

Middle East Notes

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

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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 contains articles pertaining to the EU statement to Israel concerning funding, cooperation, awarding of scholarships, research funds or prizes to anyone residing in the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem; the resumption of negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians; the prevention of the Israeli military from using white phosphorous in built-up areas; Israelis human rights violations; and other issues.

The next Middle East Notes will be published on September 5.

- Churches for Middle East Peace's July 22 Bulletin provides limited details that are emerging about the negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians.
- Barak Ravid writes in Ha'aretz that some say that the guideline published by the European Union will make it impossible to sign accords with Brussels without recognizing in writing that West Bank settlements are not part of Israel. (A link to the statement by the delegation of the EU to the State of Israel on the European Commission Notice follows.)
- Gideon Levy writes in Ha'aretz that Israel cannot flaunt that it is the only democracy in the region and at the same time compare itself with Syria, calling it worse. If it looks like injustice, acts like injustice and quacks like injustice, it is injustice.
- Gadi Baltiansky and Nidal Foqaha, directors of Geneva Initiative, write that the present negotiations between the Israelis and Palestinians can succeed if certain guidelines followed.
- Dan Margalit writes in the Israel Hayom newsletter about the interesting results of a recent poll conducted at the outset of negotiations: Many Israeli Jews support the fact that negotiations are taking place, but an even larger majority does not believe they will result in a peace agreement.
- The State of Two States published by Israel Peace Forum for the week of July 21 notes that the recent news cycle opened with a flurry of reactions to Secretary Kerry's announcement that "an agreement that establishes a basis for resuming direct final status negotiations" had been reached.
- Carlo Strenger writes in Ha'aretz that a referendum in Israel that was won by a clear margin would provide legitimacy for a peace agreement and might conceivably mitigate some of the phenomena witnessed before Rabin was murdered following the Oslo Accord.
- Isi Leibler writes in the Israel Hayom newsletter the reasons he believes Martin Indyk is a disastrous choice as U.S. mediator of the Israeli Palestinian negotiations.
- Uri Avnery writes "The turkey under the table," in which he shares his concerns and hopes about the role of Martin Indyk in the present negotiations.
- In a press release, the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights said that a number of Palestinian human rights organizations have strongly condemned the Israeli Supreme Court's reply to a petition to prevent the Israeli military from using white phosphorous in built-up areas.
- A spokesperson for the Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem says that she believes she was deliberately targeted recently by an Israeli soldier who shot a rubber-coated steel bullet at her from close range. The bullet lodged in her leg, and had to be surgically extracted.
- In its Weekly Report on Israeli Human Rights Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for the week of July 18-24, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) notes that a Palestinian boy was wounded in al-Bireh in the West Bank during an Israeli incursion.

1) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletin, July 22, 2013

Limited details emerging about negotiations: More details are emerging after news that United States Secretary of State John Kerry “reached an agreement that establishes a basis for resuming direct final status negotiations.”

When making his announcement, Kerry told reporters, “The agreement is still in the process of being formalized, so we are absolutely not going to talk about any of the elements now. Any speculation or reports you may read in the media or elsewhere or here in the press are conjecture. They are not based on fact because the people who know the facts are not talking about them. The parties have agreed that I will be the only one making further comments about this.” This means details are still hazy but parties are hoping to come to Washington as soon as this week to begin the process.

Israeli and Palestinian negotiators have been reluctant to sit down at the table without a general framework and initial concessions. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has insisted that any return to negotiations should be based on the borders before the 1967 war with mutually agreed land swaps. On the other side, Naftali Bennett is threatening to take his pro-settlement party, Jewish Home, out of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s ruling coalition if the government agrees to negotiate on the basis of the 1967 lines.

So how did Kerry compromise these two positions? Deftly. The New York Times reported that “Secretary Kerry will issue a statement that negotiations will be based on the 1967 lines with land swaps and recognition of Israel as a Jewish state. The U.S. has reportedly reached understandings that neither side will be forced to publicly endorse these principles.”

Both parties have peace process detractors in their governments and there is a lot of unconfirmed information floating around. Last week after Reuters quoted an Israeli official as saying that the 1967 lines would form the basis of renewed negotiations, a source close to Netanyahu issued a denial. On Saturday Palestinian officials told the Associated Press the same thing only to be contradicted by anonymous U.S. official.

