

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
November 3, 2016



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The six featured articles and the many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the speech by B'Tselem chairman Hagai El-Ad at the United Nations Security Council stating that 'The occupation must end'; Netanyahu's fear of *any challenge to the integrity and permanence of the settlement enterprise and its shield, the occupation, such as B'Tselem and Peace Now; the demise of the two-state solution and the need for both Israelis and Palestinians to recognize that they have reached a stalemate; the Israeli condemnation of a UNESCO resolution that strongly condemned Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinians territory; the words of the women in the March of Hope organized by Women Wage Peace in Jerusalem, after thousands of Israeli and Palestinian women walked for two weeks to demand under the slogan "We won't stop until there's a political agreement" between Israel and the Palestinians; the total disinterest generated in Israel in the case with every killing of Palestinians; and other articles of interest.*

Commentary: The Israeli settlement program, permanence of the occupation and the obvious demise of the two state solution, all point to the remaining two "solutions" to the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Neither one of which is acceptable to the majority of Israelis and Palestinians.

The first option: continuation of the present status quo of military occupation, expansion of settlements, isolation of Gaza and eventual annexation of the West Bank, although seemingly the present policy of the Israeli government, is totally unacceptable to the Palestinians, the US and most of the nations of the world. It is unsustainable, unjust, and will only lead to escalation of the conflict and of the pain and suffering of both Palestinians and Israelis.

The second option: mutation of the present, de-facto reality of Israeli control of both populations between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River into a mutually acceptable bi-national state in which Israelis and Palestinians have full democratic rights and responsibilities. Such a bi-national state, while acceptable to some Palestinians, is totally rejected by the majority of Israelis. Most nations of the world however would recognize a binational "Israel" in which all its citizens have equal democratic participation in government.

Without Israeli promotion and acceptance of a viable two state solution, there does not seem to be any other options.

- An editorial by Haaretz supports the speech by B'Tselem chairman Hagai El-Ad at the United Nations Security Council stating that 'The occupation must end' — that's the flag that must unite Israel's opposition."
- Bradley Burston writes in Haaretz that lately, Netanyahu seems to be threatened by a lack of external threats. Which brings us back to his deepest fear: any challenge to the integrity and permanence of the settlement enterprise and its shield, the occupation, such as that of B'Tselem and Peace Now.
- Talal Jabari writes in the +972 Blog that the two-state solution is dead and it's time for both Israelis and Palestinians to recognize that they have reached a stalemate: nobody is leaving, and the status quo just isn't pragmatic.

- Ma'an News reports of a new version of a UNESCO resolution that strongly condemned Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinian territory, was approved after widespread uproar from Israel and its supporters claimed that the previous text denied Jewish ties to the location of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem's Old City.
- Noa Osterreicher writes in Haaretz that last week the March of Hope organized by Women Wage Peace ended in Jerusalem, after thousands of Israeli and Palestinian women walked for two weeks to demand under the slogan "We won't stop until there's a political agreement" between Israel and the Palestinians.
- Gideon Levy in Haaretz notes that Khaled Bahar's blood cries out from the total disinterest his killing generated in Israel, as is the case with every killing of Palestinians, but no one in Israel hears it.

1. [Editorial We Are All B'Tselem Head Hagai El-Ad, Haaretz Editorial, October 23, 2016](#)

"'The occupation must end' — that's the flag that must unite Israel's opposition. Those who don't wave it are helping make the status quo in the territories permanent.

"The speech by B'Tselem chairman Hagai El-Ad at the United Nations Security Council should be the updated platform of the opposition, in response to Benjamin Netanyahu's government of occupation and annexation. El-Ad touched the heart of the matter: The occupation must end. Forty-nine years of Palestinian misery and repression, and the insatiable expansion of Israeli settlements, must end. There is no more important national matter, and there is no other matter worthy of the opposition's attention. Everyone should repeat just one thing: It's time to end the occupation.

"'What about the many 'ordinary' days of a 17,898-day-long occupation, which is still going strong?' El-Ad asked. 'Living under military rule mostly means invisible, bureaucratic, daily, violence. It means living under an endless permit regime, which controls Palestinian life from cradle to grave: Israel controls the population registry; Israel controls work permits; Israel controls who can travel abroad — and who cannot; Israel controls who can visit from abroad — and who cannot; in some villages, Israel maintains lists of who can visit the village, or who is allowed to farm which fields. Permits can sometimes be denied; permits must always be renewed.'

"The conclusion is clear: 'Israel's long-term project to maximize its benefits from Palestinian land while minimizing the nuisance of Palestinian presence there has become even more palpable than perhaps ever before. Admittedly, even just half a day spent in the West Bank has long been more than enough to realize the permanence sought for the enterprise that Israeli governments right, center, and left have been advancing there since 1967.'" ...

