

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**March 6, 2014**



*Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

[Read previous weeks' Middle East Notes.](#)

This week's Middle East highlights the Kerry Framework for negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians, U.S. academic freedom, the growth of BDS, continuing settlement development, water discrimination in the Occupied Territories, Israeli opposition to any form of Palestinian State, and other issues.

- The Feb. 20 and Feb. 27 CMEP Bulletins focus on the Kerry Framework, the effect of settlements on the negotiations, and other issues.
- Alex Shams in Ma'an interviews Ilan Pappé; Pappé states that the actions of Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS), including the latest support given by one U.S. academic society, are the best lesson on academic freedom Israelis have ever received since the state was created.
- The Ma'an News Agency presents a review of 2013, a year which saw continued regional backlash from the events of the Arab Spring and Palestine caught between regional dynamics, internal divisions, and Israel's continued occupation.
- Mark Openheimer writes in the New York Times of the conflict of faith of four U.S. academics who, although devoted to Jewish observance, have found that their views on Israel differ from those of family members and friends.
- B'tselem (Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories) reports that there is undeniable discrimination in the amount of water allocated to Israelis and Palestinians.
- Willem-Gert Aldershoff and Michel Waelbroeck write in Ha'aretz that a new analysis of international law shows that closing the EU to Israeli settlement products does not constitute a boycott of Israel, but exclusively addresses Israel's illegal settlement policy and its consequences.
- Steven Kaplan and Sanford Weiner write in the Jewish Journal that the only convincing answer to calls for BDS against Israel is supporting Israel by boycotting the settlements and challenging the occupation.
- Naomi Paiss writes in the New Israel Fund, JTA that the blurring of lines between Israel and the territory it occupies and administers militarily, while serving the short-term purposes of the settlers and their apologists, in the long term could lead to the failure of the whole Zionist enterprise.
- Hussein Ibish writes in The National, that if the rhetoric of strident BDS activists can be brought into line with the reality of anti-settlement rather than anti-Israel boycotts, Palestinians could well acquire a significant and desperately needed new tool of leverage with Israel.
- A Ha'aretz poll shows that there is a significant increase in the willingness of the soft right wing of Israeli political sentiment to accept concessions to the Palestinians and to support both an agreement and Netanyahu, should he lead this peace process.
- The State of Two States includes pertinent quotes for the week of February 23 on the talks between Israelis, Palestinians, and the U.S., expressing a mixture of optimism and doubt concerning the establishment of an agreement before the approaching expiration date of negotiations on April 29.
- Muhammad Shtayyeh in Ma'an states that he believes the government of Israel has done everything possible to make negotiations fail since the ruling coalition represents the political platform of the majority of its members, who are staunchly and outspokenly against the concept of a sovereign Palestinian state in any part of historical Palestine.

**January-February 2014 Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories, Foundation for Middle East Peace (FMEP):** Now available. [Use this link to view it online or in PDF format.](#)

## **1) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Round-Up for February 20, 2014**

As Secretary of State John Kerry prepares a framework document that would serve a step towards a final agreement and extend negotiations, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas hosted an event last Sunday for 300 Israeli young people at the PA headquarters.

The New York Times reports, "The Palestinian news media described the well-publicized event, which was rare in its scope, as part of Mr. Abbas's outreach efforts toward Israelis. Mr. Abbas's conciliatory tone also seemed to be intended as a way to keep up the pressure on the Israeli leadership."

One comment in particular grabbed a lot of media attention. He told the crowd, "But we do not seek either to flood Israel with millions (of refugees) or to change its social composition." This suggests that the Palestinian negotiators may agree to limit the "right of return" for most Palestinian refugees displaced in 1948 and 1967 to a future Palestinian state, not Israel.

This statement was in response to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's comments in January when he said, "what we are being asked to do is allow the establishment of a Palestinian state ...which will try to flood us with refugees."

President Abbas also showed a willingness to deviate from the 1967 lines using land swaps and accept a third-party force in the West Bank such as NATO to ensure security.

The Associated Press notes, "The audience of young Israelis, mostly affiliated with dovish political parties and coexistence activities, greeted Abbas' comments with multiple bursts of applause." One of the organizers, Israeli Labor party lawmaker Hilik Bar says the meeting was, "unprecedented."

Days after meeting with the group of young Israelis, President Abbas flew to Paris to meet with Secretary Kerry at what the State Department called, "an important point in the negotiations."

After meeting over dinner on Wednesday night, the two agreed, "it would be beneficial" to meet again the next day. Secretary Kerry is trying to hammer out the final details of the framework that could be released in the coming weeks.