Israeli officials have said they have at least one good will gesture up their sleeves. On Saturday, they confirmed that a Palestinian prisoner release would be forthcoming if talks actually happen. According to The New York Times, “it remained unclear on Saturday how many Palestinian prisoners were to be released and when, though it was unlikely to happen before the first meeting in Washington.” The minister for strategic affairs said on Israel Radio on Saturday “I don’t want to give numbers, but there will be heavyweight prisoners who have been in jail for tens of years.”

As the details get hammered out, some are maintaining cautious optimism. JJ Goldberg writes, “Well, surprise, surprise. After months of hearing from all the wise pundits from left to right that Secretary of State Kerry was beyond his depth in Israeli-Palestinian peace-making... It looks like Kerry gets the last laugh, at least for now.”

CMEP welcomes breakthrough: Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) congratulates Secretary Kerry, as well as courageous Palestinian and Israeli leaders, for the announcement that negotiators are expected to meet in Washington in the near future to resume direct negotiations on terms for the establishment a viable Palestinian state alongside a secure and democratic State of Israel. While important details still need to be determined it is an immense achievement for all parties to have arrived at this point. ...

[Read the entire Bulletin on CMEP’s website.](#)

2) EU: Future agreements with Israel won't apply to territories

Barak Ravid, Ha'aretz, July 16, 2013

The European Union has published a guideline for all 28 member states forbidding any funding, cooperation, awarding of scholarships, research funds or prizes to anyone residing in the Jewish settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The regulation, which goes into effect on Friday, requires that any agreement or contract signed by an EU country with Israel include a clause stating that the settlements are not part of the State of Israel and therefore are not part of the agreement.

A senior Israeli official, speaking on condition of anonymity, described the new ruling, which was published on June 30, as an "earthquake."

"This is the first time such an official, explicit guideline has been published by the European Union bodies," the senior official said. "Until today there were understandings and quiet agreements that the Union does not work beyond the Green Line [the pre-1967-war border]; now this has become a formal, binding policy."

The official noted that the significance of the regulation is both practical and political: From now on, if the Israeli government wants to sign agreements with the European Union or one of its member states, it will have to recognize in writing that the West Bank settlements are not part of Israel.

In the Prime Minister's Office and Foreign Ministry there is great tension and anxiety over the new regulation and its implications for Israeli-EU relations. The efforts of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Deputy Foreign Minister Ze'ev Elkin to stop the move have all failed. Senior EU officials say they would like to hold talks with Israel concerning the new guideline, but since it will go into effect by the end of this week, the chance of its being amended is extremely slim.

"We will have to decide what to do from this day forward," a senior Israeli official said. "We are not ready to sign on this clause in our agreements with the European Union. We can say this to the Europeans, but the result could be a halt to all cooperation in economics, science, culture, sports and academia. This would cause severe damage to Israel."

The new guideline was published by the European Commission, which is the executive branch of the European Union. The ruling determines the parameters for cooperation between the Union, along with its member states, and Israeli private and governmental entities between 2014 and 2020.

The most significant part of the guideline is its "territorial clause," which for the first time will appear as a binding rule on all agreements between the European Union and Israel. The new clause determines the areas in Israel that are entitled to cooperation with the Union, and those that are not. The territorial clause determines that all agreements will be valid only within Israeli borders recognized by the European Union, meaning the borders prior to the 1967 Six-Day War.

The new guideline forbids any cooperation by European Union members with private or governmental bodies located beyond the Green Line. It allows cooperation with Israeli government offices in East Jerusalem, such as the Justice Ministry, but only if the activities themselves are carried out within the 1967 borders.

[Read the statement by the delegation of the European Union to the State of Israel on the European Commission Notice here.](#)

[Read the guideline for the EU-Israel cooperation here.](#)

3) Israel, agitated at last, should be thanking Europe

Gideon Levy, Ha'aretz, July 18, 2013

Thank you, Europe. Through one administrative decision you have already managed to rattle Israel's insufferable complacency. With one administrative decision, necessitated by the situation and without a doubt correct, you have already undermined Israel's arrogance and conceit, which are responsible for the view that the stance of the entire world simply does not matter to this country.

