

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
June 19, 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 Notes focus on support of and opposition to the Palestinian unity government, necessity of prayer and good will to resolve the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, continuing settlement activity, opposition to the occupation, U.S. military aid to Israel, the hunger strike of Palestinians held without charges, Israeli election of a new President, implications of the kidnapping of three teenagers in Area C of the occupied territories, a recent poll showing diminishing support for West Bank settlements among the Israeli public, and other issues.

- The June 6 and June 13 Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletins give information and commentary on the Palestinian unity government, recognition by the U.S. government, Israeli rejection expressed by increased settlement activity, reflections on Pope Francis' call to prayer in Palestine, Israel and the Vatican, plus links to other articles of interest.
- Rabbi Gideon D. Sylvester writes in Ha'aretz that the world pities Israel as it sends peace envoys and religious leaders like Pope Francis to do the work of praying for peace.
- Ynetnews recalls that Pope Francis told Presidents Peres and Abbas during prayer at Vatican that "peacemaking calls for courage. It calls for the courage to say yes to dialogue and no to violence."
- B'Tselem notes that after nearly half a century, the occupation is still going strong. A third, even fourth, generation of Palestinians and Israelis has been born into this reality, and know no other.
- The State of Two States - Weeks of June 1 and June 7, 2014.
- Gideon Levy writes in Ha'aretz that every decent citizen must cry out against the many horrors of the Israeli occupation- which have little to do with any West Bank construction.
- S. Daniel Abraham notes in Ha'aretz that while the Israeli economy's is thriving, with no war and with a false sense of security, the Jewish State will be lost unless Israelis push for recognized borders between a Palestinian state and Israel now.
- An introduction and link to a video by Miko Peled, the author of *The General's Son: Journey of an Israeli in Palestine*.
- Amos Harel writes in Ha'aretz that the U.S. gives Israel \$3.1 billion in military aid a year, not including special aid for specific purposes; for the first time the question was raised in a Senate committee of whether the U.S. needs to continue.
- Ruchama Weiss and Rabbi Levi Brackman write in Associated Press and Ynetnews that for decades, support of Israel united U.S. Jews across political and religious spectrum; now its occupation of Palestinians is a sore subject for second-largest Jewish community.
- An editorial in APN states that it is Israeli governments alone who bear responsibility for permitting Israeli control of lands captured in the 1967 war to metastasize into the poisonous, ideologically motivated land grab of these past 47 years.
- A Ma'an editorial notes that jailed Palestinians who have been refusing meals since April 24 are taking part in the longest collective hunger strike in Palestinian history.
- Tia Goldenberg reports that Israel's parliament recently chose Reuven Rivlin, a veteran nationalist politician and supporter of the Jewish settlement movement, as the country's next president, putting a man opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state into the ceremonial but influential post.
- Jack Houry in Ha'aretz notes that a Hamas spokesman says Israel in response to the kidnapping of the three Israelis teens will bear responsibility for any escalation against the Palestinians and its leadership in the West Bank.
- Ha'aretz published a poll that shows a drastic decline in public support for settlers since 2009.

1a) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, June 6, 2014

New unity government: This week the Palestinian Authority formed a new unity government backed by both the two main Palestinian political parties, Fatah and Hamas. The fallout highlights the growing tensions between the U.S. and the Netanyahu government over U.S. relations with Palestinians. Prime Minister Netanyahu and other senior officials condemned in unusually vitriolic terms the U.S. announcement that it would continue relations with the new Palestinian unity government. The New York Times reported that the harsh language shows how strained relations are between U.S. and Israel since the collapse of the peace talks a month ago. U.S. officials have largely blamed Israel for the collapse which Israel strenuously denies.

The new Palestinian cabinet is made up of “technocrats,” prominent persons who are not members of a political party. Their mandate is to prepare for long overdue elections of the Palestinian parliament in the next six months. After the election, a new cabinet is to be formed with the support of the new parliament.

This cabinet is the first formed with the agreement of both parties since Hamas staged a coup in Gaza in 2007, expelling Fatah from Gaza. Fatah followed by expelling Hamas operatives from the West Bank. The U.S. and most western countries consider Hamas a terrorist organization. It or its surrogates have regularly fired rockets into Israel from Gaza, occasionally killing innocent people. (A common definition of terrorism is deliberately targeting non-combatants with deadly force in hope of political gain.)

Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas moved to reconcile with Hamas after U.S.-sponsored Israeli-Palestinian negotiations failed in late April to bring about even a general framework agreement on the core issues separating the two sides. Since 2005 Abbas has cooperated closely with the U.S. and Israel on security matters, including arrests of Palestinians in the West Bank wanted by the Israelis, in hopes this would help progress toward an agreement to end the Israeli occupation. When negotiations failed in April, his move towards Hamas helped shore up his political support against his critics who said his cooperation with the US and Israel had failed to yield political results for Palestinians.

Hamas has been in charge of Gaza but isolated there. It was founded as an Islamic political party (with help from Israel seeking to build up a rival to the secular Palestine Liberation Organization) with help from the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. It is now gets the cold shoulder from the anti-Brotherhood military government in Cairo, and its support from Iran was cut back after it fell out with Syria, Iran’s protégé. It has received support from Qatar, but Gaza and Hamas remain largely cut off from the world by Israel because of its support for violence and militant opposition to Israel’s right to exist.

Israel has said it will refuse to negotiate with a Palestinian government that includes Hamas, or in this case, a government of non-political technocrats formed with the support of Hamas. However, to the anger of the Netanyahu government, the U.S. announced this week that it intends to continue to work with the Palestinian unity government and continue U.S. assistance, while monitoring the situation closely. U. S. spokespersons pointed out that the cabinet includes no Hamas members, and PA government continues to adhere to the Quartet principles that include recognition of Israel, opposition to violence, and support for previous agreements. Contrary to its charter, Hamas has now given its endorsement to a government that recognizes and cooperates with Israel.

The real political crunch may come in six months when elections contested by both Fatah and Hamas are scheduled to take place. ...

