

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 focus on Israeli and Palestinian hopes and fears as a result of the election of Donald Trump; implications concerning the weakening of hope in any two state solution: non recognition by Palestinians of Israel as a "Jewish State and non-recognition by Israelis of any Palestinian State; discrepancy in wages of Israeli citizens: Israeli Jews and "Arab Israelis"; future disruptions of international power in the UN with the appointment of the staunch supporter of Israel, Nikki Haley, as U.S. ambassador to the United Nations; and links to other articles of interest.

Commentary: Leadership of Israel, Palestine, Arab Nations, the EU and other nations of the world must still speculate about the future role of the U.S. under the presidency of Donald Trump. Will he be true to his campaigning rhetoric or be increasingly pragmatic as he faces the reality and responsibilities of his role to the U.S. and world as a president and world leader? This will be an open question until he is inaugurated. The Israeli leadership seems to be opting for a continuation of the "status quo" in its relationship with the Palestinians of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza, and with the Palestinian citizens of Israel (Arab Israelis). The meeting of the UN General Assembly on November 29, 2016 during its "International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People" will either signal a continuation of the status quo or some kind of new approach.

- Ramzy Baroud writes in *Ma'an News* that fear and trepidation are slowly building up, as U.S. President-elect Donald Trump is fortifying his transitional team with people capable of bringing about a nightmare scenario.
- Giora Eiland states in *Ynetnews* that the Israeli government can either determine that there is no solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and continue to 'manage' it, or it can launch a dialogue with the new US administration which would examine the entire range of possibilities.
- *Haaretz* reports that the AIPAC website has scrubbed two-state solution from talking points and that though 'two-state solution' remains on other parts of the pro-Israel lobby's site, the educational section on the peace process has dropped reference to it.
- Elie Friedman reports in the *972 Magazine* that the Netanyahu government insists that Palestinians recognize Israel as the Jewish state, as opposed to just recognizing that it exists. But the Israeli prime minister refuses to recognize the Palestinian people and their rights to exist as a nation, as opposed to just acknowledging the fact that they live the area.
- Moti Bassok writes in *Haaretz* that the average employed Arab Israeli earns only 58.6 percent of what a Jewish Israeli makes, down from 67.2 percent in 2014.
- Samer Badawi notes in the *972 Magazine* that whatever disruptions are afoot in the balance of international power will eventually be reflected at the United Nations. And when that happens, even a staunch supporter of Israel like Nikki Haley may have to yield to a new order.

1. [Analysis: What should Palestinians expect -- can Trump be any worse? Ramzy Baroud, Ma'an News, November 23, 2016](#)

“Fear and trepidation are slowly building up, as US President-elect Donald Trump is fortifying his transitional team with people capable of bringing about a nightmare scenario, not only for Americans but for the rest of the world, as well.

For Palestinians, however, the signs are even more ominous. From former New York Mayor, Rudy Giuliani to Republican leader Newt Gingrich, the Trump team is filling up with dishonorable men who have made careers out of pandering to Israeli interests and unabashedly discounting Palestinian rights.” ...

“The Obama administration, despite the uneasy relationship between President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, has been one of the friendliest and most generous towards Israel. Obama has remained steadfast on Israel’s side as they both fought against Palestinian political aspirations in international institutions. Only recently, Obama signed a ‘landmark agreement’ by giving Israel \$38 billion in military funding, the largest aid package in US history.” ...

“In his last speech before the United Nations, Obama dedicated a single sentence to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict -- a sentence that accurately reflected his failure to positively affect the outcomes of the Middle East’s most protracting, destabilizing conflict. Both sides would “be better off if Palestinians reject incitement and recognize the legitimacy of Israel, but Israel recognizes that it cannot permanently occupy and settle Palestinian land,” he said. Nothing more.” ...

“Yet, some are, naively, hoping that Obama will seek recognition for the State of Palestine at the UN Security Council in his remaining weeks in the Oval Office. These hopes have been buoyed by media reports that Obama had instructed the State Department to develop an ‘option menu’ regarding his vision for a resolution to the conflict.

“While Palestinians and their supporters are optimistic that Obama will redeem himself, even if symbolically, and support the Palestinian push for statehood, Obama is unlikely to carry out any such steps, especially since Trump is bound to defeat such initiatives once he moves into the White House.” ...

“As of September of last year, 139 of the UN's member states (and two non-member states) have recognized Palestine. But those recognitions remain largely symbolic as long as the US is unyielding in its rejection of Palestinian aspirations. An unwavering supporter of Israel, the US is not only blocking full Palestinian membership at the UN, but is doing its utmost to prevent 'Palestine' from gaining access to international institutions.” ...

