

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
November 13, 2014



Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.

[Read previous weeks' Middle East Notes.](#)

This week's Middle East Notes give information on the "war of words between Israel and Washington, actions by the Israeli Prime Minister to make a Palestinian State impossible, camouflaged methods of expulsion of Palestinians from East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, violence in Jerusalem, the fear that Washington's protection at the UN can no longer be taken for granted, fanatics on The Temple Mount/the Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) stirring up conflict, movement of the European Union States towards recognizing the State of Palestine, and other timely issues.

- The CMEP Bulletins for October 31 and November 7 focus on the war of words between Israel and the U.S., tensions in Jerusalem, settlement expansion, Gaza health issues, especially lack of clean water, and other pertinent readings.
- The State of Two States for the weeks of October 31 and November 7.
- David Zonsheine writes in +972 that by seemingly doing nothing but trying to preserve his power, Netanyahu is in fact advancing a process that makes a Palestinian state impossible.
- Bradley Burston in Ha'aretz notes nine enormously destructive things Israel is doing these days to itself.
- Amira Hass gives an inventory in Ha'aretz of some of the camouflaged methods of expulsion of Palestinians from the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.
- Sever Plocker writes in Ynetnews that avoidance of peace initiatives and delusional West Bank construction threaten Israel's existence as a Jewish and democratic state, yet the Israeli silent majority remains silent.
- An October 31 Ha'aretz editorial notes that the Jerusalem syndrome just erupted again when an apparently religious Muslim fanatic tried to assassinate a religious Jewish fanatic, illustrating that Jerusalem is not only Israel's vibrant capital, it's also the precise hub of the internal contradiction and self-deception of the political formulas pushing Israel firmly toward strategic non-existence.
- Raphael Ahren writes in the Times of Israel that the U.S. security council veto may no longer be a given. With ties growing colder, some in Jerusalem fear Washington's protection at the UN cannot be taken for granted, and that the midterms may further complicate the picture.
- Rabbi Alana Suskin writes in Washington Jewish Week that the Temple Mount should be a place of peace. Extremists are using this site to spark a holy war, at the expense of Israel's security, its stability and peace.
- John V. Whitbeck writes in the Palestine Chronicle that most of those who proclaim themselves "pro-Israel" or who genuinely care about the welfare of Israelis profess to support a "two-state solution" since they realize that the perpetuation of the current one-state reality would nullify the Zionist project if transformed into a fully democratic state and make Israel a despised pariah state if perpetuated as today's effective apartheid state.
- The Israel News reports that a European official told the Wall Street Journal that "other European countries are poised to follow Sweden" if efforts are not made to renew peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.
- The Israel News notes that after meeting officials in Jerusalem, Federica Mogherini, the European Union's new foreign affairs chief, said that a Palestinian state is "the ultimate goal and this is the position of all the European Union."

1a) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin for October 31

Tensions in Jerusalem: Tensions over the Temple Mount or Noble Sanctuary in Jerusalem spiked and fears of more violence increased after the shooting on Wednesday of an activist rabbi who has campaigned to change the status quo by expanding Jewish access and rebuilding a Jewish Temple on the site. This was followed by the killing of a Palestinian suspect at his home early Thursday by Israeli police and the announcement by Israeli authorities that the Temple mount would be closed on Friday, reportedly the first time it has been closed since 2000. Since 1967 under an agreement the site has been controlled by Jordanian Muslim religious authorities (Waqf) who allow non-Muslims to visit the site at certain times during the day but not to pray there. Closing of the site was denounced by Jordanian and Palestinians officials. Police reinforcements were brought into Jerusalem on Friday, but despite threats order was generally maintained. Secretary Kerry called for calm, avoiding provocations and maintaining the status quo.

New settlement expansion plans announced: Prime Minister Netanyahu's office revealed October 26 that plans had been approved to build over 1,000 new housing units in East Jerusalem and development of new infrastructure projects in the West Bank, including 12 new roads.

On Monday State Department and White House officials signaled the Obama administration's "unequivocal opposition" to the move, saying it would be "incompatible with the pursuit of peace," "inconsistent" with the Israeli government's stated goal of a two-state solution with Palestinians. It was also said that continued settlement calls into question Israel's commitment to peace. Asked what consequences there might be, the State Department's spokesperson said, "Obviously the international community is watching closely what they do."

Jordan announced it would request an emergency session of UN Security Council to discuss the settlement plans.

The following day Netanyahu criticized those who condemn Israeli expansion in East Jerusalem as "disconnected from reality." His office said, "Netanyahu will continue to uphold the security interests of Israel and the historic rights of the Jewish people in Jerusalem, and no amount of pressure will change that."

The level of angry U.S.-Israeli rhetoric increased with publication of an article by Jeffrey Goldberg on Tuesday in which an unnamed U.S. official described Prime Minister Netanyahu as "chickens**t." Goldberg described U.S.-Israeli relations as a "full-blown crises" that stands to get worse after the U.S. elections in early November. Goldberg suggested that post November Obama lay out the administration's vision for a two-state solution, including borders based in the 1967 lines, making explicit to Israel what the U.S. expects of it. The remarks were denounced in strong terms by the White House and the State Department.

A national Security Council spokesperson rejected the idea that there is a crisis in U.S. relations with Israel, saying ties are "unshakable," but added the U.S. does raise "concerns about Israel's settlement policy "out of deep concern about Israel's future..."

Peter Beinart also commented that Abbas's UN bid for recognition is not an end run around peace talks but an effort to make peace talks real. UN recognition "may represent a last chance" for Obama "to prove that he won't let the two-state solution die without a fight. ...