Israel's initial reaction to the decision to require that certain economic agreements with the European Union contain a commitment that they will not be used for activities in West Bank Jewish settlements was expected. The reaction was automatic. But after the wave of arrogant pronouncements about how Europe is not going to dictate to us subsidies; after the grotesque calls to bar the EU from providing assistance to the Palestinians; and the childish argument that things are worse in Syria – and, the most ludicrous excuse of all, that the European decision is disrupting U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's efforts to restart peace negotiations; after all this froth dissipates, Israel will be left to its fate facing the mirror that Europe has placed before it.

The country finds itself at a critical juncture over whether to continue to maintain the occupation and pay the unbearable price, or whether to end the occupation, albeit outrageously late, and return Israel to the family of nations as a member in good standing.

The European continent of enlightenment and culture, as well as atrocities, has awakened late in the game. For years, it has been talking rather than acting. For years, Europe's public opinion has been stirring while its governments remained paralyzed because of past legacies and fear of the United States. Those who feign surprise – and quite soon an Israeli commission of inquiry will be convened to investigate the failure of our embassy in Brussels to foresee this step – just prove how great the disconnect is between the international reality and the blindness that has gripped the government and public here.

It is of course possible to direct threats at Europe, like the mouse that roared. It is also possible to reproach the Europeans over their own injustices. But friends, it's already too late. No one will take Israel's excuses seriously any more. It can only be hoped that the European decision will be the harbinger of the demise of the occupation.

Europe is not interfering with Kerry's negotiations, but is actually mobilizing support for him. And Finance Minister Yair Lapid's reaction is therefore the most baseless. Lapid complained of the bad timing of the European move, which is always the excuse of those faint-hearted people for whom any change is poorly timed. Lapid claimed that the step would harm efforts towards negotiations. What negotiations and what will be harmed? The prospect that maybe it will lead Israel to come to its senses? That it will become more flexible?

After it is clear that the government has no intention of taking genuine steps to bring about an end to the occupation, and after it's clear that 'that occupation thing' is not of interest to Israelis comes the European wake-up call, with almost perfect timing, just before it's too late. Now it can only be hoped that Europe doesn't stop with this minimal decision and that it is not put off by Israel's "threats." ...

[Read the entire piece on the Ha'aretz website.](#)

4) Peace deal – victory for both sides

Gadi Baltiansky, Nidal Foqaha, Ynetnews July 26, 2013

The term “win win” does not exist in Hebrew or Arabic. However, the opposite term, “zero sum game,” does exist and is even popular. Now, when talks between Israelis and Palestinians are resumed, not only language needs to be reinvented, but also the thinking patterns that were acceptable so far in negotiations.

An Israeli-Palestinian agreement will only be achieved when both parties will feel victorious. The natural but harmful desire of each side to show it defeated the other is maybe good for wars, but is bad for those who want peace. The formula to forming positions must be one that results in achieving a good agreement, and not one that measures how many of the other’s positions will be rejected.

Sometimes, success in negotiations is dangerous. Let’s assume Israel will insist on the right to build in the settlements during the process, and that the Palestinians would agree to it. Will such a step ultimately improve the chances of reaching an agreement based on the two-state vision or hurt them? It’s understandable why those who oppose a Palestinian state will support expanding Jewish settlements in the territories, but the interest of those who want to reach this goal is to create a situation in which the division to two states will be possible. Or, let’s assume that the Palestinians will insist on the right to require the involvement of international institutions in the negotiations and Israel will be convinced of it. It is clear that an attempt to impose acts by organizations that are not pro-Israel will not be accepted by the Israeli public and its elected representatives, and the chance to reach an agreement will become smaller.

In every negotiation course, it is taught that a condition for its success is that there is an initial understanding that there is a zone of possible agreement, or ZOPA. In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, 20 years after Oslo, 13 years after the Clinton parameters and nearly 10 years after the detailed model of the Geneva Initiative, it is clear to the whole world how a possible outline for an agreement will look like. One can agree or oppose it, but the decades and previous processes have already shown that another patent does not exist. Those who enter negotiations in good faith and real intention should realize that a positive outcome can only be achieved in the known zone of agreement.

The second relevant term from negotiations theory is known as BATNA - best alternative to an agreement. Each side, when entering the conference room, needs to understand what its best alternative is in case there is no agreement. In our case, there are no good scenarios. The Palestinian people will have to continue fighting for their rights and independence, while paying heavy prices, against a stronger entity. Israel risks losing its Jewish or democratic identity, international isolation, economic consequences and sooner or later even violence.

