

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
September 22, 2016

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The six featured articles and the many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on Netanyahu's attempt to legalize settlements; accusations of "ethnic cleansing"; calls for an Israeli referendum on the future of the occupation; growing divisions among Israelis on the continuation of the occupation, U.S. financial aid to Israel; and various links to other articles of interest, including 6 links (J to O) to other articles in the Israeli and U.S. press concerning this financial aid.

Commentary: Settlements, occupation, ethnic cleansing, divisions within the Israeli and Palestinian populations, "a single Jewish state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea", U.S. financial aid, are the key words in the articles and links below. The recently agreed upon 38 billion dollars from U.S. taxpayers to Israel over the next 10 years is being questioned and challenged. It is commonly believed that this secure financial aid, at the cost of some \$300 annually to each American tax payer, is directly and indirectly helping to finance settlements, the occupation and the obliteration of any hope for a future Palestinian state. The Obama administration continues to promote a two state solution while seemingly financing the opposite: a binational one state of Israel. Such contradictory confusion only seems to be prolonging this too long a conflict between the Israelis and Palestinians, and to be fueling radical and terrorist elements in the "middle east".

- Lara Friedman in the [Times of Israel](#) writes that It seems there is no line Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won't cross to defend settlements. Israeli law says settlers can't steal Israeli-recognized Palestinian private land for their own purposes. Netanyahu leaves no principle of rule of law unchallenged in the effort to "legalize" the settlers' actions.
- Bradley Burston notes in [Haaretz](#) that now is one of those times when standing up for Israel means having the guts, the pride, the concern and the passion to say, right out loud: ethnic cleansing; Not In My Name.
- Odeh Bisharat states in [Haaretz](#) that the campaign that calls for a referendum (Deciding on the 50th) on the future of the occupation is an affront to Palestinians.
- Jonathan Cook wonders in the [National](#) whether Israel is on the verge of civil war, as a growing number of Israeli commentators suggest, with its Jewish population deeply riven over the future of the occupation.
- Ehud Barak writes in the [Washington Post](#) that during the past two years, a sense of gloom has taken over his country as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu enabled a militant, nationalist minority to carry out a hostile takeover of his party, Likud; to form a majority in his cabinet; and thus to hijack our national agenda in the service of a messianic drive toward, as it's often put, "a single Jewish state, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea."
- Barak Ravid writes in [Haaretz](#) that one of the most significant disputes during the bilateral negotiations related to the America demand to stop the arrangement that allowed Israel to spend some 40 percent of the American aid to buy equipment from Israeli defense industries and to buy fuel for the IDF.

1) [Bibi, Settlements & the "Ethnic Cleansing" Canard, Lara Friedman, Times of Israel, September 12, 2016](#)

"It seems there is no line Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu won't cross to defend settlements. Israeli law says settlers can't steal Israeli-recognized Palestinian private land for their own purposes? Netanyahu leaves no principle of rule of law unchallenged in the effort to "legalize" the settlers' actions. The boycott-divestment-sanctions (BDS) movement challenges Israel's legitimacy? Netanyahu jumps on the chance to exploit the BDS threat to legitimize settlements, accusing anyone who differentiates between Israel and settlements of embracing BDS (and accusing Israel's closest allies of adopting policies similar to those of the Nazis). The Palestinians – and virtually the entire world – argue that settlements are an obstacle to peace and will need to be removed? Last week, Netanyahu releases a video accusing them of supporting ethnic cleansing." . . .

"A reminder: The Israeli population of the West Bank in June 1967 was zero. Since 1967, that population has grown to hundreds of thousands of Israelis — not out of any natural forces but out of a combination of political-religious ideology and Israeli government policies, both seeking to displace Palestinians and take control over as much of the land as possible." . . .

"Then, there is the final argument, a favorite of Netanyahu: 'But there are Arabs living inside Israel!' This is absolutely true. Arab citizens live alongside and (in theory, if not always in practice) as equals to Israel's Jewish citizens. This diversity and equality within Israel — a key facet of Israeli democracy — is something for which Israelis and supporters of Israel justifiably feel pride. And it stands in stark contrast to the situation in the West Bank and East Jerusalem — a situation that can only be a source of shame and outrage.