[Read the entire October 31 Bulletin on CMEP's website.](#)

1b) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin for November 7

Lack of clean water in Gaza reduces quality of life: The United Nations predicts an underground reservoir used by locals will become unusable by 2016 leaving residents of the Gaza Strip without a single water supply. Palestinian residents of East Jerusalem also confront daily challenges in accessing water. Due to a lack of urban development plans, hundreds of apartments in the area have been built without permits prohibiting them from being legally connected to the water supply and sanitation systems. The water infrastructure could “adequately provide for the consumption needs of 15,000 people, while the local population numbers 60,000 to 80,000.”

The World Health Organization (WHO) standards stipulate that a minimum of 100 liters of water be allocated for a single person on a daily basis. The average water intake for Israelis is 183 liters per day, 73 liters for Palestinians connected to the water grid, and 20-50 liters for Palestinians not connected to the water grid. Gaza’s primary water source is the coastal aquifer which has been over-pumped for decades. Currently the Palestinian Water Authority pumps 180 cubic meter (mcm) a year from the aquifer, while its replenishment rate is only 50-60 mcm per year. At the current rate of pumping the aquifer is unable to naturally replenish itself and may have passed the point of return in terms of rehabilitation.

During the Gaza War 11 wells and two purification plants were completely destroyed with an additional 15 wells and four purification plants severely damaged. In addition, 29 kilometers (18 miles) of pipeline was destroyed and another 17 kilometers was damaged. As a result, wastewater treatment plants are unable to function properly and approximately half of the water system is non-functional. Functional parts of the water system receive water once every five days. 90-95 percent of the remaining water is unfit for drinking or agricultural use due to high counts of nitrogen and chloride. Nitrogen is present due to agricultural runoff from pesticide use and sewage seepage into the aquifer chloride is the direct result of salination. Instances of skin disease including infections and illnesses targeting children are rising due to prolonged use of contaminated drinking water.

Haim Gvirtzman, a member of the Israeli Water Council and advisor to the Israel- PA Joint Water Committee has said that, “[the] Palestinian Authority is using water as a weapon against the State of Israel. It is more interested in reducing the amount of water available to Israel, polluting natural reservoirs, harming Israeli farmers, and sullyng Israel’s reputation around the world than truly solving water problems for the Palestinian people.” Fieldwork reports by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) state that, “After being hit several times, the Gaza Power Plant (GPP) was shut down on July 29... Even in areas where service has resumed, outages exceed 18 hours per day, severely disrupting the provision of basic services including health and water throughout Gaza.”

Opposing explanations of the water crisis have made revisions and repairs difficult to manage. While the Gaza Donor Conference was able to plan a budget and collect money from donors, actions have yet to be executed.

* Many of you have witnessed our campaign calling on the U.S. government to declare Israeli settlements in the West Bank illegal under international law. In order to magnify our voice and yours [please share this page](#) with your friends who believe in peace with justice for Palestinians and Israelis.

[Read the rest of the Bulletin on CMEP's website.](#)

2a) The State of Two States - Week of October 26

This week in Israel tensions continued to be strained between Israeli and American officials. On Monday, as the Knesset's winter session was initiated, the Prime Minister's Office announced its decision to build 1,060 housing units in Jerusalem, beyond the Green Line. On Tuesday, the Atlantic published an article by Jeffrey Goldberg, in which he quotes an anonymous senior Obama administration official who refers to Netanyahu with personally disparaging remarks. On Wednesday night, there was an assassination attempt in Jerusalem on prominent right-wing activist Yehuda Glick. As a result, Israel decided to close the Temple Mount, sparking outrage from the Israeli-right and the Palestinians. On Thursday, Sweden officially announced that it would recognize the State of Palestine. In the midst of these conflicts, debate and disagreement continue in the Knesset over the allocation of new funds for settlements.

"There is no peace, no security, no economy, no housing, no income, no hope. There is no reason to leave Netanyahu in power." Opposition Chairman Isaac Herzog, in a speech made at the start of the Knesset's winter session. (Monday 10/27)

"The time has come for Israel to decide what its vision is, what are the objectives that stem from that vision, and how it can act to make them become manifest. That debate is one that the country's leadership needs to hold with the public. If that is not done, no one is going to take us seriously, and the Israeli public will stop believing its leaders." Former Director of the Mossad Efraim Halevy, in an op-ed for Yedioth Ahronoth. (Tuesday 10/28)

"People here feel like their backs are being pushed against the wall, step by step. The Jews' takeover of the houses, led by the Elad Foundation, which works to strengthen Jewish ties to Jerusalem, and the Ateret Cohanim Yeshiva, makes people realize that resistance is their only option—and then the stone becomes a weapon. The young men feel that throwing stones is their only way to express the anger that they feel inside. This is the reality they are born into. They don't know anything else." Yedioth Ahronoth Columnist Elior Levy, based on an interview with anonymous Palestinians residents from the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan. (Tuesday 10/28)

"I have heard a claim that our construction in Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem makes peace more distant. It is the criticism which is making peace more distant. These words are detached from reality. They foster false statements among the Palestinians." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a comment responding to international condemnation of plans to build new housing in East Jerusalem. (Tuesday 10/28)

"The other day I was talking to a senior Obama administration official about the foreign leader who seems to frustrate the White House and the State Department the most. 'The thing about Bibi is, he's a chickenshit,' this official said, referring to the Israeli prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, by his nickname." Columnist Jeffrey Goldberg in an op-ed from the The Atlantic. (Tuesday 10/28)

"The State of Israel has three binding principles. The first is the relationship with the United States. The second is the relationship with the United States. And the third thing, which is last but not least, is the relationship with the United States." President Reuven Rivlin in a comment about Israel-US relations, as reported by Israel Army Radio. (Wednesday 10/29)

"If you squabble and argue all day long, the side liable to pay the price is Israel's citizens. Jeffrey Goldberg's article contains an extremely dangerous signal that the diplomatic safety net that Israel has enjoyed for a generation from the United States could be removed. It is not child's play when every single day the prime minister sticks it to President Obama." Opposition Chairman Yitzhak Herzog in a comment on Netanyahu's behavior, as reported by Israel Army Radio. (Wednesday 10/29) ...