[Read the entire Bulletin here.](#)

1b) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, June 13, 2014

Israel responds to Palestinian government with settlements: On June 2, the Palestinian Authority swore in 18 ministers to the new technocratic government in an important step towards patching up the costly rift between Fatah and Hamas. Eight out of the 18 ministers retained their seats from the old government and none have open Hamas affiliations. Nevertheless, the condemnation from Israel was swift. Days after the announcement, the Israeli government said that it would move ahead with construction plans for new settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

Despite threats from the Netanyahu government, Israel did not halt tax transfers as punishment. Instead, it sent \$135 million to the new government the day it was announced. Without these tax transfers, the PA is unable to pay its bills. One Palestinian economist explained that, "Economic pressures are liable to bring down the [Palestinian] Authority — a risk that Israel cannot take."

If there was any doubt about the timing of the construction announcement, housing minister Uri Ariel erased it, saying settlements are, "an appropriate Zionist response to the establishment of the Palestinian terror government" and this would be "just the beginning."

The State Department said, "We are deeply disappointed. As we have consistently said, these actions are unhelpful and counterproductive to achieving a two-state outcome." Europeans took a stronger stance. According to The New York Times, William Hague, the British foreign secretary, said he "deplored" the Israeli decision "to expand a number of illegal settlements, many of which are deep within the West Bank, and in East Jerusalem."

Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a spokesman for President Mahmoud, vaguely said the Palestinians would "respond [to settlement construction] in an unprecedented way." This likely means filing letters of complaints against Israel in UN bodies they joined in April, including the Fourth Geneva Convention. It now seems that escalating tit-for-tat countermeasures could make the resumption of U.S.-led peace talks further out of reach.

Isaac Herzog, head of Israel's opposition, said the construction announcement was "poking Barack Obama in the eye with an act of diplomatic pyromania."

It's true that the announcement did not improve relations between the Israeli and United States governments who are already divided over how to respond to a government accepted by Hamas. The State Department met the new government with caution but said it meets the conditions set by the Quartet and the U.S. will cooperate with it. European governments followed suit. An Israeli official complained to The New York Times, "Instead of taking a standoff approach, [the U.S.], in effect, became the first government in the world to recognize the Palestinian government. They essentially became the first domino."

The State Department may be continuing cooperation because it knows the chances of elections actually taking place are far from certain. On Wednesday, riots broke out in Gaza when PA personnel in the strip continued to collect their paychecks, despite sitting idly for seven years, while the Hamas government workers haven't been paid in months. Integrating the West Bank and Gaza bureaucracies could prove too steep a task for the rival factions in a place where so many rely on paychecks from the government.

Praying with the Pope: Just two weeks after visiting the Holy Land, Pope Francis hosted Israeli President Shimon Peres and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to the Vatican to pray for peace. Although the landmark meeting was focused on prayer and not politics, Pope Francis did express his hopes that the meeting would encourage peace negotiations to begin again. ...

[Read the entire Bulletin here.](#)

2) [How the pope put Israel to shame](#)

Rabbi Gideon D. Sylvester / Jewish World blogger, Ha'aretz, June 3, 2014

There was something very troublesome about the Pope's visit. From the moment he came off the plane, wherever he went, Pope Francis preached a consistent message; he spoke about peace, he prayed for peace and he coaxed others to join him in working toward it. Whether he was among Jews visiting a Holocaust Memorial or praying with the Palestinians in Bethlehem and at the Separation Barrier, his point was the same – a clear call for a two state solution, an end to violence and the building of good relations between Jews and Palestinians.

He did not stop there. The Pope searched for like-minded people and determined that they would be his partners in his quest for peace. He alighted on President Shimon Peres and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, inviting them to join him in Rome to pray for peace. Incredibly, despite that neither of these two men is Roman Catholic, they accepted his invitation.

Even the chief rabbis of Israel latched on to the Pope's campaign. At the rabbis' meeting with him the pope, which I attended, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi David Lau concluded his speech by asking the head of the Catholic Church to use his influence to gather religious leaders to discuss world peace. "Be a partner with us," he said, "and establish an international interfaith conference to advance this crucial message." Herein lies our disgrace.

Our Biblical ancestors were trailblazers charged with bringing blessing to all of humanity. Our prophets stood before kings and princes, critiquing their leadership and giving the greatest ever vision of universal peace. Their sentiments were brought to our prayer book so that all our major prayers end with a call for peace. They were also echoed in Israel's Declaration of Independence, which sought peaceful coexistence of Jews and Arabs in Israel and with neighboring states. In short, the pope used our lines.

We can only admire his ability and determination to express a clear vision of peace and to persuade our president to join him in prayer, but I am left wondering why our own spiritual leadership failed to make the same call to our head of state. Rome is known for its impressive architecture and some rather magnificent places of worship, but Jerusalem too has a strong claim as a religious center and it would, after all, save a lot of time and money if our leaders began their prayers amid our people in Jerusalem. I admire the pope for making his way to the separation barrier to pray for peace there, but given that Bethlehem is just a short hop from Jerusalem, I wonder whether our own religious leaders could not have made the trip, offering thanks to the soldiers who protect us and acting as our ambassadors for peace. The Jewish people are charged with being the ethical leaders of the world, Jerusalem is meant to be the city of peace and we are meant to be the shining moral example; "a light of the nations" (Isaiah 42:7).

But, instead of seeing us as an inspirational sovereign Jewish state, the nations of the world take pity on us. "You are incapable of taking care of yourselves," they say, "so we will send peace envoys and religious leaders to stand in the breach and do your work for you." We have become the world's nursery, with a perpetual chain of babysitters dispatched by the international community to coax us into seeking peace.

We live in a tough neighborhood, surrounded by people committed to our destruction. Successfully ending the occupation and signing treaties will take great military knowledge and strategic expertise. While that is the job of the military and political echelons, it does not detract from the role of our religious leaders to preach and pursue peace. ...

The pope did not put us to shame because he worships differently or because of his credo that we cannot share. He shamed us because in the very areas where we share beliefs, we have abandoned our sacred role and relied on others to seize the initiative.

3) Pope says Israelis, Palestinians must “persevere undaunted in dialogue”

Ynetnews, June 8, 2014

VATICAN CITY - Pope Francis on Sunday told the Israeli and Palestinian presidents that they "must respond" to their people's yearning for peace in the Middle East and find "the strength to persevere undaunted in dialogue."

The pope made his vibrant appeal to Shimon Peres and Mahmoud Abbas at the end of an unprecedented prayer meeting among Jews, Christians and Muslims in the Vatican gardens that marked the first time the two presidents have met in public in more than a year. Peres and Abbas embraced in the foyer of the Vatican hotel where Francis lives, joked together and sat on either side of Francis for an hour long invocation of Jewish, Christian and Muslim prayers in the Vatican gardens.

