

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
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The five featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes contain the Kairos Palestine 9th Anniversary Statement; a tribute to Amos Oz, a literary giant, a beacon of morality and humanity, and a founder of Israel's peace movement; a U.S. Senate bill aiming to punish those who boycott Israel over its settlement policy which is testing America's bedrock principles of freedom of speech and political dissent; the developing one-state solution which means Israel will no longer be a Jewish state; the role of Netanyahu in the demise of the two state solution; and links to CMEP Bulletins.

Commentary: 2018 was a year of continued deterioration of Israeli/Palestinians relationships. These two peoples continue to live side by side in the same small piece of land as their numbers increase; these are the "on the ground" realities. Another reality is that the preferred Israeli solution to these deteriorating relationships is continued settlement expansion and increasing repression of the Palestinians. This is the "status quo" solution. Other realities are that Israel has become as de-facto apartheid State for Israelis only, and that the two democratic States solution has been rejected by successive Israel governments. Will 2019 bring more violence? Or will the present State of Israel with control of all the people and territory from the Sea to the River find a way to respect and creatively respond to all the people, all the images of God in the land that has been called holy?

- Kairos Palestine 9th Anniversary Statement: On December 6 and 7, more than 300 people, consisting of Palestinian Christian church and organization leaders, Kairos Palestine leaders, people of faith, representatives of the Palestinian civil society, and around 100 international Christians representing the global Kairos for Justice movement and different church bodies, met in Bethlehem.
- Ori Nir of Americans for Peace Now (APN) sends its condolences to the Oz family and to the people of Israel, who today lost Amos Oz, a literary giant, a beacon of morality and humanity, and a founder of Israel's peace movement.
- Curbing Speech in the Name of Helping Israel: The Editorial Board, of the New York Times states that a Senate bill aims to punish those who boycott Israel over its settlement policy. This is one of the more contentious issues involving Israel which is now before Congress, testing America's bedrock principles of freedom of speech and political dissent.
- Amir Tibon writes in Haaretz that 'We have a big challenge on our hands, because the one-state solution basically means Israel will no longer be a Jewish state,' warns one U.S. activist.
- Gideon Levy writes in Haaretz that Netanyahu was the one-state visionary. The struggle for its character lies with those who will follow him.

1) [Kairos Palestine 9th Anniversary Conference Statement](#)

"Hope where there is no Hope"

"And the one who was seated on the throne said, 'See, I make all things new' And he said, 'Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.' (Rev. 21:5)

“On December 6-7th, 2018, more than 300 people met in Bethlehem, consisting of Palestinian Christian church and organization leaders, Kairos Palestine leaders, people of faith, representatives of the Palestinian civil society, and around 100 international Christians representing the global Kairos for Justice movement and different church bodies.

“We accepted the following as a joint position for action from the [Open Letter of the NCCOP](#) in June 2017 namely to:

“Recognize Israel as an apartheid state in terms of international law, and act with it accordingly; take a clear and the strongest theological stand against any theology or Christian group that justifies this apartheid; take a stand against religious extremism and against any attempt to create a religious state in our land or region; defend our right and duty to resist the occupation creatively and nonviolently; speak in support of economic measures that pressure Israel to embrace the way of justice and peace and stop the occupation; stand with those who speak for the right of Palestinians in response to the attacks and create lobby groups in defense of Palestinian Christians; and, to publicly and legally challenge organizations that discredit our work and legitimacy.” ...

2) [PN Mourns the Passing of Amos Oz, an Iconic Leader of Israel's Peace Movement](#), [Ori Nir](#), [Peace Now](#), December 28, 2018

“Americans for Peace Now (APN) sends its condolences to the Oz family and to the people of Israel, who today lost Amos Oz, a literary giant, a beacon of morality and humanity, and a founder of Israel’s peace movement.

“APN joins its Israeli sister-organization, Shalom Achshav (Peace Now), which Oz helped found and supported since its inception, in mourning Oz’s death. In a statement shortly after Oz’s daughter, Fania, announced his departure earlier today, Peace Now said: ‘Amos Oz worked throughout his life to advance peace and to establish an exemplary society in Israel. He was one of our founding fathers and will always be remembered as having charted a way, with his sharp words, for a large peace camp yearning for a liberal Israel that pursues peace with its neighbors.’