[Read the entire collection on the Israel Policy Forum website.](#)

2b) The State of Two States - Week of November 1

This week in Israel began by commemorating the 19th anniversary of the murder of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. Tensions in Jerusalem continued to rise, with another automobile terror attack on Wednesday, killing one border patrol officer and injuring dozens. Also on Wednesday, Jordan recalled its ambassador from Israel in a sign of growing discontent regarding developments on the Temple Mount, despite Prime Minister Netanyahu's insistence that he would maintain the status quo at the holy site.

"There are those who have turned the word 'peace' into a derogatory term, and there are those who consider 'peace supporters' as delusional people...I say clearly today: Those who have given up on peace are the delusional ones. Those who gave up and stopped looking for peace, they're the naive ones, the ones who are not patriots." Former President Shimon Peres, during a speech commemorating the 19th anniversary of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination. (Saturday 11/1)

"I also say that if there's no political follow-up to Operation Protective Edge its fallen soldiers were in vain. And if so, what did the residents of the Gaza-boarder communities suffer for? And why did we need this trauma for the entire population, if already now they're talking about a second and third round? For God's sake, there is a solution that could prevent the following rounds. We need to come to a settlement with the moderate Arab states, which have more leverage over the Palestinians than we do." Major General (res.) Amon Reshef, in an interview about a letter he initiated, with the backing of over 100 retired Generals, urging Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to engage in regional negotiations with the Palestinians and moderate Arab countries. (Sunday 11/2)

With great anger and condemnation, we received news of the criminal crime of assassination that was committed by the death and terrorist gangs of the hated Israeli occupation army against your son, Muataz Ibrahim Khalil Hijazi, who died as a martyr in the defense of the rights of our people and the holy places." Palestinian Authority Chairman Abu Mazen, in a letter to the family of alleged terrorist Muataz Hijazi, the man who tried to assassinate Yehuda Glick, as reported by nrg.co.il. (Monday 11/3)

"Peace is not just wishful thinking: It is a key component in any vision that seeks to ensure the State of Israel's existence in the coming generations. But a signed peace agreement that will resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in one fell swoop is a completely different story. Unfortunately, there is no such thing, at least not in the foreseeable future. Neither on the Israeli side nor on the Palestinian side. "The gap is too great, the political price required in order to bridge it is too great, the leaders are too petty, too panicked, and the two peoples are too spoiled. They will only accept the necessary concessions if and when a knife is laid on their throat." Yedioth Ahronoth Columnist Nahum Barnea, in an op-ed. (Monday 11/3)

"Abu Mazen is a long way from being a Zionist. Anyone who thinks we have an ally who will declare our right as a Jewish state, as Bibi wishes? That won't happen. But he's a pragmatist. He understands that ultimately a diplomatic solution is the right thing for the Palestinians. Yet today, in no small part because of us, he's transferred a considerable degree of the decision-making to the international community. The way he sees it, it's doing the work, it can place sanctions on Israel. Israel, for all its strength, is dependent on the international community, on the Americans, the Europeans. And the more that Israel manages to make itself hated and is more criticized, that means the international community is doing the work for me. And so, says Abbas to himself, I have to go to the UN institutions and I have to go to the International Court of Justice in The Hague, with encouragement of boycotts of settlement products — all this does the work for me, for the Palestinian cause. And we need to be patient." Minister of Science and Former Head of the Shin Bet Ya'akov Peri, in an interview with The Times of Israel. (Monday 11/13)

[Read the entire collection on the Israel Policy Forum website.](#)

3) Netanyahu's status quo strategy: Thwarting a Palestinian state

David Zonsheine, +972, October 30, 2014

In his Atlantic article on the growing crisis between Jerusalem and Washington, Jeffrey Goldberg quoted American officials slamming Netanyahu, one now-famously called him “chickenshit.” The substance of the criticism was that he lacks the “guts” to strike Iran and is only interested in “protecting himself from political defeat.”

Beyond the damage Netanyahu and his government are causing Israel in the international community – hurting ties crucial for a small country with limited resources in a complicated region – I disagree with the American diagnosis. In Netanyahu’s case, preserving his rule without any apparent progress towards a clear goal is part and parcel of his plan to deepen the deeply-ingrained process of preventing a Palestinian state in the West Bank and splintering the Palestinian people. Even if Netanyahu did not start these steps, he is propelling them with pristine efficiency.

Every day that Netanyahu tries to maintain his seat is another day of settlement construction in the West Bank, another day of Palestinian displacement, of destroying Palestinian assets and other grave human rights violations; another day in which Netanyahu’s strategic goals are being achieved. Unlike the objective of peace and ending occupation, Netanyahu’s objectives don’t have a big fan base in the international arena. He knows this all too well, and this is why he cunningly operates to maintain the status quo. Ostensibly this means doing nothing; in practice it means rapidly changing facts on the ground in the West Bank.

His declaration of support for the two-state solution at Bar Ilan University and the negotiations led by Kerry were conducted in parallel to government actions on the ground – constituting an integral part of his strategy.