"For nearly 50 years, Israeli settlers have acted, and been treated by Israel, as a super-class. They are afforded not only the rights of Israeli citizens but granted the special privileges of a favored minority to which Israeli politicians pander." . . .

"One day, when there is peace and a Palestinian state established alongside Israel, we can all hope that Palestine will be welcoming to people of all faiths. If it is not, we can work to change that. Until then, the settlements are and will remain an obstacle to peace — not because their inhabitants are Jewish, but because that was what the settlements were always intended to be."

See also links A - [Settlement Withdrawal And "Ethnic Cleansing"](#); link B - [U.S. condemns Netanyahu's charge that Palestinians want to 'ethnically cleanse' Jews from West Bank](#); link C - [Netanyahu is right: Settlements aren't the biggest obstacle to peace](#); link D - [Abbas says Israel, not Palestinians, committing 'ethnic cleansing'](#); link E - [Netanyahu's 'Ethnic Cleansing' Video Pushes Obama Closer to UN Security Council](#); link F - [Opinion Palestinians, Not Israeli Settlers, Are Victims of Ethnic Cleansing](#); link G - [Opinion Yes, Netanyahu, Let's Talk About Ethnic Cleansing](#)

2) [Standing Up for Israel Means Saying 'Not In My Name', Bradley Burston, Haaretz, September 13, 2016](#)

"It began hours before Benjamin Netanyahu effectively took the advice of senior Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, who according to The Washington Post, told the prime minister to "tell the administration to go F themselves."

"It had already begun Friday morning, long before anyone had heard the prime minister in his pre-Shabbat Facebook post, implicitly accuse the White House - and the majority of North American Jews and anyone else who supports a two-state solution - of supporting war crimes in a theoretical, and, in fact, wholly disingenuous, future "ethnic cleansing" offensive against West Bank settlers.

"No one has to take this anymore. No one has to accept that lies and quarter-truths and bigotry and demagoguery do Israel any good. The opposite is true. And Israelis and their supporters abroad are starting to raise their voices, some of them from unexpected quarters, standing up to lance the steadily inflating gasbags of propaganda." . . .

"It's an indication of this time of madness, that the most telling response to Netanyahu's charge of Palestinian ethnic cleansing, came – inadvertently to be sure - from none other than Netanyahu's Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman.

"Speaking Monday at Ariel University, the pride and joy of Samaria settlers, Lieberman called on Netanyahu to support his plan for "land swaps" involving Palestinian citizens of Israel and West Bank settlers in the context of a future two state agreement.

"'Why do the [largely Arab area of the] Triangle and Umm al-Fahm need to be part of Israel?' Yedioth Ahronoth quoted Lieberman as saying. 'Why should I need to subsidize [militant Israeli Arab preacher] Raed Salah and pay a salary to [radical Palestinian Israeli MK] Haneen Zoabi?'

"'I see no reason why the prime minister should not adopt the principle of land swaps.'

"Did someone say ethnic cleansing? Have a good look in the mirror."

See also link H - [J Street Calls on Treasury Dept. to Review Tax-deductibility Status of Pro-settlement Groups](#),

3) [Opinion Should Israelis Determine the Fate of Conquered Palestinian Lands? Odeh Bisharat, Haaretz, September 12, 2016](#)

"The organizers of a petition called 'Deciding on the 50th' wish to hold a referendum on the fate of the occupation without ever mentioning that word." . . .

"Not only is the word 'occupation' missing from the text coined by its adversaries, but so is Palestinian land, termed in their lexicon "territories." What does "territories" mean? Does this refer to a nature reserve with extinct creatures? Not mentioning the name of millions of people is highly insensitive. The petition's organizers are ashamed to mention the name of the people they intend to make peace with.

"When talk of a referendum about the fate of conquered Palestinian lands began, I gave it some thought. By what right can an Israeli citizen determine the fate of lands that don't belong to him? Nevertheless, I thought the issue would produce a public debate, since Israelis are the other side of the equation and they have an obligation to state their case. When I saw the wording of the initiative I was stunned to discover how far its proponents had strayed from the path." . . .

