

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**April 13, 2017**



*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 related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the challenge of Passover to the Israeli Jews; the influence of the Israel lobby on U.S. policy; opposition by young Jews to the recent AIPAC conference: resolutions of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva urging States and Businesses to cut off ties to Israeli Settlements; the systemic separation of Arabs from Jews, by education, opportunity, land, roads and water and, in the West Bank, by law; the growth of the BDS movement through national and global networks; CMEP and other links to current articles of interest.

**Commentary:** Happy Holiday to all our Jewish friends and Easter Greetings to all our Christian readers!

Israeli Rabbi Arik Ascherman, considering the behavior of the current Israeli government, often emphasizes some of the 36 times that the Torah commands Jews not to oppress the non-Jews living among them. He reminds especially his Israeli brothers and sisters, that their ancestors were once a powerless minority in Egypt. Specific criticisms of Israeli repressive policies and actions towards the Palestinians continue to be rejected by the current Israeli government as being “anti-Semitic” as attempts to “delegitimize the State of Israel”, with little effort to “fact check” the veracity of the criticisms nor eliminate the behaviors causing the constant criticisms. Passover for the Jews and Holy Week for the Christians are times of faithfulness to the Covenant, truth, repentance and newness of life.

- Tomer Persico reflecting on Passover writes in [Haaretz](#) that It's tragic that the people who gave humanity the ultimate story of liberation control a population without allowing it equal rights.
- [The Israel Lobby And American Policy](#) conference took place at the National Press Club, Washington, DC on March 24. Links are provided to the speeches given by the principal speakers.
- Bradley Burston notes in [Haaretz](#) that after all these years, resistance is the reason that there are still Jews in the world as the thousand protesters, most of them young Jewish Americans, who chanted calls to end the occupation at the entrances to the AIPAC conference.
- Barak Ravid writes in [Haaretz](#) that the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva has urged States and Businesses to cut off ties to Israeli Settlements and also condemned Israeli construction in West Bank.
- Dahlia Scheindlin explains in 972 Magazine why “It’s not apartheid arguments” fail since the tragic reality is it doesn’t actually matter if Israel is a carbon copy of apartheid’s policies or not. The result is the same: a systemic separation of Arabs from Jews, by education, by opportunity, by land, roads and water and, in the West Bank, by law.
- Ramzy Baroud states in [Ma’an](#) News that regardless of what transpires in the case of Omar Barghouti, BDS will not weaken. It is a decentralized movement with local, regional, national and global networks spanning hundreds of cities across the world.

1) [Opinion Passover: The Irony of Celebrating Liberty While the Israeli Occupation Persists](#) , *Tomer Persico, Haaretz, April 5, 2017*

... “It is indeed hard to imagine our civilization without that specific myth and the ethos all of us inherited from it. The magnitude of our cultural debt to the story of the Exodus undoubtedly explains the immense popularity of Passover among all Jews, non-religious as much as religious.

“This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War, and as such demands a reckoning. We can no longer pretend that the occupation of the Palestinian people, which began 50 years ago, is an inadvertent accident in the history of the State of Israel. Indeed, even Israel’s formal description of the occupation as “temporary” lacks genuine force of conviction. The State of Israel has been subjugating millions of non-citizens for more than two-and-a-half times the number of years that it hasn’t. It is a bitter, vicious tragedy that the people who bequeathed humanity with the ultimate story of liberation are the last people on earth who control a population without allowing it either equal legal rights or the political independence to determine its own destiny.

“We do, of course, have our reasons. Good ones. There are always explanations. We will find elaborate ways of giving the current situation legitimation. After all, we do wish to be good. But the brutal fact remains, and after all excuses and explanations, the fact remains brutal. Its perpetuation will mean that Jewish history will be forever stained by the occupation, and it will retroactively color the Jewish tradition. Passover, our celebration of liberty, will acquire an ironic, rancorous twist.”

See also:

[Opinion A Fifth Question for Israelis to Ask Themselves on Passover](#)

[Opinion After 50 Springs](#)

2) [THE ISRAEL LOBBY AND AMERICAN POLICY](#) , March 24, 2017 at the National Press Club, Washington, DC

Watch the YouTube live stream video archive: <http://israellobbyandamericanpolicy.org/>

***Individual speaker videos will appear in the [videos section](#)***

2017 Keynote Speakers:

[Hanan Ashrawi](#)

[John Mearsheimer](#)

[Ilan Pappé](#)

Presentations by:

[Wajahat Ali](#)

[Tom Hayes](#)

[Khalil Jahshan](#)

[Maria LaHood](#)

[Jim Moran](#)

[Nick Rahall](#)

[Jack Shaheen](#)

[Grant Smith](#)

[Clayton Swisher](#)

Growing numbers of Americans question massive, automatic and unconditional U.S. support for Israel. The American Educational Trust, publisher of the [Washington Report on Middle East Affairs](#), and the [Institute for Research: Middle Eastern Policy](#) will host an historic fourth annual conference on March 24, 2017 at the National Press Club in Washington, DC focusing on the key issues.