[Read the entire February 20 Bulletin here.](#)

### **CMEP Bulletin, Feb. 27, 2014: Can Obama seal the deal for a framework?**

Seven months ago, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry brought Israeli and Palestinian negotiators back to the table after a three-year hiatus. The parties agreed to an April 2014 deadline to prevent open-ended talks that did not produce results. Secretary Kerry has been indefatigable in his efforts, visiting the region ten times since taking office. His latest strategy is to have a not a final agreement but a framework for negotiations by the end of April, giving the parties more time hammer out the details. Despite the shuttle diplomacy, it is clear the secretary of state is going to need all the help he can get to persuade Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to agree to even a clear framework for negotiations. ...

If Obama can get Netanyahu and Abbas on board for the framework that would outline general terms for issues like security, borders and refugees, then the negotiations could be extended with, "with a new target of completing a treaty by the end of 2014" according to The New York Times' administration sources.

[Read the entire February 27 Bulletin here.](#)

## 2) Interview: Ilan Pappé on academic freedom in Israel and BDS

Alex Shams, Ma'an News Agency, February 22, 2014

*Ilan Pappé is an Israeli historian and political activist. Much of Pappé's academic work has focused on the 1948 expulsion of 700,000-800,000 Palestinians from their homes in what became the State of Israel. He recently announced that he would begin translating his book "The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine" through crowd-sourcing on Facebook. The move came after years in which he was unable to find a translator and publisher inside Israel.*

*Ma'an recently conducted an interview with him to discuss his decision to crowd-source book translation, the state of academic freedom in Israel, and the American Studies Association's recent decision to endorse the boycott of Israeli academic institutions.*

**What was the process that led to the decision to translate the book via Facebook? You mentioned online that so far you had been unable to find a publisher in Israel. How has that process of trying to publish the book in Hebrew been? What have been the major obstacles? Were they related to potential financial backlash against the publishers, or were more ideological factors at play in your opinion?**

The book was already finished in 2006, and I think I was already then aware that the chances of publishing it in Hebrew would be slim, but I have tried several publishers and the answer was candid and ideological. They would not publish such a book. On top of it the major bookshop chain in Israel, Steimatzky, has boycotted my books even before that. So it was either hoping that people would read it in English, or looking for alternative ways.

**What is the state of the publishing industry with regards to opinions critical of Zionism, in your opinion? How is it similar or different to the climates in academic institutions? Can you tell us a little bit about the obstacles you faced while working in an Israeli university?**

In academia and the publishing world, and other cultural media like this, there are certain invisible red lines that you know there are there only when you cross them. In principle, I would say you are not allowed to base your criticism on Zionism on the basis of your professional credentials and know-how. Namely, you can teach, study or publish critique of Zionism based on your convictions or activism; so you be a chemist who criticizes the government's policies or even the state's ideology. Not that there are many people like that either, but this has to do more with self-censorship than anything else.

But critique of Zionism as a pastime or political activity (provided you are a Jewish citizen of course) is somehow tolerated. But if you claim that Zionism as an ideology is morally corrupt and that its policies are war crimes on the basis of your professional credentials, for instance as a historian trained in the history of Israel and Palestine, you have crossed a red line. Because obviously this what you will teach your students or instruct the future teachers of the state.

Similarly, if you accuse your own reference group as being part of the oppression you have crossed a red line, and of course it is worse if you believe it should be boycotted for its complacency. This is why even the bravest journalists we have would not attack their own place-work for their role in maintaining the oppression and this is why so few academics in Israel were willing even to ask the question of how involved are their institutions in the criminal reality on the ground.

Finally, if you critique not the state policies, but its very nature and doubt publicly its moral justification and basis your out of the "legitimate" boundaries and if you dare drawing comparisons with the darkest moments in Jewish and European history to the current realities you will not be tolerated. ...

[Read the entire interview here.](#)

### 3) 2013: The year in review Ma'an News Agency, February 17, 2014

*In a year which saw continued regional backlash from the events of the Arab Spring, Palestine remained caught between regional dynamics, internal divisions, and Israel's continued occupation. Embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad continued to hold power as 2013 became the bloodiest year in the country's conflict. In Egypt, the military ousted elected President Mohamed Morsi and increased restrictions on the besieged Gaza Strip, frequently closing the Rafah crossing and destroying hundreds of smuggling tunnels. For Palestine, a return to peace talks brought little respite from the daily struggles of the occupation, as Israeli military forces killed a record high number of Palestinians in the West Bank. In Gaza, violent storms exacerbated the already dire infrastructure of the coastal territory after six years of an Israeli blockade.*

**January:** ... [To] challenge Israel's occupation[, ...] hundreds of people set up protest tents in the E1 corridor area near Jerusalem. The collective effort was sparked by Israel's decision a month earlier to build over 3,000 settler homes in the E1 corridor, which would divide the West Bank and make the creation of a contiguous Palestinian state almost impossible. Hundreds of activists set up dozens of tents and a medical clinic in a protest village named Bab al-Shams before Israeli forces raided the encampment and evicted the activists. A new protest village named al-Karamah was then set up northwest of Jerusalem to protest the expansion of illegal Israeli settlements, before being dismantled by Israeli forces. Another protest village was built months later in al-Eizariya east of Jerusalem.