Netanyahu surely must have taken the Americans’ criticism as a complement. They thought they were insulting him but in fact they were praising him. They revealed that they do not understand Netanyahu’s strategy – mistaking his effective methods for fear and lack of political vision. They also positioned him perfectly in his battle for right-wing voters. He is simultaneously standing tall in front of the Administration while winking to his benefactors and allies in the Republican Party ahead of Senate elections. At the same time, he is not “giving in” to Bennett, who perfectly fills the role of the settler youth who makes the prime minister appear like the experienced, rational centrist.

A trip to the West Bank and a perusal of reports by human rights organizations, like the recent B’Tselem report on the Burqah village, can attest to these processes. While Netanyahu’s rhetoric focuses on Iran, ISIS, the war in Gaza and the high cost of living, the West Bank continues to undergo significant changes and the Palestinian people continued to be divided and conquered.

Netanyahu is the victor in Goldberg’s Atlantic story. And he continues to be the leading candidate for Israeli prime minister, precisely because of his ability to sell his de facto strategy of change as a status quo strategy.

David Zonsheine is the chairman of B’Tselem.

4) The nine most destructive things Israel is doing right now. To itself.

Bradley Burston, Ha'aretz, October 28, 2014

If you value concepts like democracy, co-existence, equality, justice and security for the vulnerable and the decent, it has probably occurred to you that news about the Holy Land, whether it be online, in print, or on the airwaves, will do your system absolutely no good. This is especially true if the welfare of Israelis and Palestinians is of consequence in your personal equation.

Let's take Israel for a start. Let's take, for a start, the enormously destructive things Israel is doing these days – destructive, that is, to Israel itself. Here's a representative sample:

1. Segregating buses: Banning Palestinians from certain bus lines used by settlers in the West Bank.

Background: Settlers put heavy pressure on hardline Likud Transportation Minister Yisrael Katz and Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon, to order commuting Palestinian workers off buses used by settlers. Settlers cite "security concerns," which include contact between the workers and female settlers. The order was to have begun to go into effect this week. This, despite reservations by Israel's own justice minister and attorney general as to the legality of the edict, which was reportedly issued unilaterally by Ya'alon.

Consequence: Substantive evidence for charges of apartheid and Jim Crow-type segregation in Israeli policies. "This is an official governmental stamp on a policy of apartheid in the territories," declared Meretz party chief Zehava Gal-On. "Separating Jews and Palestinians only deepens Israel's status as a pariah state."

2. Declaring that Israel is committed to settling throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem, thus defying the international community's outlines for possible future Palestinian state.

3. Fanning the flames of violence in East Jerusalem and further poisoning ties with the Obama administration and EU allies by backing settlers taking new homes in the flashpoint Silwan neighborhood.

Background: Netanyahu tells a meeting of Likud MKs that he is "committed to building in every part of Judea and Samaria." Later, he signals to the full parliament that rising violence in Jerusalem should have no effect on limiting settlement activity in largely Palestinian Silwan and elsewhere. He thus echoes far-right Housing Minister Uri Ariel, who announced this week plans to move his family from a West Bank settlement to Silwan.

Consequence: Referring to plans to build 1,060 new settler homes in East Jerusalem, U.S. State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki tells reporters: "If Israel wants to live in a peaceful society, they need to take steps that will reduce tensions. Moving forward with this sort of action would be incompatible with the pursuit of peace." "We view settlement activities as illegitimate and we are unequivocally opposed to unilateral steps." The European Union says such a decision, if confirmed, would be "ill-judged and ill-timed" and "would call into serious question Israel's commitment to a negotiated solution with the Palestinians," harming EU-Israel ties.

4. Taking direct aim to antagonize Washington and Europe, for narrow domestic political advantage.

Background: Leaving nothing to chance, Netanyahu tells the Knesset that Israel is going it alone against its enemies (omitting mention of billions of dollars in U.S. annual foreign aid). He further indicates that he is not about to allow a two-state solution: "I don't see pressure on the Palestinians. I see only pressure on Israel to make more and more concessions, without anything in exchange or security. I want to make it perfectly clear – no pressure, at home or abroad, will work."

Consequence: See Number 3, above.

[Read the entire list here.](#)

5) Israelis excel at camouflaging the expulsion of Palestinians

Amira Hass, Ha'aretz, October 20, 2014

As the descendants of a people [who were] banished throughout history from its homes and various homelands, we Israelis have developed our own expulsion skills – skills that would not embarrass the kings, nobles and officials of the goyim. Our contribution to the family of banishing nations is great, especially considering our short existence as a sovereign entity.

After the big expulsion of between 700,000 and 800,000 Palestinians in 1948, we have made do with smaller expulsions, and excel in camouflaging them under various legal definitions or varying circumstantial theories. The Israeli civil-military bureaucracy does not attempt to bathe its acts in any single guiding ideology. But the spirit of Avigdor Lieberman, Naftali Bennett, Rehavam Ze'evi and Yosef Weitz is watching from above.

