

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**September 8, 2016**



*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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The six featured articles and the many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the role of the IDF in prolonging the occupation rather than preparing for “external threats”; the reality that Israel is already a bi-national state with an equal population of Jews and Palestinians; the erosion of bi-partisan support and US Jewish Community support for Israel; criticism of continued financial military aid to Israel and calls for greater accountability; the role of BDS in combating the false Israeli narrative which denies that there is an occupation; and other articles of interest.

**Commentary:** In the first weekly meeting of the IDF general staff after the Six Day War, the respected staff general, Mati Peled said: “Now we have a chance to offer the Palestinians a state of their own.” He said that holding on to the newly conquered lands would result in popular resistance to the occupation, and the use of the IDF to quell such resistance with the disastrous and demoralizing results of turning the Jewish state into an increasingly brutal occupying power and eventually into a bi-national state.” (*The General’s Son* by Miko Peled, p.61) That state for the Palestinians was not promoted by the Israelis then or since then. And now almost 50 years later, the results predicted by Mati Peled have come to be!

- Lilach Shoval, Mati Tuchfeld notes in [Israel Hayom](#) that the former chief of IDF Central Command, Maj. Gen. (res.) Gadi Shamni stated that Israel had “made an art of the occupation” and that the IDF cannot fight threats while “controlling a population of 2.5 million civilians”.
- Gideon Levy writes in [Haaretz](#) that it is nonsense to say that the Palestinians are a minority in Israel when two peoples equal in size live under Israeli rule: about 6.3 million Jews and 6.3 million Arabs. Half and half. That’s the outcome of 50 years of life in a binational state, not Jewish and not democratic.
- Mitchell Plitnick writes in a [FMEP blog](#) that the bipartisan pro-Israel consensus that has long reigned in American politics is eroding, just as the pro-Israel consensus within the American Jewish community is also eroding.
- David Rosenberg states in [Haaretz](#) that Israel Needs Less U.S. Aid rather than more since American aid now amounts to 1.5% of GDP while providing 20% of the defense budget, a sum the government could easily find through spending cuts, reforms and tax increases.
- James M. Wall blogs in [WallWritings](#) that BDS was created to combat the false Israeli narrative which denies that there is an occupation. This non-violent tactic is being used against corporations profiting from this occupation.
- Rogel Alpher also writes in [Haaretz](#) that there won’t be a Palestinian state, and Israel will no longer be the state of the Jews. He is not proud of his country, because he believes that it is now obvious that the two-state solution is dead and Israel is a binational, apartheid state.

1) [IDF Officer Slammed for calling Israel ‘Occupation Champion’, Lilach Shoval, Mati Tuchfeld, Israel Hayom, September 1, 2016](#)

“Former GOC Central Command Maj. Gen. (res.) Gadi Shamni, drew ire Wednesday when he stated that Israel had “made an art of the occupation.” Speaking at a conference for the Institute for Policy and Strategy at the

Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, Shamni said, "We are the world champions of occupation, and we have made it into an art form. I was GOC Central Command -- the general of the occupation. And I ask, is this what we want to be?"

"According to Shamni, "Israel will never agree to a deal that doesn't meet its security demands, and the Palestinians will never accept the continuation of the endless occupation. The only acceptable solution is an agreed-upon separation." . . .

"Shamni also charged that 'The IDF's task of controlling a population of 2.5 million civilians distracts the military from its primary function, and it is having difficulties preparing for the threats it must deal with. The military is losing its values and capabilities and is becoming a punching bag for politicians.'" . . .

"Shamni's comments about the occupation were sharply criticized, with Jerusalem Affairs Minister Zeev Elkin (Likud) saying, 'I deeply regret Gen. Shamni's remarks. It is impossible to occupy your own land; it is only possible to return to it. As a Gush Etzion resident, I see myself as a proud settler and not as the occupier of a foreign land -- and that is also what I would expect from IDF officers who are tasked with protecting settlers' lives.'" . . .

See also link A - [IDF Raids Too Often Aren't 'Deterrence,' but a Provocation](#); link B - [In Israel, a Dead Arab Evokes Just One Big Yawn](#)

## 2) [Stop With the Nonsense That Palestinians Are a Minority in Israel, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, August 25, 2016](#)

"You can't argue that the Palestinians aren't an integral part of greater Israel; occupied and dispossessed, but integral.

"A delusion under which most Israelis live lets them invent vacuous excuses based on the virtual reality they've built for themselves. According to this fallacy, the State of Israel only controls its own citizens, most of them Jewish of course, but nobody counts the millions of other subjects who fall under its control at least as much, maybe more. They're invisible.