**February:** Arafat Jaradat, 30, from Hebron died in the Israeli jail of Megido sparking widespread hunger strike action by Palestinian prisoners and mass protest across the occupied West Bank. Palestinian officials said an autopsy proved that Jaradat, who was arrested days earlier on suspicion of stone-throwing, was tortured during an interrogation by Israeli intelligence officers. A spokeswoman for Israel's Prison Authority that Jaradat had apparently died of cardiac arrest in Megiddo prison. Over 4,000 Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails refused food from Israeli prison authorities to protest the death and dozens of Palestinians were injured in mass protests held across the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

**March:** U.S. President Barack Obama arrived in the region for his first visit to Israel and Palestine since entering the White House in 2009. The visit, which largely addressed Israeli concerns, began with a meeting with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in Jerusalem before traveling to Ramallah to meet with President Abbas and to briefly visit Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. Palestinian activists installed billboards in Ramallah and Bethlehem to highlight the fact that Palestinians have been deprived of the right to have 3G telecommunication technology because they compete with Israeli companies.

**April:** Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Salam Fayyad resigned amid mounting criticism of his economic policies in the ruling Fatah movement. The US-educated economist pinned his resignation on difficulties with President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah party, as well as Israeli intransigence. Abbas accepted Fayyad's resignation at a brief meeting at the Muqataa presidential compound in Ramallah. In an interview published after his resignation in The New York Times, Fayyad said the Palestinian leadership is a failure and that his state-building efforts and transformation of the security situation were not reciprocated by Israeli measures.

**May:** Thousands of people in the West Bank and Gaza Strip marked the 65th anniversary of the Nakba, an event which saw hundreds of thousands of Palestinians displaced from their homes in what is now Israel. Sirens were sounded for 65 seconds in the West Bank to mark the start of celebrations, with thousands of people gathering in Ramallah, Nablus, Qalqiliya, and other West Bank cities. ... In the Gaza Strip, faction leaders addressed thousands of people who had gathered in the streets, calling for unity in the Palestinian leadership as a number-one priority. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

#### **4) Conflict of Faith: Judaism vs. Israel today** **Mark Openheimer, New York Times, February 14, 2014**

There is no question that Charles H. Manekin is a rarity. Not because he is an Orthodox Jew who keeps the Sabbath, refraining from driving, turning on lights, even riding in elevators on Saturdays. Rather, this philosophy professor at the University of Maryland is rare because he believes that his Orthodox faith calls him to take stands against Israel.

Professor Manekin, 61, became Orthodox in college and became an Israeli citizen in the 1980s. Yet in an interview this week, he denounced Israel's "excessive reliance" on military force, its treatment of Arab citizens and its occupation of the West Bank. Although not a member of the American Studies Association, he was pleased when the group voted in December not to collaborate with Israeli academic institutions — the "academic boycott." He is "sympathetic" to B.D.S., as the global movement to boycott, divest from, and sanction Israel is known.

"As a religious Jew," he said, "I am especially disturbed by the daily injustices perpetrated against the Palestinians."

The vast majority of Jews consider themselves supportive of Israel. They may quarrel with various Israeli policies, but since the state's founding in 1948, and especially since the 1967 war, Zionism has been a common denominator of world Jewry.

And while there have always been anti- or non-Zionist Jews, today they cluster on the less observant end of Judaism, among secular or religiously liberal Jews. In such a world, Professor Manekin — a modern Orthodox Jew in a skullcap whose religion moves him to oppose Israel — is exceedingly rare.

Zionism was not always the norm among American Jews. Nevertheless, those committed to Jewish practice but openly at odds with Israel are now likely to find themselves at odds with their friends and family. In the past couple of months, events like the American Studies vote and the endorsement by the actress Scarlett Johansson of a seltzer-maker in the occupied West Bank have multiplied the opportunities for tense family dinners.

Professor Manekin spends about half the year in Israel, where his children and grandchildren live, so he is hardly boycotting the country with his own dollars (or shekels). But since 2007 he has regularly offered criticisms of Israel on his blog, *The Magnes Zionist*. It is named for Judah L. Magnes, an American rabbi who, until his death in 1948, argued that a Jewish return to the Middle East did not require a nation-state.

