

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
January 28, 2016



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The six featured articles and the many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the growing involvement of the European Union in resolving the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, the execution of teenagers with knives or scissors without trial or discussion, unchecked Israeli vigilantism on the West Bank, the silence of U.S. Jewish organizations on Israeli "il-liberalism," the growing de-legitimization of Israel due to the occupation and apartheid policies, and Israeli government attempts to silence internal and external opposition to the occupation.

Commentary: Israel's opposition to a "two state solution," expansion of settlement activity, and the continuing occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and blockade of Gaza, are fueling criticism by the nations of the European Union, the U.S. State Department, and within Israel itself. The negative response to these criticisms by Israel, especially among its own citizens, Jewish and Arab, is only exacerbating and publicizing these criticisms. The de-legitimization of which Israel accuses its critics seems to be promoted by its own policies towards the Palestinian people. Israeli leadership continues to rely on unquestioned support of the U.S. Congress in the face of growing justice concerns of the EU. These concerns are being met in Israel with fear, insecurity, denial, and increasing political opposition to internal critics.

- - Sam Bahour and Mousa Jiryis write in Al-Shabaka that Europe must recognize that "the U.S. leads" approach to resolving the conflict is doomed to never-ending failure: It affords time for the Israeli settlement enterprise to further entrench itself and makes the two-state solution increasingly impossible to achieve.
 - Ynetnews notes that the European Union has reinforced its position that products made in Israeli settlements must be clearly labelled in Europe, despite growing tensions with Israel over the issue. The EU stresses that the bloc opposes any boycott of the Jewish state.
 - Gideon Levy writes in Haaretz that Israel executes people without trial nearly every day. "Terrorists" are executed even without trial and without discussion. It's enough to be a teenage Palestinian girl with scissors.
 - Barak Ravid publicizes in Haaretz that the U.S. Ambassador to Israel, Dan Shapiro has voiced sharp criticism of Israeli authorities, saying "too much Israeli vigilantism in the West Bank goes on unchecked."
 - Michael J. Koplow. in the Israel Policy Forum, answers the question: Why? They are now passive on the Israel issue because they learned to live without a collective voice that was connected to group self-interest.
 - Amos Schocken states his belief in Haaretz that the growing delegitimization of Israel is this country's own handiwork. Should Israel decide to end apartheid, it will return to being legitimate in every respect.

Note: The following are excerpts of each article. The full article can be found by clicking the link.

- 1) [Palestine-Israel: Europe Drowning in America's Failures](#), Sam Bahour, Mousa Jiryis, Al-Shabaka, January 14, 2016

...“As it discusses next steps, Europe must recognize that “the US leads” approach to resolving the conflict is doomed to never-ending failure: It affords time for the Israeli settlement enterprise to further entrench itself and makes the two-state solution increasingly impossible to achieve. It is blindingly clear - in light of two decades of failed bilateral negotiations under American auspices - that US leadership of conflict resolution efforts is pointless and counter-productive.

“If Europe’s policy is to achieve two states for two peoples, it will have to pursue an independent policy position that circumvents the Americans. Moreover, the substance of European policy will have to be more consequential than policy changes to the EU Guidelines for participation in the Horizon 2020 program that exclude settlements, or requiring that Israeli settlement products be labeled while allowing their trade to continue.

“If Europe’s influence in this conflict arena is negligible, it is because Europe has relied on the wrong leadership for too long. This tragic, historic mistake has not only cost European taxpayers billions, but has also led to a reality that is the diametric opposite of what European policy-makers intended. After 23 years, reliance on American “leadership” has led to the creation of numerous Palestinian Bantustans, surrounded by an occupying military power that continues to occupy with impunity, bankrolled by European taxpayers: The EU and its member states are by far the largest donors to the Palestinians.

“America supports occupation. Europe inadvertently subsidizes occupation. This regrettable logic is an accurate description of current reality. The US continues to advocate a hands-off, “it’s up to the two parties to decide” approach. As a result, Israel, which has all the power, has little incentive to concede, while the Palestinians, who have no power and are supposedly “protected” under international law are left to their despair.”

2) [European Union defends labelling goods made in Israeli settlements](#), Ynetnews, January 18, 2016

...“The European Union reinforced on Monday its position that products made in Israeli settlements must be clearly labelled in Europe, despite growing tensions with Israel over the issue, but stressed that the bloc opposes any boycott of the Jewish state.

“EU foreign ministers said the guidelines on labels for farm and other products, which were unveiled in November and branded discriminatory by Israel, were there to explain EU law and did not mark a change in the European Union's long-held opposition to Israeli settlements.

““The EU and its member States are committed to ensure continued, full and effective implementation of existing EU legislation and bilateral arrangements applicable to settlements products,’ ministers said in a statement. Ministers reiterated the EU's position that the lands Israel has held since the 1967 Middle East war - including the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights - are not part of the internationally recognized borders of Israel.”

