

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
December 15, 2016



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Christmas Blessings, Peace and Wonder in the New Year to all our readers!
After a brief Christmas break the next Middle East Notes will be available on January 5, 2017.

The six featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on Pax Christi International's "Call for a new Israeli-Palestinian peace process"; the UN Palestinian Solidarity Day's speeches; Ban Ki-Moon's call on the international community to reiterate its commitment to peace negotiations; the UN General Assembly's call on Israel to leave the Golan Heights and its declaration that Israeli jurisdiction on 'the Holy city of Jerusalem' is 'null and void'; the upcoming arrival in Washington of a high level Palestinian delegation to discuss the Security Council's criticism of continued settlement construction and other possible resolutions; an article in the CMEP Bulletin discussing why settlements in the West Bank are detrimental to peace, followed by links to other articles of interest.

Commentary: "Last month Oxford Dictionaries chose *post truth* as its word of the year for 2016. The publisher said it referred to circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief, and cited the first place it was used: a 1992 essay in *The Nation*." (p.7, *The Nation*, Dec. 19/26, 2016) 'Post truth' is an applicable term for the responses by Israeli and U.S. leadership to the documented, ongoing repression and oppression of the Palestinian people. People of good will are calling for a nonviolent and just end to the conflict. Verifiable 'facts on the ground' reiterated in the speeches of the UN Palestinian Solidarity Day continue to be less influential on public opinion in Israel and the U.S. than 'post truth.'

- The full text of the [Pax Christi International's](#) "Call for a new Israeli-Palestinian peace process: the moment for renewed commitment." is provided.
- The [Times Of Israel](#) Staff notes that on UN 'International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People' on November 29, the UN deputy head hailed the historic milestone the 2012 recognition of Palestine as non-member state; Israel's envoy slammed the day as a 'charade'.
- [Ynetnews](#) reports that noting this commemoration day, Ban Ki-Moon called on the international community to reiterate its commitment to peace negotiations, warning that lack of progress has strengthened radicals on both sides.
- Eitan Goldstein, Itamar Eichner write in [Ynetnews](#) that since the UN General Assembly on Palestinian Solidarity Day called again on Israel to leave the Golan Heights and declared Israeli jurisdiction on 'the Holy city of Jerusalem' to be 'null and void,' the Jewish state is prepared to go up against three UNSC resolutions aimed against it.
- Barak Ravid and Jack Khoury write in [Haaretz](#) that a Palestinian delegation will soon arrive in Washington to discuss a Security Council bid, which criticizes settlement construction. According to a Western diplomat: If the delegation would soften certain sections, there's a chance Obama will comply.
- The [CMEP Bulletin](#) for December 9, 2016 notes that since the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993, the settler population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has more than doubled and over 50,000 new settlement units have been built, 11,000 of them between 2009 and 2015. CMEP's Executive Director Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon discusses why settlements in the West Bank are detrimental to peace. Included in this CMEP Bulletin are links to pertinent articles.

1) [Israel-Palestine: Pax Christi International: Call for a new Israeli-Palestinian peace process: the moment for renewed commitment, Pax Christi International, December 1, 2016](#)

"A just resolution to the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict is critical for peace in our world today. Despite the difficulties inherent in ending this conflict, it is urgent that it is resolved. 2017 marks 100 years since the Balfour declaration, 70 years since UN resolution 181, and 50 years since Israel began its occupation of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights and the annexation of East Jerusalem. Pax Christi International believes that this is the moment for a renewed commitment to end the violence and to reach a just and sustainable solution guaranteeing the fundamental rights of both Israelis and Palestinians in accordance with international law. '...

Stop all violations of international law

"Pax Christi International is committed to an approach which protects human rights, promotes peace and respects international law. We call on both Israeli and Palestinian authorities to adhere to international humanitarian and human rights laws." ...

Focus on the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT)

"The situation in the OPT is cause for alarm. Breaches of international law related to the Israeli military occupation take place on a regular basis and in a variety of ways, including frequent collective punishment, confiscation of land, exploitation of water resources, home demolitions, restrictions on the freedom of movement and goods, administrative detentions, and the harassment, psychological trauma and torture of Palestinian detainees and prisoners. " ...

Work towards solutions based on peaceful co-existence

"Our movement strongly urges both Israel and Palestine to return to the negotiating table and begin a dialogue rooted in mutual respect for human rights and the dignity of the other, as well as a commitment to abide by international law. " ...

Recognize the fundamental right to full equality of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel

"In 2014, the UN Human Rights Council expressed its concerns to Israel over the fact that its Jewish and non-Jewish populations are treated differently and that its domestic legal framework maintains a three-tiered system of laws affording different civil status, rights and legal protections for Jewish Israeli citizens and Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel." ...

