

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
October 29, 2015



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This week's featured articles and links to other articles refer to the current spontaneous strife, particularly in Jerusalem and the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa compound, and efforts to calm this strife, as well as the oppressive policies of the present right wing government of Israel, the reality of a permanent occupation, and the de-facto existence of One State for all Israelis and Palestinians between the Mediterranean Sea and Jordan River.

Commentary: Some commentators are calling the present phase of the Israeli Palestinian conflict "the Jerusalem Intifada." Perceived constant increase of Israeli encroachment on the compound of the Haram al Sharif has alarmed Muslims all over the world, and created an unorganized and violent response from Palestinian residents of Jerusalem. This response by individuals has had expressions among Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza. These violent expressions have been met by walls in Jerusalem and intensified IDF presence.

Responses to this "Jerusalem Intifada," the continued and expanding settlements and occupation of the West Bank, the isolation of Gaza, attempts to silence criticism within and outside of Israel, and refusal to respond creatively to the growing BDS movements in Europe and the U.S., are now being seen by many friends and foes of Israel as indications that the inner core of Israeli values of justice, compassion and wisdom is being challenged and is perhaps in a process of decay. If there is such a weakened core, it seems Israel will be seen and responded to by most nations of the world as an apartheid country, and have to depend more and more on its military strength and political support from the U.S. to grow and even survive.

- Barak Ravid in Haaretz quotes Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu saying that although he doesn't want a binational state, "at this time we need to control all of the territory for the foreseeable future" and if I'm asked if we will forever live by the sword – yes."
- Omar Barghouti states in Salon that the present Palestinian resistance is a spontaneous reaction to the most racist, far-right government in Israel's history.
- Warren Clark writes in a CMEP newsletter that the spark that set off the present conflagration was the sense among Palestinians of a change to the status quo on the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa compound.
- Ron Ben-Yishai in an analysis in YNET News states that the understandings reached between U.S. Secretary of State Kerry, Prime Minister Netanyahu and King Abdullah in Jordan could definitely contribute to a change in atmosphere, but their actual impact on the wave of terror will only be seen later this week.
- Gideon Levy in Haaretz expresses his opinion that now, of all times, out of the fire and despair, we must start talking about the last way out: one Israeli state with equal rights for both Jews and Arabs; for Jews and Arabs, one state is already here, and has been for a long time.
- Benny Cohn in a Ynetnews op-ed notes that in the current situation, citizens of the State of Israel are going out to kill fellow citizens; the fact that both the murderers and the victims have an Israeli identity card turns a battle between states into a civil war, which is harder to solve.
- Other articles of interest

1) [Netanyahu: I Don't Want a Binational State, but We Need to Control All of the Territory for the Foreseeable Future](#), Barak Ravid, Haaretz, October 26, 2015

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Monday that although he doesn't want a binational state, "at this time we need to control all of the territory for the foreseeable future."

MKs who took part in the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee meeting — where the prime minister spoke — told Haaretz that Netanyahu turned to the politicians and said, hinting at the anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination: "These days, there is talk about what would happen if this or that person would have remained. It's irrelevant; there are movements here of religion and Islam that have nothing to do with us." Netanyahu then turned to opposition MKs and said: "You think there is a magic wand here, but I disagree. I'm asked if we will forever live by the sword — yes."

Habayit Hayehudi MK Betzalel Smotrich asked Netanyahu: "Why do you even talk to (Palestinian President Mahmoud) Abbas? Why pull the world's leg?" Netanyahu responded by saying that Israel "is not talking to bin Laden or ISIS, but I will talk to whoever isn't calling for our destruction."

Netanyahu said that contrary to what many of his colleagues on the right are saying, he is ready for territorial concessions. He added, however, that the problem is that the other side is unwilling to go down that path. "Half of the Palestinians are ruled by extreme Islam that wants to destroy us; if there were elections tomorrow, Hamas would win."

2) [Israel's descent into unmasked, right wing extremism: A new generation rises to fight occupation, settler-colonialism, apartheid](#), Omar Barghouti, Salon, October 22, 2015

As I write these words, a new unflinching generation of Palestinians is rising up against Israel's decades-old regime of occupation, settler-colonialism and apartheid. ...

This phase of popular Palestinian resistance has broken out spontaneously, in reaction to exceptionally repressive policies of the most racist, settler-dominated and far-right government in Israel's history.

Since Benjamin Netanyahu's return to power in 2009, Israel's descent into unmasked, right wing extremism has accelerated alarmingly. The number of Jewish settlers living illegally on occupied Palestinian land has grown by more than 120,000, something Netanyahu was recently caught on tape boasting about. Meanwhile, a steady stream of discriminatory, anti-democratic laws targeting Palestinian citizens of Israel, and to a lesser extent Jewish-Israeli critics of Israel's apartheid regime, have been passed by the Israeli parliament. These include the so-called "boycott law," and the "Nakba law."

For more than a decade, the fanatical messianic "Temple Mount movement" has been growing inside Israel, with the ultimate goal of destroying the Muslim shrines on the Noble Sanctuary and replacing them with a temple, something they declare openly.