"That's the only way one can argue comfortably and learnedly about whether Israel is a Jewish and democratic state. The discussion is a fascinating intellectual one, with only one problem: It has long since lost relevance. A country where about half the subjects aren't Jewish can't be Jewish. If it insists on being Jewish by force, it isn't democratic.

"A state where half the subjects are denied rights can't be democratic." . . .

"Two peoples equal in size live under Israeli rule: about 6.3 million Jews and 6.3 million Arabs. Half and half. That's the outcome of 50 years of life in a binational state, not Jewish and not democratic. To the 1.8 million Arab citizens, you have to add the 2.7 million Palestinians living under direct Israeli rule in the West Bank, and about 1.8 million living under indirect Israeli rule in Gaza.

"The fate of all these subjects, from registration at birth to the currency they use and most of their rights, is set in Israel."  
"

"As the era of the two-state solution draws to a close, and on the eve of the debate's diversion to the real issue -- rights in the binational state that has been in existence for quite some time -- it's time to stop talking about the Palestinians as a minority. Anyone who wants them to be a minority should have withdrawn from the West Bank long ago. But anyone who wants to keep the West Bank should withdraw from talking about a Jewish majority. There's no way around that, not even with the help of a thousand articles discussing the wonders of this delusion of Jewish democracy."

### 3) [For the first time Israel divides the US, JFJFP, Mitchell Plitnick, FMEP blog, August 27, 2016](#)

“FMEP: In your latest book, you explore a growing divide in the American Jewish community over Israel. In the current presidential election, Israel has been at issue a number of times: Donald Trump’s AIPAC speech, Bernie Sanders stating his support for Palestinian rights in a speech in Brooklyn, the Democrats refusing to use the word “occupation” in their platform while the Republicans’ platform explicitly states that Israel is not an occupying power. How do you see these issues playing out in the Jewish community, in the context of your view of this growing divide?”

“DW: Although Israel often comes up as an issue in American presidential election campaigns (unlike most foreign policy issues which are generally given scant attention), what makes this election campaign unusual, and highly significant, is the divisive way in which Israel has been discussed and debated. Unlike in previous elections when candidates simply spouted bromides about the US-Israel relationship and competed over who was the most pro-Israel, in this election we have heard a broader range of views about Israel and its conflict with the Palestinians, including some unprecedented criticism of Israel during a nationally televised primary debate (Bernie Sanders’ denunciation of Israel’s “disproportionate” response to Palestinian rockets attacks in the 2014 Gaza War during a CNN Democratic debate with Hillary Clinton).

“Political disagreements over Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—both within the Democratic and Republican parties and between them—have been on prominent display, clearly indicating that Israel is becoming a divisive issue in American politics.”

“The bipartisan pro-Israel consensus that has long reigned in American politics is, therefore, eroding, just as the pro-Israel consensus within the American Jewish community is also eroding—as I describe in my book, *Trouble in the Tribe: The American Jewish Conflict over Israel*. What’s happening in American politics today mirrors what’s been happening in American Jewish politics for some time—criticism of Israel is going mainstream and divisions over Israel are deepening.

“Ultimately Israel is not what matters to most American Jewish voters.” . . .

“Finally, there seems to be a growing divide among anti-occupation groups, particularly over the tactic of Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). Many leading BDS activists and groups are Jewish. Is this debate a healthy one for the Jewish community, and how do you see this split on the ‘Jewish let’ playing out going forward?”

“I think debate is healthy for any community. The problem with the American Jewish community today when it comes to BDS is that there isn’t enough debate about it. In fact, in much of the mainstream Jewish community the debate isn’t even allowed to take place.” . . .

“But as long as the occupation continues, American Jews opposed to it are bound to consider whatever non-violent means is available to break the Israeli-Palestinian stalemate and end the occupation. Support for BDS is, therefore, likely to grow on the Jewish left, and organizations like Jewish Voice for Peace, which champion BDS, will continue to gain support, especially among young American Jews.” . . .

### 4) [Israel Needs Less U.S. Aid, Not More, David Rosenberg, Haaretz, August 23, 2016](#)

“Aid isn't life-and-death for Israel any more, it's become a gift to a PM who needs to buy off coalition partners.