Here is an inventory of the methods of expulsion in their various concealments:

1. "Stop being a resident." Israel's control of the Palestinian Population Registry allowed it to expel some 250,000 Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip between 1967 and 1994 by revoking their status as residents (because they remained overseas for over seven years). These figures were provided by the Defense Ministry to HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual, in 2011 and 2012. We must add about 100,000 Palestinians (at least) to this number, who fled or were expelled from the West Bank and Gaza during the June 1967 war and were not present during the census conducted that summer. They have not been allowed back to their homes. The Israelis who have emigrated to Los Angeles, it should be noted, continue to be Israelis.
2. "Trickery." The Oslo Accords speak of a mechanism for the gradual return to the West Bank and Gaza of those who "lost" their identity cards in 1967. Later, Israeli representatives in the negotiations claimed that the intention was for those who had physically lost their ID cards, not residency status itself. In the meantime, here we have another section of the agreement that Israel is not carrying out, while demanding the Palestinians follow their commitments in full.
3. The continued control of the Palestinian Population Registry in the West Bank and Gaza, 20 years after the establishment of the Palestinian Authority, allows Israel to continue and prevent hundreds of thousands from returning to their homes and families. Also, to approve only a few tens of thousands to return through the goodwill gesture of "family reunification."
4. Defining the Palestinians born in East Jerusalem as "permanent residents" whose status is a sort of favor the country grants – like the favor it grants to a priest from the Philippines, for example, who wants to live in the Holy Land under Israeli rule. However, this is a favor with a condition: Whoever lives abroad for seven years will see this favor revoked. His status as a permanent resident will be revoked. But the Palestinians born in Jerusalem are what they are: Born there. In Palestinian Jerusalem. They did not choose to live under Israeli rule; it is Israel that chose to occupy them. And it is the one which decided that whoever lives and works abroad (even in the West Bank, a kilometer north of their homes) will lose his/her status as a permanent resident. In other, simpler, words to understand: They will not be allowed to return. Since 1967 through the end of 2013, Israel expelled 14,309 Jerusalem-born Palestinians that way (according to information that the Interior Ministry gave to HaMoked). Not so many? Think about the 7,000 "victimized" settlers from the Gaza Strip and the noise they are still making because their project of land theft and water robbery came to an end in 2005. The sword of expulsion is quietly hovering over the heads of all Jerusalem Palestinians, concealed under the cover of the laws of Israel and its glory.
5. Bedouin. Who counts them? They are always being expelled. From water sources, pasture lands, because of military firing ranges. Because of nature reserves. In the 1990s they were banished to the garbage dump of Abu Dis to make room for another neighborhood of Ma'aleh Adumim. Now there are plans to expel other groups of Bedouin to a town to be built north of Jericho. ...

[Read the entire piece here. Available to subscribers and registered users.](#)

6) Why are Israelis sleepwalking toward a one-state solution?

Sever Plocker, Ynetnews, October 27, 2014

Where is everybody? Where is the mass protest? Where are the hundreds of thousands of people to flood the squares? Why can't we see or hear them? The protest has ended, and I am not talking about a protest against the annoying price of one dairy product or another. I am referring to the protest against Israel's deterioration down a slippery slope to a situation of a bi-national state. An intolerable situation, a clear risk to our lives and to our children's lives. Hell on the earth of this land.

The vast majority of Israelis don't want a bi-national state. The vast majority of Israelis understand very well that such a state means cancelling Zionism as the Jewish people's national liberation movement. Most of us are unprepared to live in a bi-national state, even if it has a slim Jewish majority, and all the more so if the Jews are a minority subject to the Palestinians' mercy.

Nonetheless, the silent majority here really is silent. Here and there, an alarmed manifesto pops up signed by several hundred figures from different fields, here and there Knesset members exchange verbal jabs. Beyond that, there is silence. No one is willing to organize an apolitical protest against the expansion of settlement construction and the acceptance of a bi-national state. It would be attended, the potential organizers say, by several thousand activists from the political left – and that would be the end of it.

Peace Now, a large popular movement born outside of the party establishments, before the Internet, the social networks and the cellular phones, is today nothing more than a pale shadow of itself.

How can this indifference be explained as the future of the homeland is hanging in the balance? It's not because of the difficulties of life. New figures have just been published about the level of income and expenses of families in Israel. In 2013, the average real income of a family of salaried employees increased by 5.5 percent, the household saving rates have risen and the gaps have been significantly reduced. It's not the economy, stupid. It's the politics.

There are undemocratic states, and sometimes democratic states too, where the political leadership stimulates a national and religious unrest in order to divert the public's attention from the shaky economic situation to goals whose achievement makes people forget the troubles. A "small" initiated war may direct the social-economic anger towards uniting patriotism.

And there are countries, although few, where the political leadership sees an economic protest as an efficient economic tool for diverting the public's attention from its policy in other areas – from civil rights to international isolation and existential threats. This is a tactic of walking on the edge, which takes advantage of the innocence and goodwill of serious people who are concerned about the economy and society.

In the term "leadership," I am not referring to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Netanyahu senses the dangers lying in wait for Israel strongly and deals with them his own way, rather than escaping to consumer-economic issues.

The advantage – from the government's point of view – of a specific economic protest is that it is undamaging in governmental terms and can be quickly quelled at a minimal cost. The price of pudding will be reduced, and to hell with the state. Its disadvantage is that the flames of the protest could spread and start threatening the government. So it must make sure to stop it the moment it becomes "political."

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

7) The Jerusalem paradox in the heart of Israel

Ha'aretz, October 31, 2014

The Jerusalem syndrome erupted again this week. Apparently a religious Muslim fanatic tried to assassinate a religious Jewish fanatic. Both were religious, fired by similar fanaticism and divided by a controversial mountain. Many are familiar with the Jerusalem syndrome, that mental disorder that strikes Jerusalemites or visitors to the city. Its victims are suddenly possessed by a deep spiritual conviction that they have divine or messianic powers. The result is usually serious damage to themselves and anyone who comes into contact with them.

In recent years I sometimes have the feeling that the Jerusalem syndrome has become a mainstream Israeli party, whose people occupy the most sensitive positions in the country – in the government, the army and the Jerusalem municipality. Jerusalem is an insane city, in which three eras exist simultaneously – the old era, the middle ages and the new era – in an impossible confusion. Primitives and innovators, inventors and conservatives, quacks and sane people move in it in constant collision, giving the city its special brand of lunacy.

