

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
March 24, 2016



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

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The six featured articles and the many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on **Palestinian children**, their involvement in acts of violence in Israel, the occupied territories and Jerusalem, the summary execution of some of these children after these acts and the military detention of others. Also noted are criticisms of AIPAC, the necessity of President Obama offering a clear outline for Israel/Palestinian peace while still in office, the need for lifting the siege of Gaza, the recent Pew Research Center poll surveying attitudes among Israeli citizens confirming that Israel is a deeply divided society, the speeches by U.S. presidential candidates to AIPAC, and other articles of interest.

Commentary: As political leaders of Israel, the U.S., and Europe state and debate their policies towards the Israeli and Palestinian people, the people themselves live in fear and insecurity with little hope for a realistic resolution of this tragic conflict. Most Palestinians have given up hope for any change in the status quo; many Israelis are fragmented into religious factions. While issues are being promoted for political purposes both in Israel and the U.S., the people of Gaza continue to suffer from blockade, Palestinian teenagers ineffectively offer their lives in stabbing attacks, Israelis live in fear and preparation for possible attacks and are even anxious about their children going to school and walking their streets alone. Although a two – state solution remains available, the status quo grows less sustainable each day for those who must live rather than debate its reality.

- Amr Kawji of the organization “No Way to Treat a Child” introduces “Detaining Dreams,” an intimate new documentary featuring the stories of four Palestinian children and their families undergoing the ordeal of Israeli military detention. It is sponsored by the American Friends Service Committee and Defense for Children International – Palestine.
- Orit Perlov writes in INSS Insight that the prevalent view in Israel of young Palestinians who conduct stabbing attacks is imprecise and at best a partial picture.
- Gideon Levy states in Haaretz that the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) has corrupted Israel, teaching that everything is permissible: The day AIPAC weakens, Israel will grow stronger, forced to stand on its own two feet and act morally.
- Jimmy Carter writes in USA Today that President Obama can still advance Israeli/Palestinian peace by creating and offering a clear outline for moving forward.
- Haggai Matar writes in +972 Magazine of a group of Israelis living along the Gaza border who after countless pleas to the Israeli government went unanswered, asked Ban Ki-moon to intervene and end the siege on their neighbors.
- Daniel Sokatch notes in Jewish Telegraphic Agency that the recently released Pew Research Center poll surveying attitudes among Israeli citizens confirms what many of us who work on Israeli issues already knew: Israel is a deeply divided society, first and foremost between its Jewish and Arab citizens, but also among its Jewish sectors.

1) [Detaining Dreams](#), Amr Kawji, No Way to Treat a Child, March 2015

“Detaining Dreams is an intimate new documentary featuring the stories of 4 Palestinian children and their families undergoing the ordeal of Israeli military detention. It is sponsored by: American Friends Service Committee & Defense for Children International – Palestine.

“We have created a 10 page Study Guide that goes along with our film Detaining Dreams. In the Study Guide you will find answers to your frequently asked questions. You will also find answers to questions about Palestinian child detention, as well as suggested questions for an open discussion after the film. The Study Guide can be downloaded as a PDF for your use.”

2) [Children of Tunnels, Children of Knives](#), Orit Perlov, INSS Insight No. 802, March 9, 2016

“The prevalent view in Israel, which regards the young Palestinians who dig tunnels and conduct stabbing attacks as products of a process of religious and political radicalization by Hamas and of incitement led by the Palestinian Authority waged on the social media, is imprecise and at best a partial picture. The social networks are communication tools – not the root of the problems. The efforts to take care of the symptom, i.e., incitement on social media, without addressing the illness, namely, the problematic core issues in the Palestinian arena, will not serve to eradicate the phenomenon of children who turn to tunnels and knives.” . . .

“Unemployment of youth in the Gaza Strip currently stands above 50 percent, and the generation of parents is now the dominant sector in the workforce. With no alternative source of employment, adolescents and young adults between the ages of 15 and 20 are employed by the Hamas military wing, which provides them with an income and a meaningful purpose by employing them to dig the offensive tunnels.” . . .

“Children of Knives: In contrast to the events in the Gaza Strip, the phenomenon of the “stabbing youth” is not organized, run, or funded by any organization – not the Palestinian Authority, Hamas, or any other institution in East Jerusalem or the West Bank. It is a phenomenon of individuals, with some operating in small groups of two to three.” . . .

