

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
November 1, 2012



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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.

This week's Middle East Notes focus on the growing reality of an apartheid Israeli State and the present Palestinian majority in the area controlled by Israel. Also included is a link to a film giving clear history of the conflict and suggestions for its resolution.

- **October 26, 2012 Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletin:** Violence in Gaza, the visit of the Emir of Qatar to Gaza with a pledge of humanitarian aid, elections on the West Bank, and the promise by Mahmoud Abbas that he would be ready for negotiations with Israel if the UN recognized Palestine as a non-member state are some of the issues highlighted in this week's Bulletin.
- **Standing with the 15: A Call to Action:** Sign a petition in support of the Church leaders who sent a letter to Congress calling for accountability on the use of U.S. military aid.
- **The Jewish majority is history:** The Israeli government's acknowledgement that Jews are a minority in the land between the sea and the river means one thing only: Apartheid is here.
- **Israeli Jews' support of apartheid:** Arab lawmaker Jamal Zahalka says a recent survey symbolizes "the end of hypocrisy" and that the "Israeli regime isn't a carbon copy of South Africa's apartheid, but it is certainly from the same family."
- **The new Israeli apartheid:** Katrina Steward writes in the Independent that the recent poll reveals widespread Jewish support for policy of discrimination against Arab minority.
- **Carter criticizes both Netanyahu and Obama:** Former President Carter said that Prime Minister Netanyahu lacked the courage of his predecessors and that he had abandoned the two-state solution that has been the accepted framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades Carter was almost as critical of President Obama, saying his administration has shirked the historical role played by the United States in the region.
- **Film: How we can solve the Israeli Palestinian problem:** Sami Moukaddem's hour-and-a-half film, released in late September 2012, includes several long excerpts from an interview with journalist Jonathan Cook, among many others.

1) Churches for Middle East Peace

October 26, 2012

The situation in Gaza: Violence flared up in Gaza and southern Israel this week as Israeli forces killed four Palestinian militants and injured nine others while over 70 rockets fired from Gaza injured three Thai workers in Israel. This tragic violence comes at a time when the regional landscape is changing, leaving many to wonder about what comes next.

Since its founding in 1987 as a branch of the Egyptian Muslim brotherhood, it has operated as an armed resistance group opposed to Israel. After contesting and winning parliamentary elections in the West Bank in 2006, it took over Gaza by force 2007 when the election results were not implemented. Its rockets into Israel led to Operation Cast Lead by Israeli forces in 2008-2009 that left 1,400 Palestinians and nine Israelis dead in three weeks. Hamas now faces the challenge of trying to balance its armed resistance credentials and its political survival.

On Tuesday the [emir of Qatar became the first head of state to visit the Gaza Strip](#) since Hamas took power. The emir, Sheik Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani, pledged \$400 million to build housing, rehabilitate roads and create a prosthetic center, among other projects. The infusion of money is critical at a time when both Gaza and the West Bank are experiencing a financial crisis. *Foreign Policy's* David Roberts believes that, "by breaking Hamas's regional isolation and explicitly recognizing its rule over Gaza, [Doha has strengthened the militant group's hand](#) against its Palestinian rivals."

Reuters reports that "analysts think Qatar, building up a leader's role in the Sunni Muslim world and influence beyond the Gulf, [hopes to tame Hamas](#), get it to reconcile with the Fatah movement of Western-backed Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and perhaps advance the cause of Middle East peace."

Yigal Palmor, a spokesman for Israel's Foreign Ministry, declared that the emir had "thrown peace under the bus." Southern Israel has faced what he described as "a steady drizzle of rockets" in the last few weeks. While it has largely abided by the truce brokered after Cast Lead, extremist Salafi militants inspired by the ideology of Al Qaeda are [causing problems for Hamas](#), once considered one of the most extreme Palestinian movements. Another group, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad, which the New York Times describes as "somewhere between Hamas and the Salafists," is becoming better armed thanks to support from Iran. Many of the members of these groups defected from Hamas after it decided to participate in the 2006 elections. These groups are credited for most of the recent cross-border rocket salvos.