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3) [Opinion There's a Word for Jewish Resistance to Trump and Netanyahu: Daylight](#) , Bradley Burston, Haaretz, March 29, 2017

“No one needs democracy. You can live without it. It's not like oxygen or water. Or health care. Just as, in theory, you can live without daylight. No one knows this better than Benjamin Netanyahu. He proved it in his speech this week to AIPAC, the annual pro-Israel gathering which often reveals much more than it intends to, about changes in both Israel and the American Jewish community.

“In a sharp departure from past years, Netanyahu didn't mention the word "democracy" once. He was too busy introducing the 19,000 delegates to what boils down to a new Israel-endorsed anthem. Call it ‘All You Need Is Trump.’” ...

“Despite the best efforts of Netanyahu, Trump, and their people to seal AIPAC off from the wider more complex world of conflict, daylight, which has a way of getting in regardless, did.

“Unsurprisingly, it came in from outside. Daylight came in the form of as many as a thousand protesters, most of them young Jewish Americans, who chanted calls to end the occupation. Protesters also chained themselves to the entrance doors of the site of the conference, blocking them.” ...

“After all these years, resistance is the reason that there are still Jews in the world. As it turns out, there's another word for resistance to Trump and Netanyahu and occupation: Daylight. And, for the record, you can live without daylight for only so long, before it begins to take a toll on your health.”

See also:

[Opinion I Witnessed JDL Beating Up Peaceful Protestors Outside AIPAC and Trying to Burn a Koran](#)

[Opinion AIPAC's Choice: Be Apolitical or Be Honest About Political Affiliation](#)

[Analysis AIPAC Loves Israel, but Only the Sanitized Version](#)

[Hundreds of Young U.S. Jews Protest Outside AIPAC Against Occupation,](#)

[AIPAC – don't spoil our dream with facts,](#)

[How Netanyahu's dirty tricks squad targets boycotts](#)

4) [Human Rights Council Urges States and Businesses to Cut Off Ties to Israeli Settlements](#) Barak Ravid, Haaretz, March 24, 2017

“The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva adopted four resolutions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict on March 24, including a motion condemning settlement construction in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. The motion calls on states and firms to avoid both direct and indirect ties with the settlements.” ...

“The resolution critical of the settlements calls on UN member states to distinguish, in their relevant dealings, between Israel proper and the settlements, located beyond the pre-1967 lines.”

“The Council also adopted three other motions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The first concerns ensuring accountability for human-rights violations allegedly perpetrated by Israel in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.”

“The second resolution, concerning the Palestinians right to self-determination, was passed almost unanimously, with 43 states voting in favor, two abstaining, and two voting against the resolution.

“The third resolution, which dealt with the status of Palestinian human rights in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, passed with 41 states voting in favor, four abstaining, and two voting against it.

“Another resolution condemned Israel for allegedly violating the human rights of Druze residents of the Golan Heights.” ...

See also:

[Palestinians welcome new UNHRC resolutions condemning Israeli occupation](#)

[UN commission approves draft resolution on Palestinian women](#)

5) [Why 'it's not apartheid' arguments fail: Response to NYT op-ed](#) Dahlia Scheindlin, 972 Magazine, April 3, 2017

“A New York Times op-ed argues that Israel is not the South African apartheid its author sat in jail to expose. But to make his case, Benjamin Pogrund ignores the heart of what occupation really is.

“In an impassioned New York Times op ed, Benjamin Pogrund lays down the best possible arguments for why Israel is not an apartheid state. He brings out the full arsenal: his personal experience as a South African. His knowledge as a reporter who investigated and exposed the horrors of the system. He even paid the enormous price of jail time. It’s hard to top that level of credibility in dispelling the apartheid claim.

“So why don’t his arguments work?” ...

“The tragic reality is *it doesn’t actually matter if Israel is a carbon copy of apartheid’s policies* or not. It doesn’t matter whether the mentality is rooted in obsolete racial ideologies, or in the desire to decimate Palestinian statehood. The result is a systemic separation of Arabs from Jews, by education, by opportunity, by land, roads and water and, in the West Bank, by law.