Theoretically, the existing conditions – recognizing the future agreement and understanding the danger of its alternatives - should lead to successful negotiations. Along with American involvement, the regional contribution of the Arab world and the international interest there is a reason for optimism. However, one necessary and critical component is missing: Courage of leaders. Ultimately, these are two people who in one given moment would have to put political and personal considerations aside, and prefer the historical and national considerations that are really good for their people. In this moment of truth we will know if the two parties won or lost. Any other outcome, in which one side wins and the other loses, will never occur here.

Nidal Foqaha and Gadi Baltiansky are the director generals of the [Geneva Initiative](#) in Ramallah and Tel Aviv, respectively.

5) Israelis are hopeful, but skeptical

Dan Margalit, Israel Hayom newsletter, July 26, 2013

Diplomacy in the Middle East sometimes resembles season memberships to the Philharmonic orchestra or to a basketball league. There are seasons. They begin, they end. At some point they start up again. Repeat.

The latest season of diplomacy begins on Sunday. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu will bring a series of proposals and legislative initiatives for the cabinet's approval that will pave his way toward negotiations with Mahmoud Abbas. The negotiations will be conducted through emissaries and under the auspices of the United States.

The results of the poll conducted at the outset of negotiations is particularly interesting. A large majority of Israeli Jews support the fact that negotiations are taking place, but an even larger majority do not believe they will result in a peace agreement. The Israeli public wants to give peace a chance but remains skeptical, nevertheless feeling that talks are better than smoke and gunfire.

The poll results also contain a semi-contradiction. A significant majority are ready for a two-state solution, but an even greater percentage oppose such a solution if it means returning to the 1967 borders with minor reciprocal border adjustments.

It is an open question whether the public understands the concept of "border adjustments" in depth. It would mean the world recognizing settlement blocs in Judea and Samaria as sovereign Israeli territory, but involve our relinquishing other areas of Judea and Samaria, as well as areas within the Green Line. Netanyahu believes that if the sides come to an agreement that "he can live with," as he puts it, then most of the public will stand behind him.

All of this -- as well as broad support for a national referendum in the event of a retreat from Judea and Samaria -- is interesting but largely theoretical. When most of the public believes that Netanyahu can't reach an agreement with Abbas anyway, the other questions remain merely hypothetical. There is just one tangible question, the issue of releasing prisoners in exchange for holding negotiations.

By a large, decisive majority, the public not only objects to releasing terrorist murderers in exchange for starting negotiations, but also not in the midst of negotiations, when it becomes clear that both sides are serious. In any case, 78-85 percent of Israelis are opposed to the move. But anyone involved in talks knows that without the release of prisoners, Abbas cannot sit at the negotiating table. There is a powerful lobby of Palestinian prisoners' families that is making this demand, and they received a promise. We must take into account that Netanyahu rejected all the other demands that were presented to him as preconditions. There is no American in a present or past administration who believes that the Palestinians can agree to negotiations with empty hands.

It's reasonable to assume that the government will approve the proposal to release prisoners, with conditions attached. If not on Sunday, then a week later. It is a very bitter pill to swallow. Except that reconciling the dictates of wisdom with the palpitations of the heart is the test of any mature government. The date has been set.

6) The State of Two States – IPF (Israel Peace Forum)

Week of July 21

This week's news cycle opened with a flurry of reactions to Secretary Kerry's announcement last Friday evening that "an agreement that establishes a basis for resuming direct final status negotiations" had been reached. On Thursday, the Israel Policy Forum sent a letter to Prime Minister Netanyahu signed by 140 prominent American Jews expressing support for the Israeli Prime Minister's decision to move the diplomatic process forward. Some of the signatories to the IPF letter included Former Congressmen Gary Ackerman, Howard Berman, Barney Frank, and Robert Wexler; Philanthropist Charles Bronfman; Professor Alan Dershowitz; Senator Joseph Lieberman; and Dov S. Zahkeim, an advisor to both George W. Bush and Mitt Romney. Meanwhile, tensions continued to rise between the transitional Egyptian government and Hamas, potentially signaling a new Egyptian role in the Israeli-Palestinian discourse as well. Talks between Israeli and Palestinian representatives are expected to start on Tuesday, July 30.