Francis told the two men, who signed the Oslo peace accords in 1993, that he hoped the summit would mark "a new journey" toward peace. "Peacemaking calls for courage, much more so than warfare. It calls for the courage to say yes to encounter and no to conflict: yes to dialogue and no to violence; yes to negotiations and no to hostilities; yes to respect for agreements and no to acts of provocation; yes to sincerity and no to duplicity. All of this takes courage, it takes strength and tenacity," the pope said. Francis said seeking peace was "an act of supreme responsibility before our consciences and before our peoples" and noted that millions around the world of all faiths were praying together with them for peace.

"We have heard a summons, and we must respond. It is the summons to break the spiral of hatred and violence, and to break it by one word alone: the word 'brother'," he said.

He said the children who have been the innocent victims of wars and conflicts made the search for peace an imperative. "The memory of these children instils in us the courage of peace, the strength to persevere undaunted in dialogue, the patience to weave, day by day, an ever more robust fabric of respectful and peaceful coexistence, for the glory of God and the good of all," he said.

In his strong speech in Italian, Francis called for respect for agreements and rejection of acts of provocation. "All of this takes courage, it takes strength and tenacity," he said.

Francis, who made the surprise invitation to the two leaders during his trip to the Holy Land last month, said that the search for peace was "an act of supreme responsibility before our consciences and before our peoples" and noted that millions around the world of all faiths were praying with them for peace.

The pope spoke after Jewish rabbis, Christian cardinals and Muslim Imams read and chanted from the Old Testament, the New Testament and the Koran in Italian, English, Hebrew and Arabic in the first such inter-religious event in the Vatican. At times the chanting made it seem that participants were in a synagogue or outside a mosque in the Middle East rather than a primly manicured triangular lawn, a spot the Vatican chose as a "neutral" site with no religious symbols.

The event had the air of an outdoor summer wedding, complete with receiving line and guests mingling on the lawn as a string ensemble played. Only the two key protagonists are technically on opposite sides of the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During his prayer, Abbas prayed to Allah "to bring comprehensive and just peace to our country and region so that our people and the peoples of the Middle East and the whole world would enjoy the fruit of peace, stability and coexistence".

Abbas made a few political points, saying Palestinians craved peace as well as "dignified living" and "freedom in our sovereign and independent state." "We want peace for us and for our neighbors," he said, according to his prepared text. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

4) Israel in the West Bank: A 47-year-long temporary occupation
B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories
June 5, 2014

At times the occupation seems to be a thing of the past. Women in labor detained at checkpoints for so long that they end up giving birth there are no longer a common occurrence; there are fewer incidents of killings, violence and destruction. Israel is no longer involved in determining the scholastic curricula for Palestinian schoolchildren and Israeli troops are no longer permanently stationed in the streets and alleys of the city of Nablus. Instead, we hear reports of Palestinians building a new city in the West Bank and about Israel and the Palestinian Authority cooperating on security-related issues.

Nevertheless, after nearly half a century, the occupation is still going strong. A third, and even fourth, generation of Palestinians and Israelis has been born into this reality, and they know no other. The Oslo Accords, signed over two decades ago, brought about the establishment of the Palestinian Authority and with it the illusion that Israel's impact on the lives of Palestinians would henceforth be no more than negligible. Yet, to this day, Israel is the most dominant factor influencing the daily lives of all residents of the West Bank.

Settlements: The heart of the matter: Israeli settlements are currently the major factor influencing the reality of life in the West Bank: over 300,000 Israeli citizens live in more than 200 settlements and settlement outposts throughout the West Bank, all established in contravention of international humanitarian law, some even in contravention of Israeli law.

Tens of thousands of hectares of land, including pastureland and farmland, have been seized from Palestinians for the express purpose of building settlements. A significant portion of these lands has been declared state land, based on a dubious interpretation of the law; other areas have been usurped from Palestinians by force and strong-arm tactics and by actual construction that would make the settlement seem a fait accompli. In addition, settlements have been granted generous allocations of land, far exceeding their built-up areas. All lands allocated to settlements – built-up area and environs – have been designated closed military zones which Palestinians may not enter without a permit.

The impact the settlements have on Palestinians' human rights is above and beyond the land seized for the actual settlements: additional lands were confiscated from Palestinians to build hundreds of kilometers of bypass roads for the settlers; checkpoints and other measures that restrict only Palestinian movement were set up based on the placement of settlements; much Palestinian farmland – both in and outside the settlements – has become effectively off-limits to its Palestinian owners; and the tortuous, meandering route of the Separation Barrier in the West Bank was planned primarily to keep as many settlements and large areas designated by Israel for their expansion west of the barrier, on its "Israeli side". The current route of the barrier leads to severe violations of the rights of Palestinians living in its vicinity, some of whom have ended up trapped in enclaves. The barrier disrupts their lives, limiting their access to farmland, essential services and to friends and relatives who have remained on the other side. It also precludes any possibility for development in these areas.

The presence of Israeli citizens in the West Bank and the settlements and outposts scattered throughout it are the main reason for the massive presence of Israeli security forces there. Israel devotes a great deal of resources to ensure that Palestinians not violate the military orders designed to keep them away from settlements and to keeping Palestinians from attacking settlers or settlements – attacks that are both immoral and unlawful, the fact that the settlements are a breach of international humanitarian law notwithstanding. The presence of security forces results in daily friction between Israeli troops and Palestinian residents. This, in turn, leads to human rights violations by security forces, including acts of violence and illegal gunfire. ...

[Read the entire report here.](#)

5) The State of Two States - Weeks of June 1 and June 8, 2014

June 1: Reports this week revolved around the new Palestinian unity government announced on Monday. While Israel expressed alarm and concern over the reconciliation agreement, the US stated that it would work with the new Palestinian government while closely monitoring it for any unacceptable behavior. Meanwhile, security cooperation between the Palestinian Authority, Israel and the US continued unabated throughout the week. On Tuesday, Abdel Fattah el-Sisi won Egypt's elections in a landslide, and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Shimon Peres both called the newly elected president to congratulate him in the first phone call between Israeli and Egyptian leaders since Mubarak's ouster in 2011. The week concluded with an outburst of criticism from the international community over Israel's decision to approve 1,500 new housing units over the Green Line.

