

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
April 27, 2017



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The six featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the hunger strike in Israeli prisons led by Mawan Barghout; Holocaust Day commemorations, the 50 year anniversary of the 1967 war and the Palestinian continuing Nakba; a satirical reply by Gideon Levy to some critical readers of his articles in Haaretz; a detailed presentation of different frameworks of analysis of present Palestinian options with the conclusion that the anti-apartheid framework is the most strategic in furthering Palestinian goals; and links to two CMEP Bulletin with their recommended links to other articles of interest.

Commentary: The past agony and destruction of European Jews during the Holocaust is being commemorated at the same time as the present hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners, continuing occupation, and apartheid policies have become growing concerns and challenges to Israeli Jews and their friends. Freedom, justice and equality are the rights and responsibilities of all persons. They were denied in the past but must be promoted in the present by all peoples lest the past be repeated.

- Marwan Barghout in a smuggled article to the New York Times on April 16th , wrote that some 1,000 Palestinian prisoners have decided to take part in a hunger strike, which begins today, the day we observe here as Prisoners' Day. Hunger striking is the most peaceful form of resistance available.
- James Zogby wrote in the Huffington Post on April 22nd that one thousand five hundred Palestinian prisoners have been on a hunger strike for almost a week now. They are refusing sustenance in an effort to improve the deplorable conditions faced by the nearly 6,500 Palestinians who are currently imprisoned in Israel.
- In commemorating Holocaust Day Amira Hass wrote in Haaretz that Jews were murdered in the Holocaust because they were Jews. Not so that a state would be established that day after day keeps proving the anti-Zionists right.
- Gideon Levy proposes in Haaretz that Israel must cloak itself in sorrow over what happened since that terrible summer of 1967, when it won a war and lost nearly everything. This is a jubilee year: 50 years after the greatest Jewish disaster since the Holocaust, 50 years after the greatest Palestinian disaster since the Nakba.
- Gideon Levy in Haaretz writes a satirical letter to former readers of this paper saying to all offended readers, I apologize for the one-sidedness. How could I not maintain a balance between the murderer and the murdered; the thief and his victim; and the occupier and the occupied?
- Nadia Hijab and Ingrid Jaradat Gassner in Al-Shabaka compare different frameworks of analysis and conclude the anti-apartheid framework is the most strategic in furthering Palestinian goals in the absence of a near-term political settlement.

1) [Why We Are on Hunger Strike in Israel's Prisons](#), , Marwan Barghouti, New York Times, April 16, 2017

“Having spent the last 15 years in an Israeli prison, I have been both a witness to and a victim of Israel’s illegal system of mass arbitrary arrests and ill-treatment of Palestinian prisoners. After exhausting all other options, I decided there was no choice but to resist these abuses by going on a hunger strike.

“Some 1,000 Palestinian prisoners have decided to take part in this hunger strike, which begins today, the day we observe here as Prisoners’ Day. Hunger striking is the most peaceful form of resistance available. It inflicts pain solely on those who participate and on their loved ones, in the hopes that their empty stomachs and their sacrifice will help the message resonate beyond the confines of their dark cells.” ...

“Israel, the occupying power, has violated international law in multiple ways for nearly 70 years, and yet has been granted impunity for its actions. It has committed grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions against the Palestinian people; the prisoners, including men, women and children, are no exception.” ...

“Over the past five decades, according to the [human rights group Addameer](#), more than 800,000 Palestinians have been imprisoned or detained by Israel — equivalent to about 40 percent of the Palestinian territory’s male population. Today, about 6,500 are still imprisoned, among them some who have the dismal distinction of holding world records for the longest periods in detention of political prisoners. There is hardly a single family in Palestine that has not endured the suffering caused by the imprisonment of one or several of its members.” ...

“Their solidarity exposes Israel’s moral and political failure. Rights are not bestowed by an oppressor. Freedom and dignity are universal rights that are inherent in humanity, to be enjoyed by every nation and all human beings. Palestinians will not be an exception. Only ending occupation will end this injustice and mark the birth of peace.” ...