“On the other hand, alongside the efforts to implement operational (and partial) solutions to the symptoms – that is, the digging of attack tunnels and knife-based terrorism – and alongside action against incitement on the social networks, Israel should formulate an extensive plan of action that focuses on employment and the economy, and seeks to build a positive future for the children of the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank. Reducing the attractiveness of joining the tunnel-digging teams in the Gaza Strip and doing away with the knife attacks as a means of national expression and as a solution to personal problems will require the promotion of solutions to hardships rooted in unemployment, poverty, and the impossibility of social mobility.”

3) [AIPAC Is Destroying Israel, Not Safeguarding It](#), Gideon Levy, Haaretz, March 20, 2016

“The enemies of Israel will gather here Sunday for their annual conference. Almost 20,000 people will flock to the city’s Walter E. Washington Convention Center. Almost all are Jews, and almost all are not friends of Israel, despite their organization’s name and pretensions.

“The American Israel Public Affairs Committee may be the organization that has caused the greatest damage to Israel. It corrupted Israel, taught it that everything is permissible to it. It made sure America would cover up and restrain itself over everything. That it would never demand anything in exchange. That Uncle Sam would pay – and keep mum. That the supply of intoxicating drugs would continue. America is the dealer, and AIPAC the pusher.” . . .

“At the conference center, presidential candidates will vie over who can be more fawning. This isn’t a good situation for Israel. Behind this fawning, which more and more Americans are beginning to try to get to the root of, hides suppressed thoughts that will eventually burst forth. Not all of those who fawn over Israel in the Senate and House of Representatives do so willingly. The fear of AIPAC silences them. It also silences the media. This can’t go on forever. It’s also liable to spark anti-Semitic sentiment.” . . .

See also Link F - [The Speech Bernie Sanders Didn't Give at AIPAC](#); Link G – [Full text of Hillary Clinton's speech to AIPAC Clinton](#); and Link H - [Full text of Donald Trump's speech to AIPAC](#).

4) [President Obama can still advance Israeli/Palestinian peace](#), Jimmy Carter, *USA Today*, March 17, 2016

“Since the time of President Harry Truman, the United States has assisted Israel, including persistent efforts to forge peace agreements with her neighbors. Our government has also vetoed more than 30 U.N. Security Council resolutions that were critical of Israel, including many that were supported unanimously by all other Security Council members, and for several decades our support has included massive economic and military aid, amounting to about \$8 million per day. This financial commitment is now being renewed, unless Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu decides to wait and conclude the deal with the next president.

“At the same time, the U.S. has joined Europe, the United Nations, the Arab League and almost all other nations in espousing basic principles relating to peace and justice in the region, including a two-state solution and opposition to Israel’s policy of occupying Palestinian land in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The future prospect for this preferred solution can be greatly enhanced if President Obama spells out its advantages before leaving office.” . . .

“Recent Israeli strategy has been to postpone solution of the Palestinian issue and maintain the status quo, which has strengthened those who see this as an opportunity for one Jewish state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. This makes it impossible for Israel to be both a Jewish and a democratic state, and makes continuing violence inevitable. Under this policy, there have been three destructive wars in Gaza and a recent resurgence of Palestinian violence.

“Although there is little prospect of a breakthrough during the remaining months of this administration, a clear statement of principles could have a lasting impact, enshrined in a U.N. Security Council resolution and based on the president’s previous statements and on recent assessments by Secretary of State John Kerry as he sought a peace agreement. It should cover the central issues in dispute, including the borders of a Palestinian state, the status of Jerusalem and Israel’s guaranteed security. It might include a reiteration of resolution 446, which was passed in 1979 when I was president and affirmed the applicability of the Geneva Conventions in the occupied territory. A specific timeline should be set for the delineation of borders between the two states, with the U.S. proposal on permanent borders being stated publicly, after being shared with both Israel and the Palestinians in private.” . . .

5) [Why Israelis are asking the UN to end the siege on Gaza](#), By Haggai Matar, *+972 Magazine*, March 10, 2016

“A group of Israelis who live in the Gaza border region sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon last week imploring him ‘to use the power of your office to pressure the Israeli government into adoption of a humanitarian and moral plan that will give hope to peoples on both sides of the border.’