Israeli officials hold Hamas will be held responsible for any attacks coming out of Gaza whether it is directly responsible or not. The day after the emir left Gaza, Hamas began a major to take part in the rocket salvo against Israel, suggesting the Emir's support was facilitating more violence. attacks. Many analysts [attribute rockets fired by Hamas militants to political pressure](#). Mukheimer Abu Sada, an independent analyst in Gaza, said "Hamas is under pressure from the people: 'Where is the resistance that you speak of?' Hamas needed to save face."

Khalil Abu Shammala from the human rights group Ad Ameer gives his insight into Hamas' violent outburst by saying, "It was [a calculated escalation](#). The rockets used were short range, though Hamas and other groups have rockets with ranges of 20 km and more. But they did not use them and that is evidence the escalation was calculated and limited. As a resistance movement, Hamas feels embarrassed in front of its own members, so it attempts through these limited responses to prove it remains on the battlefield." ...

[**Read the entire Bulletin, which includes a remembrance of George McGovern, on CMEP's website.**](#)

2) Standing with the 15: A Call to Action

A note from Sabeel-North America's director, Don Wagner: "Please take a minute and sign the petition below in support of the 15 courageous church leaders [including Kathy McNeely, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns] who sent the letter to Congress calling for hearings on Israel's possible misuse of U.S. military assistance. As you know, this initiative has drawn a firestorm of pressure on the church leaders by the pro-Israel lobby and we need to stand up and be counted in our support of the churches. It will take you only a few seconds but it will send an important message of support. Please pass it on to your friends and ask them to do the same." ([Read more about the letter and the responses in last week's Middle East Notes.](#))

Petitions have been prepared and will be posted on four websites - Kairos USA, Jewish Voice for Peace, the U.S. Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation and American Muslims for Palestine.

We invite you to stand with the 15 by adding your name to the petition on either the **Kairos USA** (not accessible using Firefox browser) or **U.S. Campaign** site. And when you have done that, forward this letter to five friends with your invitation to join you.

3) [The Jewish majority is history](#)

Akiva Eldar, Ha'aretz, October 16, 2012

Amid a dry economic report published yesterday ... lies an official announcement/acknowledgment of unparalleled importance:

Hila Raz's article reports that the Tax Authority is trying to pass an amendment to the law for the purpose of revising the ceiling for eligibility for tax benefits, whose aim, in turn, is to encourage exports. According to the Export Promotion Law approved in 2005, a factory is entitled to a tax break if at least 25 percent of its income stemmed from sales to a market with at least 12 million residents. A Ministry of Finance memorandum on the amendment to the law notes that in 2011 the population of Israel and the Palestinian Authority exceeded the 12 million mark, which enables manufacturers who market to these consumers to enjoy a tax break. The Tax Authority's diligent officials would like to raise the threshold for qualifying for the benefit by two million residents, so that they will not have to grant the benefit to exporters who sell their wares in Israel and the territories.

According to the Central Bureau of Statistics (which is subordinate to the Prime Minister's Office), of the 12 million residents living under Israeli rule, the number of Jews is just under 5.9 million (as of April 25). Twelve million minus 5.9 million Jews equals 6.1 million non-Jews. In other words, between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River, there is a pretty Jewish state as far as its laws and customs, but the reality is not so democratic. Foreign sources report that Jews had already become a minority in the area of the greater Land of Israel several years ago. From now on, it is an official statistic.

There will certainly be those who argue that the 12 million includes the resident of the Gaza Strip, which Israel evacuated, and that I should have deducted 1.5 million people from the number of non-Jewish residents. But the 12 million, which does happen to include the residents of the Gaza Strip, is an official figure appearing on Ministry of Finance stationery. If this

population “is not considered” for purposes of the demographic balance, the Finance Ministry should be so kind as to deduct it from the limit for receiving the tax breaks and from the balance of its income.