"People look at 'non-statist Zionism' as the type that lost," Professor Manekin said this week, referring to Rabbi Magnes's philosophy. "But I found a lot of what they were saying resonated today, and a lot of their predictions about endless war had come to pass."

Stefan Krieger, 67, teaches law at Hofstra University, on Long Island. He refrains from work on the Sabbath, keeps kosher, and studies a page of the Talmud every day. But his views on Israel have always been unusual.

"My parents were very sensitive to the issues of Palestinians," Professor Krieger said. "My mom had a book called 'They Are Human Too,' and my memory is she would take it off the bookshelf, as if this was some sort of scandalous tract she was showing me, and show me pictures of Palestinians in refugee camps." ...

[Read the entire piece on the New York Times' website.](#)

## **5) Undeniable discrimination in the amount of water allocated to Israelis and Palestinians** **B'tselem, Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories, February 12, 2014**

Following the Knesset debate, B'Tselem publishes a short FAQ about inequality in the distribution of water between Palestinians and Israelis.

**1. Is there discrimination in terms of the quantity of water available to Israelis and Palestinians?** Yes, there is discrimination in water allocation and Israeli citizens receive much more water than Palestinian residents of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The Government of Israel is largely responsible for this discrimination due its water policy: First, minimal amounts of water are supplied to Palestinians and water from shared resources is unequally divided; Second, existing infrastructure with high levels of water loss is not upgraded, no infrastructure is developed for communities that are not connected to the water grid and water infrastructure projects in areas located inside the Palestinian Authority are not approved. It is important to note that the water allocation for Palestinians was determined in the Oslo Accord, but the agreement included a plan to increase the supply. This plan never materialized. In addition, demand for water has increased due to population growth over the twenty years since the Oslo Accord was signed.

**2. Are there gaps in water consumption between Israelis and Palestinians?** Absolutely. According to the Israeli national water company, Mekorot, the average household water consumption in Israel is between 100 and 230 liters per person per day. The World Health Organization recommends a minimum of 100 liters per person per day. This figure relates to urban consumption which includes drinking, food preparation and hygiene, and takes into consideration urban services such as hospitals and public institutions. Israelis living in the settlements, as well as inside Israel, generally have access to as much running water as they please.

This is not the case for Palestinians.

Palestinians living in the OPT can be divided into three groups according to the amount of water available to them, which is less than the Israeli average in all three cases:

- Palestinians in the West Bank who are connected to the water infrastructure: The average daily consumption among Palestinians connected to a running-water network is about 73 liters. There are significant gaps between the various cities (169 liters per person per day in Jericho compared to 38 in Jenin). However, even those who are connected do not necessarily have access to running water throughout the day or the year, and water is supplied intermittently, following a rotation program. In many places in the West Bank, including city centers, residents must fill tanks with water, when it is available through the network and use it when running water is not available. Communities located at the edges of the water supply network and in high areas experience the water shortage more acutely and residents must buy water from private dealers at a much higher cost than the water supplied through the grid.
- Palestinians in the West Bank who are not connected to the water supply network: About 113,000 people living in 70 communities, 50,000 of them in Area C. These residents are not included in the calculations of the public water authority. They rely on rainwater which they store in cisterns and on water sold in tanker trucks by private dealers. In the southern West Bank, about 42 communities consume less than sixty litres per person per day and shepherding communities in the northern Jordan Valley consume only twenty. Private dealers charge between 25 and 40 NIS per cubic meter, depending on the distance between the village and the water source. The price is up to three times that of the highest tariff Israelis pay for water for household consumption. In the summer months, the monthly household expenditure on water in communities that buy water from tankers is between 1,250 and 2,000 NIS, about half of the entire monthly household expenditure. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## **6) Close the EU to Israeli settlement products**

**Willem-Gert Aldershoff and Michel Waelbroeck, Ha'aretz, February 25, 2014**

In July 2013, the European Commission adopted guidelines announcing that the EU would no longer fund Israeli entities in the occupied Palestinian territories. A few years earlier, the European Court of Justice clarified that settlement products are not entitled to preferential treatment under the EU-Israel Association Agreement.

These settlement products, however, often continue to be sold under the "Made in Israel" label. For this reason, the EU is now finalizing guidelines to make clear that under EU consumer protection law, retailers must specify the correct origin of products imported from Israeli settlements. One formula being envisaged is to label these as "Products from Israeli settlements (West Bank /East Jerusalem/Golan Heights)."

The European Commission is also preparing a document to inform firms of the possible legal consequences of doing business with Israeli entities in the territories.