See also link I - [Decision at 50 Press Release](#)

4) [Is Israel on the brink of tearing itself asunder?, Jonathan Cook, The National, September 12, 2016](#)

"Is Israel on the verge of civil war, as a growing number of Israeli commentators suggest, with its Jewish population deeply riven over the future of the occupation?" . . .

"Observing that a Palestinian state would require removing hundreds of thousands of Jewish settlers currently living – illegally – on Palestinian land, Mr Netanyahu concluded: 'There's a phrase for that. It's called ethnic cleansing.'

“An Israeli consensus believes Gaza has been free of occupation since the settlers were pulled out in 2005, despite the fact that Israel still surrounds most of the coastal strip with soldiers, patrols its air space with drones and denies access to the sea.

“The same unyielding, deluded Israeli consensus has declared East Jerusalem, the expected capital of a Palestinian state, as instead part of Israel’s ‘eternal capital.’

“But the problem runs deeper still. When the new campaign proudly cites new figures showing that 58 per cent support ‘two states for two nations,’ it glosses over what most Israelis think such statehood would entail for the Palestinians.

“So what do Israelis think a Palestinian state should look like? Previous surveys have been clear. It would not include Jerusalem or control its borders. It would be territorially carved up to preserve the “settlement blocs”, which would be annexed to Israel. And most certainly it would be ‘demilitarised’ – without an army or air force.

“But the truth is that there is very little ideologically separating most Israeli Jews. All but a tiny minority wish to see the Palestinians continue as a subjugated people. For the great majority, a Palestinian state means nothing more than a makeover of the occupation, penning up the Palestinians in slightly more humane conditions.” . . .

5) [Ehud Barak: Netanyahu’s reckless conduct endangers Israel, By Ehud Barak, Washington Post, September 14, 2016](#)

“During the past two years, a sense of gloom has taken over my country, as pride in Israel’s accomplishments and self-confidence grounded in reality have given way to fear-mongering, victimhood and internal quarrels.

“Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu enabled a militant, nationalist minority to carry out a hostile takeover of his party, Likud; to form a majority in his cabinet; and thus to hijack our national agenda in the service of a messianic drive toward, as it’s often put, ‘a single Jewish state, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea.’ This overarching ambition is bound to culminate in either a single, binational state, which, within a generation, may have a Jewish minority and likely a Bosnia-like civil war, or else an apartheid reality if Palestinian residents are deprived of the right to vote. Both spell doom for the Zionist dream.

“Netanyahu’s reckless conduct has also undermined Israel’s security. Israel has reached a new military-aid agreement for the next decade with the United States. The damage produced by Netanyahu’s irresponsible management of the relations with the White House is now fully manifest. “ . . .

“Expressing our opposition to the Iran nuclear deal was certainly legitimate. But instead of holding a candid dialogue behind closed doors with President Obama, Netanyahu went behind his back to deliver a speech to Congress, shaking the foundations of bipartisan support for Israel and dividing Jewish opinion.

“Likewise at home, Netanyahu has consistently nourished fear of existential threats and unleashed ghosts of enemies from within, when domestic realities called for unity and confidence and regional developments required a sober assessment and steady hand.” . . .

“Our people need a policy that does not seek shelter in arguing over the availability of a Palestinian partner but rather takes the initiative by implementing the Security First plan recently presented by more than 200 of Israel’s most respected former top commanders. The plan would bolster our security while preserving the two-state option and prospects for regional cooperation.” . . .

6) [U.S., Israel Sign Historic 10-year, \\$38-billion Military Aid Deal, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, September 14, 2016](#)

"The United States and Israel signed a defense aid agreement on Wednesday that promises Israel \$38 billion over 10 years, from 2019 through 2028. "We affirm today the unbreakable bond between the United States and Israel," U.S. National Security Adviser Susan Rice said at the Washington ceremony.

"On behalf of President Obama, we are all thinking of and praying for President Shimon Peres, Israel's national treasure," Rice continued. "Since 2009, the U.S. provided almost \$24 billion in military aid to Israel," she said, adding that "we are proud that no other administration has done so much to enhance Israel's security." "We can't know what will happen in the next 10 years, but we do know that the U.S. will always be there for Israel," Rice said.

"It is because of this same commitment to Israel and its long-term security that we will also continue to press for a two-state solution to the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict, despite the deeply troubling trends on the ground that undermine this goal," Obama continued.

