

**Middle East Notes,
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
November 2, 2017**



Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

[Read previous weeks' Middle East Notes](#)

Editor's note: *Middle East Notes* will be available on the first Thursday of each month and will offer four or five pertinent articles with commentary and links. During the interim weeks between monthly issues, special *Middle East Notes Alerts* will be available to all on our electronic mailing list. These alerts will consist of one article of special interest with a brief commentary.

The four featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East focus on Israeli Governments “creeping annexation” of the West Bank; the Women Wage Peace March in Israel with no mention of the occupation; the recent reconciliation agreement signed between Hamas and Fatah which will not be a successful national unity accord until the interests of the Palestinian people become a priority above factional agendas; reflections on British colonialism and the Balfour Agreement.

Commentary: The 100 years since the publication of the Balfour Agreement have seen the growth of Zionism, the establishment of the State of Israel, and the unsuccessful attempts to remove all Palestinians from what has become a de-facto apartheid bi-national Israel. Israeli Jews still hoping for an end to the constant conflict with the Palestinians, and with most of the Arab Nations and world-wide Islam, still seem unwilling and unable to begin a true peace process by ending the violence of military occupation. The Palestinians still working for a State of their own are tired of their factional Fatah/Hamas leadership and are demanding a unified leadership that gives priority to their needs and an ending of Israeli oppression by non-violent means. Both Israelis and Palestinians are tired of their unending conflict and of the incompetence of their leaders to achieve a just and lasting peace.

- Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man states in *+972 Magazine* that a proposed law to ‘annex’ dozens of settlements to Jerusalem is just one step toward normalizing a reality that has been in the making for decades.
- Orly Noy reflects in her article in *+972 Magazine* that a recent rally organized by ‘Women Wage Peace’ may have looked momentous, yet it ignored 50 years of military occupation, all while recycling the same old tropes about the role of women in violent conflicts.
- Ramzy Baroud states in *Ma’an News* that the reconciliation agreement signed between rival Palestinian parties, Hamas and Fatah, in Cairo on October 12 was not a national unity accord -- at least, not yet. For the latter to be achieved, the agreement would have to make the interests of the Palestinian people a priority, above factional agendas.
- Gideon Levy writes in *Haaretz* that British colonialism prepared the way for Israeli colonialism, even if it didn’t intend for it to continue for a 100 years and more.
- Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins
- Book recommendations

1) ['Creeping annexation' is a distraction from the one-state reality](#), Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man, +972 Mag, October 27, 2017

“There is not a single Israeli politician today calling for the wholesale annexation of the West Bank. The number of politicians working to advance piecemeal annexation, however, is growing by the day.

“Take the proposed Greater Jerusalem law, making its way through Israel’s parliament at the moment. The bill, which would extend Jerusalem’s municipal umbrella over dozens of West Bank settlements along with well over 100,000 settlers, wouldn’t really annex the settlements to Jerusalem. In a way, it actually does the reverse: it annexes Jerusalem to the settlements.

“While the new ‘residents’ would be given a right to vote in Jerusalem municipal elections in order to achieve an astounding feat of gerrymandering, their existing settlement municipalities will actually remain intact — subject to Israeli military law, as opposed to Israeli civilian law that applies to Jerusalem and the illegally annexed eastern half of the city.

“In other words, the drafters of this law were careful to ensure that it doesn’t qualify as either formal or de facto annexation, irrespective of what its reality looks like on the ground.

“And that’s the point.

“The proponents of annexation within the Israeli establishment understand perfectly well that the world isn’t ready to accept the formal annexation of the West Bank right now.” ...

“That is what people mean when they talk about ‘creeping annexation’: when the drive toward annexation happens so slowly and incrementally, in a way that that no single step appears all that significant, it’s incredibly difficult to remember where we started and how far we’ve come.” ...

“Israel has been the only acting sovereign between the river and the sea for more than 50 years now. Annexation, *de facto* or *de jure*, creeping or sweeping, is the inevitable trajectory of the policies and ideology that have come to define both sides of the political map in Israel today. For nearly a decade Israel has had a prime minister who repeatedly vows to never withdraw its troops and settlements from the West Bank, and now the leader of the only viable opposition party is pledging the same.