Jerusalem is not only Israel's vibrant capital. It's also the precise hub of the internal contradiction and self-deception of the political formulas pushing Israel firmly toward strategic non-existence. Israel's strategic and political formulas are an embarrassing logical paradox.

Israeli statesmanship has been accompanied for decades by two very catchy formulas "two states for two peoples" and "No to the division of Jerusalem." On the face of it, all is well and good. It reflects a positive aspiration for peace as well as a great patriotic love for the holy city, our eternal city. So what's bad? It's bad that they both represent a complete failure. The 'two states' time is running out and the city is torn and ruptured as it has never been before. Why?

Before discussing the city's future it is necessary to note that a discussion about what Jerusalem really is or where it is even located has never been held. It's a strange city. We still pray for its construction and still fast to mourn its destruction, although it is densely over-built, stretches from Jericho to Netanya and is much, much bigger than David and Solomon, who erected it, could ever have imagined.

Back to realpolitik. Those committed to the two-state formula and think it through to its implementation, understand that the capital of the second state – Palestine – will also be in Jerusalem. Because the Jews have no monopoly on the city's symbolism, much to their regret. Hence, the formula of dividing the land between its two peoples goes hand in hand with the formula of dividing Jerusalem into two capitals.

The same logic works in reverse on the other side. The ranting, enthusiastic formula of not dividing Jerusalem totally denies the principle of establishing another capital in its jurisdiction. The immediate significance of this is a clear no to any plan of dividing the land into two states. This is because the same religious and ideological sources that forbid and prevent dividing the urban monster, are the very ones that totally deny – for the same reasons – the partition of the rest of the land.

However, since 1967 official Israel has been trying to flee from a formula and laboring to integrate the paradox of the two formulas at the same time. Israel speaks of two states for two peoples and at the same time swears in the name of undivided Jerusalem. This doesn't work. On the contrary, the reciprocation between the two formulas is the key to understanding the city's wretched situation.

These days provide a refined insight into the morbid link between the city's madness and the political despair. Following Netanyahu – the leader of the Jerusalem syndrome party – proves as much. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

8) U.S. veto at Security Council may no longer be a given **Raphael Ahren, The Times of Israel, November 4, 2014**

After Jeffrey Goldberg's infamous "chickenshit" article, it is hard to deny that ties between the Israeli government and the current U.S. administration have reached a nadir. Even Yaacov Amidror, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's former national security adviser, admitted this week that "relations between Israel and the U.S. have deteriorated to an all-time low."

Worse than the bad language and backroom bickering, though, is the fear that the frosty relationship may mean Israel can no longer rely on Washington's veto in the Security Council, which has been a rock-solid given in defense of Israel for decades.

It's no secret that Netanyahu and U.S. President Barack Obama have little love lost for each other, between disputes over an Iranian nuclear deal and building in East Jerusalem and the West Bank.

Less discussed publicly is the fear that the administration will abandon Israel on the Palestinian question at the UN. The Palestinians are planning to go the United Nations Security Council with a draft resolution calling for an Israel withdrawal by November 2016 from all areas captured in 1967. They originally wanted to submit it by October but will probably wait for January, when the Security Council membership will be more favorable to their cause.

A few years ago, there would have been no question that the US would have vetoed any such resolution. In February 2011, Washington vetoed a UN Security Council resolution condemning Israeli settlements (despite the U.S.'s longstanding opposition to settlement-building), thwarting the council's other 14 members, who all voted in favor. A year later, the administration successfully blocked the Palestinians' attempt to become full UN members.

But since then, ties between the Jerusalem and Washington have gone drastically downhill, and the American veto can apparently no longer be taken for granted.

"Without U.S. support in the international arena, and especially in the UN Security Council, Israel would be in a very difficult position today, to the point of diplomatic and economic isolation," Amidror wrote Monday in a paper for the BESA Center for Strategic Studies.

Asked by The Times of Israel whether he fears Washington could possibly refrain from using its veto in January, he indicated that while unlikely, such a scenario is not entirely unthinkable. "It doesn't seem logical that they wouldn't use their veto. But I don't know."

Netanyahu is indeed worried that the U.S. will "abandon" Israel at the UN, Israeli journalist Ariel Kahane reported Sunday on the NRG website [Hebrew link], quoting senior ministers. "The prime minister told colleagues in recent days ... that his office's understanding of the issue and the government's take on it is that the Americans will not cast a veto against a resolution that reaches the Security Council," Kahane later elaborated in a newspaper interview.

Officially, Jerusalem has faith in the Americans. "The U.S. has had a consistent position of refusing to support one-sided UN resolutions against Israel, and I have no reason to believe that America's position is about to change," a senior official in the Prime Minister's Office told The Times of Israel this week.

Even Danny Danon, a hawkish Likud lawmaker who doesn't mince words in his criticism of the White House, said Israel could depend on the support of its biggest ally, even while anonymous senior U.S. administration officials hurl obscenities at the prime minister. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

9) [On the Temple Mount... Keep the status quo](#)

Rabbi Alana Suskin, Washington Jewish Week, November 5, 2014

By tradition, the binding of Isaac – the Akedah – which occurs in this week’s Torah portion, is held to have taken place on the site known today as the Temple Mount. During the last few days, as tensions in Jerusalem reached new heights over the Temple Mount, I have been reading the portion and thinking about the meaning the Temple Mount has for Jews – and about how sad it is that, rather than respecting it as a place of peace, sacred to both Muslims and Jews, extremists on both sides choose this site to fan the flames of holy war.