"'The occupation must end' — that's the flag that must unite the opposition. Those who don't wave it are helping make the status quo in the territories permanent."

See also link A - [Israel, U.S. Spar Over Human Rights Organization B'Tselem at UN Security Council](#)

2. [Opinion As an Israeli, B'Tselem and Peace Now Protect Me. Who Will Protect Them?, Bradley Burston, Haaretz, October 25, 2016](#)

"At least once a month, I thank God for B'Tselem. For Peace Now as well. Their people seek out, compile and publish facts and figures which nobody wants to hear. On subjects which make everyone uncomfortable. Like the occupation and settlements. I know that I don't want to hear them. But I need to. As Israelis, we all do. I could give you ten reasons why, but let's start with this one:

“Sooner or later, what you don't know will hurt you. That's one reason why NGOs like B'Tselem and Peace Now are so valuable. In working for rights for Palestinians, in revealing what is actually going on behind this wall or that, they are a last defense of what is so valuable and so fragile in Israeli democracy.” ...

“Branding B'Tselem and Peace Now ‘fly-by-night and delusional’ organizations which “subvert democratic principles and which slander the Jewish State and the brave soldiers defending it,” Netanyahu then went into an extended Facebook harangue about how ‘The democratic process is sacred,’ but that the NGOs having aired their opinions abroad was ‘anti-democratic’

“The prime minister seems to have missed the part of Friedman's speech where she described herself as ‘someone who proudly and unapologetically cares about Israel and defends its existence.’

“Israel – Occupation = Democracy.

“Israel + Occupation = Apartheid.” ...

“I've lived here a long time. I've yet to meet a single Israeli – not one – who believes that Benjamin Netanyahu will do anything to the occupation except deepen it. I've learned this much: The truly existential threat to Netanyahu's rule is hope. That's why the worst thing he could think of saying about B'Tselem and Peace Now were that they were transient phenomena. Unlike his settlements, which are eternal. Unlike his occupation, which is permanent. Unlike his rule, which is until the end of time.” ...

“Maybe things are finally starting to change. But we're not nearly there yet. In the meantime, as an Israeli, I've come to know that the work that organizations like B'Tselem and Peace Now do protects me. In working for the rights of Palestinians, they are defending the future of democracy for all Israelis.” ...

[3. The two-state solution is dead. Let's move on Talal Jabari, +972 Blog, October 23, 2016](#)

“After all, what is left of Palestine besides the memories and the name, and the former is quickly disappearing as the 70th anniversary of the creation of the State of Israel looms around the corner. To put it realistically, nobody under the age of about 73 remembers life in historic Palestine, and no Palestinians living in the West Bank or Gaza Strip under 55 know what it's like to not live under military occupation. Despite all that, almost all of the nearly 13 million Palestinians living around the world still call it Palestine.” ...

“So does it matter what it is called?

“For over 70 years, Palestinians have been fighting for their existence, for their land, to avenge the killings of loved ones, to improve the quality of their lives, to end the occupation. Palestinians have been fighting for their freedom for over 70 years.

“And what do we have to show for it? An abysmal refugee situation that persists, or rather one that continuously reinvents itself. Hundreds of thousands of others have been sentenced to life in an open-air prison, Gaza, where their daily caloric intake is calculated and regulated by the warden, while that very same warden takes it upon himself to destroy parts of the prison on a regular basis. Hundreds of thousands of others still live as second-class Israeli citizens. Millions more live under two different systems including one in democracy has been permanently suspended out of fear that the ruling tyrants will be defeated by the equally horrible alternative.

“Worst of all, we have young men and women who are desperate, angry, afraid, essentially committing suicide one by one with the far-fetched hope that they’ll take someone down with them. I’m not sure they really think they’re going to liberate Palestine; everyone else knows they don’t stand a chance.

“Meanwhile, settlements expand and the U.S. State Department still warns of the impending death of the two-state solution. My friends, the two-state solution is dead, buried, and it has decomposed almost to the extent of being unidentifiable. The ship has sailed, the horse has bolted, do we really need to keep coming up with more clichéd idioms? It’s time for Israelis and Palestinians to recognize that we’ve reached a stalemate: nobody is leaving where they are right now, and the status quo just isn’t pragmatic.” ...

“I’d rather fight for equal rights in the courtroom and the ballot boxes, for a balanced immigration policy where Palestinians can apply and have a chance to live in their ancestral homeland which is now called Israel, but which we will continue in our hearts and in our minds call Palestine. It’s time to demilitarize, is time to disband the police state, it’s time to bring down the wall.

