

Editor's Picks / Highlights of the week from the pages of *Hamodia* daily

HOUSE REPUBLICAN LEADERSHIP STRONGLY SUPPORTS WALLENBERG GOLD MEDAL

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Momentum is building very rapidly in support of the legislation introduced by Representatives Nan Hayworth and Gregory Meeks for the Congressional Gold Medal for legendary Holocaust hero Raoul Wallenberg. The bill that they recently introduced in the United States House of Representatives has already garnered close to 200 co-sponsors in recognition of the upcoming centennial of Wallenberg's birth – a campaign that is being spearheaded by the Raoul Wallenberg Centennial Celebration Commission. According to Ezra Friedlander, CEO of The Friedlander Group and spokesman for the Commission, the goal is to have the "requisite two-thirds of the Congress sponsor the legislation which will lead to the legislation voted on unanimously and presented in 2012, which is being referred to as the Year of Wallenberg in everlasting tribute to a great humanitarian whose unparalleled heroism resulted in his rescue of over 100,000 Jews in the waning days of World War II."

The Wallenberg Commission recently

concluded high-level meetings in Washington, D.C. The delegation met with several U.S. Senators: Frank Lautenberg, Michael Bennet, Bob Corker, Richard Blumenthal, Rober Casey, and Mike Johanns. The delegation was also received by the Republican (Majority) leadership of the House of Representatives including Majority leader Eric Cantor, Majority Whip Kevin McCarthy and Congressman Bob Turner.

The group also met with White House Director of Jewish Outreach Jarrod Bernstein. The Senators and Representatives were all unified in their support of the campaign to award Raoul Wallenberg with a Congressional Gold Medal, one of the two highest medals that can be awarded to a civilian. The participants at these meetings included: Peter Rebenwuzel, whose late father provided canned goods and meat to the Jews in the Budapest Ghetto; Erol User, who flew in from Istanbul, Turkey; and Patricia Tiffany, who represented Flushing Bank, an official corporate sponsor of the educational activities of the Wallenberg Commission.



L-R: Wallenberg Commission Board Member Erol User; Majority Leader Eric Cantor; Wallenberg Commission Board Member Peter Rebenwuzel; Ezra Friedlander, CEO, The Friedlander Group.

SANTORUM: CONVENTION WOULD GIVE ME GOP NOMINATION

BILOXI, Miss. (AP) – Though Gov. Mitt Romney has a commanding lead in the crucial race for delegates to the national convention, Santorum told reporters a day before Alabama and Mississippi's presidential primaries that his standing in the race will improve if conservatives coalesce behind him – and if Newt Gingrich exits the race soon.

"People of Mississippi and Alabama want a conservative. ... If they want a conservative nominee for sure, they can do that by lining up behind us and making this race clearly a two-person race outside of the South," he said.

At the current pace, Santorum and Gingrich won't come close to catching Romney. Their only chance at winning the nomination is to keep Romney from collecting the needed delegates, then forcing a fight at the convention in Tampa, Fla., in late August.

But conservatives so far have failed to

unite, because Santorum and Gingrich continue to splinter the anti-Romney vote.

Santorum suggested Gingrich's appeal was limited to the South and, by contrast, said he had mounted strong efforts from coast to coast. He also hinted that Romney's inability to connect with voters in deeply conservative states should give the party reason to worry about his appeal in a head-to-head contest with President Barack Obama.

"They are not going to nominate a moderate Massachusetts governor who's been outspending his opponent 10-1 and can't win the election outright," Santorum said on NBC. "What chance do we have in a general election if he can't, with an overwhelming money advantage, be able to deliver any kind of knockout blow to other candidates?"

"We're going to be the nominee," Santorum said, adding later. "Gov. Romney will not make it."