“Indeed, regardless of what position Obama -- or even Trump -- may or may not take, it will have little bearing on the outcome if Palestinians remain divided. Far more significant than the inflammatory drivel of Gingrich and Giuliani, Palestinian division and their inability to confront the Israeli Occupation with one unified and daring strategy is Palestine’s greatest, and most pressing challenge.”

2. [Trump era must not be wasted on ‘two-state’ solution, Giora Eiland, Ynetnews, November 15, 2016](#)

“The surprising results in the US presidential election create both concerns and new opportunities for Israel. The most tangible opportunity has to do with the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, but not necessarily in the manner it was perceived and declared by the Israeli Right.

Since 1993, the American administration has supported the “two-state” solution. For those of us who have forgotten, it was supported both by Republican George W. Bush's administration and by the two Democratic administrations which preceded and succeeded it.” ...

“But who says these assumptions are four cornerstones we cannot do without? If we free ourselves from them and try to look into the entire range of possible solutions, we will find that some of the other solutions have an outstanding advantage over the only known solution.

“Among the other solutions, we can talk about a “regional solution” with land swaps between four players—Egypt, Jordan, Israel and Palestine—or about the creation of a federation between Jordan and the West Bank, or about a functional and not necessarily territorial division between us and the Palestinians. And yes, even Bayit Yehudi leader Naftali Bennett’s plan to annex C Area and establish Palestinian autonomy in the rest of the area.” ...

“The Israeli government has two options: It can either determine that there is no solution to the conflict and that it should therefore continue “managing” it, or it could launch a dialogue with the new administration which would examine the entire range of possibilities, without being committed to the four aforementioned assumptions.” ...

See also link A - [Announcing The New State Solution](#), link B - [Israeli, Palestinian officials react to Trump victory](#); link C - [Are Palestinians ready for Trump?](#)

3. [AIPAC Website Scrubs Two-state Solution From Talking Points, Haaretz, November 15, 2016](#)

“A reference to the two-state solution has been dropped from the website of the pro-Israel lobby the American Israel Public Affairs Committee – or AIPAC. Though other references to the two-state solution remain and can be found on the lobby's website, BuzzFeed News reported, the reference in the main educational section dedicated to peace was dropped.” ...

“A spokesperson for AIPAC said the change was part of a routine reorganization of AIPAC's website, BuzzFeed reported. Responding to the report, AIPAC's spokesman Marshal Wittmann told BuzzFeed News that ‘our position has not changed on two-state solution. We continue to support a two-state solution.’

“In July, the Republican Party dropped the two state solution from its official platform, and a preliminary policy paper drafted by President-elect Donald Trump's Israel advisor ahead of his election also rejected the solution, writing: ‘A two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians appears impossible as long as the Palestinians are unwilling to renounce violence against Israel or recognize Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish state,’ the paper, drafted by his team, but reportedly vetted by Trump, said.”

4. [Israel has yet to recognize the Palestinian people, Elie Friedman, 972 Magazine, November 14, 2016](#)

“Following World War II, the term “recognition” became political, a term whose purpose was to ensure the liberation of oppressed ethnic groups demanding political self-determination. The demand for recognition was especially relevant to conflicts surrounding identity, in which at least one side feels that the other is denying its identity and its right to become a significant actor on the world stage.” ...

“Moreover, Netanyahu is seen as someone who suffers from the exact same problem as the Palestinians whom he blames. He argues that Palestinians recognize Israel’s existence only because the power dynamics are clearly not in their favor; that is, they recognize the existence of a Jewish state in the Middle East, but not in its right to exist. However, the same thing could be said about Netanyahu’s stance toward the Palestinians.” ...

“Israel’s repeated demands that Palestinians recognize it as a Jewish state are an articulation of the need to hear that Palestinians accept the Jewish presence in this country as a moral principle — that they do not view the Jewish presence as a regretful fact. But as long as the State of Israel does not recognize the Palestinians as a nation entitled to its own state, even on some of the land it considers its homeland, it will not hear the words it hopes so badly to hear.”

See also link D - [How Israel thanks \(or doesn't\) Palestine for helping put out fires;](#)

link E - [As Fires Rage Across Israel, Netanyahu Busy With Political Pyromania](#)

5. [Wage Gap Between Israeli Jews and Arab Counterparts Widens, Moti Bassok, Haaretz, November 23, 2016](#)

“Earning gaps between salaried Jewish and Arab Israelis grew significantly last year, according to a survey by the Central Bureau of Statistics. The average employed Israeli earned a gross salary of 9,503 shekels a month last year, an increase in inflation-adjusted terms of 2.7 percent from 2014. The median salary last year was 6,884 shekels a month, an increase in real terms of 3.4 percent from 2014.