The EU has let it be known that it does not intend to publish these two documents as long as the discussions between Israel and the Palestinians continue, so as not to hinder them. This explanation is unsatisfactory, since the documents do nothing more than put into practice the EU's legal obligations to its own citizens, whether consumers or businesspeople.

This week, on February 27, a legal report will be presented in Brussels concluding that international law indeed obliges the EU to take further steps - it must prohibit all imports into the EU from settlements. The report is sponsored by the National Center for Development Cooperation (CNCD-11.11.11), a Belgian umbrella organization coordinating NGOs and trade unions, and the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH). The report will form the basis of these organizations' campaign to demand a complete end to imports to the EU of settlement products. Its author, François Dubuisson, teaches international law at the Université Libre de Bruxelles.

In a foreword, former UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and international law professor John Dugard stresses the relevance of Dubuisson's analysis, explaining that the report "comes at an important time as there is confusion among EU states as to their obligations on this subject. Dubuisson makes it clear that settlements are unlawful under international law and that states are obliged not to assist the settlement enterprise by doing business with settlements or by permitting their products to be sold in EU countries."

The report describes the numerous violations of international law resulting from Israel's settlement policy. It explains why the EU must not simply issue formal condemnations, as it has done in the past, but take practical steps to ensure that Israel complies with its obligations, which can be summarized as follows:

- Firstly, Article 49, paragraph 6, of the Fourth Hague Convention (which Israel has ratified) prohibits an occupying power such as Israel from transferring parts of its civilian population into the territory it occupies; in other words, it prohibits the establishment of settlements in Palestine ;
- Secondly, Article 1 of the same convention obliges the EU not only "to respect" but also "to ensure respect" for its provisions;
- Finally, international customary law imposes a duty on all members of the international community, including the EU, not to recognize as lawful or render aid or assistance in maintaining a situation created by a serious breach of a peremptory norm of international law. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## **7) A victory against anti-Israel BDS**

**Steven Kaplan and Sanford Weiner, Jewish Journal, February 27, 2104**

Israelis and supporters of Israel are increasingly concerned about international pressure — and with good reason. There was last year's directive from the European Union, which threatened important Israel-EU cooperation; the recent uproar about SodaStream, which brought Israel unflattering media attention; and the almost daily news of some European country singling out an Israeli company for negative treatment.

Are these victories for the global BDS movement — the movement calling on people and nations to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel? Absolutely not.

The BDS movement treats Israel and the occupied territories as a single entity, seeing everything Israeli as a legitimate target for activism and thus, in effect, ignoring the Green Line — the 1949 Armistice line between Israel and the occupied territories. Supporters of this kind of BDS can find their mirror image in settlers and Greater Israel ideologues who want to erase the Green Line, in order to promote permanent Israeli control of the occupied territories.

In contrast, the current wave of pressure on Israel is a resounding rejection of efforts to ignore or erase the Green Line. This pressure, which has so shaken up Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu that he recently attacked U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry for merely pointing out the danger of isolation facing Israel, is at its core a powerful affirmation of Israel's legitimacy as a state, coupled with an equally powerful condemnation of Israel's actions and policies beyond the Green Line.

Let's look at what this pressure is really about. The EU directive targeted Israeli support for settlements, not Israel itself. The SodaStream uproar was solely about its policy of manufacturing its products in a settlement, not its Israeli ownership. These and other recent developments are a clear challenge both to those who support BDS against Israel and to those who support settlements. These developments are, on the other hand, a victory for Israel — an affirmation of support for Israel as a legitimate, sovereign nation that can only survive and thrive if the occupation ends.

Israel's Shalom Achshav movement and its U.S. sister organization, Americans for Peace Now (APN), have long worked to shine a bright light on the Green Line, delineating our strong support for Israel within its recognized, sovereign territory but our rejection of occupation. We do this precisely because we are committed to Israel and its survival as a healthy democracy and a Jewish state.

When APN and Shalom Achshav first came out endorsing boycotting settlements and settlement products, many in Israel and the American-Jewish world were critical and dismissive. Some said such a policy was meaningless, as settlement-related economic activity is limited. Today, it is indisputable that highlighting the Green Line and targeting settlements is having real impact.

Some said such a policy would only encourage BDS against Israel. In truth, decades of international indifference and impotence in the face of deepening Israeli occupation has led many people of conscience, including people who care deeply about Israel, to despair of finding a way to change Israel's pro-settlement policies — and neither hasbara nor anti-boycott legislation will counteract this phenomenon. Given this reality, the only convincing answer to calls for BDS against Israel is supporting Israel by boycotting the settlements and challenging the occupation.

Make no mistake: Getting the world to adopt policies that distinguish between Israel and the occupied territories is a victory against those whose goal is to challenge the legitimacy not simply of settlements, but of Israel's very existence. If we can't succeed in doing so, others will succeed in isolating and delegitimizing Israel.