"Young people in the West Bank, who are not affiliated with any organization... take initiative and decide to act...But there should be only one conclusion from this incident at Tapuah junction. The relative quiet in the PA in the West Bank is misleading and fragile. In the absence of a peace process—whether or not the PA has any intention or desire to incite the local population to violence—these kinds of actions are liable to increase." – Yossi Melman reporting on the capture of a would-be suicide bomber on Friday, May 30 in the Hebrew edition of Ma'ariv (Sunday, 6/1)

"I call upon all members of the international community not to rush to recognize either a government to which Hamas is party or one that is backed by Hamas. It [Hamas] is a terror organization that calls for Israel's destruction, and the international community should not embrace it. This will not strengthen peace, it will strengthen terrorism." – Prime Minister Netanyahu responding to the new Palestinian unity government, as reported by Ma'ariv (Monday, 6/2)

"The dividing line today is moderates versus extremists, and when I talk about a regional arrangement, that means full diplomatic relations with the Persian Gulf states. The Palestinians alone can't reach an arrangement. Today people throughout the entire Arab world realize that the regional problem is Iran and its proxies. When we reach an arrangement with the Palestinians as part of a comprehensive regional arrangement, we won't need the Quartet." – Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman addressing an audience at the Interdisciplinary Center in Herzliya, according to a Ma'ariv report (Wednesday, 6/3)

"We leave the government but stay in power... We give up the chair but not the role we play." – Outgoing Hamas Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh describing the new formula for Hamas in the context of the reconciliation agreement, as noted by Ehud Ya'ari (Wednesday, 6/4)

"This was no accident and reflects the Israeli establishment's clear interest in maintaining a functioning and stable PA that can effectively administer Palestinian areas. Israel has no interest in seeing the PA collapse and their actions this week reinforce this clear-eyed understanding, despite what some Israeli officials are saying publicly... It is against our interest – and Israel's interests – to cut ties with and funding to such a PA government. A functioning, stable PA serves our interests, Palestinian interests, and Israeli interests." – A senior White House Official asserting that while Israel is criticizing Washington for receiving the new Palestinian unity government, Israel has maintained its coordination with Palestinian security forces (Thursday, 6/5)

"We are headed towards a disaster. The people live in denial; they don't understand how severe the diplomatic situation is. The entire world accepts the government formed by Abu Mazen. We are approaching a severe clash with the US administration on a lot of issues, including on this matter. We are on the cusp of a critical decision. Either we are headed for a bi-national state, or we are headed for an agreement. This is the time for an initiative of our own." – Opposition Leader Isaac "Bougie" Herzog offering his own concrete peace plan in a conversation with Yedioth Ahronoth's Nahum Barnea (Thursday, 6/5)

June 8: *The Israeli presidential race took center stage in the Israeli media throughout most of the week, with Likud MK Reuven Rivlin officially elected as Israel's tenth president on Wednesday. While Israel's former President Shimon Peres traveled to the Vatican on Sunday to take part in a prayer service alongside the Pope and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, back in the region things have not been as peaceful. Political tensions from within the Israeli governing coalition have been reported in the press, some perhaps serious enough to dismantle the current coalition. In addition, many are still skeptical of the Palestinian unity government, particularly after rocket fire reached Israel this week from Gaza. Finally, violent clashes in Iraq and Syria have captivated the attention of the international community in recent days, threatening to further destabilize the region.*

“John Kerry’s failed Middle East peace effort has made it clear that a negotiated political agreement is impossible at the moment...But despair is not an acceptable policy. There are practical issues that can and should be solved. First and foremost, Palestinians deserve drastic and immediate improvements in their everyday lives. Obviously, this is not their main aspiration, but, unlike others, it is feasible right now...Israel must initiate an ambitious and bold plan to improve every aspect of day-to-day life for Palestinians in Judea and Samaria — commonly referred to as the West Bank in these pages.” – Dani Dayan expressing the need to ensure a better quality of life for Palestinians (Sunday, 6/8)

“Mr. Dayan wrongly dismisses the imperative of creating a Palestinian state to ensure Israel’s own future as a Jewish and democratic state. On-the-ground improvements are essential, but they ultimately cannot be a substitute for advancing a negotiated resolution to the conflict, based on two states for two peoples. If Mr. Dayan, a former settler leader, were serious about promoting practical steps to create a better atmosphere in the region, he would join Israel’s justice minister, Tzipi Livni, finance minister, Yair Lapid, and opposition leader, Isaac Herzog, who have all recently proposed that Israel freeze West Bank settlement construction beyond the major Israeli population blocs. Israel and the Palestinians each should take actions on the ground, but those actions must serve to constructively reinforce — not undermine — the opportunity to achieve a two-state solution.” – Peter A. Joseph, Chair of the Israel Policy Forum, responding to Dayan’s op-ed (Monday, 6/9)

“Extreme right wing elements are pushing Israel towards delusional ideas of annexation that will lead us to the disaster called a bi-national state. I don’t know whether this is a PR stunt or a real intention, but we won’t let this happen. If an attempt is made to annex even a single settlement unilaterally, Yesh Atid will not only quit the government—it will also topple it.” – Finance Minister Yair Lapid addressing the Herzilya Conference (Monday, 6/9)

"What is important now is to get the Palestinian state going, because I’m telling you: In a year, maximum two, the Palestinians are going to back down officially from the concept of a two-state solution." – Ehud Yaari, Washington Institute for Near East Policy, briefing IPF audience (Tuesday, 6/10)

“America will always maintain our iron-clad commitment to the security of Israel, ensuring that Israel maintains its qualitative military edge and can protect its territory and people. Equally, we consistently defend Israel’s legitimacy and security in the UN and other international fora. In turn, we expect Israel to stand and be counted with the US and other partners on core matters of international law and principle, such as Ukraine.” – National Security Advisor Susan Rice addressing attendees of the Center for a New American Security’s annual conference in Washington DC (Wednesday, 6/11)

“Our policy is clear: if someone comes to kill you, kill him first. The IDF and the GSS carried out a precise operation, and they will continue to act forcefully against anyone who tries to undermine the security of Israel’s citizens. This is the true face of Hamas—it continues to plan terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians even from within the Palestinian government.” – Prime Minister Netanyahu commenting on the assassination of Mohamed Awar, a terrorist operative belonging to a radical Salafist organization in Gaza, according to Walla (Thursday, 6/12)

6) Horrors of the occupation go way beyond the settlements

Gideon Levy, Ha'aretz, June 8, 2014

Another Israeli "Price Tag" attack has been launched: An additional 1,500 settlement housing units have been announced in declared retaliation for the creation of a Palestinian unity government. The mask was ripped off long ago, and Israel is no longer trying to hide that settlements are no more than a punishment. But they aren't the real punishment. The real punishment is the continued tyranny. The settlements are a measure of Israeli intentions; they were built to eternalize the status quo and destroy any chances for agreements. But the real punishment is the insufferable injustices of the occupation, which are actually less discussed.