JAPAN MARKS ONE YEAR SINCE TSUNAMI

RIKUZENTAKATA, Japan (AP) – For 70-year-old Toshiko Murakami, memories of the terrifying earthquake and tsunami that destroyed much of her seaside town and swept away her sister brought fresh tears, exactly a year after the disaster.

"My sister is still missing, so I can't find peace within myself," she said before attending a ceremony in a tent in Rikuzentakata marking the anniversary of the March 11, 2011, disaster that killed just over 19,000 people and unleashed the world's worst nuclear crisis in a quarter-century.

Across Japan, people paused at 2:46

p.m. – the moment the magnitude-9.0 quake struck a year ago – for moments of silence, prayer and reflection on the enormous losses suffered and monumental tasks ahead.

Japan must rebuild dozens of ravaged coastal communities, shut down the crippled Fukushima Dai-Ichi nuclear power plant, and decontaminate radiated land so it is inhabitable again.

These are enormous burdens on a country already straining under the weight of an aging, shrinking population, bulging national debt, and an economy that has been stagnant for two decades.

INTERNATIONAL PUSH TO END SYRIA CRISIS STALLS

BEIRUT (AP) – An international push to end Syria's conflict stalled as UN envoy Kofi Annan left Damascus without a cease-fire and President Bashar Assad's forces pounded opposition areas and clashed with rebels throughout the country.

Western and Arab powers are struggling for ways to stem the bloodshed in the year-old conflict, while both the regime and the opposition reject dialogue. Former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan appeared to make little progress during two visits with Assad during his first trip to Syria as the joint UN-Arab League envoy.

Annan was seeking an immediate cease-fire to allow for humanitarian aid and the start of a dialogue between all parties toward a political solution. After meeting with Assad, Annan said he had presented steps to ease the crisis, but gave no details.

"Once it's agreed, it will help launch the process and help end the crisis on the ground," he told reporters. He called for "reforms that will create a strong foundation for a democratic Syria – a peaceful, stable, pluralistic and prosperous society, based on the rule of law and respect for human rights."

ARREST IN THREATENING LETTERS SENT TO CONGRESS

PORTLAND, ORE. (AP) – A 39-year-old man charged in connection with threatening letters containing white powder that were sent to members of Congress and some media organizations was arrested Friday.

Investigators said Christopher Lee Carlson was indicted on two criminal counts arising out of an investigation into the mailing of about 100 envelopes containing white powder.

The letters, postmarked in Portland, Oregon, so far have all tested negative for toxic substances, the U.S. Attorney's

office in Portland said.

A federal grand jury indictment that was returned Friday in Portland charged Carlson, described as being from the Portland-Vancouver, Wash., area.

The U.S. Capitol Police said in a statement that Carlson was arrested at a home in the Portland area.

Carlson was charged with one count of mailing a threatening communication to a member of Congress. House Speaker John Boehner (R-Ohio) was referenced by name.

U.S. AND RUSSIA CLASH OVER SYRIA AT U.N.

UNITED NATIONS (AP) – The United States and Russia clashed over Syria at the U.N. yesterday after Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon urged the divided Security Council to speak with one voice and help the Mideast nation "pull back from the brink of a deeper catastrophe."

Washington and Moscow both called for an end to the bloody yearlong conflict – but on different terms.

Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said if the priority is to immediately end any violence and provide humanitarian aid to the Syrian people "then at this stage we should not talk about who was the first to start, but rather discuss realistic and feasible approaches which would

allow (us) to achieve the cease-fire as a priority." Russia, which is Syria's most powerful ally, and China have vetoed two U.S. and European-backed Security Council resolutions.

In the end, the Arab League and Lavrov agreed on a plan: an immediate cease-fire, a clause preventing foreign intervention, assurances about humanitarian aid, an impartial monitoring mechanism and an endorsement of the mission by former U.N. chief Kofi Annan, the new U.N.-Arab League special envoy to Syria.

Annan left Syria on Sunday without a deal to end the conflict, while regime forces mounted a new assault on rebel strongholds in the north.