End the Israeli occupation of all Arab lands occupied in 1967 and dismantle the separation barriers

"Pax Christi International considers the Israeli occupation of the OPT, as well as the building of settlements and separation barriers on occupied land, as contrary to international law." ...

Respect, protect and promote the right of return for all Palestinian refugees

"Following the 1948 Arab-Israeli conflict, inhabitants of Palestine fled their homes en masse out of fear of or because of violent expulsions. Estimates vary as to the number of Palestinian refugees displaced from within the borders of Israel in 1948; some suggest the total to be 750.000 people." ...

Support nonviolent resistance in peacebuilding

"Pax Christi International believes that nonviolent resistance to occupation and injustice can pave the way for a renewed peace process. Research has shown that these strategies are twice as effective as their violent counterparts in achieving their goals. ' ...

Acknowledge the potential role of BDS in the peace process

“Many nonviolent strategies have been and will continue to be employed by Palestinians to resist Israel’s 50-year military occupation and the dehumanizing injustices that have accompanied it. ‘ ...

Promote justice through means of BDS

“Pax Christi International views the BDS campaign as a nonviolent way to create pressure toward peace and to target companies profiting from the occupation contrary to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights. ‘ ...

Stop punishment of BDS human rights defenders

“Pax Christi International urges Israel, and all other countries, to stop punishing human rights defenders who support the BDS-movement and asks the international community to put pressure on these countries. In general, it has become increasingly difficult to be a human rights defender in the Israeli-Palestinian context. ‘ ...

Conclusion

“While Pax Christi International acknowledges the legitimate grievances of both Israelis and Palestinians and the responsibility of participants on both sides to stop any violence perpetrated against the other, we cannot ignore the gross imbalance of power and resources in favor of Israel. We therefore emphasize the following:

- that a sustainable peace and reconciliation will only be achieved if Israelis and Palestinians engage in the peace process as equals;
- that it is essential that the legitimacy and rights of both are respected and protected, which has not been the case to this point, as the rights of Palestinians have been systematically denied;
- nonviolent struggles should be supported and the strategy set forth by the BDS-movement is one of the possible nonviolent approaches to apply international pressure on Israel until the changes necessary to create an environment for a renewed peace process have been achieved, but we do not call for a boycott of the state of Israel as a whole.

“Pax Christi International urges the international community to stay focused on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, to contribute, together with the Palestinian and Israeli people and authorities, to a revival of the peace process so that an agreement can finally be reached and an enforcement mechanism put in place.

“As stated by H.B. Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem and former President of Pax Christi International: ‘We can help leaders and people to free themselves from fear and mistrust and to reach the so long-desired peace. The beginning of Palestinian freedom is also the beginning of reconciliation between the two peoples, Palestinians and Israelis.’”

2) [Donning Palestinian flag, UNGA president marks Palestinian solidarity day, Times Of Israel Staff And Agencies, November 30, 2016](#)

“The president of the United Nations General Assembly wore a scarf with the colors of the Palestinian flag around his neck on Tuesday while addressing a special session of the 193-member assembly to mark Palestinian solidarity day.

“The UN’s “International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People” is marked annually on November 29, the anniversary of the United Nations recognizing the Partition Plan that called for the creation of the State of Israel and of an independent Arab state.

“Donning the colors of the Palestinian flag as well as a black-and-white keffiyeh associated with Palestinians, Peter Thomson of Fiji, the president of the 71st Session of the General Assembly, said peace between Israel and the Palestinians was ‘fundamental to our efforts to realize the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, and to ensure that they are able to enjoy lives of dignity, opportunity, prosperity, and equality.’

“‘However, the pursuit of peace has been mired by continuing terror attacks against civilians, and brutal acts of violence by both sides,’ Thomson said. He did not note that the majority of the stabbing, shooting and car-ramming attacks that began last year — and have seen a significant drop in recent weeks — have been perpetrated by Palestinians.

“The attacks since October 2015 have claimed the lives of 36 Israelis, two Americans and an Eritrean national. According to AFP figures, some 238 Palestinians, a Jordanian and a Sudanese migrant have also been killed, most of them in the course of carrying out attacks, Israel says, and many of the others in clashes with troops in the West Bank and at the Gaza border, as well as in Israeli airstrikes in the Strip.

“In his remarks Tuesday, Thomson urged Israeli and Palestinian leaders ‘to deescalate tensions, to refrain from violence and provocations, and to avoid incitement and polarizing rhetoric that pushes peace further out of reach.’