We must stop talking about the settlements. The amount of settlers reached critical mass long ago, making the situation irreversible. Another 1,500 housing units won't change much. Constructing them only proves that Israel intends to continue its colonialist endeavors, but housing units themselves are not the heart of the issue. The real problem is the totalitarian regime in the West Bank. It is the Palestinians' biggest problem, as well as that of the Israelis, as their nation has become a false democracy.

While it's true that without the settlements, the occupation would have ended, as the settlement-free occupation of southern Lebanon did. It's true that if there were far fewer settlers, as there were in the Gaza Strip, Israel perhaps could have also disengaged from the West Bank. But Gaza proved that disengagement is not sufficient to bring about justice: Gaza has become a prison, and no one even discusses the prisoners' fate anymore.

Ceasing settlement construction, as it is the largest Zionist endeavor since the creation of Israel, would be a gesture of good faith. But without total evacuation of the settlements (which is completely unrealistic) and the creation of a just government in the West Bank, the essence of the situation will remain unchanged.

Thus the international opposition need not focus on the settlements in the West Bank, rather it should deal with the way in which they are ruled. The international community should focus on the fact that there are two peoples here, one with every right and the other with none aside from the right to be occupied. Stop condemning Israel for each new apartment and caravan. Israel should be condemned and punished for creating insufferable life under occupation, for the fact that a country that claims to be among the enlightened nations continues abusing an entire people, day and night.

Talk about the helpless fishermen in Gaza fired upon by gunships; talk about the children brutally arrested in the middle of the night; talk about the countless detentions without trial, about the families torn between Gaza and the West Bank, between Jerusalem and Ramallah. Talk about the light Israeli finger on the trigger; talk about the discriminatory courts, the daily dispossession, house demolition and destruction of villages; talk about the pasturelands turned into firing zones only to dishearten residents and expel them; talk about the soldiers who shoot out of boredom and the police officers who make arrests just because they can.

Talk about the inherent apartheid in the West Bank, and the terrible chances facing any Palestinian child looking to build a life, or even just visit the beach, even if it's only a short distance from his home. Talk about the Gazans who cannot export their goods, nor go anywhere – not to study, not to go to the hospital, not to visit family members or work outside their prison, the largest in the world. Talk about the thousands of prisoners, some of them political prisoners, who face inhumane discrimination, as opposed to their Jewish counterparts. Talk about the bureaucracy of occupation, another institutionalized method of abuse. Talk about the checkpoints, and the overwhelming injustices. Talk about the horrors of occupation. All of these things are completely unrelated to a few hundred more settlement housing units. Every decent citizen, both in Israel and around the world, should cry out against these things. These cries aren't heard enough.

7) [Do Israelis really want a Jewish state?](#)

S. Daniel Abraham, Haaretz, June 8, 2014

Hostile exchanges now dominate the Israeli-Palestinian arena: Who's responsible for the failed peace negotiations? What's the significance of the new technocratic government in Ramallah? One thing is obvious: The more we engage in this futile debate the less focused we are on the grim reality: Peace isn't happening, certainly not now.

But that doesn't mean that the most important question facing Israel is becoming any less significant: How do we resolve the Palestinian question? The answer to that question will determine Israel's future - and that is our great debate. I use the word "future" carefully. For today and tomorrow, Israel is fine; more than fine. There is a thriving economy and no immediate risk of war. But anyone with eyes in their heads can see that the future of Israel as a Jewish state is in danger. Particularly because anytime beyond today, the status quo means an ever-increasing Arab population within Israel's borders.

Right now, 1.7 million people, a little over 20 percent of Israel's 8.2 million citizens, are Israeli Arabs. An additional 2.4 million Palestinians live under Israeli control on the West Bank. Further, because Israel controls Gaza's air space and maritime borders, the world regards the 1.7 million Arabs of Gaza as also under de facto Israeli control. In short, there are 6.1 million Jews living in Israel, and 5.8 million Arabs who are either Israeli citizens or living under Israeli rule.

The Arabs are increasing in numbers more rapidly than the Jews. Israel is moving closer and closer to parity in numbers between the Jews and Arabs living under Israeli rule. Professor Sergio DellaPergola of the Hebrew University, the world's leading demographic authority on the Jewish and Palestinian populations, has concluded that if one takes into account Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, Jews will be a minority by the year 2020. Even without Gaza, DellaPergola notes, by the year 2020, Arabs will comprise 44 percent of the people living under Israeli rule. And the day will come, in the not distant future, when the country's Arab population will outnumber the Jewish.

In the words of Bob Dylan, "The times they are a'changing." When the American Secretary of State, John Kerry, declares in a private meeting with the Trilateral Commission that if Israel doesn't find a way to help bring about a Palestinian state and to extricate itself from the West Bank, that it will evolve into an "apartheid state," that means the times are changing far more rapidly than many Israelis realize. And Kerry, it must be emphasized, is sympathetic to Israel.

Israel has an important choice to make. It has to resolve this conflict in order to be a Jewish state. For Israel to remain majority Jewish, what it needs is a recognized and agreed border between Israel and a future Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza. And the sooner that happens the more secure Israel's future will be. It's up to the Prime Minister, however, to lead the way to Israel's future as a Jewish state while safeguarding its democratic character.

This might well be the most important choice Israelis will ever have to make - to be a Jewish state or a half Jewish, half Arab state. If you want a Jewish state then you - Israelis - must insist that your Prime Minister carries out your wishes. What kind of state Israel will be, and whether it will continue to be Israel at all, is up to you.

S. Daniel Abraham is a U.S. entrepreneur and founder of the Center for Middle East Peace in Washington.

8) The General's Son: Journey of an Israeli in Palestine

Miko Peled

In 1997, a tragedy struck the family of Israeli-American Miko Peled: His beloved niece Smadar was killed by a suicide bomber in Jerusalem. That tragedy propelled Peled onto a journey of discovery. It pushed him to re-examine many of the beliefs he had grown up with, as the son and grandson of leading figures in Israel's political-military elite, and transformed him into a courageous and visionary activist in the struggle for human rights and a hopeful, lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. ...