**8) Op-ed: Boycotting settlements is not anti-Israel**  
**Naomi Paiss, New Israel Fund, JTA, February 5, 2014**

On her way out the door to defend the SodaStream company, the suddenly political Scarlett Johansson threw a grenade at her erstwhile cause, the international aid organization Oxfam. According to her spokesperson, “she and Oxfam have a fundamental difference of opinion in regards to the boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.”

The global boycott, divestment and sanctions movement, which harbors more than a few people who want to put the entire project of a Jewish homeland out of business, is not the issue between Ms. Johansson and Oxfam. SodaStream has its main factory in the occupied territories. The company is contributing to the health and prosperity of the occupation while providing income for the settlement enterprise — an enterprise that is corroding Israeli democracy, deemed “illegitimate” by the American government and considered illegal under international law.

Boycotting goods and services coming from the settlements, although sometimes difficult to implement in practice, means putting one’s money where one’s mouth is, if one has been saying that the settlements are an impediment to the two-state solution and to peace.

What’s so hard to understand about that? My organization, the New Israel Fund, which supports more than 100 progressive civil society organizations in Israel at any given time, made a clear distinction some years ago in our funding guidelines. We don’t fund organizations with global BDS programs. We will not disqualify organizations for funding if they support the boycott of settlement goods because we see it as entirely consistent with our opposition to the occupation, our defense of Israeli democracy and our support for a two-state solution.

So let’s take a look at those who are profiting from blurring the lines — the Green Line, to be precise. The current Israeli government and its well-funded organizational allies have popularized the word “delegitimization” to describe opposition to Israel. But in making no distinction between calls to boycott Israel itself and calls to boycott the settlement enterprise, they are deliberately conflating two very different things while erasing the distinction between Israel inside the Green Line — the pre-1967 border with the West Bank — and military control of settlements in the territories. Defunding the settlements equals delegitimization equals anti-Semitism equals destruction of Israel as a Jewish state, or so goes their formula. Those for whom any progress toward ending the occupation is their worst nightmare have been somewhat successful at making this false equivalence stick.

The truth is, Israel has real adversaries who equate Zionism with racism. But it is also true that criticizing Israeli government policy, especially support for the settlement enterprise, is not delegitimizing Israel. According to last year’s Pew study, only 17 percent of American Jews believe the settlements help Israeli security. Do the other 83 percent not think that Israel is legitimate?

By some accounts, the Palestinians who work at SodaStream are well treated by the standards of occupation enterprises. But suggesting that those Palestinians don’t have much choice about their employment because the West Bank is entirely aid dependent, and because it’s hard to have a vibrant economy under foreign military control — that’s not delegitimizing Israel either. That’s the truth as pro-Israel progressives worldwide see it.

But let’s leave the Palestinians aside for a moment. What blurring the lines between Israel and its military occupation accomplishes is not just the perpetuation of the occupation. Israel’s existence as a democratic state is grounded in the values and institutions it shares with other democracies, including freedom of speech and conscience, an independent judiciary and an untrammelled civil society. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## **9) Harmful rhetoric can break the momentum of boycott efforts** **Hussein Ibish, The National, February 8, 2014**

The recent SodaStream controversy has illustrated both the power and shortcomings of the various pro-Palestinian boycott movements. The falling out between actress Scarlett Johansson and her long-term former partners at Oxfam – who support settlement boycotts, but not boycotts against Israel – over her advertising for the company based in an Israeli settlement dovetails with many other European moves to draw the line with Israel.

The European Union recently insisted on excluding settlement-based institutions from its new research funding arrangement with Israel, and Germany is pushing to extend these restrictions to bilateral agreements that also involve the private sector.

Many Israelis, particularly those directly involved in business and finance, including finance minister Yair Lapid and over 100 Israeli CEOs, have expressed deep concern about Israel's growing isolation over settlements. Israelis who are ideologically committed to a "greater Israel" naturally dismiss the emerging boycott trend as irrelevant bluster.

In fact, the growing mood in Europe that has lost patience with Israel's ongoing settlement activities, which are universally acknowledged to be a flagrant violation of black letter international human rights law – and therefore declines to subsidise it with a single further euro – does pose a significant danger to Israel of political, diplomatic and even to some extent economic, isolation. But it's important to note that these European boycotts are targeted directly against the settlements and the occupation, and not at Israel itself.

Here is where the most strident rhetorical "BDS movement" is, in many ways, not only failing to seize an opportunity, but it also does harm to this important campaign.

