

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
June 30, 2016



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The six featured articles and the many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes highlight the goals of the BDS movement; the indiscriminate killing of young Palestinians; the recent detention of 300 Palestinians including 60 children along with an estimated 7,000 Palestinians already in Israeli jails; support of murdered Jo Cox, a British Labor Party politician and advocate for Palestinians, especially children; an Icon of Mary as a symbol of Christian *Resistance* painted along the Separation wall; and other articles of interest.

Commentary: There was once a town often inundated with water whose inhabitants kept blaming the river for flooding their homes when it was the town officials themselves who kept releasing the reservoir waters to reclaim the land in and around the reservoir for themselves.

Israeli leaders persist in portraying their citizens, and through conflation, all Jews, as victims of anti-Semitism due to the growing world-wide BDS movement and other forms of support for the Palestinian people. These leaders seem to take no responsibility for their opposition to a two-state solution, and their repressive and oppressive policies and actions towards Palestinians in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. They continue to complain of the “waters of criticism” slowly destroying global support rather than stop releasing and increasing the flow of their unjust policies. Most of the world is aware of this self-defeating paradox constantly denied by present and past Israeli leadership, and their U.S. supporters in Congress. The Israeli “townspeople” continue to complain about the river rather than the source of its flooding waters.

- Omar Barghouti, the co-founder of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement discusses in Al-Shabaka this movement and its goals: self-determination, freedom from occupation, equality for the Palestinian citizens of Israel, and the right of return.
- Gideon Levy writes in Haaretz that Israeli soldiers fired fiercely, with full intent, at the moving car, and they had no idea who was inside except for the fateful fact that they were Palestinians.
- Zena Tahhan reports in Al Jazeera that a monitoring group says 330 Palestinians, including 60 children, have been detained as raids in West Bank are stepped up and that there are an estimated 7,000 Palestinians are in Israeli jails.
- IMEMC News wrote that Member of Parliament, Jo Cox was a genuine working class hero, mother of two, and a devoted compassionate friend of Palestine, refugees and immigrants. She was murdered on her way to a constituency meeting. Jo had spoken in Parliament which led to an urgent and thought provoking recent debate about the way in which children are arrested, detained and treated in the occupied Palestinian territories.
- The Times of Israel staff published the Annual report by the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) which says that Israel is the primary cause of Palestinian suffering through the occupation, the Gaza blockade, and settler violence.
- An Icon of Christian Resistance *painted along the Separation wall* is presented in the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation News. This icon of the Mother of God, near the Emmanuel Monastery in Bethlehem, emerges on the 8-meter high concrete wall, revealing with its beauty the failure of communities to love one another.

1) [BDS: Discussing Difficult Issues in a Fast-Growing Movement, Omar Barghouti, Al-Shabaka, June 14, 2016](#)

“Israel’s attacks on the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and other human rights defenders living under occupation, such as Al Haq staff, have dominated the headlines in recent weeks, including the direct threats made by leading Israeli officials against BDS activists and in particular against the movement’s co-founder Omar Barghouti.

“Beyond the headlines, the work goes on, as does continuous debate and discussion to further the movement amongst Palestinians at home and abroad as well as among global solidarity activists. There is much to discuss and some of the issues are difficult ones, including questions of framing. Al-Shabaka Executive Director Nadia Hijab discussed some of these issues in a wide-ranging conversation with Omar Barghouti.” . . .

“Boycotts have historically been one of the main popular resistance strategies available to Palestinians of all walks of life, and today, in the realm of international solidarity, BDS is the most important and strategic form of support to our struggle for self-determination. The BDS movement has never claimed that it is the only strategy to achieve full Palestinian rights under international law. Nor is it possible to expect it to deliver Palestinian rights by itself. Among other strategies are, for example, local popular resistance against the wall and colonies as well as legal strategies to hold Israel and its leaders accountable for the crimes they have committed against the Palestinian people.” . . .

“We Palestinians always compare our strategies and progress to South Africa and other movements for justice, self-determination and human rights – and we know that we’re missing key pillars that were critical to their success.