“Among the notable aspects of the America’s special relationship with Israel is billions of dollars in military aid we get every year. The headline figure of \$3.1 billion is supplemented with hundreds of millions more for development programs like Iron Dome and David’s Sling missile-defense systems. Then there are the special terms Israel enjoys, like the money being delivered in one lump sum at the start of the year, rather than in the dribs and drabs that other recipients get. Also, Israel is generously allowed to spend 26% of the aid at home, rather than on buying U.S. equipment.” . . .

“In any case, Israel is certainly no longer a beggar state that relies American generosity to stay afloat. American aid now amounts to 1.5% of GDP. It provides 20% of the defense budget, but that is certainly an amount the government could find through spending cuts, reforms and tax increases, if it wanted to. Also, aid comes with costs. It risks becoming a way for future U.S. administrations, maybe as early as a Trump presidency, to pressure Israel. It makes it easier for the army to avoid spending reforms.” . . .

See also link C – [U.S. fueling Israel's civil war](#); link D - [I support Israel, which is why I don't support US aid to Israel](#)

#### **5) [Israel Defends Its False Narrative Against BDS, James M. Wall, WallWritings, August 23, 2016](#)**

. . . “To sustain its invading colonial project, Israel constructed its own narrative history, utilizing a steady outpouring of *hasbara* (propaganda).” . . .

“This narrative has infected the world, most especially in the United States, where all centers of power adhere to the false narrative. Those who fail to embrace the narrative are branded with that ultimate mark of shame, “anti-Semitism”. BDS was created to combat the occupation the false narrative sustains.

“BDS is a non-violent tactic of boycotts, divestments and sanctions against corporations profiting from Israel’s occupation. It was created by secular and religious groups who knew in time it could work to end the occupation just as a similar campaign brought down South Africa’s apartheid system. BDS was not intended to eliminate Israel (a favorite Israeli false claim) but to call the world’s attention to the oppressiveness of the occupation.

“Is BDS working? To use a Sarah Palin assertion, “you betcha”. To measure its effectiveness, we need only take note that Israel has launched a massive effort to squelch BDS.” . . .

#### **6) [Why I'm Not Proud of My Country, Israel, Rogel Alpher, Haaretz, September 5, 2016](#)**

“Face facts: there won’t be a Palestinian state, and Israel will no longer be the state of the Jews. “Arguments can always be found to turn desire into policy,” U.S. historian Barbara Tuchman once wrote.

“The vast majority of moderate Israelis confuse desire with reality. They desire a two-state solution to the conflict with the Palestinians, so they adopt a policy of two states for two peoples.

“They call themselves Zionists, or center-left, or moderate left, or even center-center. And they have found arguments to turn their desire into policy — for example, the preservation of the country’s Jewish and democratic character, or avoidance of the destruction that a binational state would produce.” . . .

“There won’t be a Palestinian state, and Israel will no longer be the state of the Jews. This violent, bloody, binational non-democracy — because democracy for Jews alone is apartheid — has already been launched.” . . .

"I am not proud of my country, because I know the reality. It is an apartheid state, and the two-state solution is dead. Because Israel is a binational, apartheid state, everything is bad here. Most Israelis, including Shavit, don't recognize this reality. I don't want it either, but I recognize it.

"Shavit is still proud of Israel, because he believes it is still possible to save its Jewish-democratic character." . . .

See also link F - [Zionism Today Is an Illusion](#);