“He also issued a call to the international community ‘to redouble its efforts to support credible efforts to peacefully end the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.’

“The UN General Assembly is set to consider six resolutions critical of Israel on Wednesday, including one that called on Jerusalem to resume peace talks with Syria and to withdraw from the Golan Heights.

“Israel’s Ambassador to the UN Danny Danon angrily rejected the resolution proposals, questioning whether ‘the Palestinians even want a state.’

“‘History tells us that the answer is no,’ Danon said in his speech. ‘If the Palestinians really wanted peace, we could have had peace decades ago. The Palestinians reject every Israeli offer and every plan and respond with waves of violence and terror.’

“Earlier in the session, the UN’s Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson said the admission of Palestine to the United Nations as a non-member Observer State in 2012 was a historic milestone, while acknowledging both the achievements and lost opportunities related to the conflict as he and Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon near the end of their tenure this year.

“Eliasson says the last 10 years can be described as ‘a lost decade’ for Israeli-Palestinian peace-making and if the trend continues, a two-state solution could slip out of reach.

“He noted Israel’s ‘legitimate security concerns,’ but said ‘holding another people occupied for half a century undermines the values and strength of your democratic society.’” ...

3) [UN chief: Israeli-Palestinian peace prospects under threat Associated Press, November 30, 2016](#)

“During ‘International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People’, Ban Ki-Moon calls on international community to reiterate its commitment to peace negotiations, warning that lack of progress has strengthened radicals on both sides; Israel’s UN envoy slams event as ‘Israel-bashing festival.’” ...

“Ban, bemoaning a lack of progress in peace negotiations during his tenure as the top UN official, released a statement prior to a meeting of the 193-member UN General Assembly on the conflict. He said that events in recent years—including two unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a settlement and armed conflict—have left Palestinians and Israelis alike frustrated and disillusioned.

"It has strengthened radicals and weakened moderates on both sides,' he said. 'Making matters worse is a dangerous vacuum within the international community as crises elsewhere claim the attention of world leaders.' The General Assembly meeting came on the UN's annual 'International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.'"...

"Danny Danon, Israel's UN ambassador, criticized the General Assembly during Tuesday's meeting, saying members bash Israel every year over the issue of the Israel-Palestinian conflict even though he said the Palestinians' commitment to negotiating an agreement is questionable.

"Every year, on this date, this chamber holds this same, cynical, Israel-bashing festival,' he said."Every year, we hear speaker after speaker distorting history and promoting a completely one-sided narrative.'" ...

"Deputy Secretary-General Jan Eliasson, reflecting on the state of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, said in a statement that the admission of Palestine to the United Nations as a non-member Observer State in 2012 was a historic milestone during his and Ban's tenure."

4) [UN calls on Israel to leave Golan, Israel prepares fight at UNSC, Eitan Goldstein, Itamar Eichner, Ynetnews, December 2, 2016](#)

"The UN General Assembly [adopted six resolutions](#) on the situation of the Palestinians on Wednesday, including a demand for Israel to withdraw from the Golan Heights." ...

"The resolution, called [UNGA Resolution A/71/L.8](#), was put forth by over 35 countries, including Bahrain, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Indonesia, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, and the Palestinian delegation, amongst others.

"The resolution calls for peace talks between Syria and Israel and Lebanon and Israel to be restarted immediately, calls for the Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights, and determines that Israel being in the Golan Heights and Israel's de-facto annexation of the Golan Heights represents a key stumbling block to regional peace.

"It was passed in the UN General assembly by a vote of 103 for, 6 against (Canada, Federated States of Micronesia, Israel, Marshall Islands, Palau, and the United States), and 56 abstentions.

"The resolution is one of six anti-Israel resolutions passed Wednesday, another being on the status of Jerusalem (A/71/L.22). In it, the UN expressed '[its determination that any actions taken by Israel, the occupying Power, to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem are illegal and therefore null and void and have no validity whatsoever.](#)'

"The representative from Israel said in the assembly following the vote that "it was shameful how some countries had yet to accept the existence of Israel and abused the General Assembly to spread baseless allegations," and that the resolutions seek to provide a 'biased narrative.'

The next round: The UN Security Council

"Meanwhile, the Israeli Foreign Ministry is expecting a tough fight against several anti-Israel resolutions which are due to be voted on at the UN Security Council before US President Obama leaves office.

"There are three initiatives which especially worry Israel; initiatives from New Zealand, the Palestinians, and France.

