

## Middle East Notes

### Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

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The four featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres criticism of Israel's occupation of the West Bank; prospects for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; a 50-year-old statement of international legal implications arising from the recent June War and the beginning of the occupation; need of an Israeli/Palestinian political movement promoting a country in which all Israelis and Palestinians between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River live in a single democratic state that ensure equal civil rights to all its inhabitants...one person, one vote; two fine CMEP Bulletins with links to articles of special interest; and recommended sources of reliable articles on Israeli and Palestinian issues.

**Commentary:** Israeli leaders seem to be dreaming still of Zionist state for Jews only, ignoring the equivalent Palestinian population under their oppressive and repressive control; most Israelis seem content with the status quo relationships of repression and oppression of indigenous Palestinians; most Palestinians have already given up any hope of "two states" in response to the occupation/settler policies of Israel.

Increasing numbers of Palestinians and progressive Israelis are no longer concerned about either a Zionist state nor "two states" but are focusing their creative energies on the establishment of a single democratic state that ensures equal civil rights to all its inhabitants: one person, one vote; with a single parliamentary regime and the creation of a robust and inclusive civil society for all Jews and Palestinians living between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. Israeli policies have destroyed the Zionist dream and made a "two state solution" an impossible dream. A single democratic state seems to be the only alternative to a future nightmare of escalating violence and despair. It is time for all to wake up and stop dreaming.

Featured articles:

- U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres criticized Israel's occupation of the West Bank and called for the establishment of a Palestinian state in a statement marking the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Six-Day War.
- Dahlia Scheindlin in 972 Mag explores prospects for a solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and varying levels of opposition to Israel's military rule. After half a century, could there finally be a proposal that stands a chance?
- Michael Link writes in The Globe and Mail that in September, 1967, Theodor Meron, the newly appointed legal adviser to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was asked by the Israeli government for his written advice on the international legal implications arising from the recent June War. He opposed occupation with warnings. Fifty years later, his forewarning still resonates.
- Jeff Halper writes in +972 Blog, that progressive Israelis and Palestinians have a crucial task: mounting a political movement that gives all an effective voice in forging the future of our country: a country in which all Israelis and Palestinians between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River live in a single democratic state that ensure equal civil rights to all its inhabitants. One person, one vote.
- Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletins

## **1) UN secretary-general calls for Palestinian state in statement marking 50th anniversary of Six-Day War,**

**June 5, 2017**

“UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres criticized Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and called for the establishment of a Palestinian state in a statement marking the 50th anniversary of the 1967 Six-Day War. The statement, issued Monday, said the war ‘resulted in Israel’s occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians and Syrians.’

“Guterres criticized Israel’s military control of Palestinian areas, saying it endangers both Israelis and Palestinians. He called for the establishment of a Palestinian state through ‘direct negotiations to resolve all final status issues on the basis of relevant UN resolutions, agreements and international law.’”

... “The current government maintains that Israel’s military control of the West Bank is not an occupation, though the international community and some Israeli leaders disagree.” ...

## **2) Fifty years of opposition, Dahlia Scheindlin, 972 Mag. June 6, 2017**

... “Still, the often-overlooked fact is that 50 years of Israeli occupation is also a half-century of opposition. It is true that the core goal of ending occupation has failed and there is no political resolution in sight. But the history of opposition holds elements of success. In fact the often-derided “peace industry” has produced not just dialogues and demonstrations but has helped legitimize ideas in Israel that form the core principles for resolving the conflict.” ...

“Instead, the occupation became more entrenched, more elaborate, and more permanent. In response to the widespread violation of human rights including land appropriation, torture, military courts and movement restrictions, a growing community of Israeli human rights organizations arose, becoming more prominent during the 2000s. The two-state solution was stuck, but the idea of protecting human rights spread. Palestinians of course had been demanding rights throughout; now Israeli human rights organizations came to the fore in Israel and on the international scene, to no small controversy. The idea of a “rights-based” approach gained more prominence. But the 2010s, human rights discourse practically took the place of a nearly defunct “peace” discourse among the left.” ...