“That we are living in a one-state reality — and have been for a long time — should no longer be a theoretical question, irrespective of what we call it. The question that really matters is where things go from here.”

See also: [Ashrawi: Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank amounts to war crimes](#)

2) [How can women 'wage peace' without talking about occupation?](#) Orly Noy, +972Mag, October 13, 2017

“I arrived early and with many reservations to the rally organized by ‘Women Wage Peace’ in Jerusalem’s Independence Park this past week. It was the culmination of a two-week ‘Journey to Peace,’ in which thousands of Israeli and Palestinian women marched through Israel and the West Bank to demand a peaceful resolution to the conflict. I had been following the group since it was formed after the 2014 Gaza war. On the one hand, a mass movement of women in support of peace is a welcome change. On the other hand, what are they actually saying? And even more importantly: what are they *not* saying? How can it be that the word occupation is entirely absent from a group that aims to end the conflict?” ...

“This was the decision that was made,’ she responded evasively. When I asked once more whether or not it bothers her, she said, ‘of course it bothers me. It bothers me as a woman, as a Palestinian, as an Israeli, but this is what they decided. That we must speak about the future, we’ve already spoken plenty about the past.’ But the occupation is not the past, I insisted. It is very much the present. ‘You’re right, but what can we do? Keep sitting at home? We need to do something to change reality.’”

“That pesky word:

“In fact, the movement’s demands are so unclear that even Netanyahu could join if he were so inclined. Its demands can be summed up as such: peace negotiations that include women. That’s it. But what will these women say when they sit around the negotiating table? What are their demands? Their red lines? It’s a mystery. Even the Palestinian speaker — the only one who came from the occupied territories, from Hebron, a city that lives under apartheid — did not mention the word occupation even once. She did not even speak in Arabic, for God’s sake, but rather in English. Not a word about the checkpoints or the hardship she endured just to get a permit from the Israeli army to enter Israel. Occupation? Forget it. We are talking about the conflict — a much nicer, more symmetrical word than occupation.”

See also: [Opinion It’s Women Who Will Make an Arab-Jewish Peace. Because Peace Scares Men](#)

3) [Analysis: Hamas and Fatah Must Transform to speak on behalf of Palestinians](#) Ramzy Baroud, Ma’an News, October 24, 2017

“The reconciliation agreement signed between rival Palestinian parties, Hamas and Fatah, in Cairo on October 12 was not a national unity accord -- at least, not yet. For the latter to be achieved, the agreement would have to make the interests of the Palestinian people a priority, above factional agendas. The leadership crisis in Palestine is not new. It precedes Fatah and Hamas by decades.”...

“The Oslo Accords, however, was the demise of that movement. Historians may quarrel on whether Arafat, the PLO and its largest political party, Fatah, had any other option but to engage in the so-called ‘peace process’. However, in retrospect, we can surely argue that Oslo was the abrupt cancelation of every Palestinian political achievement, at least since the war of 1967.”...

“The PLO’s attempt to hijack the Intifada was one of the main reasons why the uprising eventually faltered. The Madrid talks in 1991 was the first time that true representatives of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Territories would take on an international platform to speak on behalf of Palestinians at home.

“That endeavor was short-lived. Eventually, Arafat and Mahmoud Abbas (today’s head of the Palestinian Authority - PA) negotiated an alternative agreement secretly in Oslo. The agreement, largely sidelined the United Nations and allowed the United States to claim its position as a self-proclaimed ‘honest broker’ in a US-sponsored ‘peace process.’”...

“Officially, Palestinians had two governments, but no state. It was a mockery, that a promising national liberation project abandoned liberation and focused mostly on settling factional scores, while millions of Palestinians suffered siege and military occupation, and millions more suffered the anguish and humiliation of ‘shattat’ – the exile of the refugees abroad.

“Many attempts were made, and failed to reconcile between the two groups in the last 10 years. They failed mostly because, once more, the Palestinian leaderships leased their decision-making to regional and international powers. The golden age of the PLO was replaced with the dark ages of factional divisions.

“However, the recent reconciliation agreement in Cairo is not an outcome of a new commitment to a Palestinian national project. Both Hamas and Fatah are out of options. Their regional politicking was a failure, and their political program ceased to impress Palestinians who are feeling orphaned and abandoned.