“Activists from the group Other Voice, which penned the letter to Ban, say they have sent countless letters and petitions to the Israeli government asking it to change its policy vis-à-vis Gaza for the betterment of both peoples, but say their pleas have gone unanswered. Therefore, they write, because

the blockade is “a ticking bomb for all of us – Israelis and Palestinians – who live in the region,” they had no choice but to seek outside help.

“[The blockade] keeps nearly 1.8 million people locked up in a small piece of land,” the Israeli residents of the Gaza border region wrote to Ban. ‘This governmental policy has left the Palestinians in Gaza with little to no opportunities to meet their most basic needs, and of course, constitutes a gross violation of their human rights, as set forth by the UN Declaration of Human Rights, to which Israel is a signatory.’ . . .

“The residents of southern Israel also mentioned in their letter reports of humanitarian issues in Gaza like dangerously diminishing drinking water reserves, 16-hour daily power outages, and the fact that 80 percent of the population is dependent on international aid. They further noted that senior Israeli security officials have warned recently that the situation in Gaza endangers Israel and necessitates immediate steps toward easing the humanitarian and economic crises in the Strip.

“One might add to that the fact that the UN itself has determined that the Gaza Strip is in danger of becoming uninhabitable within four years, and that abject poverty and unemployment is pushing Gazans to attempt to emigrate in large numbers — legally and illegally.” . . .

“Israel’s siege on the Gaza Strip, supported by Egypt, has been in place for nearly 10 years, including a complete sea, land and air blockade and the destruction of Gaza’s single airport. And despite the fact that Israel withdrew its troops from the Strip, it still controls the currency (shekels). It still controls the electricity and water. It still manages the population registry.” . . .

“It’s no coincidence that people — including the Israeli media — calls Gaza ‘the largest prison in the world.’” . . .

6) [Op-Ed: Pew findings not surprising, but also not irreversible](#), Daniel Sokatch, Jewish Telegraphic Agency, March 9, 2016

“The Pew Research Center poll released this week surveying attitudes among Israeli citizens confirms what many of us who work on Israeli issues already knew: Israel is a deeply divided society, first and foremost between its Jewish and Arab citizens, but also among its Jewish sectors.

“Ethnicity, religiosity, family origin and political beliefs have created an Israel of “camps” that don’t much like or have much to do with each other. The Pew research director described these divisions as “jaw-dropping.”

“As in-depth as the survey is, however, what it does not tell us is why Israel has become so fractured. Israel’s Jewish and Arab citizens have been living together for generations, and its Jews belong to a people that survived millennia of persecution with cohesion and unity. Why, then, is it so difficult for Israelis to share their society and arrive at some concept of Israeli-ness that would downplay sectarian differences? And how can a nation so deeply divided offer a sense of community to all its citizens?” . . .

“And then there is the attitude toward the “other.” There is profound disagreement over the significance of Israel as a Jewish state. Nearly 80 percent of Jews believe that Jews deserve (some unspecified) preferential treatment in Israel. No wonder most Arab respondents do not think Israel can be a Jewish state and a democracy at the same time. The two groups can’t come close to agreement on whether Israeli Arabs face discrimination or the prospects for peace.

“The 48 percent of Jewish respondents who actually want to expel their Arab neighbors is a terrible headline, one that underlines the need to reinforce the value of minority rights within Israeli society. Commentators warn that this question cannot be taken in isolation, especially because it did not refer to a real policy proposal. But to those of us working against the growing wave of racism and incitement, this response is a red flag that reflects the reality of what we see on the ground.” . . .

“The Pew study validates, once again, those of us who warn of dangerous fissures in a nation that cannot afford the continued breakdown of cohesion and amity. But we who warn, we who are dedicated to repairing those fissures and building some solid foundations above them, we also know that Israelis are miraculously good at inventing new realities.

“Now they need to reinvent their own society — for their own sake, and for all of us who love and support their efforts.”