*N.B. see also **Other articles of interest:***

A) [Occupation, Inc.](#),

B) [Israel: Businesses Should End Settlement Activity](#)

C) [U.S. backs European move to distinguish Israel from West Bank](#)

D) [What is it about ‘label’ they don’t understand?](#)

3) [Yes, Israel Is Executing Palestinians Without Trial](#), Gideon Levy, Haaretz, January 17, 2016

“We should call it like it is: Israel executes people without trial nearly every day. Any other description is a lie. If there was once discussion here about the death penalty for terrorists, now they are executed even without trial (and without discussion). If once there was debate over the rules of engagement, today it’s clear: we shoot to kill – any suspicious Palestinian.

“Public Security Minister Gilad Erdan outlined the situation clearly when he said, “Every terrorist should know he will not survive the attack he is about to commit” – and almost every politician joined him in nauseating unison, from Yair Lapid on up. Never have so many licenses to kill been handed out here, nor has the finger been so itchy on the trigger.”

...“In most cases, there was no need to shoot – and certainly not to kill. In a good many of the cases, the shooters’ lives were not in danger. They shot people to death who were holding a knife or even scissors, or people who just put their hands in their pockets or lost control of their car.

“They shot them to death indiscriminately – women, men, teenage girls, teenage boys. They shot them when they were standing, and even after they were no longer a threat. They shot to kill, to punish, to release their anger, and to take revenge. There is such contempt here that these incidents are barely covered in the media.”

...“Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallström, one of the few ministers with a conscience left in the world, demanded that these killings be investigated. There is no demand more moral and just than this. It should have come from our own justice minister.

“Israel responded with its usual howls. The prime minister said this was “outrageous, immoral and unjust.” And Benjamin Netanyahu understands those terms: That is exactly how to describe Israel’s campaign of criminal executions under his leadership.”

*N.B. see also **Other articles of interest:***

E) [Israel defends shoot-to-kill policy](#)

F) [Sweden Demands Probe of Israeli Extrajudicial Executions](#)

4) [U.S. Ambassador: Israel Has Legal Double Standard in West Bank](#), Barak Ravid, Haaretz, January 18, 2016

“United States Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro voiced nearly unprecedented criticism against Israel's settlements in the West Bank on Monday. Shapiro praised progress made in the investigation into the arson-murder in the Palestinian village of Duma, but emphasized the inadequate response by Israeli authorities to settler violence against.

“Speaking at the Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) conference in Tel Aviv, Shapiro said "Too much Israeli vigilantism in the West Bank goes on unchecked," adding that "there is a lack of thorough investigations... at times it seems Israel has two standards of adherence to rule of law in the West Bank - one for Israelis and one for Palestinians."

“Shapiro added that the two-state solution is the only way to prevent Israel from turning into a bi-national state, and said a way must be found to preserve its viability. He noted that the American administration is "concerned and perplexed" in wake of the Israeli government's policy on the settlements, "which raise questions about Israeli intentions."

*N.B. see also **Other articles of interest:***

G) ['Perplexed' Over Israel's Double Standards in the West Bank? You Don't Say, Mr. Ambassador](#)

5) [Liberal Jews Without Liberal Organizations](#), Michael J. Koplow, Israel Policy Forum, January 21, 2016

“Why are American Jewish organizations predominantly silent on Israeli illiberalism? This is the question posed and answered by J.J. Goldberg in a much-discussed piece, (“Liberal Jews Didn’t Betray Israel — Our Organizations Betray Us”) on Martin Luther King Day tying the American Jewish organizational voice on Israel to the breakdown of the black-Jewish partnership on civil rights. Goldberg’s theory quickly summed up – and you should really read the piece in its entirety if you haven’t yet – is that the biggest factor in how American Jewish organizations relate to Israel today is the collapse fifty years ago of the alliance between blacks and Jews on civil rights.”

...“I would instead point to two other variables that I believe are causing the dissonance between a very liberal American Jewry and a far less liberal American Jewish organizational stance toward Israel. The first fits into the structure of Goldberg’s overall argument about a crisis in mission leading to a new focus on Israel, but rather than point to civil rights, I would point to the decline of Judaism itself.

“As traditional religious observance waned over the course of the 20th century, Israel was elevated into a religious cause that became for many American Jews their primary way of expressing their Judaism as a religion, as opposed to their embrace of Judaism as an ethnicity or a culture. Support for the Jewish state became de rigeur at synagogues of all denominations, prayers for the Israeli government and the IDF were adopted into the Shabbat morning liturgy, and Israel itself became intertwined with Judaism so that it became a focal point of the American Jewish religious tradition. Support for Israel was the equivalent of fasting on Yom Kippur or holding a Passover seder; even if your religious observance was minimal, Israel was a part of it. For many American Jews, Israel was what bound them to Judaism, rather than the religious practices of their parents and grandparents. For Jewish organizations that needed to stay relevant, pivoting to supporting Israel was an obvious move, and naturally any organization devoted to advocating for something is going to be reluctant to be overly critical, even when there are things taking place that are particularly unpalatable.”