“For the Hamas-Fatah unity to become a true national unity, priorities would have to change entirely, where the interest of the Palestinian people - all of them, everywhere - would, once more, become paramount, above the interests of a faction or two, seeking limited legitimacy, fake sovereignty and American handouts.

See also:

[Analysis: What Is Behind the Hamas-Fatah Reconciliation?](#)

[Opinion Reconciliation in Gaza Provides Israel With an Opportunity](#)

[Israel Says Will Not Negotiate With Palestinian Government Supported by Hamas](#)

[Fatah-Hamas reconciliation: Both a challenge and an opportunity](#)

4) [Opinion Balfour’s Original Sin](#) Gideon Levy, Haaretz, October 28, 2017

“There was never anything like it: an empire promising a land that it had not yet conquered to a people not living there, without asking the inhabitants. There’s no other way to describe the unbelievable colonialist temerity that cries out from every letter in the Balfour Declaration, now marking its centenary.” ...

“The Balfour Declaration could have been a just document if it had pledged equal treatment of both the people who dreamed of the land and the people dwelling there. But Britain preferred the dreamers, hardly any of whom lived in the country, over its inhabitants who had lived there for hundreds of years and were its absolute majority, and preferred to give them no national rights.”...

“Not only was the State of Israel born as a result of the declaration, so was the policy toward “the non-Jewish communities” as stated in the letter by Lord Arthur James Balfour to Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild. The discrimination against the Arabs of Israel and the occupation of the Palestinians are the direct continuation of the letter. British colonialism prepared the way for Israeli colonialism, even if it didn’t intend for it to continue for a 100 years and more.” ...

“Whatever the motive was, following the Balfour Declaration, more Jews immigrated to this country. Immediately on their arrival they acted like overlords, and they haven’t changed their attitude toward the non-Jewish inhabitants to this day. Balfour let them do this. Not by chance did a small group of Sephardi Jews living in Palestine oppose Balfour and seek equality with the Arabs, as Ofer Aderet wrote in Haaretz on Friday. And not by chance were they silenced.

“Balfour let the Jewish minority take over the country, callously ignoring the national rights of another people that had lived in the land for generations.” ...

“On the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the nationalist right should bow its head in thanksgiving to the person who originated Jewish superiority in this country, Lord Balfour. Palestinians and the Jews who seek justice should mourn. If he hadn’t formulated his declaration the way he did, maybe this country would be different and more just.”

See also:

[The Alternative Balfour Declaration The Jews in Pre-state Israel Who Called for a Binational State](#)

[Opinion Balfour Declaration’s Legacy Is Toxic for Both Israelis and Palestinians](#)

[Who wrote the Balfour Declaration and why: The World War I Connection](#)

5) Churches for Middle East (CMEP) Bulletins

- Oct 13, 2017 - [\[Bulletin\] Palestinian Breakthrough in Cairo](#)
- Oct 20, 2017 - [\[Bulletin\] Israel Hosts U.S. Christian Journalists](#)
- October 27, 2017 [\[Bulletin\] Women Wage Peace: A Bridge in a Divided Land](#)

[Click here](#) for other excellent sources of information and links to articles concerning the State of Israel and the Palestinian people.

6) Book recommendations:

[***Not by Might, nor by Power: The Zionist Betrayal of Judaism***](#), written by Moshe Menuhin, with a new introduction by Adi Ophir, Mondoweiss. Originally published as “The Decadence of Judaism in Our Time”, Exposition Press, 1965; Forbidden Bookshelf, 2017. Available as an ebook via [Kindle](#) for \$9.99.

[***State Of Terror, How terrorism created modern Israel***](#), written by Thomas Suárez, Interlink, 2016.

Endorsement: **Ilan Pappé**, Historian, Author, and Professor, University of Exeter: “A tour de force, based on diligent archival research that looks boldly at the impact of Zionism on Palestine and its people in the first part of the 20th century. The book is the first comprehensive and structured analysis of the violence and terror employed by the Zionist movement and later the state of Israel against the people of Palestine. Much of the suffering we witness today can be explained by, and connected to, this formative period covered thoroughly in this book.”