"As I have emphasized previously, the only way for Israel to endure and thrive as a Jewish and democratic state is through the realization of an independent and viable Palestine. Ultimately, both this MOU and efforts to advance the two-state solution are motivated by the same core U.S. objective of ensuring that Israelis can live alongside their neighbors in peace and security."

"One of the most significant disputes during the bilateral negotiations related to the American demand to stop the arrangement that allowed Israel to spend some 40 percent of the American aid to buy equipment from Israeli defense industries and to buy fuel for the IDF. The senior American officials noted that Israel used around \$1.2 billion of the annual aid for these purposes instead of buying advanced weaponry from the United States.

"That amounts to a whole squadron of F35 over 10 years," said one of the U.S. officials. "Now that's going to go towards building a further arsenal of state-of-the-art U.S. equipment, while simultaneously supporting U.S. industry and jobs. It's a win-win for Israeli security and the U.S. economy."

See also link J – [With U.S. Military Aid, Are Netanyahu's Strong Beliefs Worth \\$7 Billion?](#); link K – [Editorial Netanyahu Gambled on Obama and Iran, Now Israel Is Paying the Price](#); link L – [New US-Israeli Military Aid Package Reflects Shifts in Relationship](#); link M – [Touting aid deal, Obama says true Israeli security requires Palestinian statehood](#); link N – [In Editorial, NYT Asks: Does Ever-growing U.S. Defense Aid to Israel Make Sense](#); link O – [Opinion With New Israel Aid Deal, Obama Is Patron of the Occupation](#).

Other articles of interest:

A. [Settlement Withdrawal And "Ethnic Cleansing" Matt Duss, FMEP, September 9, 2016](#)

Earlier today, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office tweeted out a short video in which Netanyahu confronts the claim, made regularly by the United States and the rest of international community, that Israeli settlements in the West Bank are an obstacle to a Palestinian state. Netanyahu rejects this, which is not surprising, but he goes even farther, condemning the idea of settlement withdrawal as "ethnic cleansing."

B. [U.S. condemns Netanyahu's charge that Palestinians want to 'ethnically cleanse' Jews from West Bank, William Booth, Washington Post, September 10, 2016](#)

U.S. officials condemned a provocative video posted Friday by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that accused the Palestinians of wanting to commit "ethnic cleansing" by ridding the West Bank of Jews.

- C. [Netanyahu is right: Settlements aren't the biggest obstacle to peace, Dahlia Scheindlin, +972, September 10, 2016](#)
The prime minister published a video accusing the Palestinians — and the world — of ethnic cleansing for opposing Israeli settlements. Not so fast.
- D. [Abbas says Israel, not Palestinians, committing 'ethnic cleansing', JTA, September 12, 2016](#)
Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas responded to a video released by Benjamin Netanyahu, saying it is Israel, not the Palestinians, who are committing "ethnic cleansing."
- E. [Netanyahu's 'Ethnic Cleansing' Video Pushes Obama Closer to UN Security Council, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, September 11, 2016](#)
White House was again reminded that Netanyahu has no qualms about attacking them, even when he needs them. PM's comments were almost word-for-word on hasbara talking-points penned by far-right political strategist.
- F. [Opinion Palestinians, Not Israeli Settlers, Are Victims of Ethnic Cleansing, Ahmad Tibi, Haaretz, September 11, 2016](#)
If Mr. Netanyahu really wants to know what ethnic cleansing means, he should ask the Palestinian citizens of Israel. 85% of the Palestinians living in what is now Israel were forced out in the 1948 Nakba - just because they weren't Jews.
- G. [Opinion Yes, Netanyahu, Let's Talk About Ethnic Cleansing, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, September 11, 2016](#)
Turning Israeli settlers into victims is the prime minister's most staggering act of chutzpah yet. The only mass ethnic cleansing that took place here was in 1948, when some 700,000 Arabs were forced to leave their lands.
- H. [J Street Calls on Treasury Dept. to Review Tax-deductibility Status of Pro-settlement Groups, JTA, Haaretz, September 13, 2016](#)
The liberal Jewish Middle East policy group stated a 'private network' in the U.S. funded by tax-deductible donations has channeled 'millions of dollars to strengthen the settlements.'
- I. [Decision at 50 Press Release: A New Movement Demanding a Referendum on the Fate of Israeli Control over the Palestinian Territories and on the Future of Israel, APN, September 5, 2016](#)
"Decision at 50" launched a campaign demanding a referendum on the future of the Territories and the future of Israel during the 50th year of Israel's control over the West Bank and Gaza.
- J. [With U.S. Military Aid, Are Netanyahu's Strong Beliefs Worth \\$7 Billion? Amos Harel, Haaretz, September 15, 2016](#)
The prime minister persuaded the Gulf states that Israel was countering Washington's defeatist, conciliatory approach to Iran. But in the long term that strategy might fail.
- K. [Editorial Netanyahu Gambled on Obama and Iran, Now Israel Is Paying the Price, Haaretz Editorial Sep 16, 2016](#)
The Israeli attempts to sabotage White House policy eventually extracted a high price: \$7 billion – the difference between Obama's original offer and the eventual amount in the new U.S. military aid deal.
- L. [New US-Israeli Military Aid Package Reflects Shifts in Relationship, Yousef Munayyer, Arab Center-DC, SEPTEMBER 15, 2016](#)
The new agreement, covering Fiscal Years 2019 through 2028 to the tune of \$38 billion, and not the \$45 billion Israel asked for, has been characterized by US officials as the single largest pledge of bilateral military assistance. Closer inspection of the provisions of the agreement however suggests that there are important changes not easily captured by a cursory glance at the headlines in the American or Israeli media.