See also Link C - [Two Peoples, One Tribe](#), and Link D - [First Pew Study in Israel Finds Increasing Polarization Amongst Jews](#)

Other articles of interest:

A) [Israel Helpless as Young Knife-wielding Palestinians Run Wild on Its Streets, Amos Harel, Haaretz, March 12, 2016](#)

The government won't call it this, but there's no denying that Israel is facing a third intifada. What makes it different is that it's being carried out by individuals who aren't taking their lead from religious or political figures. And preventive measures run the risk of making matters worse.

B) [Most Palestinians in West Bank Oppose Stabbing Attacks on Israelis, New Poll Shows, Jack Khoury, Haaretz, March 13, 2016](#)

Palestinian polling center JMCC finds President Abbas losing support; 60 percent back a two-state solution, while more than half feel ISIS has hurt their cause.

C) [Two Peoples, One Tribe, Michael J. Koplow, IPF, March 17, 2016](#)

There is a yawning chasm on many issues between Jews in Israel and Jews in the U.S., to the extent that anyone looking at the numbers without any identifying information on the two groups would have a difficult time guessing that they were members of the same family, so to speak.

D) [First Pew Study in Israel Finds Increasing Polarization Amongst Jews, Judy Maltz, Haaretz, March 8, 2016](#)

Among the findings: Most Israeli Jews oppose turning Jewish law into state law, the vast majority believe in God, and many don't necessarily see themselves as Zionists.

E) [U.S. clinging to two state solution for Israel and Palestine, Reuters/Newsweek, March 9, 2016](#)

Having twice failed to achieve Israeli-Palestinian peace, the Obama administration is discussing ways to help preserve the prospect of an increasingly threatened two-state solution, U.S. officials said.

F) [The Speech Bernie Sanders Didn't Give at AIPAC, Ben Harris, Haaretz, March 22, 2016](#)

Democratic candidate released text of address he would have delivered at Israel lobby conference, in which he castigates both Netanyahu and Abbas.

- G) [Full text of Hillary Clinton's speech to AIPAC, Ami Eden, The Times of Israel, March 22, 2016](#)**
Democratic presidential front-runner vows to combat BDS, says US 'can't ever be neutral when it comes to Israel's survival'
- H) [Full text of Donald Trump's speech to AIPAC, The Times of Israel, March 22, 2016](#)**
Republican presidential front-runner vows to confront Iran, veto UN imposed peace deal; slams Palestinian incitement.
- I) [Why BDS cannot lose: A moral threshold to combat racism in Israel, Ramzy Baroud, MaanNews, March 15, 2016](#)**
A foray of condemnations of the boycott of Israel seems to have fallen on deaf ears. Calls from Western governments, originating from the UK, the US, Canada and others, to criminalize the boycott of Israel have hardly slowed down the momentum of the pro-Palestinian Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS). On the contrary, it has accelerated.
- J) [The Palestinian project, Nahum Barnea, Israel Opinion, March 11, 2016](#)**
Op-ed: We need to reject unrealistically simple solutions and boost employment, investment, living standards, and more to at least mitigate the hatred and perhaps reach the point where we can say goodbye.
- K) [CMEP Bulletin - Angry about Military Aid, Israel Seizes Land, March 18, 2016](#)**
- L) [Fleeing the world's largest prison: A journey from Gaza to Israel, By Samah Salaime, +972 Maqzine, March 17, 2016](#)**
When Shefaa was granted permission to leave Gaza for a four-day visit to Israel to meet with a group of Jewish and Palestinian women, it was nothing short of a miracle. There she could tell her story and dispel the myths about life in Gaza.
- M) [US, Germany, France criticize Israel's 'land grab' near Jericho, Israel News, March 16, 2016](#)**
'This decision sends a wrong signal at the wrong time,' says German Foreign Ministry statement, while French Foreign Ministry says it's 'extremely concerned' after Israel appropriated 2,342 dunams near the Dead Sea.
- N) [PA's collapse now seems a matter of when, not if, Avi Issacharoff, Times of Israel, March 17, 2016](#)**
Israel now takes seriously the threat of an end to security cooperation. But that doesn't mean it intends to meet the PA's demands.
- O) [The Nerve! Rewarding a Palestinian Teacher Who Incites to Nonviolence!, Zvi Bar'el, Haaretz, March 16, 2016](#)**
How dare they give the Global Teacher Prize to a Palestinian who's showing her students how to endure Israel's occupation in peace?