“In South Africa, for example, the African National Congress-led struggle identified four strategic pillars for the struggle to end apartheid: Mass mobilizations, armed resistance, an underground political movement, and international solidarity (particularly in the form of boycotts and sanctions). There is no “copy-paste” strategy to achieve liberation and human rights – every colonial experience is different and has its unique particularities. We have been engaged in evolving our own Palestinian strategies that suit our environment of struggle for justice and dignity.” . . .

“It’s important not to conflate opposition to Zionism and to Israel’s regime of colonial oppression and apartheid as being an opposition to Jews: It is absolutely not. The BDS movement has consistently and categorically rejected all forms of racism, including Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. The fact that 46% of non-Orthodox Jewish-American men under 40 support a full boycott of Israel to end its occupation and human rights violations, according to a [2014 poll](#), partly attests to the inclusive, anti-racist character of the movement.”

See also [Link A - Anti-BDS law can't be 'pro-Israel' if it tramples on free speech](#); [Link B - Anti-BDS laws don't perpetuate discrimination. They prevent it](#); [Link C - The Best Intention](#); [Link D - It's Far Too Early - and Too Easy - to Write Off the Threat of BDS](#)

2) [Sorry, Mahmoud Rafat Badran, 15, Was Killed by 'Mistake', Gideon Levy, Haaretz, June 23, 2016](#)

“By mistake the soldiers stood on the bridge, by accident they sprayed the car driving on the road below them with heavy fire, without any idea who was in it. Unintentionally they killed the youth, by accident wounded four of his friends seriously.

“By mistake the soldiers thought the passengers of the car had thrown rocks and poured oil on the road, mistakenly they thought this allowed them to shoot to their hearts’ desire. Clearly by accident, because if the youth had thrown rocks, they would have been allowed to kill him.

“By mistake the IDF initially reported that its soldiers had killed the “terrorist” and wounded his partners, and only after a few hours corrected the mistake and admitted the youth was killed “by accident.” Unintentionally, Israelis

have forgotten that Route 443, the high road to the capital, passes deep through the occupied territories on the lands of the surrounding villages, whose residents cannot drive on that road to anywhere.

“By mistake the Israelis think this will last forever: They will hurry to Jerusalem on the high road, the children will look at them from below with longing and submissive eyes, from the underpasses built for them, from the enclave of villages they are imprisoned in, which very few of those traveling on Route 443 have heard of and even fewer are interested in. Mistakenly the Israelis think that the residents of the stolen land will always bow their heads towards the passengers on the road that tore apart their lives.

“By mistake the violent opposition to this is described as terrorism, expelling the residents is defined as preserving law and order, and the killing of the youth as self-defense. By accident Israel once again is victimized, and the Foreign Ministry spokesman has the gall to accuse the Palestinians of killing the youth.” . . .

“But the real mistake is the idea that they were allowed to shoot stone throwers fleeing for their lives. And this mistake is malicious. Everything was malicious, including the road they fired from, which was not paved by accident, either, but rather maliciously and with great and evil intent, which is the real reason for everything that has happened there ever since.”

See also [Link E - Palestinian teen was celebrating friends' visit before being killed by army, survivor recounts](#); [Link F - Israel returns body of 15-year-old Palestinian killed in Israeli army attack on car](#)

3) [Palestine: 'Hundreds detained' since start of Ramadan, Zena Tahhan, Al Jazeera, June 26, 2016](#)

“An estimated 7,000 Palestinians are in Israeli jails. More than 700 are being held without charge or trial. At least 65 prisoners have declared an open-ended hunger strike. An estimated 414 prisoners are under 18 years old

About 330 Palestinians across the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip have been detained by Israel since the start of Ramadan, the Palestinian Prisoners' Center for Studies has said.” . . .

According to the centre's records, of the 330 held, at least 60 are children, with the youngest being 10-year-old Marwan Sharabati from Hebron. The figure also includes 21 women ranging from 18 to 45 years old. About 15 Palestinians, 13 of whom are fishermen from Gaza, were also arrested at Israel's Ashdod port, including Mohammad al-Halabi, the head of the Gaza program at the Christian humanitarian organization World Vision.” . . .

“There are an estimated 7,000 Palestinians behind Israeli bars, according to the statistics of Jerusalem-based prisoner and human rights association Addameer. Of those, 70 are female prisoners and 414 are children, 104 of which are under 16.”