Editors’ Note: April 17, 2017

This article explained the writer’s prison sentence but neglected to provide sufficient context by stating the offenses of which he was convicted. They were five counts of murder and membership in a terrorist organization. Mr. Barghouti declined to offer a defense at his trial and refused to recognize the Israeli court’s jurisdiction and legitimacy.

See also:

[Marwan Barghouti's supporters should acknowledge his past](#)

[Will the NYT start noting the violent pasts of Israeli contributors, too?](#)

[Activist group cries foul over Israeli outrage at Marwan Barghouti](#)

[The Signal and the Noise in the Barghouti Op-Ed](#)

[Palestinian Prisoners Hope to Use Rare Collective Action to Force Israeli Concessions](#)

[Is Marwan Barghouti The Palestinian Nelson Mandela?](#)

2) [Palestinian Prisoners Hunger Strike Continues](#), James Zogby, Huffington Post, April 22, 2017

“One thousand five hundred Palestinian prisoners have been on a hunger strike for almost a week now. They are refusing sustenance in an effort to improve the deplorable conditions faced by the nearly 6,500 Palestinians who are currently imprisoned in Israel.” ...

“Reflecting on this Israeli bullying campaign, Haaretz’s insightful columnist, Chemi Shalev* termed the entire effort a ‘ritual of diversion and denial’. By focusing on the description of Barghouti and not the content of his piece, Israel was able to ‘accentuate the insignificant at the expense of the essence.’ ‘First,’ he wrote, ‘you manufacture righteous indignation over a minor fault...then you assault the newspaper...and cast doubt on its motives...In this way the Israeli public is absolved of the need to actually contend with the gist of the article...In this way, anyone who wants to address Barghouti’s claims...is seen as collaborating with a terrorist and enabling terror.’

“What Israel will not acknowledge and is attempting to obfuscate is that their treatment of Palestinians is deplorable.”...

“There are, to be sure, horrific acts of real terror that have been committed by Palestinians and these must be condemned and punished. But even here Israel is not blameless. Doesn’t bombing civilian targets and killing scores of civilians or systematically starving Gaza into submission qualify as terror? And doesn’t confiscating land, demolishing homes, and centuries-old olive orchards also fit the definition of terrorism?”

“At the root of all the violence is the persistence of an inhumane occupation and the evil that results from it.” ...

3) [Opinion The Holocaust for Daily Use](#) Amira Hass, Haaretz, April 24, 2017

“After the Palestinians, Israel has other victims: the Jews who perished in the Nazi murder industry. They are the victims of exploitation, exhibitionism and extortion – all to justify the expulsion of the Palestinian people from their homeland. And as the expulsion was not fully successful, to justify their forced concentration in disconnected enclaves and bombardments of the enclosed Gaza camp and of Lebanon and the killing of many thousands.” ...

“So violent and persistent is the exploitation of these victims that the Palestinians and their supporters tend to deny or minimize the Nazi murder machine.” ...

“This is a natural response to Israel’s dubious success in dubbing the Jewish genocide the most awful thing in human history. Natural but not justified: because the correct response to manipulations is to keep on seeing all the dimensions.

“Israel’s opponents vie with the hierarchy of victimhood it created. The first genocide committed by Germany was against the Herero and Nama people in Africa. And Stalin murdered just as many people within the Soviet empire. And let’s not forget Leopold II of Belgium and the 10 million killed in Congo. Or the African slaves in America. The gypsies and homosexuals. All true, and utterly horrifying. But none of this negates the fact that all Jews were the target of an elaborate and calculated murder program. This program was partially realized and by methods that defy imagination.” ...

4) [Opinion Our Nakba](#) ,Gideon Levy, Haaretz, April 16, 2017

“This is a jubilee year: 50 years after the greatest Jewish disaster since the Holocaust, 50 years after the greatest Palestinian disaster since the Nakba. It is the jubilee of their second Nakba and our first. A moment before the start of the celebrations to mark the 50th anniversary of the “liberation” of the territories, we should remember that it was a disaster. A great disaster for the Palestinians, of course, but also a fateful disaster for the Jews here. 2017 ought to be a year of soul-searching in Israel, a year of unparalleled sadness.”