- M. [Touting aid deal, Obama says true Israeli security requires Palestinian statehood, Raoul Wootliff, Times of Israel, September 14, 2016](#)
U.S. president says military package will help Israel defend itself but 'long-term security' depends on creating 'an independent and viable Palestine'
- N. [In Editorial, NYT Asks: Does Ever-growing U.S. Defense Aid to Israel Make Sense? New York Times, Haaretz, September 18, 2016](#)
The New York Times notes the discourse surrounding the agreement fails to discuss American needs.
- O. [Opinion With New Israel Aid Deal, Obama Is Patron of the Occupation, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, September 18, 2016](#)
U.S. generosity, which costs American taxpayers \$300 a year, is detrimental to Israel and will only push it toward more acts of aggression.
- P. [It's time to look beyond the two-state plan, Giora Eiland, Ynet News, September 9, 2016](#)
Analysis: The difficulty in solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is based on the fact that there has been only one plan on the table for 23 years now, and that plan is not attractive enough for either side.
- Q. [Opinion Face It, Israel, Sometimes Countries Just Commit Suicide, Rogel Alpher, Haaretz, September 10, 2016](#)
Ari Shavit believes Israel can be saved if we can find a way to make Israelis see sense about the dangers of the occupation — even though, after numerous attempts by many fine patriots, no one has managed it to date. Perhaps Ari Shavit can finally reveal to us this mysterious “third way” he has worked so hard on developing (“The Third Way,” Haaretz, September 8), through which he says a decisive majority of Jews in Israel can be convinced to forgo the occupation.
- R. [Palestinian Economy Would Double if Freed of Israeli Control, UN Says, Haaretz and The Associated Press September 7, 2016](#)
A United Nations agency report illustrates situation in Gaza by noting that infant mortality rate is on the rise for first time in 50 years.
- S. [CMEP Bulletin - U.N. Special Coordinator Sounds The Alarm, September 9, 2016](#)
- T. [Palestinian Oral History as a Tool to Defend Against Displacement, Thayer Hastings, Al-Shabaka, September 15, 2016](#)
Oral history has a long precedent in Arab and Palestinian culture that stems from a broader oral tradition. ¹ In the years immediately following the Nakba of 1948 the Arab tradition of the hakawati (storyteller) was used, according to Nur Masalha, to shore up a defense against erasure of culture and memory among Palestinians.
- U. [In the Jewish state, most prisoners are Arabs, Noam Rotem, +972 Blog, September 2, 2016](#)
Figures obtained by Local Call reveal that the number of Arab prisoners is more than twice the number of Jewish ones, even though they make up only 20 percent of the general population.