See also [Link G - The price of occupation: child prisoners in Israeli jails suffer lifelong trauma](#)

4) [RIP Jo Cox, IMEMC News, June 17, 2016](#)

“Jo Cox, a devoted compassionate friend of Palestine, refugees and immigrants, an advocate for the plight of Syrian and Yeminite civilians, a genuine working class hero and a mother of two, was murdered today on her way to a constituency meeting.

“Jo Cox on the arrest detention and treatment of children in occupied Palestinian territories: ‘Parliament held an urgent and thought provoking debate recently about the way in which children are arrested, detained and treated in the occupied Palestinian territories.’”

“Westminster Hall, the overflow venue for backbenchers to hold debates when time pressures on the main Chamber won’t allow, was jammed with MPs keen to contribute and listen to what was a fascinating, deeply troubling discussion.

“Israel is the only country in the world that systematically prosecutes children in military court and the differences between how Israeli children and Palestinian children are treated are stark. For example, an Israeli child subject to civil court proceedings has to have access to a lawyer within 48 hours. Yet a Palestinian child can be left without legal guidance for as long as 90 days. This, and many other disparities, underline the existence of a two tier justice system operating in the West Bank. One where Israeli children are subject to the rule of law; Palestinian children are not. This disparity of treatment, along with the estimate that 59,000 Palestinian children detained by the Israeli military since 1967 are likely to have been physically abused in one way or another, is deeply disturbing. It is also a clear and fundamental abuse of basic human rights and international law, including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

“Estimates put the number of Palestinians detained since 1967 at 850,000. Of these almost 100,000 are children. Between 500 and 700 children are prosecuted each year, with stone throwing the most common charge. This often brings with it a sentence of between 10 and 20 years. And worst of all the number of children involved is increasing. As of last month the number of children in detention was up to 470 – over a 200% increase since last September. These abuses have been going on for nearly 50 years. As my colleague Sarah Champion MP, who sponsored the debate, said – this situation requires decisive action to ensure we meet our international legal obligations.”

See also [Link H - Congress Shines a Light on Palestinian Youth Behind Bars](#)

5) [UN says Israel is primary cause of Palestinian suffering, TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF June 13, 2016](#)

“Published in English, Hebrew and Arabic, the report, titled ‘Fragmented Lives,’ bills itself as a ‘comprehensive overview of the underlying causes or drivers of the humanitarian vulnerabilities in the oPt.’ The major cause, the report says, is Israel. “Humanitarian needs in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt) continue to be driven by practices related to Israel’s prolonged occupation and continued conflict.”

“‘This month, Palestinians enter their 50th year under Israeli occupation,’ OCHA’s Palestinian branch head David Carden is quoted as saying. The report ‘shows clearly the devastating impact of this ongoing situation.’ The report presents other parties, including Palestinian factions such as Hamas and the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority, as well as Egypt’s role in bolstering the blockade of Gaza, as second-tier causes.

“Palestinians are suffering most acutely in Gaza, the report states. ‘The suffering resulting from the 2014 hostilities – with close to 90,000 Palestinians still displaced during the second half of 2015 – was compounded by an eight-year blockade by Israel, the almost continuous closure of the Rafah passenger crossing by Egypt, and by internal Palestinian divisions. The precarious living conditions of displaced girls and women raise a range of protection concerns, including increasing exposure to gender-based violence.’

“According to the report, the number of attacks on Palestinians decreased in 2015, but ‘the number of Palestinian-owned trees damaged, stolen or uprooted (11,254) in settler-related incidents was the highest since 2006.’

“Israel’s crackdown against the terror wave also draws criticism. “By the end of 2015, there were more Palestinians held in Israeli prisons (over 6,000) than any year since 2010 and more Palestinian children held (422) than since 2008.” The report demands that Israel end the controversial practice of administrative detention without trial for terror suspects, crack down on Jewish violence against Palestinians and end the closure on Gaza, calling it a form of “collective punishment.”

6) [Our Lady Who Brings Down Walls : An Icon Of Christian Resistance, HCEF News, June 17, 2016](#)



“Made at the request of the local faithful and some internationals, the icon of Our Lady who brings down walls was written on the Separation wall between Bethlehem and Jerusalem in 2010. The purpose of their request was clear; an icon that could bring along hope that the wall would come down some day.