“Amos Oz was an official spokesperson of Shalom Achshav, and later continued to be a clear, articulate, sober voice articulating the worldview of Israel’s peace movement and its vision of a two-state solution. He recently said that Israel and the Palestinians ‘cannot become one happy family because we are not one, we are not happy, we are not family. We are two unhappy families. We have to divide the house into two smaller next-door apartments.’” ...

3) [Curbing Speech in the Name of Helping Israel](#), [The Editorial Board](#), [NY Times](#), December 18, 2018

“One of the more contentious issues involving Israel in recent years is now before Congress, testing America’s bedrock principles of freedom of speech and political dissent.

“It is a [legislative proposal](#) that would impose civil and criminal penalties on American companies and organizations that participate in boycotts supporting Palestinian rights and opposing Israel’s occupation of the West Bank.

“The aim is to cripple the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement known as B.D.S., which has gathered steam in recent years despite bitter opposition from the Israeli government and its supporters around the world.” ...

See also:

[Israel’s Crusade Against BDS Comes at the Cost of Its Own Democracy](#), [Anders Persson](#), [Haaretz](#), December 20, 2018
The boycott movement hasn’t managed to hurt Israel from the outside: the country’s never been stronger economically, diplomatically and militarily. But it’s beginning to hurt Israel from the inside.

[Sanders, Feinstein Urge Senate to Reject anti-BDS Bill: 'Threat to Free Speech'](#), Haaretz, [Amir Tibon](#), Dec 19, 2018

Two of the most prominent Jewish members of the Senate warn that the 'Israel Anti-Boycott Act' will harm free speech in the U.S.

4) [One-state Solution Gains Ground in America – and pro-Israel Groups Are Worried](#), Amir Tibon, Haaretz, December 15, 2018

“Before a crowd of mostly right-wing Israelis and supporters of the Jewish state at the Israeli-American Council’s annual conference last Sunday, Rep. Nancy Pelosi (Democrat of California) was asked her thoughts on the Trump administration’s promise of presenting a peace plan for the Middle East. ‘One of the principles we hope to see there is a two-state solution,’ she said.

“Her words drew boos and cries of ‘No way’ from a number of people in the crowd, who wanted to express their opposition to this decades-old formula for solving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“Pelosi responded to the hecklers by stating that their real source of concern shouldn’t be the two-state solution, but an alternative idea that is gaining more and more support among left-wingers in America. ‘I understand there are disagreements,’ she said. ‘But you need to understand, the extreme left wants a one-state solution.’” ...

See also: [Americans Are Increasingly Critical of Israel](#), [Shibley Telhami](#), [Foreign Policy](#), December 11, 2018.

New polling shows that the U.S. public’s views on Israel’s policies are shifting.

5) [We Should Thank Netanyahu for Destroying the Two-state Solution](#), Gideon Levy, Haaretz, December 26, 2018

Netanyahu was the one-state visionary. The struggle for its character lies with those who will follow him.

“Benjamin Netanyahu must be excoriated. One can understand those who are dying for him to just go away. It’s clear his time is almost up. But one cannot say he hasn’t done anything.

“In his dozen years as prime minister he has changed the face of Israel in ways that he considers wildly successful. Some of the changes he’s made could be rolled back if only some worthy liberal leader was given the chance – a hope that for now seems far-fetched.

“But there is one big, fateful change, the fruit of Netanyahu’s calculated policy, that is irreversible. Against the stance of the entire world, the United States, the Palestinian Authority and even against the declared position of most Israelis, Israel’s ninth prime minister has managed to remove the possibility of a viable Palestinian state from the agenda. He has irrevocably destroyed the two-state solution. Whether reelected or not, Netanyahu will be remembered as a revolutionary statesman; the man who shaped the country in his image.” ...

6) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins:

12/28/18 – [2018 In Review](#)

12/07/18 – [December 2018](#)