"When will the real crises start? When they start to talk about practical steps on the ground, like a settlement freeze... That will be the first hurdle that Netanyahu will have to cross in his coalition. He will wage tough battles in the Likud, and it is not clear that he will emerge unscathed. It could be that the entire coalition business will then start to unravel." – Shalom Yerushalmi writing in Ma'ariv (Sunday, 7/21)

"To the left, we say: We must conduct these negotiations the way negotiations are done in the Middle East—with strictness, suspicion, and insistence on 'selling dearly,' without compromising on the property of the State of Israel. To the right we say: We have to say farewell to the Palestinians, because a bi-national state would spell the end of Zionism." – Israeli Finance Minister Yair Lapid to Yedioth Ahronoth (Sunday, 7/21)

"In the absence of Palestinian-Israeli peace, Israel and the Arabs are condemned to a relationship of confrontation and occasional war, and America will be caught in the middle." – Shibley Telhami explaining why resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is an essential American interest (Monday, 7/22)

"If we're ever going to get anywhere, this is what the beginning is going to look like." – Hussein Ibish during an IPF video conference explaining why observers should hesitate to confidently predict the nascent diplomatic process will fail (Wednesday, 7/24)

"Our goal in bringing together this diverse group is to demonstrate the broad base of support among American Jews for Prime Minister Netanyahu's entering the diplomatic process initiated by Secretary Kerry." – IPF Executive Director David Halperin describing the motivation for sending letter to PM Netanyahu expressing support for resuming talks (Thursday, 7/25)

"[John Kerry] is right on target with what he's doing. And I just hope the protagonists want peace and a two-state solution as much as he does." – Marine Corps General James Mattis, the recently retired leader of U.S. Central Command, speaking about American's great national security interest in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (Thursday, 7/25)

[Read the entire State of Two States on the IPF website.](#)

7) Popular referendum could increase chances for Israeli-Palestinian peace deal

Carlo Strenger, Ha'aretz, July 24, 2013

A recent poll conducted by Ha'aretz shows that if a referendum was conducted about a peace agreement presented by Israel's government, the results would be as follows: 39 percent of Israelis said they would vote in favor; 16 percent think they would vote in favor; 20 percent are sure they would vote against and 20 percent are not sure.

This means that in most likelihood such a referendum would pass.

Currently the demand to put any withdrawal from the West Bank to a referendum is primarily sponsored by Israel's right, including Naftali Bennett's national-religious Habayit Hayehudi party. Most liberal commentators are against this motion, and some of them are well-founded. Nevertheless their objection to such a referendum is shortsighted for a number of reasons. Law Professor Aeyal Gross has put the most powerful objection succinctly, claiming that such a referendum would be asking the wrong people for its agreement.

He points out correctly that the question of whether they want to be part of Great Britain will be put to the Scots, not to the British as a whole; and that the Northern Irish decided the fate of Northern Ireland.

Therefore, as Gross points out, the people who should really be asked whether they want to be part of Israel or have a state of their own are the Palestinians, not the Israelis.

I completely agree with Gross. Personally I do not think that it is up to Israelis to determine the status of the West Bank, because they are not part of Israel. And his point that the Palestinians rather than Israelis should determine their fate reflects the human rights paradigm correctly and is supported by international law.

Nevertheless I think that a referendum on withdrawal from the West Bank is advisable on purely pragmatic grounds. The chasms in Israeli society are very deep indeed.

A peace agreement with the Palestinians will strain this society's cohesiveness to the breaking point. It might therefore be advisable that such a peace agreement be backed by the Israeli people. A referendum won by a clear margin would certainly provide such legitimacy for a peace agreement and might conceivably mitigate some of the phenomena we witnessed from 1993 to 1995 when Rabin was murdered.

First and foremost it is to be expected that if indeed an agreement with the Palestinians is reached – and this is a big “if” – it will cause an enormous upheaval in Israeli society. We should remember that when Rabin signed the Oslo accords, huge demonstrations were staged, posters with Rabin in Nazi uniform were carried, and national-religious rabbis ruled that Rabin's legal status was that of a ‘Mosser’, of a man who delivers Jews to gentile jurisdiction. As a result it seemed legitimate to kill Rabin, which, as we know, turned into a terrible reality.

It is difficult to predict which form protests against a peace agreement with the Palestinians will take this time, but we can be sure that the ideological right will not give in meekly. ...