“The lived experience of the people in this land show the results: 74 percent of settlers, some five percent of the whole population in the region, say life conditions are good. Just 23 percent of West Bank and Gaza Palestinians — about one-third of the total population — say the same.” ...

See also: [Dublin City Hall to raise Palestinian flag in solidarity against 'brutal' Israeli occupation](#)

6) [The next phase in the war on BDS: Why Israel detained Omar Barghouti](#), Ramzy Baroud, Ma'an News, March 30, 2017

"The Israeli state has violated international law more than any other country, yet has rarely, if ever, been held accountable for its crimes and misconduct.

"Israel's successful public relation campaigns through the ever-willing western media partners, coupled with the relentless work and pressure carried out by its powerful backers in Washington DC, London, Paris and elsewhere, has borne stupendous results.

"For a while, it seemed that Israel was capable of maintaining its occupation and denying Palestinians their rights indefinitely, while promoting itself as 'the only democracy in the Middle East.' Those who dared challenge that skewed paradigm through resistance in Palestine were eliminated or imprisoned; those who challenged Israel in public arenas anywhere in the world were smeared as 'anti-Semitic' or 'self-hating Jews.'" ...

"It was that groundwork that facilitated the success of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS). Established in 2005, BDS was a call made by Palestinian civil society organizations to people around the world to take part in exposing Israeli crimes and to hold accountable the Israeli government, army and companies that benefit from the subjugation of Palestinians.

"With large and growing networks already in place, BDS spread quickly and took the Israeli government by surprise. In the last decade, BDS proved resilient and resourceful, opening many new channels and platforms for discussions on Israel, its occupation, Palestinian rights and the moral accountability for those who either support or ignore Israel's violations of human rights. What worries Israel most about BDS is what it calls the movement's attempt to 'delegitimize' Israel." ...

"Regardless of what transpires in the case of Barghouti, BDS will not weaken. It is a decentralized movement with local, regional, national and global networks spanning hundreds of cities across the world.

"Smearing one individual, or a hundred, will not alter the upward movement of BDS. Israel will soon realize that its war on BDS, freedom of speech and expression is unwinnable. It is a futile attempt to muzzle a global community that now works in unison from Cape Town, South Africa to Uppsala, Sweden."

See also:

[The Jewish Voice at the Heart of the Boycott Israel Movement](#)

[At Summit to Counter BDS Movement, J Street Feels the Heat](#)

#### Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins

a) [CMEP Bulletin – Old Plans – New Alternatives – March 30, 2017](#)

Links:

[Netanyahu Announces Policy of Restrained Settlement Construction in 'Show of Good Will' to Trump \[Haaretz\]](#)

[Israeli Security Cabinet Approves First New Settlement In Two Decades \[Jewish Telegraphic Agency\]](#)

[Leaders at Arab Summit Reaffirm 2002 Two-State Solution Peace Plan \[Haaretz\]](#)

[As Palestinian Divisions Deepen, Arab Actors Seek Two-State Alternative \[+972\]](#)

[Elevating Palestinians \[The World Post\]](#)

[Even God Told the Angels Not to Sing \[The Times of Israel\]](#)

[Killing of a Hamas Leader Could Signal a New Conflict With Israel \[The New York Times\]](#)

**b) [CMEP Bulletin – Broader Middle East – April 7, 2017](#)**

Links:

[U.S. Launches Air Strikes Against Assad Forces In Syria \[Politico 4/6/2017\]](#)

[Syria: Scores Killed in Gas Attack in Idlib, Hospital Treating Victims Bombed \[Haaretz 4/4/2017\]](#)

[Syria Peace Talks in Astana Close With No Sign of Rebels \[Reuters 3/15/2017\]](#)

[UN Council Postpones Vote on Syria Resolution \[Al-Monitor 4/5/2017\]](#)

[Pope Francis to Visit Egypt to Mend Ties With Muslims \[New York Times 3/18/17\]](#)

[Sources: Egypt Planning to Open Rafah Crossing With Gaza Twice a Month \[Ma'an News Agency 3/7/17\]](#)

[Squaring the Regional Solution Circle \[Israel Policy Forum 4/6/2017\]](#)

[Reassessing the Civil War in Yemen \[The Washington Institute 3/8/17\]](#)

[Israel and Russia Head for a Crash \[Israel Policy Forum 3/23/2017\]](#)

[Netanyahu: Israel is 'Perfect Junior Partner' for China's Economy \[The Times of Israel 3/20/2017\]](#)