U.S. intel cries “apartheid”: The term “apartheid” features prominently in an article in the on-line magazine Foreign Policy Journal on a new “confidential report” prepared by 16 American intelligence agencies. Franklin Lamb reported from Beirut to the Foreign Policy Journal on the “confidential report, which he claims compares Israel to the apartheid regime in South Africa. The document, he says, warns that the Arab Spring and the Muslim awakening will encourage 1.2 billion Muslims to fight against what they refer to as “the immoral European occupation of Palestine.” Lamb argues that the report accuses Israel of intervening in internal American affairs via 60 organizations and some 7,500 administration officials. The report, Lamb says, advises the United States to leave Israel alone as its existence sabotages the American interest in moving closer to the Arab world and the Iranian people.

A quick Google search reveals interesting details about Lamb; you can find him in friendly pose with the arch-terrorist Samir Kuntar. His profile states that he is a board member of the Sabra-Shatila Foundation, a volunteer with the Palestinian Civil Rights Campaign, a regular guest on talk shows of Hezbollah’s Al-Manar station and a contributing writer to the Electronic Intifada site. It is hard to believe that Republican Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen bothered to scrutinize the scoop maker. Otherwise even an ardent supporter of the Netanyahu government like her would not have waved Lamb’s above-mentioned article in the meetings she is having with Florida Jewish communities as convincing proof that Hussein Obama is an enemy of Israel.

Netanyahu may not need to worry about reports that “the intelligence report will be presented to President Obama.” However, ahead of the U.S. elections, the prime minister certainly must raise his level of concern over all matters of U.S.-Israel relations. Leaving aside the exaggerations scattered throughout the article on “the report,” the findings attributed to it reflect the prevailing White House attitude toward Netanyahu. The official acknowledgment that Jews have become a minority in the land of Israel could only reinforce the claims against Israeli rule over the Palestinians and the international support, including that of the Americans, for establishing a Palestinian state within the 1967 borders. It is unnecessary to dwell on what the prime minister may expect if Obama remains in the White House for four more years. But even if Mitt Romney spends the next four years there, Obama will continue to hold full presidential authority until January 20, 2013.

Reminder: President Reagan’s decision to open a dialogue with the PLO (following the organization’s declaration of independence on the basis of UN Resolution 242, which includes recognition of Israel) was made during a period of transition, after the 1988 U.S. election. It was Reagan’s revenge on Yitzhak Shamir for impeding the peace process and the London Agreement for an international peace conference. In the present case, the transition overlaps with an Israeli election campaign. What damage would an outgoing President Obama incur if the day after the November 6 U.S. elections, he instructs the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations to support Palestine’s bid to join the organization? On the other hand, a campaigning Netanyahu will not have a problem turning that move into additional proof that the whole world is against us and therefore the country really needs a strong leader.

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

4) [Israeli Jews' support of apartheid is not surprising](#)

By Jack Houry and Jonathan Lis, Ha'aretz, October 24, 2012

Arab Knesset members and organizations operating in Israel's Arab community were not surprised by the survey results showing that most Israeli Jews favor denying Palestinians the right to vote if Israel were to annex the West Bank, or by the backing for discrimination against Israel's Arab citizens.

They said that [the survey, published on Monday in Ha'aretz](#), only verifies their sense of increasing radicalization of Israelis and the marginalization of Arab citizens to the fringes of Israeli society.

At the Mossawa Center in Haifa, which bills itself as the Advocacy Center for Arab Citizens in Israel, they said that "the survey's results indicate of the future to come. There is a feeling that those racist positions will also be expressed in party propaganda for the upcoming elections, as it has in past campaigns." Nidal Othman, the center's legal adviser and projects coordinator, said: "In our view, the Central Elections Committee and the attorney general have an important, central role in steps against certain parties that turn their election propaganda into racism. To do this, they must sharpen the regulations and take action against all those who incite to violence and racism."