“It’s time for us to stop giving Israel the excuse that we’re fighting it when the overwhelming majority stopped fighting years ago. As the situation stands today, we’re only giving the Israeli government an excuse to continue and even worsen its collective punishment. I sincerely appreciate the dozens of countries voting to recognize Palestine, but now it’s time to move on.”

See also link B - [Palestinians seek UN resolution against settlements](#); link C - [Fatah leader: Peace process is dead, Palestinians must boycott Israeli goods](#)

4. Israel still outraged by new 'softened' version of UNESCO resolution, Ma’an News, October 26, 2016

“A new version of a UNESCO resolution that strongly condemned Israeli policies in the occupied Palestinians territory was approved on Wednesday after widespread uproar from Israel and its supporters claimed that the previous text denied Jewish ties to the location of the Al-Aqsa Mosque compound in East Jerusalem’s Old City.

“The resolution was backed by ten World Heritage Committee members states, opposed by two, with eight abstaining. However, Israeli media sites reported that the revised version continued to “ignore Judaism’s connection” to the holy site, as the text still only referred to the compound by its Arabic and Muslim names -- Al-Aqsa or al-Haram al-Sharif -- and not as the Temple Mount as it is known to Jews. Amid the uproar, the issues raised in the resolution itself regarding several Israeli policies against Palestinians at the holy site have largely fallen to the wayside.

“As a Palestinian representative to UNESCO put it after the initial text was approved, the resolution was “about occupation, not about a name,” asserting that the Geneva Conventions required the site be referred to by the name that predated Israel’s illegal occupation of East Jerusalem in 1967.” ...

“Meanwhile, the PLO voiced its support for the resolution in a statement Wednesday saying that, “Contrary to what the Israeli government claims, the resolution that was voted by UNESCO aims at reaffirming the importance of Jerusalem for the three monotheistic religions,” adding that Al-Aqsa ‘continues to be threatened by the systematic incitement and provocative actions of the Israeli government and extremist Jewish groups.’

““Through an orchestrated campaign, Israel has been using archaeological claims and distortion of facts as a way to legitimize the annexation of Occupied East Jerusalem,’ the statement added.” ...

5. [Opinion A Black Curtain Falls Over Netanyahu's Rule, Noa Osterreicher, Haaretz, October 26, 2016](#)

“Last week the March of Hope organized by Women Wage Peace ended in Jerusalem, after thousands of Israeli and Palestinian women walked for two weeks to demand under the slogan ‘We won’t stop until there’s a political agreement’ between Israel and the Palestinians.

“The march ended with a rally outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's home, where participants were greeted by a strange sight: A black screen had been stretched across Balfour Street, separating them from the imperial residence. No metaphor here, there was an actual black screen. Obviously the barrier was not just meant to block the marchers from beholding the beauty of the residence, but to hide from its occupants the intolerable sight of citizens protesting peacefully.”

“A black curtain is especially fitting for the man who arranged for the dissolution of the Israel Broadcasting Authority and is now trying to bring down the curtain on the new Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation, known as Kan, even before it goes on the air. It suits the man whose patron, casino tycoon Sheldon Adelson, almost darkened the screens of Israel Channel 10 television in 2011 by threatening to sue for libel; who filed a personal libel suit against an Israeli journalist over a Facebook post and during whose tenure Palestinian and Israeli-Arab citizens Facebook users have been arrested for posts that are little different from those of right-wing Jewish extremists. ...

“The black screen is appropriate to a prime minister who spends huge sums to address the United Nations (6.7 million shekels, or \$1.74 million for one week in New York), but who sics his supporters on the director of B’Tselem who addressed a UN conference (without using taxpayers’ money); who make personal attacks on investigative journalists; who puts Israeli history through a meat grinder and removes it distorted and bent so as to memorialize his late father and his late brother.” ...

See also: link D - [Women’s Peace Group to Hold Vigil Outside Knesset for Duration of Winter Session](#)

6. [Opinion Khaled Bahar’s Blood Cries Out, but No One in Israel Hears It, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, October 27, 2016](#)

... “The blood of Khaled Bahar cries out. It cries out almost audibly from the ground on which he fell, in the shade of the apricot trees, where a black stain of congealed blood remains alongside a few stones and a bottle of water, put there for a memorial.

“His blood cries out from Room 1207 of the boys’ high school in Beit Ummar, between Bethlehem and Hebron – the classroom of the 10th grade, which this week stayed home from school in mourning. The strike was a spontaneous decision by the students. They laid colorful flower petals on each desk, hung plastic memorial flowers on the walls and on the desk of the deceased placed his last photograph, surrounded by wreaths. Khaled sat there Thursday, just a few hours before an Israeli soldier killed him.

