

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
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The six featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes begin with condolences and solidarity with our Jewish brothers and sisters of Pittsburgh as they grieve the anti-Semitic murder and loss of community friends and relatives; the Notes continue by giving publicity to recent, fact informed and challenging expositions of domination, increasing control, repression and oppression of the Palestinian People not only by the Israeli government, but also by Fatah in the West Bank and Hamas in Gaza; the Notes end with links to recent CMEP Bulletins.

Commentary: “The Image of God” (B’Tselem) - Judaism, Christianity and Sufi Islam all use variations of this term to speak of every child, woman and man without exception. And yet we “images of God” so often and so tragically see our differences “through the distorting lens of distinction, discrimination, dissimilarity, divergence, discord or disparity. But since God made difference, difference is good, and we are challenged to live, not despite our differences, but with them.” (Anthony Gittins, [Courage and Conviction](#), p.99). Killing, oppressing, repressing any and every human being, for any reason, is a denial and rejection of our Loving Creator.

- In its editorial on October 29, *Victims of Hatred*, Haaretz states that in a world where foreigners and minorities are disparaged and people dream of ethnic and national purity, Jews will always be the victims of hatred and violence.
- Hagai El-Ad, executive director of Israeli human rights NGO B'Tselem, told the UN Security Council on October 18th that the time has come for action against Israeli actions in the West Bank and Gaza.
- Gideon Levy asks in Haaretz who contributes more to Israel’s status in the world, UN Ambassador Danny Danon or B’Tselem director Hagai El-Ad? Who generates more respect, the diplomat or the human rights activist? Which of the two disgraced Israel with his words and who retained some of its humane image? Who told the truth and who lied?
- Hagai El-Ad's address at the United Nations Security Council on October 18.
- United Nations: Seventy-third session - October 22, 2018. The report to the General Assembly of the Special Rapporteur, Michael Lynk on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967.
- The Fatah-led Palestinian Authority in the West Bank and Hamas authorities in Gaza routinely arrest and torture peaceful critics and opponents, Human Rights Watch said in a report released on October 23.

1) [Victims of Hatred](#), Haaretz Editorial, October 29, 2018

“The massacre Saturday at the Conservative Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, in which at least 11 people were killed by a right-wing extremist, has been described as the most deadly attack on the Jewish community in U.S. history. Rabbi Aaron Bisno, the rabbi of the nearby Reform congregation, said the attack was the inevitable result of the current hate-filled public discourse in the United States today. ‘We all knew that the rhetoric of hate could lead to this kind of situation,’ he said. ‘There is a numb sense of shock, yes, but there is also a sense that when you have so much hate, this is what happens.’

“If we are to judge by the comments made by the gunman, Robert Bowers, on social media, the organization in his sights is HIAS – an American Jewish organization that has been helping refugees since 1881. ‘HIAS likes to bring invaders in that kill our people. I can’t sit by and watch my people get slaughtered. Screw your optics, I’m going in,’ he tweeted before the attack. HIAS is identified in the United States with the call to take in Syrian refugees, whom Bowers believes will attack white people in the United States. HIAS has been active in Israel as well; in recent years it has conducted a determined battle against Israeli government policy on African asylum seekers.

“The various interpretations given to the attack do not contradict each other; anti-Semitism, hate speech, and xenophobia are phenomena that go hand in hand and feed into each other. In a world where the discourse of hatred is widespread, and the stranger is perceived as an invader, anti-Semitism will also raise its head.

“For this reason, many both in Israel and around the world are uncomfortable with the way Israel’s right-wing government, headed by Benjamin Netanyahu, has been embracing non-liberal European leaders, and with his almost symbiotic relationship with U.S. President Donald Trump, who is championing the struggle against immigrants.”

See also: [U.S. Jews’ Despair Over Pittsburgh Atrocity Is Compounded by Trump’s Complicity and Netanyahu’s Hypocrisy](#), Chemi Shalev ,Haaretz, October 28, 2018

2) [Head of Israeli Human Rights NGO B'Tselem to UN Security Council: Time Has Come for Action](#), Noa Landau, B’Tselem, October 18, 2018

“Addressing a regular Middle East discussion led by UN Middle East Envoy Nickolay Mladenov, El-Ad said that ‘it is difficult and perhaps impossible to convey the force of the humiliation, rage and pain that are the lot of a people who’ve been denied their human rights for over fifty years.’