“By 2016, the number of settlers had roughly doubled since 2000, approaching 600,000. The two-state solution appears more unlikely every day. Although settlements represent the bullseye target of left-wing opposition for decades, some feel that instead of fighting windmills, there is a need for new solutions. Fifty-five percent of all Israelis still support the two-state solution, but just half of Jews, according to the December 2016 survey.

“Waning prospects have driven new ideas again. In recent years, some have begun to envision a modified version of two states, based on two governments for two peoples, with different national identities and a geographic border. But instead of a hard separation, this approach envisions a porous border. Citizens of either side would be allowed to cross for travel, leisure, work or even residency unless they pose an individual security threat — to replace the collective restriction of movement that exists today.

“Rather than uprooting massive numbers of settlers as the traditional two-state solution would require, with the accompanying potential for internal Israeli social breakdown, this approach allows for citizens of each side to live as permanent residents in the other state – under local laws, with full rights, but national voting in one’s country of identity (Arab citizens of Israel can choose their citizenship, or retain both).

“Jerusalem would remain united, the capital of two states, under a unified municipality representing both populations, to provide municipal services. Holy sites would be protected by religious authorities like today, and perhaps an international body. Security cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces can continue as it is today — in fact this is one of the only successful forms of cooperation today.” ...

“The word ‘confederalism’ or ‘confederation’ scares many. But it is interesting to note that the initiative has sparked interest and curiosity among settlers and other right-wing figures, the classic spoilers in all previous two-state efforts. An organic social community has grown up around the idea, called ‘Two States/One Homeland’ with diplomats and policymakers expressing significant interest.” ...

**See also:**

[An Israeli-Palestinian confederation? Not so fast](#)

[Colonizing the Occupied Palestinian Territory: Fifty Years of Israeli Impunity, Fifty Years of International Failure, Fifty Years of Brutal Military Occupation](#)

**3) [Fifty years ago, an Israeli occupation foreseen](#), Michael Link, *The Globe and Mail*, June 9, 2017**

“In September, 1967, Theodor Meron, the newly appointed legal adviser to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, was asked by the Israeli government for his written advice on the international legal implications arising from the recent June War. Fifty years later, his forewarning still resonates.” ...

“In his legal opinion to the Israeli government, Mr. Meron explained the strict prohibitions that international humanitarian law placed on Israel’s rule over these territories. The Fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 applied, he wrote, and, through this lens, he noted that the international community viewed these conquered lands as subject to the law of occupation. (In legal terms, this would mean that the Palestinians are a protected people, annexation of any occupied lands is illegal and the occupying power must eventually return all these lands to the rightful sovereign.)

“As for the burgeoning Israeli settlements, Mr. Meron warned that they were expressly forbidden under the Geneva Convention. This prohibition, he said, was categorical, and intended to prevent the colonialization of captured territory by the occupying state. Settling civilians of the occupying power in these territories would be seen by the international community as the unlawful prelude to annexation.” ...

“In April of this year, on the eve of the 50th anniversary of the occupation, he has published a remarkable article in the *American Journal of International Law* about his prescient memo and on the widening gap between international law and Israel’s actual practices in the West Bank. In this article, Mr. Meron points out that Israel’s continued growth of Jewish settlements in the West Bank is foreclosing the chances of a contiguous and viable Palestinian state. Referring to Israel, he said:

““Disrespect for international law is, alas, not unusual in the affairs of states. It is rare, however, that disrespect for an international convention would have such a direct impact on the elimination of any realistic prospects for reconciliation, not to mention peace.””...

“In his recent article, he decries Israel’s self-serving interpretations of humanitarian law that seek to justify what is plainly unlawful. In his closing words, he warns that Israel must understand that the violation of Palestinian human rights and ‘the colonialization of territory populated by other peoples can no longer be accepted in our time.’”