[Read the entire piece on the Ha'aretz website.](#)

8) Indyk: A disastrous choice for mediator
Isi Leibler, Israel Hayom newsletter, July 26, 2013

The U.S. State Department has floated a trial balloon to test the idea of former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Martin Indyk serving as mediator in the forthcoming peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. It is not surprising that PA President Mahmoud Abbas has signaled his approval. What is incomprehensible is that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has done likewise.

Unfortunately, the prospect of genuine progress in the negotiations is extraordinarily slim. There is no evidence that the PA will compromise on a single issue. In the unlikely event that the weak, corrupt Abbas does make even a single concession, his Fatah supporters will immediately topple him.

Nonetheless, an "honest broker" is essential to the process. However, Martin Indyk is not that broker. His track record in presiding over previous peace negotiations indicates that if reappointed, he will, in all probability, direct negotiations in a manner to ensure that Israel will be blamed for their failure.

Indyk has had an impressive political career. Educated in Australia, he moved to the U.S. where he joined the American Israel Public Affairs Committee and subsequently held executive positions at prestigious Washington, D.C. think-tanks (executive director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, and director of foreign policy at the Brookings Institution). He also has assumed key political positions (assistant secretary of state for Near East affairs in the Clinton administration). After Indyk became a naturalized U.S. citizen, President Bill Clinton appointed him U.S. ambassador to Israel -- the first foreign born and first Jew to hold the position. He served two terms, from April 1995 to September 1997 and from January 2000 to July 2001.

Indyk's rise in the political arena has been ascribed to his talent of adjusting to the prevailing political climate of the Democratic leadership. When Barack Obama was elected president, Indyk aligned himself with the new leader and enthusiastically participated in Obama's Israel-bashing and Netanyahu-snubbing. He was unsparing and, at times, vicious in his criticism of our prime minister, and laid the bulk of the blame on Netanyahu for the breakdown in Israeli-Palestinian relations.

He has moved further and further to the Left as his career unfolded. He served as international chair of the New Israel Fund, an organization that has repeatedly been castigated for funding rabid anti-Zionist and anti-Israel nongovernmental organizations, including several that compiled distorted and false information for the notorious Goldstone Report accusing the Israel Defense Forces of engaging in war crimes.

Aside from occasional lip service to their failings, Indyk became an aggressive apologist for the Palestinians and at one stage even identified himself with those defending Arafat's rebuff of Prime Minister Ehud Barak's extreme concessions at Camp David. ...

[Read the entire piece on the Israel Hayom website.](#)

9) The turkey under the table

Uri Avnery, Gush Shalom, July 27, 2013

When you have a conflict between two parties, the way to solve it is clear: you put them in the same room, let them thrash out their differences and emerge with a reasonable solution acceptable to both.

For example, a conflict between a wolf and a lamb. Put them in the same room, let them thrash out their differences and emerge with...Just a moment. The wolf emerges. Now where's that lamb?

If you have a conflict between two parties who are like a wolf and a lamb, you must have a third party in the room, just to make sure that Party 1 does not have Party 2 for dinner while the talks are going on.

The balance of power between Israel and the Palestinian Authority is like that between a wolf and a lamb. In almost every respect – economic, military, political - Israel has a vast advantage.

This is a fact of life. It is up to the Third Party to balance this somehow. Can it be done? Will it be done?

I have always liked John Kerry. He radiates an air of honesty, sincerity, that seems real. His dogged efforts command respect. The announcement this week that he has at long last achieved even the first stage of talks between the parties can give some room for optimism.

As Mao said: A march of a thousand miles begins with a single step. The parties have agreed to a meeting of delegates to work out the preliminary details. It should take place this coming week in Washington. So far so good.

The first question is: who will be the third person? It has been leaked that the leading candidate for this delicate task is Martin Indyk, a veteran former State Department officer. This is a problematic choice. Indyk is Jewish and very much involved in Jewish and Zionist activity. He was born in England and grew up in Australia. He served twice as U.S. ambassador to Israel. Right-wing Israelis object to him because he is active in left-wing Israeli institutions. He is a member of the board of the New Israel Fund, which gives financial support to moderate Israeli peace organizations and is demonized by the extreme rightists around Binyamin Netanyahu.