“According to Ian Knowles, the iconographer who wrote the icon, the inspiration behind Our Lady originated from a speech that Pope Benedict XVI had given at a special assembly for the Middle East of the Synod of Bishops in 2010. During the assembly, His Holiness referred to chapter 12 of the book of Revelation and talked about a woman who is clothed with the sun and gives birth with a cry of pain. He linked how this chapter in the Bible is a prophecy about the suffering of Christians in the Middle East. ‘That gave me an image of Mary, who is pregnant, clothed with the sun chased by the beast that wants to devour her child,’ Ian pointed out.” . . .

“Almost 85% of the Separation wall, which saw the start of its construction in 2003, is built in the West Bank. The wall disregards international law and to this day continues to annex fertile lands for settlement expansion and deprives Palestinians of basic human rights, including the freedom of movement.” . . .

Prayer to Our Lady Who Brings Down Walls

Most Holy Mother of God, We pray to you as mother of the Church, mother of all Christians who suffer. We beg you, through your ardent intercession, to bring down this wall, the walls of our hearts, and all the walls that generate hatred, violence, fear, and indifference between people and between nations. You who crushed the ancient Serpent by your Fiat, gather and unite us under your virginal cloak, protect us from all evil and open forever in our lives the gate of Hope. Bring to birth in us and in our world the civilization of Love that sprang forth from the Cross and Resurrection of your divine Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns forever. Amen.

Source: Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem

Other articles of interest

- A) [Anti-BDS law can't be 'pro-Israel' if it tramples on free speech, Jill Jacobs, JTA, June 14, 2016](#)
This is the first of two contrasting views on an executive order by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo that prevents state agencies from doing business with companies that support a boycott of Israeli products. In the second, a law professor who tracks anti-BDS legislation says such laws do not pose a First Amendment problem.
- B) [Anti-BDS laws don't perpetuate discrimination. They prevent it, Eugene Kontorovich, JTA, June 15, 2016](#)
This is the second of two contrasting views on laws that prevent state agencies from doing business with companies that support a boycott of Israeli products. Earlier this week, Rabbi Jill Jacobs [argued](#) that such laws curtail free speech.
- C) [The Best Intention, Evan Gottesman, Matzavblog, June 14, 2016](#)
The New York executive order and New Jersey bill are clearly well-intentioned demonstrations of solidarity with the Jewish community. However, such an unsophisticated approach to BDS is poorly matched to the movement itself and can only provide short term results
- D) [It's Far Too Early - and Too Easy - to Write Off the Threat of BDS, Mose Apelblat, Haaretz, June 20, 2016](#)
Not only are boycotts of Israel already a reality, but the Israeli government's response - well funded though it is - has been shoddy, uncoordinated and incoherent.
- E) [Palestinian teen was celebrating friends' visit before being killed by army, survivor recounts, Ma'an News, June 22, 2016](#)
Five teenage Palestinian boys were on their way home after midnight Monday morning, after spending the evening at a swimming pool in the village of Beit Sira west of Ramallah, celebrating the recent arrival from Qatar of friends who were to spend the summer in their hometown of Beit Ur al-Tahta.
- F) [Israel returns body of 15-year-old Palestinian killed in Israeli army attack on car, Ma'an News, June 22, 2016](#)
Israeli authorities returned on Wednesday the body of Mahmoud Raafat Badran, 15, who was shot dead by Israeli forces a day earlier while driving back from the swimming pool with his friends in the central occupied West Bank
- G) [The price of occupation: child prisoners in Israeli jails suffer lifelong trauma, Lili Martinez, Palestine Monitor- June 15, 2016](#)
The recent violations of children's rights, from the spike in arrests after the October 2015 stabbing attacks to the detention of Dima at just 12 years old, represent a systematic assault against children and childhood in Palestine.
- H) [Congress Shines a Light on Palestinian Youth Behind Bars, Kyle Cristofalo \(Program Assistant for Middle East Policy at Friends Committee on National Legislation\),Huffington Post, June 20, 2016](#)
With Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory nearing a half-century, members of Congress have developed a new way to focus on the structural and physical abuse of Palestinian young people that is a major driver of conflict in the region. In a letter sent to President Obama yesterday, Rep. Betty McCollum (MN) and 19 other members call for the appointment of a Special Envoy for Palestinian Youth.
- I) [Journalist forced into exile by Palestinian Authority 'death threats', Rori Donaghy, Middle East Eye, June 27, 2016](#)
Middle East Eye contributor Abed al-Qaisi says he cannot live in the occupied West Bank until there is reform of the Palestinian Authority; he says that he has been forced into exile because of death threats from the Palestinian Authority after he exposed police brutality in the occupied West Bank.