The Abraham Fund, which works toward Jewish-Arab coexistence and equality, said that "there has been a deterioration in the way Jews relate to the Arab minority, both as individuals and as a group, which is fueling the alienation of the state from its Arab citizens. The major factor is the absence of a clear national policy promoting coexistence and equality between Jews and Arabs and the failure to carry out a comprehensive educational policy for life together."

"Racism has become long ago the mainstream in Israeli society and Israel has long since become a democratic state for Jews, and Jewish for Arabs," said MK Ahmed Tibi (United Arab List- Ta'al). "The data is an ugly mirror image, but an accurate one, of Israel."

Hadash chairman MK Mohammad Barakeh said that the fact that the majority of respondents supported an apartheid regime "is the fragrant fruit of the cumulative policies of Israeli governments, in particular the current government and the 18th Knesset."

"The survey," said MK Jamal Zahalka, the head of the Balad party, "symbolizes the end of the era of hypocrisy and the removal of all masks. We're talking about racism, pure and simple. The Israeli regime isn't a carbon copy of South Africa's apartheid, but it is certainly from the same family."

Tzipi Livni, the former head of the Kadima, who is now considering a return to active politics, expressed shock at the results of the survey and called for an immediate revival of the two-states-for-two-peoples initiative.

5) The new Israeli apartheid

Catrina Steward, The Independent, October 24, 2012

A new poll has revealed that a majority of Israeli Jews believe that the Jewish State practises "apartheid" against Palestinians, with many openly supporting discriminatory policies against the country's Arab citizens.

A third of respondents believe that Israel's Arab citizens should be denied the vote, while almost half – 47 percent – would like to see them stripped of their citizenship rights and placed under Palestinian Authority control, according to Israel's liberal Ha'aretz newspaper, which published the poll's findings yesterday.

About 20 percent of Israel's nearly eight million people are Israeli Arabs, Palestinians who hold Israeli citizenship and live within the borders of Israel proper. The views echo hardline opinions usually associated with Israel's ultranationalist and ultraorthodox parties, and suggest that racism and discrimination is more entrenched than generally thought.

The poll, conducted by Israel's Dialog polling group, found that 59 percent out of the 503 people questioned would like to see Jews given preference for public-sector jobs, while half would like to see Jews better treated than Arabs.

Just over 40 percent would like to see separate housing and classrooms for Jews and Arabs. The findings "reflect the widespread notion that Israel, as a Jewish State, should be a state that favours Jews," wrote Noam Sheizaf, an Israeli journalist and blogger. "They are also the result of the occupation ... After almost half a century of dominating another people, it's no surprise that most Israelis don't think Arabs deserve the same rights."

Human rights groups have long decried existing Israeli policies that discriminate against Arabs, citing classroom shortages, smaller municipal budgets, and unequal property ownership rights as proof of Israeli Arabs' status as second-class citizens.

That many Jews believe that Israel has adopted "apartheid" policies is surprising, given that the term is usually deployed only by Israel's most vociferous critics, and suggests that the government-led narrative that the Jewish State is the only democracy in the Middle East is unconvincing to some. But such self-awareness does not mean that Israelis are ashamed of it.

Nearly 70 percent of those questioned would object to the 2.5 million Palestinians living in the West Bank obtaining the vote if Israel was to annex the Palestinian territory, suggesting that they effectively endorse an apartheid regime. Nearly 75 percent favour separate roads there for Israelis and Palestinians – although most view such a step as "necessary," rather than "good." Although nearly 40 percent support annexation, that remains a distant prospect for the moment. ...

[Read the entire article on the Independent's website.](#)

6) [In Jerusalem, Carter derides Netanyahu and Obama](#)

Jodi Rudoren, *The New York Times*, October 22, 2012

Three decades after leaving the White House, former President [Jimmy Carter](#) still functions inside the trappings of power, cruising through fiercely contested areas of this city on Monday in a 12-car motorcade, with Secret Service agents stationed strategically as he surveyed the view from the Mount of Olives.