“Khaled’s blood cries out from the deathly silence that shrouds the empty classroom and from the flag in the schoolyard, lowered to half-staff. His blood cries out from the circumstances surrounding his death; a 15-year-old boy whom soldiers chased with their jeep because they suspected that he had thrown stones at their armored vehicle, until three soldiers got out and one shot him in the back from a distance of 20 meters, killing him as he fled desperately for his life.

“His blood cries out from the total disinterest his killing generated in Israel, as is the case with every killing of Palestinians. His blood cries out from the way this teenager, who participated in a Jewish-Arab soccer project, was portrayed as a ‘terrorist.’ It cries out from the automatic, unfeeling response of the Israel Defense Forces Spokesman’s Unit, with its ‘stone-throwing’ and “operational conclusions’ and ‘Military Police investigation’ and ‘the findings will be

submitted to the prosecution.' All of it is whitewashing from the IDF excuse factory; it doesn't contain a word of truth or a modicum of humanity. As for an apology or expression of regret – not a chance, even after the army's own investigation concluded that the soldiers weren't in any kind of danger." ...

"Khaled's blood cries out because it's so clear that no one will be punished for this criminal killing. It cries out because the soldier who killed him has no idea whom he killed and it's doubtful that it interests or disturbs him; it's doubtful that he understands what he did and what was wrong with killing a Palestinian teenager. What's more, no one will bother explaining it to him." ...

"Khaled Bahar's blood cries out, but no one in Israel hears it; the cry of a teenager whose death was a crime – neither the first nor the last."

See also link E – [Haaretz Editorial A License to Kill](#)

Other articles of interest:

A. [Israel, U.S. Spar Over Human Rights Organization B'Tselem at UN Security Council, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, October 19, 2016](#)

After Israeli envoy tells Security Council that UN must stop interfering in Israel's democratic process by funding the NGO, U.S. representative says it is 'vital that all governments protect and create an atmosphere that all voices can be heard.'

B. [Palestinians seek UN resolution against settlements, Edith M. Lederer, The Times of Israel October 20, 2016](#)

The Palestinians urged the U.N. Security Council on Wednesday to adopt a resolution with serious measures to compel Israel to halt all settlement activities and threatening "consequences" if it refuses.

C. [Fatah leader: Peace process is dead, Palestinians must boycott Israeli goods, The Muslim Times, October 25, 2016](#)

International Relations Commissioner for the Fatah movement Nabil Shaath called on Palestinians to begin a full-fledged consumer boycott of Israel in an interview with The Arab Weekly on Tuesday. "A consumer boycott should be the Palestinians' weapon against Israel," the newspaper quoted Shaath as saying. Referring to the decades-long Israeli-Palestinian peace process, which has failed and been revived numerous times, Shaath said Palestinians should "wake up from their dreams of peace," adding that the peace process should be declared dead.

D. [Women's Peace Group to Hold Vigil Outside Knesset for Duration of Winter Session, Ofra Edelman, Haaretz, October 28, 2016](#)

120 members from Women Wage Peace will stand there every week, each one holding a sign with the name of a single Knesset member. The goal, said one of the group's leaders, is to get Israel's 120 lawmakers thinking about peace.

E. [Editorial A License to Kill, Haaretz Editorial, Haaretz, October 30, 2016](#)

By closing the case into the shooting of Palestinian siblings by security guards in Qalandiyah, Jerusalem District Prosecutor's Office gave stamp of approval to hasty trigger fingers.

F. [Opinion Obama: Last Chance to Rectify Your Israeli-Palestinian Peacemaking Failures, Yossi Beilin, Haaretz, October 30, 2016](#)

The election-inauguration window only happens once for every president. Reagan used it to recognize the PLO in 1988, and Clinton for his parameters for peace in 2000. Will Obama follow suit?

- G. [CMEP Bulletin - Human Rights Groups Urge Immediate UN Action on Settlements – October 21, 2016](#)
- H. [CMEP Bulletin - B'Tselem Speaks at the UN and Sparks Internal Israeli Debate – October 28, 2016](#)
- I. [Hamas leaders meet with Abbas in Qatar, present 'complete vision' for reconciliation, Ma'an News, OCT. 30, 2016](#)
Leaders of the Hamas movement announced on Thursday that they had offered Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas a “complete vision” to achieving reconciliation between Hamas and the ruling Fatah movement.
- J. [A Change of Course: Women’s Boat to Gaza Activists Speak Out, Following their Release from Israeli Custody, IMEMC News October 20, 2016](#)
After sailing for several days, the adventure of 13 pro-Palestinian women ended abruptly, when Israeli commandos illegally boarded the Zaytouna-Oliva in international waters, on 5 October, 2016.