Once on the fringes of Israeli society, today this dangerous fundamentalist movement has moved into the mainstream, counting senior government officials among its adherents. The Israeli government in fact provides direct financial and political support to extremist settler groups, like the Temple Institute and others, that are colonizing Palestinian homes and neighborhoods in Jerusalem and actively working towards building a temple in place of the Al-Aqsa mosque, putting paid to hollow, disingenuous claims by Netanyahu that Palestinians have no reason to fear an Israeli desire to change the status quo on the site.

**3) [Increased Violence in Israel-Palestine: Why now? What Next?](#)
Warren Clark, Churches for Middle East Peace, October 26, 2015**

The past few weeks have seen an upsurge of daily and deadly violence in Israel and the occupied Palestinian territories. This has included attacks by Palestinians on innocent Israeli citizens, including stabbings with knives or screwdrivers; murder by meat cleaver; the shooting death of a couple in front of their children; stones thrown at cars; and vehicular homicide and assault. Israel's military response to the violence has included shooting to kill Palestinian assailants (and, in one case, an Israeli Jew suspected of being a terrorist); closing off parts of East Jerusalem; and demolishing the homes of perpetrators. Since the beginning of October some eight Israelis have been killed by Palestinians and 52 Palestinians have been killed. Many daily protests in East Jerusalem and the West Bank have turned violent, with Palestinians throwing stones and Molotov cocktails, and Israel responding with live fire, tear gas, and rubber bullets.

Recently, leaders on both sides have sought to calm the situation. Abbas firmly reiterated his opposition to violence and told his own US-trained security forces not to participate in violence. ...

However Netanyahu continues to fan flames of fear and hatred against Palestinians. For example, he recently described an imagined role of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem during the Second World War in giving Hitler the idea of the Holocaust. ...

Violence has been actively opposed by PA President Abbas. Significantly, much of the violence has taken place in East Jerusalem which is under the control of Israel, not in areas of the West Bank under the control of Abbas and the PA. ...

Jerusalem, the "united and eternal capital of Israel" often proclaimed by Prime Minister Netanyahu, has never been more divided. The boundary between the 63% of the city that is Israeli West Jerusalem and the 37% that is Palestinian East Jerusalem has never been clearer. Residents of either side cross over at their peril. This suggests that the idea of a single state with all citizens having equal civil and political rights is as far off as ever. ...

**4) [Temple Mount agreement won't lead to immediate calm](#)
Ron Ben-Yishai, YNET News, October 26, 2015**

The wave of stabbings, vehicular attacks and Molotov cocktails is now being fed by the panic and fear which are disrupting life in Israel and serving as an incentive for young Palestinians who are incited on the social networks. It is also being fed by the narrative of the alleged "executions" of the stabbers, which has become deeply rooted among the Palestinian public, and by the wild incitement from Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad. The impact of the false call "All-Aqsa is in danger" has been significantly reduced on the Palestinian street, so the agreement Secretary of State Kerry managed to reach with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, King Abdullah and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas in Jordan will not lead to an immediate change, but could definitely contribute to a change in atmosphere. ...

The verbal agreement reached in Jordan on Saturday basically reinforces the custom announced by then-Defense Minister Moshe Dayan, immediately after the Temple Mount and Western Wall were liberated in 1967. It's safe to assume, therefore, that if Israeli politicians won't try to challenge the agreement, the Jordanian king will be committed to support Israel's claims from now on. He has already reinforced the Waqf people operating on his behalf in the mosque area on the Temple Mount. ...

5) [The Single-state Solution Is Already Here](#)
Gideon Levy, Haaretz, October 17, 2015

... And now to the facts. One state already exists here, and has done so for 48 years. The Green Line faded long ago; the settlements are in Israel, and Israel is also the settlers' land. The fate of the two million Palestinians who live in the West Bank is decided by the government in Jerusalem and the defense establishment in Tel Aviv, not by Ramallah. Maj. Gen. Yoav Mordechai, the coordinator of government activities in the territories, is their ruler far more than Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is. They are clearly part of the binational state and have been its subjects, forcibly, for some three generations. This state has three regimes: democracy for the Jews; discrimination for the Israeli Arabs; and apartheid for the Palestinians. But everyone lives in one inseparable state.

The binational state that was born in 1967 is not democratic. In fact, it's one of the worst states in the world, because of the military dictatorship it upholds in part of its territory – one of the most brutal, totalitarian regimes in existence today. It is also one of the most racist states, since it determines its residents' rights based solely on their nationality. This is the one state that is washed in blood right now, and will continue to be washed in blood as long as it remains in its malicious, nondemocratic format.

...We could go back to the two-state solution, of course. Not a bad idea, perhaps, but one that has been missed. Those who wanted a Jewish state should have implemented it while it was still possible. Those who set it on fire, deliberately or by doing nothing, must now look directly and honestly at the new reality: 600,000 settlers will not be evacuated. Without evacuation, there will not be two states. And without two states, only the one-state solution remains.

Now, of all times, out of the fire and despair, we must start talking about the last way out: equal rights for all. For Jews and Arabs. One state is already here, and has been for a long time. All it needs is to be just and do the right thing. Who's against it? Why? And, most important, what's the alternative?