**Other articles of interest:**

- A. [IDF Raids Too Often Aren't 'Deterrence,' but a Provocation, Haaretz Editorial, August 28, 2016](#)  
The army must stop this perverse practice, tighten its rules of engagement and must not use means that cause disability and death.
- B. [In Israel, a Dead Arab Evokes Just One Big Yawn, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, Aug 28, 2016](#)  
No one bats an eye over the killing of an innocent man by an Israeli soldier. It's not terror, or apartheid, or racism or dehumanization. It's only killing a subhuman.
- C. [U.S. fueling Israel's civil war, Sam Bahour, Middleeast Eye, August 24, 2016](#)  
U.S. should withhold military aid until Israel recognises Palestinian sovereignty. Israel is a very special country. Its history is like no other. Maybe that's why its civil war, which is well underway, is almost indistinguishable to the untrained eye from a stable country. Upon closer inspection, Israel is a powder keg already in the process of the most significant societal and political implosion of its history. While a total meltdown is not inevitable, the US continues to provide the fuel for Israel to continue driving drunk on power.
- D. [I support Israel, which is why I don't support US aid to Israel, Jeff Jacoby Boston Globe columnist, September 4, 2016](#)  
Is it possible to support Israel and uphold the importance of the US-Israeli relationship while simultaneously opposing the annual subsidy Congress provides to Israel's military? Of course it is. The Jewish state, with its booming economy, doesn't need American charity.
- E. [The "S" in BDS: Lessons of the Elbit Systems Campaign, Maren Mantovani, Jamal Juma', Al-Shabaka, August 24, 2016](#)  
Israeli military companies such as Elbit Systems appear invincible, yet Israel's arms industry is more vulnerable than it seems. Al-Shabaka guest author Maren Mantovani and Policy Advisor Jamal Juma' examine both national and global trends and identify avenues for human rights activists to pursue to hold Israel accountable under international law.
- F. [Zionism Today Is an Illusion, Rogel Alpher, Haaretz, August 28, 2016](#)  
Anyone ever expecting Israel to end the occupation, either voluntarily or via international pressure, needs to think again. We are on course to become a binational state, and Jews should plan accordingly.
- G. [Book Recommendation: The Way to the Spring: Life and Death in Palestine, Penguin, Ben Ehrenrei](#)  
From an award-winning journalist, a brave and necessary immersion into the everyday struggles of Palestinian life. Over the past three years, American writer Ben Ehrenreich has been traveling to and living in the West Bank, staying with Palestinian families in its largest cities and its smallest villages.
- H. [Lawsuit claims U.S. aid to Israel violates nuclear pact, JTA \(Jewish Telegraphic Agency\), August 12, 2016](#)  
A lawsuit filed in federal court claims that U.S. aid to Israel is illegal under a law passed in the 1970s that prohibits providing assistance to nuclear powers that do not sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

- I. [\*\*“The Awful Clarity” of Israeli Oppression Becomes Murky Spin in the NYT, Barbara Erickson, Times Warp, August 22, 2016\*\*](#)  
 When writer Michael Chabon visited the West Bank city of Hebron earlier this year, the brutal reality of the Israeli occupation hit him with force. During an interview with the *Forward*, he appeared “visibly jarred,” and he pulled no punches in describing his reaction.
- J. [\*\*CMEP Bulletin - Sussiya Under Threat of Demolition Again. Why?, August 26, 2016\*\*](#)
- K. [\*\*CMEP Bulletin - Settlements Surging – September 6, 2016\*\*](#)
- L. [\*\*Those Undermining the Jewish State, Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, August 25, 2016\*\*](#)  
 Proponents of, key partners in the Israeli government, are making a dangerous mistake by trying to base Israel’s claim to all of Mandatory Palestine on a divine promise made in the Bible. Never had a young national movement undertaken a commitment on the scale of the one adopted by the first Zionist Congress, held in Basel in 1897. Zionists recognized their political and physical weakness but were confident in the justice of their claim, which was based on universal values, not religious-messianic nationalism
- M. [\*\*The Americans Simply Don’t Care About Israel and the Palestinians, Zeev Sternhell, Haaretz, August 22, 2016\*\*](#)  
 The territories are not Israel, but rather a colony that heaps shame on Zionism and on Jewish history. When the Americans truly want something from Israel, they know exactly how to get it: with threats and force. It’s a pity they don’t use this tactic when it comes to the occupation.
- N. [\*\*I Give My Readers Cold Hard Evidence About Palestinians. They Refuse To Believe It, J.J. Goldberg, The Forward, August 29, 2016\*\*](#)  
 It’s becoming more and more obvious that there are some folks out there who simply can’t abide good news. Not just because they’re pessimists and get thrown when things are going well. No, we’re talking about the sort of people who find good news offensive. It outrages them. Their ranks are growing (in both the U.S. and Israel), and so is the level of outrage.
- O. [\*\*The New York Times: Israel Quietly Legalizes Pirate Outposts in the West Bank, Isabel Kershner, APN, August 31, 2016\*\*](#)  
 Unauthorized settlements dot hilltops in the West Bank, and anti-settlement groups and Palestinians say retroactively legalizing them is a methodical effort to change the region’s map.
- P. [\*\*100 global intellectuals to gather in Palestine, Ahmad Melhem, Al-Monitor, August 31, 2016\*\*](#)  
 The Witness Center for Citizen’s Rights and Social Development launched an initiative to invite renowned thinkers from around the world to come to Palestine in support of the Palestinian cause Noam Chomsky inaugurated the campaign Aug. 15. He addressed a message to Palestine, saying, “Israel is ignoring the two-state and one-state solutions, while endeavoring to establish a Greater Israel. The cause for the current solution’s failure was Washington’s and Israel’s disregard for the national rights of the Palestinian people.”