“The survey found that the median salary equaled 72.4 percent of the average salary, a similar figure to that of the preceding 14 years. It also found that salary gaps between Jews and Arabs grew significantly – the average Arab earned 58.6 percent of what his Jewish counterpart earned last year, versus 67.2 percent in 2014.” ...

6. [What Trump's new UN envoy could mean for Israel-Palestine, Samer Badawi, 972 Magazine, November 24, 2016](#)

“When she signed into law the first state legislation penalizing companies that boycott “based on race, color, religion, gender or national origin,” South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley was lauded by the bill’s author, State Representative Alan Clemmons, who made clear its intent.

“Citing ‘tactics employed by the Nazis,’ Clemmons called the Palestinian Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement a prime example of “hatred and bigotry” for ‘its effort to harm our great ally, Israel.’” ...

“Now that Trump has seized the presidency, we can expect America’s new UN ambassador to make good on that promise starting in January, upholding a longstanding U.S. tradition of unqualified support for Israel in the international body. That she will be doing so with card-carrying white nationalists in her court is further evidence that America’s support for Israel has never been about upholding democratic values or combating bigotry.

“As that dissonance grows even louder in the age of Trump, it will likely only hasten the erosion of America’s credibility at the United Nations. So too with America’s influence — an outcome that will no doubt sway key debates, including on Syria and Iran, in others’ favor.” ...

Other articles of interest:

A. [Announcing The New State Solution, Benjamin Anthony, Ynetnews, November 16, 2016](#)

For decades the world has subscribed to the notion that the two-state solution presents the most viable road to resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; it is time that other ideas be allowed to enter the public discourse.

B. [Israeli, Palestinian officials react to Trump victory, Ma’an News, November 10, 2016](#)

Israeli and Palestinian authorities reacted on Sunday to the victory of Donald Trump in the American presidential elections, with one Israeli minister expressing his hopes that Trump’s nomination would spell the end of efforts to establish a two-state solution.

C. [Are Palestinians ready for Trump? Omar Karmi, The Electronic Intifada, November 25, 2016](#)

Next year marks the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, the British government’s promise of support for a “national home for the Jewish people” in Palestine. And 2017 could turn out to be similarly fateful for Palestinians. An unknown quantity is waiting to move into the White House, a tweet-from-the-hip president-elect to whom Israeli politicians are already turning to clear the way for further settlement building in the West Bank

and to end talk of a Palestinian state. Palestinians are uniquely unprepared for this moment, mostly as a result of a lack of direction and leadership.

D. [How Israel thanks \(or doesn't\) Palestine for helping put out fires, Haggai Matar, 972 Magazine, November 26, 2016](#)

The Palestinian Authority contributed eight firetrucks and 40 firefighters to combat the fire in Haifa. All they got was a footnote. The Israel Embassy in the U.S. published a thank you message on its Facebook page on Friday dedicated to all the countries that helped put out the wildfires raging across the country. Only the Palestinian Authority — which sent eight fire trucks and 40 firefighters to help put out the flames in the northern city of Haifa — was somehow forgotten. Or to be more precise, the PA was mentioned in a small footnote on the bottom right of the image, without a flag or a plane of its own — only the words: “Ground assistance received also from the Palestinian Authority.”

E. [As Fires Rage Across Israel, Netanyahu Busy With Political Pyromania, Haaretz Editorial November 27, 2016](#)

The prime minister and members of his cabinet have been quick to point to Arabs as the arsonists behind the fires that raged across Israel last week, risking far more dangerous blazes that no supertanker can extinguish.

F. [CMEP Bulletin - Congressional Give and Take Over Israel-Palestine Strategy, November 24, 2016](#)

G. [Feinstein Opposes Israeli Bill to Legalize West Bank Settlements, November 16, 2016](#)

Senator Diane Feinstein (D-Calif.) today released the following statement on legislation advancing in the Knesset to legalize settlements constructed on private Palestinian land: “I’m deeply concerned by legislation the Netanyahu government is considering that could retroactively legalize all settlements built on private Palestinian land in the West Bank.

H. [Palestinians should prepare for impending onslaught, Diana Buttu, Gulf News, November 14, 2016](#)

Leaders should not be ‘welcoming’ the new US presidency but should instead be preparing for hard policies