But at 88, Mr. Carter, trying to nudge his agenda without an official platform, no longer filters his words for politics or diplomacy. On Monday, he ramped up his years of criticism of Israeli policy by saying that Prime Minister [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) lacked the courage of his predecessors and that he had abandoned the two-state solution that has been the accepted framework for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict for decades. And just two weeks before the American election, he was almost as critical of [President Obama](#), saying his administration has shirked the historical role played by the United States in the region.

“I don’t think there’s any doubt that Netanyahu has decided the one-state option is the one he’s going to pursue,” Mr. Carter said, despite Mr. Netanyahu’s professed commitment to two states, notably in [a 2009 speech at Bar Ilan University](#).

As for Mr. Obama, a fellow Democrat, the former president said, “The U.S. government policy the last two to three years has basically been a rapid withdrawal from any kind of controversy.”

He added: “Every president has been a very powerful factor here in advocating this two-state solution. That is now not apparent.”

Mr. Carter was here with the former prime minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, and the former president of Ireland, Mary Robinson, on behalf of the Elders, a group of 10 left-leaning éminences grises convened by Nelson Mandela in 2007 that aims to promote human rights and world peace by, according to its [Web site](#), “speaking difficult truths and tackling taboos.” Mr. Carter and Ms. Brundtland met with President Shimon Peres of [Israel](#) on Sunday, and all three met with President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority on Monday, consulting in between with like-minded [Palestinian](#) and Israeli intellectuals. On Wednesday, they are scheduled to see Egypt’s new Islamist president, Mohamed Morsi.

A born-again Christian who served a single term as president from 1977 to 1981, Mr. Carter said he has been to Israel and the Palestinian territories about 30 times. He recalled swimming in the Dead Sea on his first visit, in 1973, and noted that there were [then about 1,500 Jewish settlers in the West Bank](#), compared with the 350,000 living there now. And he has long been an outspoken critic of Israeli policy, particularly in his 2006 book, “Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid.”

But Mr. Carter said Monday that the situation is “worse now than it’s ever been for the Palestinians” because of the expanding settlements and lack of prospects for change. Describing himself as “grieved, disgusted and angry,” he said the two-state solution is “in death throes,” which he called “a tragic new development that the world is kind of ignoring.”

Surveys show Palestinians and Israelis overwhelmingly support a two-state solution, but intellectuals on both sides have increasingly been talking about a binational, single state. But models for such a state generally either imagine Israel losing its Jewish character, or ruling over a Palestinian majority in an undemocratic way. Mr. Carter called the one-state option “a catastrophe — not for the Palestinians, for Israel.”

As Ray Dolphin of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs pointed out Jewish homes in the Palestinian neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah, and Hagit Ofran of Peace Now’s Settlement Watch Project described Israel’s tourism development around the Old City, Mr. Carter seemed to have heard it all before. When Ms. Ofran said “there are more powers fighting” against Israel’s policies, he shook his head.

“The United States used to be major obstacle to Israeli expansion — now the United States is quite dormant,” he said. “I don’t really detect the forces. They’re not in Europe. They’re not in the United States. They’re not in the Arab world.” ...

[Read the entire article on the Times’ website.](#)

**7) Film: How we can solve the Palestinian Israeli problem
Jonathan Cook, Nazareth Blog, October 2012**

Sami Moukaddem’s hour-and-a-half film, released in late September 2012, includes several long excerpts from an interview with journalist Jonathan Cook, who is based in Nazareth. The interview was recorded in the UK in 2010. Other interviewees in the film include Noam Chomsky, Gideon Levy, Mairead Maguire, Ken Loach, David Hirst and Ghada Karmi, among many others. Highly recommended viewing.

Click here to watch: [How we can solve the Palestinian Israeli problem.](#)