“El-Ad stressed that the real difficulty lies with trying to conduct a normal communal and family life with the conditions ‘Palestinians have to bear under the occupation.’

“He said ‘it is possible to surmise the pattern of the occupation as such: Israeli institutes, in which the Palestinians have no representation, pass pieces of paper down a highly coordinated 'non-assembly' line. How do we regularize the demolition of an entire community? How do we cover up the killing of another Palestinian? The experience gathered over a jubilee of occupation has made the operation of this well-oiled machine into an art.’” ...

3) [The Real Hero Is the B’Tselem Chief](#), Gideon Levy, Haaretz, October 20, 2018

"On the day the world realizes that the UN ambassador is Israel and Hagai El-Ad represents a muzzled minority, maybe its forgiving attitude toward Israel will change.

“Who contributes more to Israel’s status in the world, UN Ambassador Danny Danon or B’Tselem director Hagai El-Ad? Who generates more respect, the diplomat or the human rights activist? Which of the two disgraced Israel with his words and who retained some of its humane image? Who told the truth and who lied? Whom does the world believe – excluding Nikki Haley, the only true collaborator in the hall – and whom can the no world no longer believe?

“They sat opposite each other at the Security Council – two Israelis of the same age, born here, army veterans, with totally different worldviews and conflicting moral standards. Their values are contradictory and their information on what’s happening under the occupation is divergent. One relies on the lies of Israel’s propaganda machine while the other’s views are based on the investigative efforts of an organization whose work couldn’t be more reliable and professional. “ ...

See also: [UN Special Rapporteur: Gaza Has Become ‘Unliveable’](#), Asharq-Al-Awsat, New York - Ali Barada, October 26, 2018

The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories, Michael Lynk, has lamented that the economy of the Gaza Strip is in free fall, saying the enclave has become “unliveable” amid a 70 percent youth unemployment, widely contaminated drinking water and a collapsed health care system.

4) [Hagai El-Ad's address at the United Nations Security Council, 18 Oct. 2018](#)

“Thank you, members of the Security Council,

“It is very difficult, if not impossible, to fully convey the indignity, the outrage and the pain of a people denied the benefit of human rights for more than fifty years. Here, in these chambers, it is hard to articulate the flesh and blood meaning of the exposed lives Palestinians endure under occupation. But no matter how hard it is to describe, the real hardship is that of facing such an intolerable existence day in and day out, of trying to live, and raise a family, and develop a community, under these conditions.

“It has been almost two years to the day since I last had the honor of speaking before the Council. Two more years of occupation, two years in which the routine of the first 49 years of occupation continued. Since I last spoke here, 317 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces and thirteen Israelis have been killed by Palestinians. Israel has demolished 294 Palestinian homes and has continued making arrests on a daily basis, including of minors; Israeli settlers have vandalized and uprooted thousands of olive trees and grapevines; Israeli security forces have continued to regularly enter Palestinians houses, sometimes coming in the dead of night to wake children, register their names and take their pictures; Palestinians have lost countless hours waiting at checkpoints, with no explanation. And so the routine of the occupation marches on.” ...

See also: [Why Speak of the Israeli Occupation Abroad? So That This Disgrace Will End](#), Hagai El-Ad, Haaretz, October 22, 2018

A disgrace is when during protests over the past months, Israeli snipers killed three 11-year-old children in the Gaza Strip. It is a disgrace that a Palestinian cannot know whether they can go abroad, or receive medical care, or work their land.

5) [Situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967](#), Report to the United Nations by the Special Rapporteur Michael Lynk , October 22, 2018 -

“Conclusion and Recommendations

“56. A fundamental tenet of modern international law is the legal maxim *ex turpi causa non oritur actio*: a law-breaker cannot benefit from his or her illegal act.¹¹⁶ In 1967 and again in 1980, the international community clearly stated that Israel’s annexation of East Jerusalem breached international law and was null and void.

“It has also spoken decisively about the illegality of the Israeli settlement enterprise, which is the political and demographic engine that has transformed Israel’s occupation into an annexation. Yet, lacking in these repeated condemnations of Israel’s annexationist actions have been any meaningful steps by the international community to insist upon accountability.