New Zealand

"New Zealand, which will be vacating its position on the council soon, wants to put forth a resolution which will require Israel to condemn settlement construction, condemn violence and incitement from both the Israelis and the

Palestinians, condemn the humanitarian situation in Gaza, and call for an immediate re-start of negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. A draft resolution is expected to be submitted in the coming days

The Palestinians

"The Palestinians are trying to pass a resolution which will term the Israeli settlements in the West Bank illegal. Israel is worried that such a decision will prepare the groundwork for sanctions, and be a precursor for an indictment against Israel at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

France

"The French resolution calls for an international peace conference, which Israel has already expressed its opposition to. The opposition is premised on the fact that the initiative calls on a time table for discussions, and that should no agreement be reached, France will automatically recognize a Palestinian state.

"Israel believes that the US will use its veto power over the French and Palestinian initiatives, yet is unsure as to US action towards the New Zealand initiative. This is because the New Zealand initiative does not seem to be unilaterally condemning one side or the other for incitement and violence.

5) [Palestinians Try to Sway Obama Not to Veto UN Resolution on Israeli Settlements, Barak Ravid and Jack Khoury, Haaretz, December 10, 2016](#)

"The Palestinian Authority is interested in coming to an understanding with the outgoing administration of U.S. President Barack Obama that would avoid an American veto of a United Nations Security Council resolution that the Palestinians intend to introduce in January, Palestinian officials and Western diplomats told Haaretz. The resolution would be critical of Israeli settlement activity in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem." ...

"The delegation will be coming to the U.S. capital to participate in a strategic American-Palestinian dialogue session, the first of its kind ever to be held. The more important meeting, however, will be that of Erekat, Faraj and other members of the delegation with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. The main item on the agenda is expected to be the resolution, which the Palestinians are currently discussing with members of the UN Security Council. The Palestinian visitors will also be meeting with representatives of the Republican Party and with advisers of President-elect Donald Trump." ...

"The Palestinians have already shared a non-final draft of their resolution on settlements with several UN Security Council members in New York." ...

"White House officials are maintaining ambiguity on everything related to the prospect that Obama would push for a UN Security Council resolution on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. High-ranking administration officials said Kerry had made it clear in his address to the U.S.-Israeli Saban Forum in Washington last week that no decision had been taken on the matter and that all options remain on the table." ...

"Nevertheless, it is not clear if in the time remaining until January 20 it would be possible to develop such a resolution or whether Obama would be interested in devoting a large part of his remaining time in office to the subject. One of the alternate ideas that is being considered at the White House is refraining from casting a veto on a resolution on West Bank settlements as long as it is not extremely biased against Israel and reflects the administration's policy on the settlements.

6) [CMEP Bulletin for December 9, 2016 – Is UN The Anti-Christ? No, But Settlements Are Detrimental to Peace](#)

“Since the peace agreement called the Oslo Accords were signed in 1993, the settler population in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, has more than doubled and over 50,000 new settlement units have been built, 11,000 of them between 2009 and 2015. This article, written by CMEP’s executive director discusses why settlements in the West Bank are detrimental to peace. What does it look like to respond to the damage and devastating effects of the settlement enterprise? Numerous organizations, including Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) are calling on President Obama and Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, to take a strong stand in the United Nations Security Council against settlements. You can learn more about these efforts and read the article [here](#).

(Please click the articles below provided in the CMEP Bulletin for further information.)

[Obama Would Have Overwhelming Support from US Public to Allow UN Establishment of Palestinian State \[Mondoweiss\]](#)

“In Philip Weiss’s new editorial, he cites information and recent studies indicating that President Obama would have strong public support and approval if he would choose to either recognize the State of Palestine or take significant measures to promote a just and comprehensive solution to the conflict before he leaves office.”

[Left-Wing MK Defends DNC Hopeful Ellison Over Anti-Israel Criticism \[Times of Israel\]](#)

“An Israeli Knesset member spoke out in support of Keith Ellison, a Minnesota lawmaker in the race for chairman of the Democratic National Committee who has been accused of harboring anti-Semitic and anti-Israel views. Citing a ‘personal source’ familiar with the candidate, Meretz MK Tamar Zandberg said Ellison’s views on Israel were consistent with his progressive positions on other social issues.”

[In Harsh Terms, Kerry Says Israel Is Undermining Peace Efforts \[The New York Times\]](#)

“An Agence France-Presse journalist wrote that, ‘Secretary of State John Kerry accused right-wing Israelis of deliberately thwarting efforts to broker a peace deal with the Palestinians. In unusually stark terms, Mr. Kerry warned that the building of Israeli settlements was undermining any hope of an agreement to allow two states to live side by side.’ At the Saban Forum, an annual gathering of senior Israeli and American policy makers, Mr. Kerry said some members of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s government had made ‘profoundly disturbing’ statements. ‘And more than 50 percent of the ministers in the current government have publicly stated they are opposed to a Palestinian state and that there will be no Palestinian state,’ Mr. Kerry said.”