Palestinians may well ask whether among the 300 million U.S. citizens there is not a single non-Jew who can manage this job. For many years now it has been the case that almost all American officials dealing with the Israeli-Arab problem have been Jews. And almost all of them later went on to be officials in Zionist think-tanks and other organizations. If the U.S. had been called upon to referee negotiations between, say, Egypt and Ethiopia, would they have appointed an Ethiopian-American?

I have met Indyk several times, generally at diplomatic receptions (not U.S. embassy receptions, to which I was not invited.) Once I sent him a letter connected with his name. ...

[Read the entire piece on the Gush Shalom website.](#)

10) Human rights organizations condemn Israeli court's reply concerning IOF use of white phosphorous
Palestinian Network News, July 25, 2013

The undersigned human rights organizations strongly condemn the Israeli Supreme Court's reply to a petition filed by human rights organizations to prevent the Israeli military from using white phosphorous in built-up areas, Palestinian Centre for Human Rights said in a press release. They believe that the court's decision leaves the door open for continuing the use of white phosphorous in built-up areas in the occupied Palestinian territory (oPt), extremely endangering the lives of the civilian population.

On 09 July 2013, the Israeli Supreme Court accepted the pledge presented by the Israeli public prosecution, representing the State, to abstain from using white phosphorous against civilians, excluding in exceptional cases. Details of such cases were classified as confidential and were not made available to the petitioners or the public, which do not practically ban the use of white phosphorous in built-up areas in the future, but this time by the consent of the highest Israeli judicial body.

The undersigned organizations point out that white phosphorous is an inflammable chemical compound that causes second and third degree chemical burns once the skin is subjected to it. It also seriously endangers the lives of civilians, and may cause death if it is touched, inhaled or swallowed as it contains poisonous substances.

According to reports of Palestinian human rights organizations, the Israeli military extensively used white phosphorous during its offensive on the Gaza Strip in the period 27 December 2008 – 18 January 2009 ("Operation Cast Lead"). The Israeli military used white phosphorous bombs against civilian persons and facilities in Khuza'a village, east of the southern Gaza Strip town of Khan Yunis; Tal al-Hawa neighborhood in the southwest of Gaza City; and the northern Gaza Strip town of Beit Lahia. As a result of the use of white phosphorous bombs in populated areas and against civilian shelters at UNRWA schools, 12 Palestinian civilians were killed. Some facilities were also burnt, including UNRWA's main warehouses, the buildings of al-Quds and al-Wafa hospitals, the office of Palestine Red Crescent Society in Gaza City and an UNRWA school in Beit Lahia.

The report of the UN Fact-Finding Mission on the Conflict in Gaza (Goldstone Report) observed in detail the Israeli military's use of white phosphorous bombs, thus confirming reports of human rights organizations. The report stated: "...The Mission finds that the Israeli armed forces were systematically reckless in determining its use in built-up areas." It also recommended Israel to seriously consider banning the use of white phosphorous in built-up areas.

The undersigned organizations reiterate their condemnation of the continued legal cover provided by the Israeli Supreme Court for Israeli crimes against Palestinian civilians, and calls upon the international community, especially the High Contracting Parties to the Geneva Conventions, to fulfill their legal obligation to provide protection to Palestinian civilians and to exert pressure on Israel to completely ban the use of white phosphorous in built-up areas.

The human rights organizations are:

Al Haq
Al-Mezan Center for Human Rights
Al Dameer Association for Human Rights
Palestinian Center for Human Rights

11) Israeli human rights worker says soldier deliberately shot rubber-coated bullet at close range

IMEMC Staff, July 21, 2013

The spokesperson for the Israeli human rights organization, B'Tselem, says that she believes she was deliberately targeted by an Israeli soldier on Friday who shot a rubber-coated steel bullet at her from close range. The bullet lodged in her leg, and had to be surgically extracted. Sarit Michaeli, widely known in Israel as a proponent of equal rights for Palestinians, gave the following statement to reporters from 972 magazine, "On Friday I was shot with a rubber-coated steel bullet while documenting the demonstration in Nabi Saleh. The demonstration was dispersed by Border Police officers when the protesters were still on the main road that leads out of the village. After the Border Police began to disperse the crowds, some kids threw a few stones in their direction."

