan. 2, 2018)

**FRENCH POLICE SEARCH FOR PROTESTERS WHO ACCOSTED JEWISH WOMAN (Paris)** – French police opened an investigation into allegations that an elderly Jewish woman was subjected to antisemitic invective while traveling on the Paris Metro last weekend, after she approached three supporters of the “yellow vests” protest movement with a request to stop their abusive chants and gestures. Since the appearance of the mass “yellow vests” protests in mid-November, concerns have risen about the violent behavior of some of the movement’s supporters, along with the infiltration of antisemitic elements. A number of antisemitic and anti-Zionist signs have been spotted at the demonstrations, along with hundreds of similar posts by “yellow vests” supporters on social media. ([Algemeiner](#), Dec. 26, 2018)

**IRANIAN DISSIDENTS URGE TRUMP TO RELEASE FROZEN TEHRAN REGIME ASSETS (Tehran)** – More than 400 Iranian pro-democracy activists have signed an open letter to President Trump seeking U.S. support to bring down their country’s regime. Around half of the letter’s signatories live in Iran, with the remainder residing in Western countries – including Canada, the US, Australia and several European nations. The letter’s publication comes amid renewed student protests in Tehran. Amateur video that circulated on Monday showed Iranian security forces firing tear gas at hundreds of students demanding the resignation of top officials at Azad University in the capital. ([Algemeiner](#), Jan. 1, 2018)

**NETFLIX CRITICIZED FOR YANKING PATRIOT ACT EPISODE IN SAUDI ARABIA (San Francisco)** – Netflix faced criticism for pulling an episode in Saudi Arabia of comedian Hasan Minhaj’s “Patriot Act” that criticized the kingdom’s powerful crown prince. The American comedian used his second episode, released on Oct. 28, to lambaste Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman over the killing of writer Jamal Khashoggi and the Saudi-led coalition at war in Yemen. Minhaj said the crown prince was being hailed as the reformer the Arab world needed until Khashoggi’s killing. Khashoggi was killed and dismembered by Saudi agents inside the Saudi consulate in Istanbul last year. ([CTV](#), Jan. 2, 2018)

**ARGENTINE MINISTER INVESTIGATED FOR DEAL WITH IRAN PASSES AWAY (Buenos Aires)** – Former Argentinian Foreign Minister Hector Timerman has passed away at the age of 65. Timerman served as Argentina’s foreign minister in January 2013 when Argentina and Iran signed an agreement to form an

independent commission to investigate the 1994 bombing of the Buenos Aires Jewish community center. Timerman later was named, along with Argentine President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, in prosecutor Alberto Nisman's 300-page complaint claiming a cover-up of Iran's role in the bombing, which killed 85. Nisman was found shot dead four days after filing the complaint. In late 2017, a judge ruled that Nisman was murdered and did not commit suicide. ([Arutz Sheva](#), Jan. 2, 2019)

**WOMEN'S MARCH EVENT CANCELED OVER CONCERNS OF BEING 'OVERWHELMINGLY WHITE'** (San Francisco) — Organizers of a Women's March rally slated for Northern California next month have canceled the event, saying they were concerned that participants would have been "overwhelmingly white." Organizers for the march in Eureka - about 270 miles north of San Francisco - said the "decision was made after many conversations between local social-change organizers and supporters of the march...Up to this point, the participants have been overwhelmingly white, lacking representation from several perspectives in our community." ([Fox News](#), Dec. 30, 2018)

**ISRAELI TOURISM FOR 2018 TOPS RECORDS** (Jerusalem) — 2018 was the best year ever for incoming tourism with 4 million people entering the country injecting NIS 24 billion into the economy. The figures were an increase of approximately 13% on the previous year and 38% on the year before that. Jerusalem was the fastest growing tourist destination in the world in 2018 and was also named between its four "cities to watch" along with Osaka, Porto, and Mumbai. The largest number of tourist to Israel came from the United States (813,500), France (320,000), Russia (303,200), Germany 259,500, Britain about 200,000 and from China (about 100,000). ([Jewish Press](#), Dec. 27, 2018)

**ISRAELI STARTUPS RAISED OVER \$400M IN DECEMBER** (Tel Aviv) — Israeli startups raised over \$400 million in December, according to press releases issued by companies that completed financing rounds. The figure may be more as some companies prefer not to publicize the investments they have received. This sum can be added to the \$4.5 billion that Israeli startups raised in the first nine months of 2018, according to IVC-ZAG as well as the estimated \$1.2 billion raised in October and November. This means that the country's startups have raised a record \$6.1 billion since the start of 2018, easily surpassing last year's record of \$5.24 billion. ([Globes](#), Jan. 1, 2019)

**ISRAEL'S POPULATION NEARS 9 MILLION - INCLUDING 6.6 MILLION JEWS (Tel Aviv) —** Israel's population neared nine million on the eve of the new year. A total of approximately 8,972,000 people lived in Israel as of December 31st. Of those nearly 9 million people, roughly 74.3%, or 6,668,000, are Jews. Approximately 1.88 million, or 20.9% of the population, are Arabs, while 426,000 (4.8% of the total) are neither Jewish nor Arab, and are classified as "Others". ([Arutz Sheva](#), Dec. 31, 2018)

**AMOS OZ, ISRAELI AUTHOR AND PEACE ADVOCATE, DIES AT 79 (Jerusalem) —** Amos Oz, the renowned Israeli author whose work captured the characters and landscapes of his young nation, and who matured into an advocate for peace with the Palestinians, died on Friday. He was 79. Oz began storytelling in his early 20s. He published more than a dozen novels, including "My Michael" and "Black Box," as well as collections of short fiction, works of nonfiction and many essays. His work was translated into more than 35 languages. His acclaimed memoir, "A Tale of Love and Darkness," was first published in Hebrew in 2002 and became an international best seller. ([New York Times](#), Dec. 29, 2018)

### [On Topic Links](#)

**[The Top 10 Best UN Watch Moments of 2018: UNWatch, Dec. 31, 2018](#) —10. One Million Views: Col. Kemp Testifies at UN Urgent Session on Gaza Riots. In May, when the UN Human Rights Council called an Emergency Session on the Gaza border riots—to prejudge Israel as guilty of war crimes in its self-defense against Hamas terrorists—UN Watch invited Colonel Richard Kemp, who had witnessed the events himself, to tell the truth.**

**[Need a Refresher on the War in Afghanistan? Here Are the Basics: Daniel Victor, New York Times, Dec. 21, 2018](#)—Even the most dedicated news junkies can find it difficult to keep up on the war in Afghanistan, now beginning its 18th year.**

**[Mattis Reportedly Quit After Trump Refused to Reverse Syria Decision: Ben Feuerherd, New York Post, Dec. 20, 2018](#)—Defense Secretary Jim Mattis made a last-ditch effort on Thursday to convince President Trump to keep US troops in Syria — and when Trump rebuffed him, the four-star general resigned, The New York Times reported.**

**[Israel's Brain-Gain; No Brain-Drain: Yoram Ettinger, Ettinger Report, Dec. 28, 2018](#)—While Israel's establishment documents net-migration of higher-education**



**WEDNESDAY'S "NEWS OF THE WEEK IN REVIEW"**  
**isranet-publications**  
**Isranet Daily Briefing, January 2, 2019**  
**<https://www.isranet.org/daily-briefing/wednesdays-news-of-the-week-in-review-30/>**

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**Israelis, it fails to document the massive influx of higher-education Olim (Jewish immigrants).**