The journey that Peled traces in this groundbreaking memoir echoed the trajectory taken 40 years earlier by his father, renowned Israeli general Matti Peled. In *The General's Son*, Miko Peled tells us about growing up in Jerusalem in the heart of the group that ruled the then-young country, Israel. He takes us with him through his service in the country's military and his subsequent global travels... and then, after his niece's killing, back into the heart of Israel's conflict with the Palestinians. The book provides a compelling and intimate window into the fears that haunt both peoples-- but also into the real courage of all those who, like Miko Peled, have been pursuing a steadfast grassroots struggle for equality for all the residents of the Holy Land.

[Use this link](#) to watch a video of Peled speaking of the Arab-Israeli situation and of his book.

9) As Israel cuts defense budget, U.S. senators question aid

Amos Harel, Ha'aretz, June 10, 2014

The debate over the size of the Israeli defense budget has reached the U.S. Senate too. In a committee session held at the beginning of June, senators raised, for the first time, the question of whether the United States needs to continue granting such a large amount of military aid to Israel. The United States gives Israel \$3.1 billion in military aid a year, which is used for buying American-produced military equipment. In addition, the United States provides special military aid for specific purposes.

During the Obama administration years, the U.S. has given Israel almost \$1 billion to develop weapons systems to intercept rockets and missiles, including the Iron Dome, David's Sling and Arrow projects. During the recent session, the issue of allocating an additional \$175 million for further development of the Iron Dome interception system was discussed, but the sum has yet to be approved.

A number of senators commented on the debate in Israel over the defense budget and the Israeli Defense Ministry's claims that its budget has been cut. (According to the Finance Ministry the defense budget has not been cut this year.)

Recently, the Israel Defense Forces and the Defense Ministry demanded additional funding of some 2 billion shekels through the end of this year, and the cabinet is supposed to make a decision about this at the end of June.

With this debate in the background, and given the IDF's claims that it has run out of money for ongoing expenses, the IDF ordered a halt to all air force training flights at the beginning of the month and cut back significantly on training for the ground forces. The American defense budget has also faced large cutbacks recently and is now 3.8 percent of the country's GDP.

It seems the senators' questions and comments reflect their being somewhat uncomfortable with the large amounts of aid Israel continues to receive at a time when the troubles of the American economy require cuts in the national defense budget. But it is hard to believe that in the coming years there will be a major change in the level of bipartisan support in the Senate and House of Representatives that would lead to a change in military aid to Israel.

Budgetary constraints have already led to a delay in the development of the mid-range missile interception system David's Sling. The Defense Ministry and IDF have recently delayed the establishment of the infrastructure needed to operate the system, and now it seems it will only enter service in 2015; the original plan was for it to be ready by the end of this year.

10) Israel a divisive cause for U.S. Jewry

Dr. Ruchama Weiss and Rabbi Levi Brackman, Associated Press, Ynetnews, June 9, 2014

Once a unifying cause for generations of American Jews, Israel is now bitterly dividing Jewish communities. Jewish organizations are withdrawing invitations to Jewish speakers or performers considered too critical of Israel, in what opponents have denounced as an ideological litmus test meant to squelch debate. Some Jewish activists have formed watchdog groups, such as Citizens Opposed to Propaganda Masquerading as Art, or COPMA, and JCC Watch, to monitor programming for perceived anti-Israel bias. They argue Jewish groups that take donations for strengthening the community shouldn't be giving a platform to Israel's critics.

American campuses have become ideological battle zones over Israeli policy in the Palestinian territories, with national Jewish groups sometimes caught up on opposing sides of the internal debate among Jewish students. The "Open Hillel" movement of Jewish students is challenging speaker guidelines developed by Hillel, the major Jewish campus group, which bars speakers who "delegitimize" or "demonize" Israel. Open Hillel is planning its first national conference in October.

And in a vote testing the parameters of Jewish debate over Israel, the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations, a national coalition that for decades has represented the American Jewish community, denied membership in April to J Street, the 6-year-old lobby group that describes itself as pro-Israel and pro-peace and has sometimes criticized the Israeli government. Opponents of J Street have been showing a documentary called "The J Street Challenge," in synagogues and at Jewish gatherings around the country, characterizing the group as a threat from within.

"I believe this has reached a level of absurdity now," said Rabbi Sharon Brous, founder of the IKAR-LA Jewish community in California, which is considered a national model for reinvigorating religious life. "Even where people are acting from a place of love and deep commitment that Israel remains a vital and vibrant state, they are considered outside the realm. It's seen as incredibly threatening and not aligned with the script the American Jewish community expects."

In 2012, when Israel carried out an offensive in Gaza after an upsurge in rocket fire, Brous wrote an email to IKAR members that was published in The Jewish Journal of Greater Los Angeles. She supported Israel's right to defend itself, while also urging recognition of Palestinian suffering. The result? She was overwhelmed with hate mail, and inspired competing op-eds and letters in the Journal from Jewish clergy and others until a prominent rabbi called for an end to the recriminations and name-calling.

For internal consumption: American Jews have always vigorously debated Israeli policy, but mostly within the community and with an understanding that differences would be set aside if the Jewish state faced an existential threat. But the discussion within the US has become more reflective of the very broad debate within Israel.

"It's a very old issue that many countries face and now Israel faces: To what extent should domestic debate carry over when you're abroad?" said Jonathan Sarna, a Brandeis University scholar of American Jewish history. "The critics of J Street and the like say, 'Of course, it's fine in Israel because the minute they call up the reserves, all politics disappear. Moreover, they have to live with the results of their decision.' Their argument is that there should be a great difference between what you can do and say in Israel and what you can do or say in America. There are all sorts of enemies who make use of the words in America differently than they do in Israel."

Internal American Jewish conflict has worsened as many Israel advocates have come to feel under siege in the U.S. ...

[Read the entire article here.](#)

11) On the 47th anniversary of the occupation: Time for hard truths, tough actions

Editorial - Americans for Peace Now (APN), June 10, 2014

Forty-seven years ago this week, Israel won a stunning victory in the 1967 War. This was not a war of Israel's choice or making. It was a defensive war, with Israel facing threats by armies from countries on all sides seeking Israel's destruction. Repelling and defeating these armies, Israel sent a resounding message to the region and the world: we are here to stay.