6) [It's not a wave of terror, it's a civil war](#)
Benny Cohn, Ynetnews, October 19, 2015

The recent wave of terror attacks is characterized by a common denominator: The murderers and the victims both have an Israeli identity card, as the murderers are citizens of East Jerusalem. They are citizens of the State of Israel who are going out to murder other citizens, as part of a battle within the State. ...

Now imagine what would happen if we annex all the territories, and in the united state, as some of us hope, everyone will carry Israeli identity cards and become citizens of one state, the State of Israel, a bi-national state in which half of the citizens are Jewish and half are Arab Muslims. ...

With the absence of a (physical and political) fence between us and the territories, and the deep sense of "separation" as well, we remain one state with two people. The meaning of the fence is disconnecting from the other side, setting a border and living side by side - not even as friends, like with Jordan or Egypt, but living in a complete and perfect dissociation. ...

Other articles of interest:

[I Left Israel for Two Weeks. I Came Home to a Different Country, Bradley Burston, Haaretz, October 22, 2015](#)
No chief, no plan, no security, no hope. There are times I think about resigning from the tribe.

[Jerusalem becoming mini-police state and ghost capital, Dahlia Scheindlin, +972, October 20, 2015](#)
As tension rises in Jerusalem, Israelis stay away and debate how to resolve problems there while ignoring the West Bank and Gaza. It can't be done.

[Palestinians Are Fighting for Their Lives; Israel Is Fighting for the Occupation, Amira Hass, Haaretz, October 7, 2015](#)

That we notice there's a war on only when Jews are murdered does not cancel out the fact that Palestinians are being killed all the time.

[Jerusalem chaos is a warning of things to come, Jonathan Cook, The National, October 19, 2015](#)

Among Palestinians and Israelis, the recent upsurge in violence has been variously described as the children's, lone-wolf, Jerusalem and smartphone intifadas. Each describes a distinguishing feature of this round of clashes.

['East Jerusalem youth no longer distinguish between life and death', Orly Noy, +972, October 15, 2015](#)

East Jerusalem is a place that lacks classrooms, where students cannot talk openly about their feelings, and where the municipality refuses to meet with Palestinian parents. Orly Noy speaks to the head of the parents' council about why Palestinian youth have lost all hope.

[Jordan's King Welcomes Netanyahu's Status Quo Pledge 'As Long as It's Implemented', Barak Ravid, Haaretz, October 25, 2015](#)

King Abdullah II says he believes understandings reached between Jordan, Israel and the Palestinians may help end the violence and calm tensions.

[Analysis: New Understandings, Old Problems on Temple Mount Nir Hasson, Haaretz, October 25, 2015](#)

Terrorism has again forced Israel into negotiations over the Temple Mount, and it seems the prime minister has gone a step farther this time. But is it enough to bring calm?

[Tel Aviv: Israelis Rally Over Netanyahu's Policies, IMEMC News, October 25, 2015](#)

Thousands of Israeli protesters have taken to the streets in Tel Aviv to denounce Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's policies, which they blame for the recent wave of tensions in the occupied Palestinian territories, as well as in the besieged Gaza Strip.

[We are lifelong Zionists. Here's why we've chosen to boycott Israel, Steven Levitsky and Glen Weyl, Washington Post, October 23, 2015](#)

The occupation has become permanent. Nearly half a century after the Six-Day War, Israel is settling into the apartheid-like regime against which many of its former leaders warned. The settler population in the West Bank has grown 30-fold, from about 12,000 in 1980 to 389,000 today.

[Netanyahu Is Cheapening The Memory of The Holocaust, Haaretz Editorial Oct 22, 2015](#)

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's statement that Haj Amin al-Husseini, the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, was the one who had inspired Hitler to annihilate Europe's Jews is completely erroneous. One would expect more judicious words from the son of an important historian.

[Netanyahu: Have You No Shame?, Michael Lerner, Editor Tikkun Magazine, Huffington Post, October 26, 2015](#)

Israel's Prime Minister attributing the Holocaust to Palestinian influence over Hitler is a "Blood Libel" level lie.

[CMEP Bulletin, UN says Choose Non-Violence, October 23, 2015](#)

This week while Israeli and Palestinian leaders continued to accuse each other of inciting violence, US Secretary of State John Kerry and United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon urged Palestinians and Israelis to deescalate the tensions.

[Why Jerusalem Can and Must Be Divided, Shaul Arieli, Haaretz, October 19, 2015](#)

The attempt to 'Judaize' East Jerusalem failed and the Palestinians currently comprise 40 percent of the capital. How exactly is it united?

[Israel's Sleeping Beauties Have Awoken From Their Deathly Silence, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, October 15, 2015](#)

Israelis didn't know about the Palestinians' suffering beyond the dark mountains a half an hour away. For the most part, they didn't want to know.

[Palestinians 'Living Under Two Occupations': Violence Spikes in Israel and the West Bank, Sharmini Peries, Jeff Halper, The Real News, October 14, 2015](#)

Jeff Halper says Israel and the Palestinian Authority are partners in repression.