Rabbi Yehuda Glick, an American-born Jerusalem activist, who advocates for rebuilding the Jewish Temple on what is the third holiest site to Islam, is now the latest victim of this pyromaniacal game that zealots on both sides are playing. A Muslim zealot, member of the radical Palestinian Islamic Jihad, attempted to murder him not far from the Temple Mount last week. I condemn the attack and wish Glick full recovery. But I also wish that he and his ilk stop jeopardizing Israel’s security through provocations on the Temple Mount.

The struggle over the Temple Mount isn’t new. In 1967, Moshe Dayan ordered the removal of Israeli flags hoisted over the site reportedly saying, “We don’t need a holy war.” Since then, there has been an unending tug of war over the status of the site. On one side stand those who recognize the sensitivities involved in Israeli control of the site – including those in the Israeli security and intelligence communities who for more than 40 years have argued against changing the status quo there. On the other side are those who favor upending that status quo, at the risk of setting the site – and Jerusalem – aflame. Today, these Jewish extremists are pushing hard for Israel to unilaterally change that status quo, in place since 1967, to permit Jewish prayer (under Israeli law, Jews may visit the site, but not pray).

It is ironic that the Temple Mount is such a focus for destructive impulses. Most Orthodox religious authorities have long held that Jews are in fact not permitted to ascend the Temple Mount and walk on its plateau, lest they defile the Holy of Holies – the inner sanctuary, which could be entered only by the High Priest on Yom Kippur. Only recently a handful of rabbis begun to advocate that Jews may ascend the Mount.

Today, what used to be a marginal group of extremists who were attempting to breed a red heifer and re-establish Temple rites, has gone a long way to going “mainstream” – selling a larger segment of the public on the idea that they merely want “equal access” for Jews (who could oppose that?), while they actively mobilize for what they hope will be the imminent building of the Third Temple. How mainstream? Last year Uri Ariel – Israel’s Housing Minister announced, “We need to build a real Temple on the Temple Mount.” This is playing with fire.

As an observant Jew, I share the pain some Jews feel at the destruction of the Temple. As a rabbi, I hope that there will someday come a messianic era – one not characterized by Jewish domination over others, but an era in which all peoples freely work and pray together in peace, including at the Temple Mount. Hopefully, it will be an era evoked by the words of the prophet Isaiah: “I will bring them to My holy mount ... for My house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples.” (Isaiah 56:7) I know that such an era will not be brought about by force. The fact that Israel has the force to do what it wants on the Temple Mount – and beyond – does not mean it should take actions repellent to Jewish values and tradition.

The Temple Mount/Har Habayit – known to Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif (the Noble Sanctuary) – should be a place of peace. Extremists want to abuse this precious site to drag the rest of us into conflict. Some of them say they simply want equal rights; others speak openly about bringing about their version of the messianic age. But in practice they are using this holy site to spark a holy war, at the expense of Israel’s security, its stability and peace.

10) Diplomatic Recognitions - The Road to Peace

John V. Whitbeck, The Palestine Chronicle, October 14, 2014

On Oct. 12, at a donors' conference in Cairo, participants pledged \$5.4 billion toward the reconstruction of Gaza. However, numerous participants noted that repeatedly paying to reconstruct what had been destroyed—and was likely to be destroyed again—was an insufficient response and that the core problem must be addressed. Yet no original ideas for addressing it were offered.

The core problem is the occupation, now in its 48th year. It was addressed the following night when the British House of Commons voted overwhelmingly (274-12) in favor of the United Kingdom's extending diplomatic recognition to the State of Palestine "as a contribution to securing a negotiated two-state solution," implicitly while its entire territory remains under belligerent occupation and without Israel's prior permission. On Oct. 3, the new Swedish prime minister had announced his government's intention to recognize the State of Palestine, thereby joining the 134 other UN member states, encompassing the vast majority of mankind, which have already done so.

Europe should not stop there. Imagine that all of the 20 European Union states which have not yet recognized the State of Palestine were to do so and that the EU were then to announce that, if Israel did not comply with international law and relevant UN resolutions by withdrawing fully from the occupied State of Palestine by a specified date, it would impose economic sanctions on Israel and intensify them until Israel did so.

Europe is not simply Israel's principal trading partner. It is Israelis' cultural homeland, with many Israelis viewing their country as a "European villa in the jungle." It is even Israelis' sports homeland, with Israeli teams competing in European football and basketball competitions. If Europe were to adopt and pursue a firm and unified position of constructive disapproval along these lines, the writing would be indelibly on the wall and the end of the occupation and the transformation of the current two-state legality under international law into a decent two-state reality on the ground would become unavoidable, a mere question of when rather than of whether.

Then, and only then, meaningful Israeli-Palestinian negotiations on the practical modalities of ending the occupation and structuring future peaceful and cooperative coexistence could begin. One may well respond that, of course, Europeans would never dream of taking such an initiative. It is true that Europe has traditionally preferred smooth and non-contentious relations with the United States and Israel, even when such subservience runs counter to its proclaimed values and interests and further fuels the multi-decade war of civilizations between the Muslim world and the West now taking shape, to applying nonviolent pressure consistent with international law to achieve peace with some measure of justice in Israel and Palestine.

However, this does not mean that Europe is incapable of breaking free from the American-imposed orthodoxy that a Palestinian state can and should never exist, even on a purely legal level, without Israel's prior consent, or incapable of acting wisely and in accordance with European values and interests.