Israel's victory in the 1967 War left it with a pressing question: what to do with the additional land now under its control: the West Bank (including East Jerusalem), the Gaza Strip, the Sinai Peninsula, and the Golan Heights. As recognized by many Israelis – and demonstrated in the Camp David Accords with Egypt – these lands offered Israel the opportunity to normalize its position in the region through agreements with its Arab neighbors, based on the principle of land for peace.

Forty-seven years later, such normalization remains a distant dream. Rather than act in good faith to seek agreements based on land-for-peace, for 47 years successive Israeli governments have actively and passively collaborated with Israel's own extremists in their efforts to take land-for-peace off the table in favor of fulfilling their own grandiose, messianic vision of Greater Israel. And now they've succeeded in killing what many believed was the best chance for a negotiated peace agreement with the Palestinians that has ever existed, and the best chance that may exist for a long time to come.

The failure to achieve peace these past 47 years has many authors: Israelis, Palestinians and others. Indeed, Arab rejectionism and Palestinian terrorism over the years were highly detrimental to peace efforts – and even if there were no settlements, there might still today not be peace. However, it is Israeli governments alone who bear responsibility for permitting Israeli control of lands captured in the 1967 war to metastasize into the poisonous, ideologically motivated land grab of these past 47 years, which today imperils Israel's security, its health as a nation, its viability as a Jewish state and a democracy, and its position in the international community. For this reason, our focus on this 47th anniversary of the occupation is only on the Israeli side of the equation. As an American Zionist organization that cares deeply about Israel, it is with great pain that we put forth this analysis; we do so out of our love for Israel and where it is heading.

It's time to face some hard truths.

The occupation and settlements are destroying Israel. They have hijacked Israeli politics, and undermined Israel's own interests and values. They are pushing Israel toward becoming an international pariah and are threatening Israel's survival as a Jewish state and a democracy. Promoting and defending the occupation and settlements has eroded Israel's claims to military self-defense, while leaving Israel increasingly demonized, defensive, and isolated – a nation of many virtues that has come to be viewed by much of the world exclusively through the prism of the occupation.

Israel needs to stop building settlements and end the occupation urgently. It must do so not as a concession to the Palestinians but for Israel's own sake. We have had 47 years of Israeli resources squandered on the self-defeating and immoral settlement enterprise. 47 years of Israeli military energies hijacked and morale eroded as military service has become an exercise in the subjugation and policing of the lives of Palestinian civilians. 47 years of occupation policies generating more Palestinian grievances, anger and hatred, sowing the seeds for future conflict and violence and alienating potential allies regionally and internationally.

Israel has for most of the past 47 years shown to the world the face of a nation that does not truly seek peace. This period has been punctuated by various efforts to reach peace, the most serious of which was cut short by the assassination of a courageous peace-seeking Israeli prime minister ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

12) [Current hunger strike "longest in Palestinian history"](#)

Ma'an Editorial, June 11, 2014

Jailed Palestinians who have been refusing meals since April 24 are taking part in the longest collective hunger strike in Palestinian history, a prisoner rights group said Monday.

"This is the longest mass hunger strike among prisoners in Palestinian history since a 45-day strike in 1976," Addameer said in a report on its website as the current strike neared its 48th day. "The hunger strikers remain steadfast in their demand to end the policy of administrative detention."

Some 125 prisoners in Israeli jails began a hunger strike on April 24 against Israel's policy of holding Palestinians in custody indefinitely without charge or trial. Hundreds have joined the strike since then, and others have taken part in one-day solidarity strikes. The report said that nearly 80 prisoners are being held in civilian hospitals in Israel.

Additionally, it quoted lawyers as saying doctors have been threatening to force-feed prisoners if they lost consciousness. Doctors in Kaplan Hospital threatened to "introduce food to the body through the nose into the stomach without taking consent, after shackling (them)," the report said.

The alleged threats of force-feeding come as Israeli lawmakers are debating a bill that would allow the prison service to treat prisoners medically without their consent, in addition to force-feeding them. "This is a dangerous step towards institutionalizing torture of Palestinian hunger strikers, which force-feeding is considered under international law and by the World Medical Association." Meanwhile, the prisoners' conditions are worsening, the report said.

"The hunger striking detainees were warned of the danger to their lives, as their core muscles are now deteriorating and the body fat has disappeared from their bodies. Some of them were told by the doctors that they can suffer from a heart attack or stroke at any moment. Some are suffering from intestinal bleeding, vomiting blood and fainting in addition to significant loss of weight and decrease in heart rate and decrease in blood sugar."

Addameer called on the international community to intervene for the strikers. UN chief Ban Ki-moon has called on Israel to immediately release or charge the Palestinian administrative detainees on hunger strike.

13) Reuven Rivlin elected as Israel's new president

Tia Goldenberg, World Post, June 10, 2014

Israel's parliament on Tuesday chose Reuven Rivlin, a veteran nationalist politician and supporter of the Jewish settlement movement, as the country's next president, putting a man opposed to the creation of a Palestinian state into the ceremonial but influential post. Rivlin, a stalwart in the governing Likud Party, now faces the difficult task of succeeding Shimon Peres, a Nobel peace laureate who became an all-star on the international stage.

While the presidency is largely ceremonial, Rivlin's political views could be a liability when he represents the country overseas. His opposition to Palestinian independence puts him at odds with the international community and Israel's own prime minister.

Rivlin has been a longtime supporter of Jewish settlements in occupied lands claimed by the Palestinians. While rejecting Palestinian independence, he has proposed a special union with the Palestinians in which Jews and Arabs would hold common citizenship but vote for separate parliaments.

The president is meant to serve as a unifying figure and moral compass for the country, and Rivlin has said that in contrast to Peres, he would focus on domestic affairs if selected to the post. Speaking at a Knesset ceremony to celebrate his election, Rivlin said his new position "commits me to remove the robe of politics," an indication that he may subdue his political beliefs as president. "I am not a man of a (political) movement. I am a man of everyone. A man of the people," said Rivlin, visibly moved as he made his acceptance speech.

While most political power is held by the prime minister, the president plays several key roles in Israel, with the power to pardon prisoners and authority to choose the prime minister after national elections. In this role, the president selects a member of parliament, or Knesset, to form a majority coalition after elections. This has usually been the leader of the party with the most seats in parliament. But with the rise of a number of midsize parties in parliament, Rivlin could theoretically have more influence over choosing the country's prime minister.