The European and other successful boycotts are aimed squarely at the occupation and are pushed by those who are determined to achieve a two-state solution. They are absolutely consistent with international law, and based on the fact that settlement activity by an occupying power is absolutely prohibited by the Fourth Geneva Convention, Article 49, Paragraph 6, because it is a major human rights violation.

Unfortunately, many self-appointed leaders of the "BDS movement" – whose efforts have had virtually nothing to do with the growing mood in Europe to cease subsidising settlement activity – instead advocate boycotting Israel across the board. The logical conclusion of their approach, and the clear subtext of most of their rhetoric, is a one-state solution in which Israel is replaced by a different state for everyone currently living in former mandatory Palestine as well as all Palestinian refugees.

This creates a series of grave complications for what is an otherwise heartening trend of increasing European refusal to subsidise or tolerate settlement activities any longer.

First, such rhetoric allows supporters of the occupation to conflate boycotts against settlements with boycotts against Israel. There is a large and expanding global constituency, based on the virtually unanimous international consensus in favour of a two-state solution, that correctly identifies Israeli settlements as the unique threat to peace and acts accordingly. But because of the rhetoric of some BDS activists, it's possible for supporters of the occupation and others to dismiss pro-peace settlement boycotts as "boycotts of Israel." And there is no real international constituency for either a generalised boycott of Israel or for a one-state solution. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## **10) Poll shows increasing support for peace by Israeli "soft right"**

**Ha'aretz, February 28, 2014**

Some 63 percent of Hebrew-speaking Israelis are likely to support a regional peace agreement in principle, even without knowing the full details of the agreement, according to a new poll released on February 27.

That support increased to over three-quarters (76 percent) after the respondents were briefed on the likely details of an agreement, based on the assumed components of U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's framework document and an interpretation of the Arab League Peace Initiative, which promises Israel "full diplomatic and normal relations" with 57 Arab and Muslim states, in exchange for a "comprehensive peace agreement" with the Palestinians.

In both cases, the responses represent a statistically significant increase over the findings in other surveys conducted over the past few months. The survey was commissioned by the Israeli Peace Initiative Group and conducted on February 6, 2014 by Israeli research institute New Wave Research among a representative sample of 500 people. The survey report stresses that the sample "is not fully representative of Arabic and Russian-speakers who do not know Hebrew or of the ultra-Orthodox population."

The poll also found that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would have strong public support if he were to present the public with an agreement that entailed ending the conflict with the Palestinians on the basis of the details provided. Specifically, 73 percent of the respondents said they would support Netanyahu and 56 percent of respondents would vote for him if he were to establish a new party.

Only two of the nine components of the agreement that were presented – that the Arab neighborhoods in East Jerusalem will be part of the Arab capital and that the Holy Sites will not be under any specific sovereignty - received less than 60 percent support in the poll. The former received 49 percent support and the latter 50 percent support.

Other findings of the poll were that a majority of respondents (72 percent) thinks that Israelis are interested in reaching an agreement regarding the end of the conflict, while a similar proportion (77 percent) is convinced that the Palestinians are not interested in reaching an agreement.

A majority of Israelis (55 percent) believe that "without intervention by the Arab states and the Arab League, the Palestinians will never reach an agreement with the Israelis."

Regarding the political identification of the respondents, 28 percent described themselves as "extreme right-wing," 24 percent as "soft right," 28 percent as "centrist," and 16 percent as "soft left" or "extreme left."

Yet throughout the survey, while the "extreme right" reveals relatively low enthusiasm for a peace agreement or its specific components, the "soft right" reveals much higher positive support than the "extreme right" and a bit lower support than "centrist" voters.

The Israeli Peace Initiative Group concludes that, "on the basis of these analyses, it becomes clear that there is a significant increase in the willingness of the soft right to accept concessions and to support both an agreement and Netanyahu, should he lead this process."

## **11) The State of Two States, Week of February 23, 2014**

### **Israel Policy Forum (IPF)**

This week, President Obama has officially taken steps to heighten his involvement in the peace process, announcing meetings with Prime Minister Netanyahu and PA President Mahmoud Abbas in March. In the continuous talks between Israelis, Palestinians, and Americans, leaders and officials on all sides of the negotiations have been expressing a mixture of optimism and doubt concerning the establishment of an agreement before the approaching expiration date of negotiations on April 29. Also this week, Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel came to Israel on Tuesday with her entire cabinet to talk with Netanyahu and emphasize the strong relationship between the two countries.