Oddly, since Israel has never defined its own borders, an act which would necessarily place limits on it, a principal argument of the Israeli government and its supporters against diplomatic recognitions of the State of Palestine is that Palestine does not have defined borders. In fact, Palestine does have clearly defined borders, and they were confirmed in the overwhelming (138-9) Nov. 29, 2012 UN General Assembly vote confirming Palestine's "state status" as "the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967." ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

11) Report: European nations threaten to recognize Palestinian State

Israel News, November 8, 2014

A number of the United States' key European allies are threatening to follow the decision of the Swedish government and unilaterally recognize a Palestinian state if efforts are not made to renew the peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians, the Wall Street Journal reported Friday, basing the claim on comments made by top U.S. and European officials. "We're not going to wait forever," the WSJ cited a senior European official as saying. "Other European countries are poised to follow Sweden," he added.

American and European officials warn that a failure to attempt continuing direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians will result in a further deterioration of tensions in the area, particularly in Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

According to the report, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry met with Palestinian and Arab officials in recent days to discuss the current situation in Jerusalem and the continued deadlock in the peace process.

Last Thursday, Sweden's center-left government on Thursday officially recognized the state of Palestine, becoming the first major European country to do so. The EU member country joined only two other Western European countries – Malta and Cyprus – that have officially recognized a Palestinian state.

Swedish Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom said the Scandinavian country had decided on the move because the criteria of international law required for such recognition had been fulfilled. "There is a territory, a people and government," she told reporters in Stockholm. Wallstrom said she hopes Sweden's "excellent cooperation (with Israel) would continue" nevertheless and that the decision would be met in Jerusalem "in a constructive way."

Israel was quick to condemn Sweden's move, however. Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman described it as "a miserable decision that strengthens the extremist elements and Palestinian rejectionism." He added: "It's a shame that the government of Sweden chose to take a declarative step that only causes harm."

The 28-nation European Union has said it would recognize a Palestinian state "when appropriate," and has urged that negotiations to achieve a two-state solution be resumed as soon as possible. Foreign Ministry spokesman Paul Hirschson said Israel's ambassador to Sweden was being recalled for consultations but declined to say how long he would remain in Israel.

Hanan Ashrawi, a senior Palestinian official, welcomed the move by Sweden, a European Union member, as "a principled and courageous decision." "It is our hope that other EU member states and countries worldwide will follow Sweden's lead and recognize Palestine before the chances for a two-state solution are destroyed indefinitely," Ashrawi said.

Israel says Palestinians can gain independence only through peace negotiations, and that recognition of Palestine at the UN or by individual countries undermines the negotiating process. Palestinians say Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu isn't serious about the peace negotiations.

The latest round of U.S.-brokered talks collapsed in April. American officials have hinted that Israel's tough negotiating stance hurt the talks, and Netanyahu has continued to settle Israelis in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

More than 550,000 Israelis now live in the two areas, greatly complicating hopes of partitioning the area under a future peace deal. The two territories and the Gaza Strip are claimed by Palestinians for a future state. U.S. State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said the U.S. supports Palestinian statehood but added it can only come through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians that resolve status issues and end their conflict.

"Some countries (are) responding to the lack of a resolution of a peace process out there," she said. Wallstrom, the Swedish foreign minister, said she had anticipated Israeli criticism against Sweden's decision. "It happens that ambassadors are recalled for consultations. It is part of the diplomatic toolkit," Wallstrom said. "I am convinced that both our countries have an interest in maintaining and strengthening our good bilateral ties."

12) [EU foreign chief calls for statehood on Gaza visit](#)

Israel News, November 8, 2014

The European Union's new foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini Saturday appealed for the establishment of a Palestinian state, saying the world "cannot afford" another war in Gaza. "We need a Palestinian state - that is the ultimate goal and this is the position of all the European Union," Mogherini said during a trip to Gaza, devastated by its third conflict in six years.

Hamas and Israel fought a 50-day war in July and August that resulted in the deaths of 2,140 Palestinians and more than 70 Israelis. Mogherini's visit comes against a backdrop of surging Israeli-Palestinian tensions in East Jerusalem where there have been near-daily clashes in flashpoint neighbourhoods.

She voiced hope that Gaza would avoid another major conflict. "It is not only the people of Gaza that can't afford having a fourth war, all the world cannot afford this," she said. "We cannot just sit and wait. If we sit and wait it will go on for another 40 years. We have to have action now," said Mogherini, a former Italian foreign minister who recently took over from Catherine Ashton as the top EU diplomat.

Palestinians are seeking to achieve statehood in Gaza and the Israeli-occupied West Bank with East Jerusalem as the capital. Sweden last month became the first EU member in western Europe to officially recognize the state of Palestine. Asked whether the EU might do the same, Mogherini said that such a move was "not among the competences" of the 28-nation bloc.

On Friday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu met with the European Union Foreign Representative in his Jerusalem office and the two discussed recent events as well as regional politics. She also met with Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman. "We see that there might be a political will to resume the talks and to especially make sure that these talks bring results," Mogherini said Friday at a joint press conference with Lieberman.

She slammed recent terror attacks as well as Israel's ongoing settlement construction, but said the EU remains committed to peace and Israel's security, which she directly linked: "Israel's security and safety will never be guaranteed unless there is a regional framework that fully allows that. The EU is and will remain ready to work in this direction with all partners of the region."

On Jerusalem, Netanyahu told Mogherini that "It is our capital, and as such it is not a settlement. The neighborhoods in which Jews live and in which we are building have existed for almost fifty years, under all Israeli governments. Everyone knows that in any peace settlement, they will remain part of Israel."

On the issue of settlements, Netanyahu said he reject the "outlandish claim that the root of the ongoing conflict is this or that settlement. The issue is not land, but rather our very existence and the refusal to recognize Israel with any borders."