...“In other words, for nearly four decades Israelis have displayed a clear rightwing preference when it comes to their leaders. Is it any surprise then that American Jewish organizations, both those that deal primarily with Israel issues and those that don’t, take those cues and reflect what is taking place in Israel itself?”

...“There is no question that the priorities of the bulk of American Jews appear out of sync with the priorities of many American Jewish groups.”...

*N.B. see also **Other articles of interest:***

H) [Liberal Jews Didn’t Betray Israel — Our Organizations Betrayed Us](#)

6) [Only International Pressure Will End Israeli Apartheid](#), Amos Schocken, Haaretz, Jan 22, 2016

“There are many differences between conditions in South Africa during the apartheid era and those current in the land from the Jordan River to the sea, especially in the territories that Israel controls beyond its internationally recognized borders. However, there is one important feature they share: two peoples living on one piece of land.

“One people has all the rights and protections, while the other is deprived of numerous rights and lives under the former’s control. Israel determines the fate and day-to-day life of millions of people who have no influence over its decisions. The government of Israel is the party that will debate whether or not to accept the Israel Defense Forces’ recommendation to ease policies toward the Palestinian Authority and its people. In South Africa, there were similar discussions about easing apartheid for blacks.

“Israel as an apartheid state is not a viable situation, not only because of the corruption of values but also because this predicament is liable to lead Israel, like South Africa in its time, to banishment from the family of nations. It is not for nothing that Israel insists on defining itself as the only democracy in the Middle East, although in fact it is only a democracy for part of its residents, and therefore is not a democracy. (South Africa was a democracy for white people only, and therefore not a democracy). It is not for nothing that Israel insists on stressing the “common values” it shares with democratic countries, firstly the United States. Indeed, there are such common values, and they certainly speak well of Israel relative to other countries in the Middle East. However, the most basic democratic values of equality before the law for all people under Israel control, and equal rights to vote and be elected, do not exist.”...

...“Israel has several options to end the apartheid regime and the control of people who are deprived of rights. The two-state solution is the Zionist way to go, but Israel does not show any interest in finding a solution. The decades-long reality, whose sole variable is the constant growth of settlements, is what will continue to be in the future.”...

...“The growing delegitimization of Israel is this country's own handiwork. Should Israel decide to end apartheid, it will return to being legitimate in every respect. Anyone who acts against Israeli apartheid is essentially acting on behalf of the renewal and strengthening of Israel's legitimacy as the national home of the Jewish people in the land of Israel, a secure refuge that enable self-determination for Jews in a Jewish and democratic state.”

*N.B. see also **Other articles of interest:***

- I) [It's open season on anyone opposing the occupation](#)
- J) [The Israeli Occupation Will End Suddenly](#)
- K) [Chinese president declares support for Palestinian state](#)
- L) [The Israeli Media Is an Accomplice in the Occupation](#)

Other Articles of Interest:

- A) [Occupation, Inc. Human Rights Watch, January 19, 2016](#)
Settlement Businesses Contribute to Israel's Violations of Palestinian Rights: From the outset, private businesses have been involved in Israel's settlement policies, benefiting from and contributing to them.
- B) [Israel: Businesses Should End Settlement Activity, Human Rights Watch, January 19, 2016](#)
Settlement Business Links Foster Abuse - Businesses should stop operating in, financing, servicing, or trading with Israeli settlements in order to comply with their human rights responsibilities, Human Rights Watch said in a recent report.
- C) [U.S. backs European move to distinguish Israel from West Bank, Times of Israel Staff, January 20, 2016](#)
State Department blasts 'illegitimate' settlement activity, says Washington doesn't consider product labeling a boycott.
- D) [What is it about 'label' they don't understand?, Julian Pecquet, Al Monitor /Israel Pulse, January 21, 2016](#)
Publicity produced by the opponents of the Congressional opposition to the EU demand for clear labeling of settlement products. While in reality this move depends on consumer choice, U.S. congresspersons, such as Nita Lowey (D.NY District 17) see it simply as an anti-Semitic boycott of all Israeli products.
- E) [Israel defends shoot-to-kill policy, JFJFP, January 15, 2016](#)
The Palestinian Authority has called for an international inquiry into the Israeli army's extrajudicial killing of Palestinians.