“A state that celebrates 50 years of occupation is a state whose sense of direction has been lost, its ability to distinguish good from evil impaired. A military victory may be celebrated, but to celebrate decades of brutal military conquest? What exactly is there to celebrate, Israelis? Fifty years of bloodshed, abuse, disinheritance and sadism? Only societies that have no conscience celebrate such anniversaries. It is not only on account of the suffering it causes the Palestinians that Israel must refrain from celebrating the anniversary. It must cloak itself in sorrow also

over what has happened to Israel since that terrible summer of 1967, the summer in which it won a war and lost nearly everything.” ...

“Nothing stood in the way of Israel becoming what it is, at home or abroad. It perpetuates the occupation, although it ostensibly didn’t want it from the outset, because it could. And it established an apartheid regime in the territories, because there is no other kind of occupation.

“Now it’s here. Strong, armed and rich as it never was in 1967. Corrupt and rotten as only an occupying country can be. That is what we are supposed to celebrate. And that is what we must weep over.”

5) [Opinion A Heartfelt Apology to Haaretz Readers](#), Gideon Levy, Haaretz, April 20, 2017

“Dear Orna and Moshe Gan-Zvi: I was saddened to read in Tuesday’s Hebrew edition of Haaretz that you’ve decided to cancel your subscription. I don’t know you, but I will miss you as readers. As someone who is partly responsible for your decision, as your article indicated, allow me to apologize. To apologize for writing the truth all these years. I should have taken into account that this truth wasn’t palatable to you, and acted accordingly.” ...

“I apologize for the one-sidedness. How could I not maintain a balance between the murderer and the murdered; the thief and his victim; the occupier and the occupied? Forgive me for daring to turn off your joy and pride in the land flowing with milk and Mobileye, and cherry tomatoes, too.

“There are so many wonderful things in this country, and Haaretz – with its ‘moral deterioration,’ as you call it – is ruining the party. How did I not see that you don’t like to read the truth, and didn’t take this into account when I’d return from the occupied territories every week to write about what I’d seen with my own eyes?” ...

6) [Talking Palestine: What Frame of Analysis? Which Goals and Messages?](#) Nadia Hijab and Ingrid Jaradat Gassner, Al-Shabaka, April 15, 2017

“What would you call a system which gives one young soldier the authority make mature women wait for hours to shuffle through Qalandia’s checkpoint? Palestinians are mired in a one or two-state debate that leapfrogs the need for a process of decolonization and reparations. The authors compare different frameworks of analysis and conclude the anti-apartheid framework is the most strategic in furthering Palestinian goals in the absence of a near-term political settlement.

“Overview: To say there is no longer a consensus among the Palestinian people on the ultimate political solution is to state the obvious. On the one hand, those claiming political leadership over the Palestinians are pursuing a sovereign state alongside Israel. On the other, the voices calling for a single democratic state in all of the land that constituted Mandate Palestine until 1948 are growing louder” ...

“Beyond this reality, there is a problem in the debate itself. By focusing on the ultimate settlement and whether it should be one state or two, the discussion too often leapfrogs the need for a process of decolonization as well as reparations for the damage inflicted upon the Palestinians. Decolonization and reparations must be part of the final settlement, whether it is that of a Palestinian state in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) adopted at the Palestinian National Council in 1988 as an expression of the Palestinian right to self-determination, or that of one state in all of the former British Mandate Palestine in which all citizens are equal.” ...

“Perhaps at the end of the day a just one-state solution will become a reality, and then there will be no need to insist on holding on to the Green Line to ensure that IHL is applied to the OPT. Until then, however, Palestinians must not give up the sources of strength and power they have today. Otherwise, we risk losing the tools offered by IHL and legitimizing the Israeli settlements instead of advancing our cause.