Rivlin dismissed speculation that he might be upset at Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a Likud rival who tried to block his candidacy, saying he was "not angry at anyone." In a bid to lay to rest the rivalry, Netanyahu congratulated Rivlin and said he would work with him. "I know you will do all you can as president and I promise that I as prime minister ... will do the same with you," he said.

Rivlin is to be sworn into office for a single, seven-year term on July 24. After Tuesday's vote, Peres called to congratulate him. Rivlin said it would be tough to follow Peres.

Rivlin, 74, currently a lawmaker for the right-wing Likud, has previously served as speaker of parliament and as a Cabinet minister. He defeated Meir Sheerit, another veteran politician, 63 to 53, in a secret runoff ballot. Three other candidates were eliminated in a first round of voting in the 120-member parliament earlier in the day.

Rivlin will have big shoes to fill, after Peres, 90, steps down. Peres, whose political career stretches back decades and who has been an outspoken proponent of peace with the Palestinians, brought the office international renown. He also restored honor to the position, which was tarnished after his predecessor, Moshe Katsav, was forced to step down by a sex scandal. Katsav is now in prison after being convicted of rape.

Although Rivlin will play no role in Israeli foreign policy, Abdullah Abdullah, a senior Palestinian official, said the election of a man with his views sent a bad message. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

14) Palestinians warn that Israeli pressure on West Bank could backfire

Jack Khoury, Ha'aretz, June 16, 2014

Israel has arrested large numbers of Palestinians in its response to the kidnapping of three Israeli teens last Thursday night. The objective seems to be to extract any information that could lead to a solution of the kidnapping.

Palestinian sources warned that massive pressure on the population, including friction such as happened in the past two days, will lead to a reaction that will be translated into clashes inside neighborhoods and villages. This is what happened on Sunday throughout the day in villages in the Hebron area, and especially in Tapuah, Yatta and Dura. Residents of these areas said forces entered the villages from the early morning and conducted widespread searches and arrested a large number of people. Many of those arrested were released after being questioned locally, and some were transferred to Israel Defense Forces and Shin Bet installations for further questioning.

Hamas continued to attack Israel for its actions, but did not take responsibility for the kidnapping – although most of the organization's spokesmen were not from its senior ranks.

Many roads were blocked off in certain areas using concrete blocks, including roads leading to Hebron from nearby villages, according to Palestinian witnesses. Some residents said these actions have almost completely halted commerce in one of the West Bank's major commercial centers. The common feeling among Palestinians in the area is that Israel is putting pressure on the local population, with many Palestinians viewing it as collective punishment.

In Tapuah, young men threw rocks at soldiers, who responded with tear gas and other riot control methods. Residents complained that soldiers took up positions on the roofs of a number of houses, or those that look out over a wide area.

The soldiers were conducting house-by-house searches, making arrests and using tear gas, said one resident. In Halhul, there were clashes and one resident was injured.

The arrests were part of a broader operation throughout the entire West Bank.

Hamas spokesman in the Gaza Strip, Sami Abu Zuhri, responded to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's comments that Hamas was responsible for the kidnapping. On a Facebook post, Zuhri said Israel would bear responsibility for any escalation against the Palestinian people and its leadership in the West Bank.

The arrest of the organization's senior officials in the West Bank was a sign of hysteria and second thoughts in Israel, wrote Zuhri. He called on the international community "to intervene and stop these crimes."

Websites associated with Hamas and Islamic Jihad also attacked the Palestinian Authority for its continued security cooperation with Israel, and for passing on information on Hamas activists, especially in the Hebron area.

The PA chose not to mention this, but instead attacked Netanyahu for what it called "a campaign of incitement" against the authority. Abbas continued his personal silence and his only public step was to convene a meeting of the PLO executive committee Sunday evening.

In an announcement released at the end of the meeting, the Palestinian leadership warned of the implications of the kidnapping and the "unrestrained racist campaign" led by Netanyahu against the Palestinian people and its leadership.

15) Support for West Bank settlements dropping among Israeli public, poll indicates

Ha'aretz, June 16, 2014

A public opinion poll on settlements in the West Bank, conducted annually for the past six years, shows a trend of decreasing support among the Israeli public for the settlers.

The poll also reveals the public is less opposed to territorial concessions and more concerned of international boycotts, and conditions its support for settlers on their combating Jewish lawbreakers in the territories, including so-called "hilltop youth."

The poll, conducted by a think tank led by Prof. Yitzhak Katz, was ordered by the Samaria and Jordan Valley Research and Development Center, and presented at Ariel University. Profs. Miryam Billig and Udi Lebel, who conducted the research, state that the poll shows a drastic decline in public support for settlers since 2009.

The 550 individuals over the age of 18 who participated in the poll do not reside in the West Bank, and reflect a cross-section of Israeli society. The poll revealed that 59 percent of those questioned believed the settlements harm Israel's relationship with the United States government. Half of those polled agreed with claims that the budget for settlements come at the expense of education and social welfare, and 40 percent believe that Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria are a waste of the country's money.

Seventy-one percent stated that settlers' clashes with the IDF prevent them from identifying with the settlements, and 54 percent claimed the hilltop youth prevent them from identifying with the settlers as a whole.

The polls also revealed that a small minority supports perpetuating the status quo (12 percent), while 31 percent would support partial or full annexation of the West Bank, though the majority of the Israeli public (51 percent) would support partial or full disengagement as part of an agreement with the Palestinians.

At the same time, public support for a peace agreement hinges upon a complete cessation of terror (84 percent) and a Palestinian declaration to end the conflict (82 percent), according to the poll.

Poll summary:

59 percent - Believe settlements harm Israel's relationship with the United States government.

50 percent - Agree with claims that the budget for settlements come at the expense of education and social welfare.

40 percent - Believe Jewish settlements in Judea and Samaria are a waste of the country's money.

71 percent - Stated that settlers' clashes with the IDF prevent them from identifying with the settlements.

12 percent - Support perpetuating the status quo.

31 percent - Support partial or full annexation of the West Bank.

51 percent - Would support partial or full disengagement as part of an agreement with the Palestinians.

84 percent - Say support for a peace agreement hinges upon a complete cessation of terror.

82 percent - Say support for a peace agreement hinges upon a Palestinian declaration to end the conflict.