- J) [What Israelis Can Learn From Britain's Revolutionary Voters, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, June 25, 2016](#)
A referendum based on the will of the people who choose to ignore their leader's fear-mongering is something Israelis can only dream of.
- K) [PCHR Report on Israeli Human Rights Violations in the oPt \(16 – 22 June 2016\), PM IMEMC News & Agencies, June 23, 2016](#)
Israeli violations of international law and international humanitarian law in the occupied Palestinian territories continued during the reporting period (16 – 22 June 2016). Israeli forces have continued to commit crimes, inflicting civilian casualties. They have also continued to use excessive force against Palestinian civilians participating in peaceful protests in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the majority of whom were youngsters.
- L) [The Leadership Must Stop Pandering: Israel as a Free Nation Won't Survive the Occupation, Zeev Sternhell, Haaretz, June 17, 2016](#)
Democracy requires acceptance of the majority decision, but it does not mandate recognition of the rightness or the moral legitimacy of the majority.
- M) [Ya'alon Slams 'Fearmonger' Netanyahu, Vows to Run for Prime Minister, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, June 16, 2016](#)
"At this time and in the foreseeable future, there is not existential threat to Israel," former defense minister tells Herzliya Conference.
- N) [Israel's fear of the 'desert' Jews in its midst, Jonathan Cook, Znet, June 22, 2016](#)
In a little-noticed move last week, Israeli defense minister Avigdor Lieberman barred an official close to Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas from entering Israel. Mohammed Madani is accused of "subversive activity" and "political terror". His crimes, as defined by Lieberman, are worth pondering. They suggest that Israel's conflict with the Palestinians is rooted less in security issues and more in European colonialism.
- O) [CMEP Bulletin - Peace – Don't Give Up Now- June 17, 2016](#)
- P) [CMEP Bulletin - Summer and No Water – June 23, 2016](#)
- Q) [EU Foreign Ministers Endorse French Initiative, Call for Mideast Peace Summit by Year's End, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, June 20, 2016](#)
EU Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini says Quartet report on Israeli-Palestinian stalemate to be published in next few days; Netanyahu to meet with Kerry next Sunday in Rome.
- R) [Palestine's 'prayer for rain': How Israel uses water as a weapon of war, : Ramzy Baroud, Antiwar, June 22, 2016](#)
Israel has been 'waging a water war' against Palestinians. The irony is that the water provided is actually Palestinian water, usurped from West Bank aquifers. While Israelis, including illegal West Bank settlements, use the vast majority of it, Palestinians are sold their own water back at high prices.
- S) [I was with Muhammad Ali on his hostage-release trip to Iraq — and the media has it all wrong, Brian Becker, Answer Coalition, June 10, 2016](#)
The story of Muhammad Ali's trip to "rescue American hostages" is back in the media since the June 3 death of this unique individual: boxing's greatest fighter. President Obama's commented: "We admire the man who has never stopped using his celebrity for good — the man who helped secure the release of 14 [sic] American hostages from Iraq in 1990," Ali's courage in the face of government opposition is quickly being re-written by the same forces that he stood up against. His legacy and courage demand that history be recounted truthfully.
- T) [Ben Ehrenreich is a freelance journalist and novelist. This article has been adapted from his latest book, The Way to the Spring: Life and Death in Palestine, which will be published on June 14 by Penguin Press.](#)
No amount of preventive repression or collective punishment will bring an end to the bloodletting in Tel Aviv or

elsewhere. As long as this oppressive system stands, and the United States continues to support it with billions of dollars a year in military aid, despair will spread, and with it death.

U) [Reality check: Almost fifty years of occupation, B'Tselem, June 30, 2016](#)

A year from now, Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip will mark its fiftieth anniversary. A third, even fourth, generation of Palestinians and Israelis has been born into this reality, and it is the only one they know. Given what has been happening on the ground for decades, it is highly unlikely that Israel will change its policies, and the implications of these policies are set to continue or worsen.