“It is clear that the process of decolonization and reparations cannot be the result of negotiations with the current Israeli regime (or indeed with past regimes). Israel has consistently blocked the emergence of the sovereign Palestinian state envisaged in a two-state solution, and it will certainly not agree to carry out the political and legal transformation required for the goal of one state.” ...

“Therefore, and in the absence of clarity about the ultimate political solution, the core goals must be the fundamental rights that are the essential elements of the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people and that, as such, must form part of any future political solution. These are: Freedom from occupation and colonization, the right of the refugees to return to their homes and properties, and non-discrimination and full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel.” ...

“ If we agree that these are the three core goals of the Palestinian people, then we can identify the framework of analysis that would be most strategic in pursuing decolonization and reparations and ensuring that they are intrinsic to the final political settlement. The two frameworks of analysis that are most comprehensive and have been most consistently promoted are that of settler colonialism and of apartheid.” ...

“We argue that the most strategic framework of analysis that should be applied to the Palestinian condition is the anti-apartheid framework. In the first place, it incorporates and builds on the analysis of settler colonialism: In the case of Palestine, apartheid began when the Zionist settler colonial society transformed into the state of Israel and incorporated its ideology of Jewish superiority and policy of ethnic cleansing into the laws and institutions of the state. Contemporary Israeli apartheid is thus best defined as the institutionalized regime of racial discrimination whereby Israel, as state and occupying power, systematically privileges Jews and oppresses, fragments, and dominates the entire Palestinian people and colonizes the OPT, with the intent of maintaining and consolidating this regime in all of pre-1948 Palestine. Population transfer and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, including denial of return, is an inhumane act of oppression and a pillar of Israeli apartheid.” ...

“At this stage of the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, when the ultimate political solution cannot be defined, the concept of apartheid provides a clear analytical framework for a struggle for decolonization and self-determination that can isolate and weaken the oppressive practices of the Israeli state and – at the same time – preserve and strengthen the fundamental Palestinian rights that are not negotiable: The right to freedom from occupation and colonization, the right to full equality of Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the right of the refugees to return to their homes and properties.”

Churches for Middle East Peace:

CMEP Bulletin , April 14, 2017: [Avenues for Change: Seizing Opportunities and Identifying Problems](#)

Some links from this Bulletin:

[Is Hamas Re-Branding to Orient Towards Egypt? \[The Brookings Institute\]](#)

[Israel Reopens Commercial Crossing with Gaza After 2-Day Closure \[Ma’an\]](#)

[Israel Warns of Snowballing Humanitarian Crisis in Gaza \[The Times of Israel\]](#)

[Netanyahu’s Settlement Scam \[LobeLog\]](#)

[Russia Says It Would Recognize West Jerusalem as Israeli Capital in Deal With Palestinians \[Haaretz\]](#)

[Israel Isn't a Fan of the Trump Doctrine \[Foreign Policy\]](#)

[Israel's 'Slow' Plan for Peace \[Al-Monitor\]](#)

CMEP Bulletin – April 21, 2017: [Abbas, Trump, and Settlements](#)

Some links from this Bulletin:

[Abbas: Ready to Meet Netanyahu Under Trump's Patronage in Washington \[Haaretz\]](#)

[Abbas to Test Trump's Commitment to Peace \[Middle East Institute\]](#)

[50 Years After War, Settlements Blur Future Borders \[Associated Press\]](#)

[The Israeli Volunteers Who Set Out to Protect Palestinian Farms \[Haaretz\]](#)

[The Palestinian Hunger Strike Aims Beyond the Jailhouses \[Haaretz\]](#)

[The Impossible Choice Faced by East Jerusalem Palestinians \[+972\]](#)

[Palestinian PM, UNRWA Head Meet to Discuss School Impasse \[The Times of Israel\]](#)

[Egyptian Line Damaged, Reducing Power in Southern Gaza to 4 Hours a Day \[Ma'an\] A Hamas Remake? \[The Middle East Eye\]](#)