- F) [Sweden Demands Probe of Israeli Extrajudicial Executions, Bill Blare, TJC Newspaper, January 14, 2016](#)
Sweden's Minister for Foreign Affairs and Deputy Prime Minister Margot Wallstrom called for an investigation to determine if Israel was guilty of extrajudicial killings of Palestinians during recent violence there, local media reported.
- G) ['Perplexed' Over Israel's Double Standards in the West Bank? You Don't Say, Mr. Ambassador, Zvi Bar'el, Haaretz, January 20, 2016](#)
The U.S. ambassador to Israel has made a historical, if not archaeological, discovery this week. Maybe his country could also do something about it.
- H) [Liberal Jews Didn't Betray Israel — Our Organizations Betrayed Us, J.J. Goldberg, Forward, January 17, 2016](#)
As vital as Martin Luther King Day is on America's calendar, it has a special meaning this year for American Jews. This year, 2016, we will mark the 50th anniversary of the beginning of the fracturing of the historic black-Jewish civil rights alliance.
- I) [It's open season on anyone opposing the occupation, Noam Sheizaf, 972 Magazine, January 23, 2016](#)
There is a campaign being carried out against anyone actively opposing the occupation in Israel, and it doesn't matter if you're an activist in the field, a human rights attorney or a former soldier talking about what you were ordered to do.
- J) [The Israeli Occupation Will End Suddenly, Michael Sfar, Haaretz, January 23, 2016](#)
The strength of organizations working to end the occupation and their supporters is greater than we think. One day the occupation will end. It will probably happen in one fell swoop. And when it happens, it will suddenly emerge that everyone was against it.
- K) [Chinese president declares support for Palestinian state, Ynetnews, January 22, 2016](#)
Beijing 'firmly supports' the creation of a Palestinian state along the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital, says Xi Jinping.
- L) [The Israeli Media Is an Accomplice in the Occupation, Michal Peleg, Haaretz, January 25, 2016](#)
How is the Israeli consensus manufactured? It happens when awful facts associated with 50 years of occupation, discrimination and systematic land theft are never "exposed" in prestigious investigative programs.
- M) [Shimon Peres: Palestinian frustration over peace process freeze leads to violence, Daniel Betini, Ynetnews, January 17, 2016](#)
In an interview with Der Spiegel, former president rejects accusations that Abbas is inciting to terror: 'Abbas is a very courageous man. He wants peace and he fights terror.'
- N) [Israel's 'traitor' du jour, Shlomi Eldar, Al-Monitor, January 19, 2016](#)
The Israeli right wing considers former Foreign Ministry Director Alon Liel a traitor for advocating to pressure the Israeli government and advance voting in the United Nations in favor of a Palestinian state.
- O) [Palestinians Seek UN Security Council Resolution Declaring West Bank Settlements Illegal, Barak Ravid and Jack Khoury, Haaretz, January 21, 2016](#)
The Palestinian Authority is trying to advance a resolution in the UN Security Council that will condemn the settlements in the West Bank and declare them illegal under international law and an obstacle to peace.

- P) [U.S. Church Puts Five Israeli Banks on Investment Blacklist, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, January 13, 2016](#)
The pension fund of the United Methodist Church, the largest Protestant group in the U.S., makes the move in an effort to exclude companies that profit from abuse of human rights; Officials: Israel will try change the decision.
- Q) [Time to break the silence: An open letter to American Jews, By Edo Konrad, +972 Magazine, January 14, 2016](#)
The American Jewish establishment, from the Federations to synagogues, must take a look in the mirror and decide whether this is the Israel it identifies with. If it isn't, it should speak up. Urgently.
- R) [CMEP Bulletin - Who Contributes to the Occupation?- January 15, 2015](#)
- S) [CMEP Bulletin - First Person: The Limits of Power – January 22, 2016](#)
- T) [Why Israel has silenced the 1948 story of Nazareth's survival, Mondoweiss , January 12, 2016](#)
A rarely told story of the 1948 war that founded Israel concerns Nazareth's survival. It is the only Palestinian city in what is today Israel that was not ethnically cleansed during the year-long fighting.
- U) [Palestinian Child Detainees Testify Of Abuse And Assaults By Soldiers And Interrogators, Saed Bannoura, Imemc News, January 14, 2016](#)
The Palestinian Detainees' Committee has reported that recent testimonies from child detainees, held by Israel, revealed they have been subject to torture and abuse during their abduction, and interrogation.
- V) [Palestinian Citizens in Israel: A Fast-Shrinking Civic Space, Nadim Nashif, Raya Naamneh, Al-Shabaka, January 13, 2016](#)
Israel still portrays itself as a Jewish and democratic state. Yet in practice, as its Palestinian citizens can attest, it functions as a Jewish ethnocracy, leaving small margins of freedom for its Palestinian citizens that have been steadily shrinking in the past few years.