[Attorney General Says Outpost Bill Still Illegal, Even Without Amona \[Times of Israel\]](#)

“Despite government efforts to reach a compromise on a controversial bill that will allow the government to legalize outposts on private Palestinian land, Attorney General Avichai Mandelblit said he would still oppose the measure as it move toward Knesset approval. Mandelblit, who has warned in the past that the legislation would not be defensible in court, said his opposition still stands, despite an agreement to drop a clause in the bill that would retroactively override a High Court ruling to raze the Amona outpost by December 25.”

[Palestinians Claim Land Directly Where Illegal Israeli Outpost Would Be Moved to \[Ha’aretz\]](#)

“Palestinians filed four claims asserting that they own land where Israel wants to temporarily move the unauthorized Israeli settlement of Amona in the West Bank. This would leave just two plots at the site where no ownership claims have been made. All told, four claims were made by Palestinians Monday claiming ownership of land in the Amona area.”

[Israel Refuses Visa to Theologian Over Boycott and Divestment Activism \[The Guardian\]](#)

"Israel has denied entry to a prominent theologian and academic for her alleged activism in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement – the first time officials say a foreign national has been refused entry for that reason. Isabel Phiri, who is an assistant general secretary with the World Council of Churches in Geneva, was refused a visa at Israel's Ben Gurion airport on Monday. The inter-church organization condemned the move saying it was based on false and inaccurate information."

[Israeli Minister Proposes Blacklist of Entities That Call for Boycotting Israel or Settlements \[Ha'aretz\]](#)

"Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Gilad Erdan has recommended to Israeli Finance Minister Moshe Kahlon that a committee be set up to maintain a blacklist of companies, organizations and, in some cases, individuals who call for boycotts of Israel or the West Bank settlements. Under Erdan's proposal those entities on the list would be subject to treasury sanctions, such as being banned from bidding on government tenders. The Strategic Affairs Ministry is responsible for coordinating the struggle against boycotts of the Jewish state."

[How Peace Can Survive Trump and Bibi \[The Times of Israel\]](#)

"According Middle East analyst Mitchell Plitnick, 'The obstacles facing advocates for a peaceful and just future for Israelis and Palestinians are difficult to overstate. In Israel, we have a government that has been marching farther and farther to the right since 2009. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fears nothing quite so much as being outdone from the right by Naftali Bennett. Defense Minister, Avigdor Liberman, is working to stake out a position as the sensible character who can, with more care than Bennett, defend the interests of the settlements. These forces continue to push Bibi farther and farther rightward and can be expected to do so for the foreseeable future.'"

[UN Envoy: Israeli Politicians Should Oppose the Settlement Bill \[Jerusalem Post\]](#)

"Israeli politicians should oppose the so-called settlement bill when it comes to the Knesset for a first reading, UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov said. 'I encourage Israeli legislators to reconsider this move,' Mladenov said of the bill, which would retroactively legalize 4,000 settler homes on private Palestinian property while offering the Palestinian landowners compensation."

[U.S. Troubled by Comments That Israeli Settlement Bill Is First Step to Annexation \[Jerusalem Post\]](#)

"The United States said it was 'troubled' to hear from Israeli lawmakers that the settlement bill was a first step toward the annexation of Area C of the West Bank. 'This legislation if it is enacted would be a dramatic advancement of the settlement enterprise, which is already greatly endangering the prospects for a two-state solution,' U.S. Deputy spokesman Mark Toner told reporters in Washington."

[Anti-Semitism Awareness Bill Passes Senate \[Inside Higher Ed\]](#)

"The U.S. Senate passed the Anti-Semitism Awareness Act, which seeks to adopt the U.S. State Department's definition of anti-Semitism so that the Education Department may consider it in investigating reports of religiously motivated campus crimes. The bill has attracted criticism from groups including Palestine Legal and Jewish Voice for Peace, who say the proposed definition of anti-Semitism wrongly conflates any criticism of Israel with anti-Jewish sentiments."

[Q&A with Former Israeli Peace Negotiator Tzipi Livni: "Israel Needs to Decide Its Own Policy" \[The Washington Post\]](#)

"The Washington Post spoke with Israel's former peace negotiator Tzipi Livni. Livni told The Washington Post that there will be no final resolution until Israeli and Palestinian leaders understand that the price of no deal is higher than the price of a deal. Livni, 58, is a leader of the opposition in the Israeli parliament. She has held eight cabinet posts, including foreign minister, the most held by any Israeli woman."

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