\*[Click here](#) to view the video from IPF's conversation with MK Herzog and Jodi Rudoren\*

"Before we refuse the demand, we have to understand what is the significance of a Jewish state. Israel must clarify what the ramifications are of recognizing it as a Jewish state, and whether there is any legal definition of this term. Does Palestinian recognition of a Jewish state mean a determination that only Jews have the right to live there?" – Political analyst Dr. Ali Jarbawi in an interview with Palestinian newspaper Al-Quds as reported by Ma'ariv (Sunday 2/23)

"We in the federal government support a two-state solution – a Palestinian state and a Jewish state of Israel....We also support Israel's security requirements to be able to finally live in secure borders." – Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel speaking at a press conference with PM Netanyahu in Jerusalem (Tuesday 2/25)

"The president wouldn't want to run any risk that it was the lack of his involvement that would make the difference between success and failure." – A senior official's report in the New York Times revealing that President Obama will become more involved in the peace process (Wednesday 2/26)

"If the Palestinians apply to the UN and succeed in obtaining the necessary majority, the Palestinian state will already exist, and so I propose that we make our move and determine our borders. They have a gun called Plan B. It is important for us to show them that we too have a weapon of this kind. The existence of a Plan B on our side improves the chances of achieving Plan A, because it shows that going to the UN has a price." – Michael Oren in an interview with Ma'ariv (Wednesday 2/26)

"I hope that the Kerry's efforts will lead to an agreement. But if they fail, we will not raise a white flag, we will not capitulate and you will not be able to oppress the Palestinian people. So I hope that the Israeli peace camp that is opposed to the occupation, that is determined to have security arrangements that will enable you and your grandchildren to live in peace and security in a state in the 1967 borders, I think that that this will be right if before there is peace you get up and say we are your partners. I am willing to be among those who will lead demonstrations for peace and coexistence that is based on a solution of two states for two peoples." – Jibril Rajoub to Israel's radio news magazine, Yoman (Thursday 2/27)

"There is no meaning to prolonging the negotiation, even for one more additional hour, if Israel, represented by its current government, continues to disregard international law." – PA chief negotiator Saed Erket talking about the peace process and the settlements to AFP news agency (Thursday 2/27)

[Israel Policy Forum website](#)

## **12) A few tanks in the Jordan Valley will not make Israel safe**

**Muhammad Shtayyeh, February 26, 2014**

The government of Israel has done everything possible to make negotiations fail. This should not come as a surprise to anyone: the ruling coalition represents the political platform of the majority of its members, who are staunchly and outspokenly against the concept of a sovereign Palestinian state in any part of historical Palestine.

Intensified settlement activity in the occupied West Bank, one of a whole host of other violations of international law, speaks for itself. If Israel's actions on the ground are not loud enough, the statements of numerous high-ranking Israeli officials on the subject of the two-state solution certainly are. Less apparent, however, are the diversionary tactics being used to stall the negotiations process and prevent the internationally-endorsed end goal, allowing Israel time to further entrench its occupation and colonization of Palestine.

There are six final status issues in negotiations. Rather than genuinely trying to reach an agreement on these issues, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu is attempting to bring two non-issues to the table.

These are issues which divert attention from the core questions. They are designed to appease a government that is by, for and of the settlers. And they are issues that the Israeli government knows that no Palestinian negotiator could ever accept, giving Israel the opportunity to stall the negotiations process while attempting to blame the Palestinian side for its failure.

The first non-issue is the new Israeli proposal to effectively annex the Jordan Valley under the pretext of "security." The Jordan Valley is an integral part of the occupied state of Palestine. It is deep within the Green Line, constitutes almost a third of the occupied West Bank and can never be a part of the state of Israel within the framework of the two-state solution.

It has never been discussed at any point during the past twenty plus years of negotiations. It is an absolute non-starter that would deny Palestine's sovereignty over its own natural resources. In terms of demands for an Israeli military presence, Israeli military experts have clearly stated that in this age of modern warfare, the Jordan Valley has no security value. A few tanks in the Jordan Valley will not make Israel safe. Nevertheless, Palestinian officials have repeatedly stated that they are willing to accept a third party presence, which directly addresses any security claim, whether genuine or not.

The second new issue, which Netanyahu and his colleagues have succeeded in bringing to the fore, is the idea that Palestine should recognize Israel as a "Jewish State." Again, this is a non-issue. Palestine recognized the State of Israel in 1988, just as any other country has recognized Israel. In fact, even Israel's president Shimon Peres has reportedly called the recognition of a Jewish state "unnecessary."

The simple truth is clear: this is a government that does not want the internationally-endorsed two-state solution. The statements made by Israeli minister Moshe Yaalon against Secretary Kerry should not be considered a mere personal opinion: they are a reflection of the Israeli government's true attitude towards the peace process.

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In terms of demands for an Israeli military presence, Israeli military experts have clearly stated that in this age of modern warfare, the Jordan Valley has no security value. A few tanks in the Jordan Valley will not make Israel safe. ...

**[Read the entire piece on the Hill's website.](#)**