

**Middle East Notes,
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
October 5, 2017**



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

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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 Notes focus on the Netanyahu Israeli denial of the occupation, colonial settlement policies, and opposition to a two state solution; the enforcement of these policies by the IDF; the movement of the Palestinians toward a one state/one vote to all people between the Mediterranean and the Jordan; the practically useless Trump initiatives to resolve the Israeli/Palestinian conflict; and timely links from CMEP.

Commentary: Wishful thinking based on reality often promotes creativity and hope; but separated from reality it can promote ignorance and arrogance and ultimately increasing separation from what is obvious to everyone else. It seems that the Israeli leaders and the majority of the people they lead are living an illusion of normality and prosperity sheltered by a glass dome provided by AIPAC and its supporters in the U.S. Congress. There are growing signs of cracks in that glass dome and increasing concern about a future Israel standing on its own in what has already become a one state with no recognition of the rights of half the people living within its yet to be determined boundaries.

Featured articles:

- Gideon Levy writes in *Haaretz* that no other society is living in such a deep state of denial as Israel. That's why there is no chance of change here in 5778.
- Alon Mizrahi in *+972 Blog* records his interview with Ruchama Marton on the occasion of her 80th birthday. Ruchama Marton is the founder of Physicians for Human Rights-Israel. She talks about the atrocities she witnessed as a soldier, the enduring power of feminism, and why only outside help has a chance of ending Israel's military rule over the Palestinians.
- Jack Khoury writes in *Haaretz* that the humanitarian crisis in Gaza and despair in the West Bank in the face of massive settlement construction have left the Palestinian president with few options and his back against the wall.
- Jimmy Carter in an *Associated Press* article states that the Trump Israeli-Palestinian peace efforts are "practically useless." He singles out Benjamin Netanyahu for having 'no intention at all' of bringing about a two-state solution.
- Churches for Middle East (CMEP) Bulletins

1) [Opinion Israelis Are Living in Paradise – and Denial](#) Gideon Levy, Haaretz, September 17, 2017

... “It was a year without war, even during the summer. There may have been soccer defeats, but there was a historic medal in rhythmic gymnastics. Unemployment was down and life expectancy was up. There are construction cranes in Tel Aviv, just like Shanghai. There is no street without a construction project. High-rises are sprouting up, along with traffic circles, tunnels, excavating, paving, expansion, preservation and renovation. The whole country is full of construction dust.

“The café talk is all about the same thing: money. Try and listen. It’s about money in all its forms – how much this and that costs. Prices are sky-high but the protests have fallen flat. Because that’s how it is in paradise when everything is rosy.

“Some are suffering and some are downtrodden, but their voices aren’t heard. The people are exultant; please don’t bother them. Demonstrations are bad. They disturb the neighbors and cause traffic jams. Police investigations, corruption, criminal cases – they’re also bad, but not enough to stir the people. A new gourmet Asian restaurant has just opened and they say it’s fantastic.

“From the outside, it looks unbelievable. From the inside, it looks equally unbelievable. Such a bad year disguised as such a good year. The rot has spread at frightening speed, extending to every field, while the exaltation has increased at the same pace. Democracy is being damaged daily, even for Israeli Jews. There have been more and more crazy decrees, yet Israelis say everything is fine. On International Happiness Day this year, Israel was ranked 11th – between Sweden and Costa Rica. And the United States? Israel is three places higher. What more can we ask?

“It would be so good if it wasn’t so bad. There is no other society living in such deep denial. Israel has never lied to itself like it is doing now. Every package tour and Mini Jeep has only intensified the repression and the blindness. It’s a dance of self-deception, a national orgy of distraction. Those suffering don’t count. Distress is hidden, the rot covered up. And the media participates enthusiastically.

“Few people have any idea what’s going on here at night in the nightclubs. Ask any cabdriver and he’ll tell you. Few also know how horrible the ignorance is among young people, and what this says about the future. Few are concerned by it. Few know what the occupation looks like, and even fewer want to know. Few know where we’re headed, and few want to know. In such a state of affairs, no positive change will take place here. Why should it?

“All of the signs indicate we will be blessed in 5778, just as we have been in the past year. No more prophesies of doom. No more sowing despondency. Israelis are exultant, and Israelis know why.”

2) [War crimes and open wounds: The physician who took on Israeli segregation](#), Alon Mizrahi, +972 Blog, September 12, 2017

“Ruchama Marton belongs to what you might call Generation 1.5 of Israel’s anti-occupation activists. She was slightly too young to belong to the small and avant-garde group that established the revolutionary socialist organization Matzpen in the 1960s, but old enough to have taken classes with firebrand Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz in Jerusalem. There, while at medical school, she revolutionized the admissions process for female students, leading to the abolishing of admissions quotas. And when she discovered there as ban on women wearing trousers at the medical faculty, she revolted against that as well.