She continued, "About 20 minutes after the protest had begun, and after the procession had already been largely dispersed, a group of about nine Border Policemen and IDF soldiers stormed the main road of the village next to the gas station in the direction of a group of demonstrators, who were running away from them up the road. I stood aside, close to the gas station. At a certain point one of the Border Policemen shot at me from what I estimate was a distance of no more than 15-20 meters. (The legal minimum range for a rubber-coated steel bullet is 50 meters).

"I'm not really sure why I was shot at. I wasn't in the path of the soldiers and I wasn't doing anything that could be interpreted as a threat to them. They saw me beforehand with my camera filming, standing on the side, not in their way. In order to shoot at me, the Border Policeman had to knowingly point his weapon in my direction, or in the direction of a medic and two Palestinian female protesters who were close to me. No one standing in my vicinity threw any stones.

"The bullet penetrated my thigh and was removed at Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv. I filmed the moment I was shot but still haven't had the chance to upload the material."

A recent report by Michaeli's organization, B'Tselem, details the misuse of so-called "crowd control weapons" by Israeli forces in attacking protesters in the West Bank.

The report states that "crowd control weapons are supposed to be non-lethal, enabling authorities to enforce the law without endangering human life. In fact, however, they are dangerous weapons that can cause death, severe injury and damage to property if used improperly." It then details numerous instances of the misuse of crowd control weapons by Israeli authorities, including tear gas, stun grenades, "skunk" liquid and rubber-coated steel bullets.

IMEMC News <http://www.imemc.org>

IMEMC is a media center developed in collaboration between Palestinian and International journalists to provide independent media coverage of Israel-Palestine relations.

12) Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) Weekly Report July 26, 2013

In its Weekly Report on Israeli Human Rights Violations in the Occupied Palestinian Territories for the week of July 18-24, 2013, the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) found that a Palestinian boy was wounded in al-Bireh in the West Bank during an Israeli incursion. In addition, Sarit Michaeli, B'Tselem spokesperson, was wounded during al-Nabi Saleh protest, northwest of Ramallah and dozens suffered tear gas inhalation and sustained bruises due to Israeli soldiers' attack.

Israeli attacks in the West Bank: During the reporting period, Israeli forces wounded an 18-year-old boy and an Israeli human rights defender, and dozens of civilians suffered tear gas inhalation during peaceful protests against the construction of the annexation wall and settlement activities in the West Bank. Furthermore, a number of civilians sustained bruises due to Israeli settlers' attack on them.

Israeli forces conducted 50 incursions into Palestinian communities in the West Bank, during which at least 25 Palestinian civilians, including four children, were abducted. On July 27, 2013, an 18-year-old boy was wounded during an Israeli incursion in al-Bireh. The boy was shot by two bullets to the chest.

Israeli forces established dozens of checkpoints in the West Bank. Ten Palestinian civilians were abducted by Israeli forces at checkpoints in the West Bank. Israeli forces have continued efforts to create a Jewish majority in occupied East Jerusalem. An Israeli court gave Siyam family an extension until August 1, 2013 to evacuate their house in al-Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in the occupied city. Licenses were issued to build 165 new settlement units in "Nabi Ya'qoub" settlement.

Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip: Israel has continued to impose a total closure on the Occupied Palestinian Territories and has isolated the Gaza Strip from the outside world.

The total closure of al-Mentar ("Karni") crossing since March 2, 2011 has seriously affected the economy of the Gaza Strip. Following this closure, all economic and commercial establishments in the Gaza Commercial Zone were shut off. It should be noted that al-Mentar crossing is the biggest crossing in the Gaza Strip, in terms of its capacity to absorb the flow of imports and exports. The decision to close al-Mentar crossing was the culmination of a series of decisions resulting in the complete closure of the Sofa crossing, east of the Gaza Strip in the beginning of 2009, and the Nahal Oz crossing, east of Gaza City, which was dedicated for the delivery of fuel and cooking gas to the Gaza Strip, in the beginning of 2010.

Israeli forces have continued to impose a total ban on the delivery of raw materials to the Gaza Strip, except for very limited items and quantities. The limited quantities of raw materials allowed into Gaza do not meet the minimal needs of the civilian population of the Gaza Strip. ...

Israeli settlement activities: Israeli forces have continued to support settlement activities in the West Bank and Israeli settlers have continued to attack Palestinian civilians and property. ...

[Read the entire report on the PCHR website.](#)