See also: [From Occupation to Infatuation: 8 New Page-turners on Israel-Palestine](#)

4) [Ending the occupation isn't enough](#), Jeff Halper, +972 Blog, June 10, 2017

“As we reach the 50th ‘anniversary’ of Israel’s occupation, it is hard to discern on the horizon either a workable political program or a focused political movement beyond the vague slogan: End the Occupation. The ‘solution’ espoused by the Israeli peace movement for the past 50 years and by the PLO/PA for the past 30 years — two states for two peoples — has become as ritualized and fossilized as it is defunct. It has been buried deep under Israeli ‘settlements,’ as we continue to call massive urban blocs in East Jerusalem and the West Bank housing some 800,000 Israeli residents.

“Consciously, systematically and with unlimited resources, Israel has virtually completed Zionism’s great project: effectively ‘Judaizing’ the country, transforming Palestine into the Land of Israel. ‘East’ Jerusalem, annexed in 1967, has long since ceased to exist as a coherent, functioning urban entity. The West Bank has become Judea and Samaria. More than 90 percent of the entire country’s Palestinians have been confined to just 12 percent of the land, even though they represent close to half the population. Greater Israel is a reality, an irreversible reality, undeniably a single apartheid state.” ...

“Israel controls all the OPT’s vital resources, plus its airspace and communications sphere. Using walls and a permit regime, it has detached “Greater Jerusalem” from Palestinian society and economy, thus robbing the Palestinians of their political, religious and cultural center as well as their major tourist attraction, the source of 40 percent of their economy.

“The map can’t show the rest: the destruction of the Palestinian economy and the impoverishment of its people (70 percent or more living under the poverty line); displacement (almost 50,000 Palestinian homes demolished in the OPT since 1967, on the backdrop of more than 70,000 within Israel since 1948); a traumatized population that has endured decades of unrelenting and repressive military occupation, 800,000 of whom have been imprisoned at one time or another, many tortured; restrictions on movement and even family unification; induced emigration; and more.” ...

... “What exists today is apartheid. A single state — Israel — rules the entire country and over an entire people without civil, human or national rights.

“One effective government, one army, one economy, one infrastructure and territorial/settlement contiguity dominates Palestinian life politically, economically, militarily and physically, while the Palestinian population, half of that of the entire country, is confined to dozens of tiny enclaves on only 10 percent of the land.” ...

“What unites all these versions of the two-state solution is a rock-solid conviction that Palestinians and Israelis are so incompatible they cannot share the same polity — a notion I for one do not accept. Invariably they leave security in Israeli hands for the foreseeable future, rendering them non-starters for Palestinians.

“The deliberate and systematic elimination of the two-state solution by Israel and the inadmissibility of apartheid leave only one option for a just political settlement to a conflict as destabilizing to the entire region as it is destructive to the Palestinians themselves:

“a single democratic state that ensure equal civil rights to all its inhabitants. One person, one vote. A single parliamentary regime, the creation of a robust and inclusive civil society, the full integration of the army and security forces, return of all the Palestinian refugees who choose it (accompanied by land redistribution, financial compensation, housing and affirmative-action education and hiring), and an economy that serves everyone.” ...

... “The masses of supporters for a just peace in Palestine/Israel can be and have been mobilized, but they have to know to what end. What are we demanding of our political leaders? ‘End the Occupation’ is a beginning, but end it

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for what? The many Israelis and internationals mobilized to support Palestine must be empowered and led by Palestinians.” ...

See also: [How Many Settlers Really Live in the West Bank? Haaretz Investigation Reveals](#)

#### 5) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins

Jun 09, 2017 - [\[CMEP Bulletin\] Broader Middle East Edition](#)

Jun 17, 2017 - [\[CMEP Bulletin\] Gaza Hanging by a Thread](#)

*Excellent sources for information and links to articles concerning the State of Israel and the Palestinian people are:*

CMEP Bulletins (Churches for Middle East Peace) [www.cmep.org](http://www.cmep.org)

FMEP (Foundation for Middle East Peace) <http://info@fmep.org/>

Americans for Peace Now - News Nosh: <http://peacenow.org/>

Jewish Voice for Peace: <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/>

+ 972 Magazine: <https://972mag.com/>

Ma'an News Agency: <http://www.maannews.com/>