“Despite Israel’s ongoing record of non-compliance with the directions of the international community, it has rarely paid a meaningful price for its defiance, and its appetite for entrenching its annexationist ambitions in East Jerusalem and the West Bank has gone largely unchecked.

“A deep-rooted problem at the heart of this conflict has not been the clarity of international law, but the unwillingness of the international community to enforce what it has proclaimed. As Professor Victor Kattan has succinctly stated: “The problem is not international law per se, but its lack of enforcement; that in the Middle East, international law is closer to power than to justice.”

“Nothing could more effectively refute this judgement than for the international community to act on the overwhelming evidence before it, and insist that Israel either fully annul its annexations and relinquish its occupation, or be prepared to bear the full consequences of accountability for its mocking of international law.

“57. The Special Rapporteur recommends that the Government of Israel fully comply with international law and bring a complete end to its 51 years of occupation of the Palestinian territory.

“The Special Rapporteur further recommends that the Government of Israel take the following immediate measures:

- (a) End the blockade and closure of Gaza, lift all restrictions on imports and exports as well as on the movement of people, and facilitate full access to medical care, consistent with genuine Israeli security concerns;
- (b) Ensure that regulations governing the use of force for Israeli security forces are in strict compliance with international standards, with particular attention to the use of deadly force;
- (c) Ensure accountability for alleged violations of international humanitarian law and international human rights law by Israeli security forces, with particular attention to the demonstrations in Gaza;
- (d) Take measures to address concerns raised about the independence, impartiality, and transparency of the military justice system;

- “58. With respect to concerns related to the annexation of territory, the Special Rapporteur recommends that Israel:
- (a) Comply with all relevant resolutions of the Security Council and the General Assembly with respect to East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and relinquish any claim of sovereignty over the territory;
 - (b) Ensure freedom of movement within the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including between Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem;
 - (c) Comply fully with Security Council Resolution 2334 (2016) concerning the settlements; and
 - (d) Pursue a good faith approach to the administration of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and Gaza as occupied territory, adhering to the tenets of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, with a view to bringing the occupation to a complete conclusion within a reasonable time period and enabling Palestinian self-determination;
- “59. The Rapporteur further recommends that the international community:
- (a) In line with Common Article 1 to the Geneva Conventions, take all necessary measures to respect and ensure respect by Israel, and all other relevant parties, to the solemn obligations of international humanitarian law;
 - (b) Seek to hold Israel to the international standards by which all states are to be held, including the prohibition on annexation;
 - (c) Ensure full accountability of Israeli political and military officials who are responsible for grave breaches of international law in the occupied Palestinian territory; and (d) To commission a United Nations study on the legality of Israel’s annexation and continued occupation of the Palestinian territory.

6) [Palestine: Authorities Crush Dissent](#), Human Rights Watch, October 23, 2018

“The 149-page report, ‘Two Authorities, One Way, Zero Dissent:’ Arbitrary Arrest and Torture Under the Palestinian Authority and Hamas, evaluates patterns of arrest and detention conditions in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, 25 years after the Oslo Accords granted Palestinians a degree of self-rule over these areas and more than a decade after Hamas seized effective control over the Gaza Strip. Human Rights Watch detailed more than two dozen cases of people detained for no clear reason beyond writing a critical article or Facebook post or belonging to the wrong student group or political movement.

“Twenty-five years after Oslo, Palestinian authorities have gained only limited power in the West Bank and Gaza, but yet, where they have autonomy, they have developed parallel police states,’ said Tom Porteous, deputy program director at Human Rights Watch. ‘Calls by Palestinian officials to safeguard Palestinian rights ring hollow as they crush dissent.’

“Human Rights Watch interviewed 147 witnesses, including former detainees and their relatives, lawyers, and representatives of nongovernmental groups, and reviewed photographic evidence, medical reports, and court documents. The report reflects substantive responses to the findings from the main security agencies implicated in the underlying abuses.”

See also: [Interview: How Palestinian Authorities Crush Dissent](#), Omar Shakir, Human Rights Watch’s Israel and Palestine director, talks about what his team’s two years of research has uncovered -- namely, arbitrary arrests and torture.

CMEP Bulletin – Oct.26, 2018 [\[Bulletin\] Israel Delays Demolition of Khan Al-Ahmar Indefinitely](#)