“Marton founded Physicians for Human Rights-Israel during the First Intifada, bringing the term “human rights” into the Israeli political discourse. Born in Israel, where she has lived her whole life, she has been an active psychiatrist for more than 40 years. Her relationship with this place is complicated and painful, almost impossible.

“Marton minces no words when it comes to the leftist and peace organizations, which she sees as a kind of “humane society,” seeing little point in activism that does not directly confront the violation of human rights, the core of which are *political* rights.

“She has been outraged by injustice and segregation her whole life. Between fighting chauvinism and patriarchy, and the lifelong struggle against the occupation, she refuses to be silent.” ...

... ““We have to fight the idea of segregation, because it separates between me and the political, between the Arab and his land, between the Arab and his human dignity. Segregation is the wound. It is the axis around which things revolve.’

“Even though Jews brought the idea of segregation here with them. After all, there are all kinds of segregation among the Jews themselves, along ethnic, religious, and political lines.

“There surely is segregation here on all levels. After all, we are divided here into first-class and second-class Jews, and beneath them are Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the Palestinians in the West Bank are even lower. At the very bottom of the ladder are the asylum seekers and the refugees (Physicians for Human Rights holds an ‘Open Clinic’ that provides medical care to refugees and asylum seekers, A.M.).

“Segregation exists within our society as a central political principal. If we cancel segregation, then what? It will be a political disaster for the regime — not just for the Right.

“When I think about what my organization has done — about the trips to Gaza, about handing out medicine out of solidarity, about managing to shatter segregation — that has our biggest achievement.”

See also: [‘A story of survival and rebirth’ The Palestinians Who Didn't Flee During the Nakba](#),

3) [Analysis Palestinian President Abbas Puts One-state Solution on the Table](#), Jack Khoury, Haaretz, September 21, 2017

“Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas’ speech at the United Nations General Assembly on Wednesday was punctuated with anger and frustration. Abbas is aware that his ability to inspire hope in his people – the hope of an independent Palestinian state – is diminishing before his own eyes. This very forum, which applauded Abbas six years ago when he submitted an application for the recognition of Palestine, has since failed to turn its support into facts on the ground.”...

“And yet those who follow developments in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip understand that this game cannot last forever. The siege and humanitarian crisis in Gaza and despair in the West Bank in the face of massive Israeli settlement construction have left the Palestinian president with his back against the wall.

“Abbas and his political circle know very well that a quarter of a century after the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian public has lost hope. Survey results released before Abbas’ visit to New York found that two-thirds of the Palestinian public demands that he resigns. The poll, conducted by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research, headed by Khalil

Shikaki, also found that 57 percent of Palestinians no longer believe in a two-state solution, while 74 percent think the Trump administration is not serious in its intentions to reach a peace agreement.

“The hope Abbas instilled in the international community has also vanished. He made clear that even if the world gives up on the two-state solution, some 6.5 million Palestinians still live between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. In his speech, Abbas implied that they will not disappear, evaporate or be expelled. Instead, they will demand their full rights. Israel, the United States and the international community will have to figure out how to accomplish that.”

See also: [Opinion Netanyahu Is Driving Israel Toward a Binational State](#)

4) [Jimmy Carter: Trump Israeli-Palestinian Peace Efforts Are 'Practically Hopeless'](#) The Associated Press, September 13, 2017

“Former President Jimmy Carter offered a damning indictment of U.S. foreign policy and domestic affairs Tuesday, saying money in politics makes the nation more like an ‘oligarchy than a democracy’ and casting President Donald Trump as a disappointment on the world stage.

“Carter's criticisms, offered at his annual presentation to backers of his post-presidency Carter Center in Atlanta, went beyond Trump, but he was particularly critical of the nation's direction under the Republican president's leadership.” ...

“He also dismissed Trump's optimism that he can engineer Middle East peace. Trump has tasked his son-in-law, Jared Kushner, with handling the issue that has vexed U.S. administrations for generations, but the president notably backed off the long-held U.S. position calling for a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians. Carter said he is "practically hopeless" that anything Trump comes up with would give ‘justice to the Palestinians.’ ‘I don't think Trump or his family members are making any process in that respect,’ he said. Carter criticized both Israeli and Palestinian leaders for a lack of flexibility, but he singled out Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a Trump ally, for having ‘no intention at all of having a two-state solution.’” ...

See also: [Editorial The Gates Are Closing on the Two-state Solution](#)

5) Churches for Middle East (CMEP) Bulletins

September 15, 2017 - [\[Bulletin\] Human Rights and the PA?](#)

September 29, 2017 - [\[Bulletin\] Settlements: An Enduring Flash Point](#)

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