

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
December 4, 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 highlights Israeli/U.S. tensions, the pursuit of civil rights in Israel, the growing "intifada," the widening division between Jewish and Arab Israelis, increasing international isolation of Israel, terror killings of Palestinians and Israelis, the reality and future conflicts of the present Israeli bi-national state, Palestinian despair responded to by further Israeli repression to acts of despair, and other issues of concern.

- David Remnick writes in *The New Yorker* that Israeli President Rivlin has become Israel's most unlikely moralist, advocating among Jewish Israelis for the civil rights of the Palestinians both in Israel and in the occupied territories.
- The State of Two States for the weeks of November 9 and 16.
- Nassar Ibrahim explains in the Alternative Information Center that what is happening in Jerusalem is not spontaneous or a knee-jerk reaction, but political behavior that aptly describes Israeli politics.
- Barak Ravid notes in Ha'aretz that the European Union has distributed a confidential document to its 28 member states that contains the draft of a proposal for sanctions to be imposed on Israel if it takes action in the West Bank that could make the two-state solution impossible.
- Uri Avnery writes in Gush-Shalom that the police were confronting a group of young Arabs protesting against the Israeli efforts to change the status quo on the Temple Mount (known to Muslims as "the Noble Sanctuary.") Such demonstrations were taking place that day in many Arab towns and villages all over Israel, and especially in occupied East Jerusalem.
- Robert Fantina notes in Counterpunch that Israel is becoming more and more isolated as its horrific cruelties are exposed -- the U.S. can only protect it for so long, and time seems to be running out.
- Gideon Levy writes in Ha'aretz that killings of Palestinians by soldiers and policemen will never shock Israel. A massacre shocks; a war, less so. Terror is always Palestinian, even when hundreds of Palestinian civilians are killed.
- Charlotte Alfred in the Huffington Post interviewed Daniel Seidemann, an Israeli lawyer who specializes in legal and public issues in East Jerusalem, who said life in Jerusalem has become "unbearable" for many Palestinians, and the city is more divided than ever.
- Noam Sheizaf writes in +962 that Netanyahu promised Israelis quiet and prosperity without having to end the occupation. However many Israelis have woken up to the true meaning of his vision, in which Israel rules over six million Palestinians — Israeli citizens, East Jerusalem residents, subjects of military rule in the West Bank and those besieged in Gaza — and the only thing he offers them is more of the same: the cruel hand of the military law, discrimination, violence, land expropriation, home demolitions, mass arrests and bombs from the sky.
- Uri Avnery notes in Counterpunch that Netanyahu's response to Jerusalem violence with more police, harder punishments, demolition of homes, arrests etc. will only provoke more violence.
- Yuval Diskin in Ynetnews offers his opinion as an Israeli that the Jerusalem Intifada offers a glimpse into the future to which the right-wing is leading Israel: A bi-national state with mixed populations and a reality of escalating confrontations.
- Jeff Halper, ICAHD/Mondoweiss, states that the "Zionist answer" to the downward cycle of senseless violence in which Jerusalem finds itself: house demolitions, mass arrests, revoking the "residency" of native-born Jerusalemites, closing Palestinian neighborhoods with concrete blocks, arming Israeli Jewish vigilantes, etc. is revealing that Israel, having given up all pretense of seeking a just solution, has answered Palestinian despair with pure, atavistic repression.

1) The one-state reality

David Remnick, *The New Yorker*, November 17, 2014

Israel's conservative President speaks up for civility, and pays a price. Talk of a two-state solution has been swallowed by despair, rage, or triumphalism. Reuven (Ruvi) Rivlin, the new president of Israel, is ardently opposed to the establishment of a Palestinian state. He is instead a proponent of Greater Israel, one Jewish state from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. He professes to be mystified that anyone should object to the continued construction of Jewish settlements in the West Bank: "It can't be 'occupied territory' if the land is your own."

Rivlin does not have the starched personality of an ideologue, however. He resembles a cheerfully overbearing Borscht Belt comedian who knows too many bad jokes to tell in a single set but is determined to try. Sitting in an office decorated with mementos of his right-wing Zionist lineage, he unleashes a cataract of anecdotes, asides, humble bromides, corny one-liners, and historical footnotes. At seventy-five, he has the florid, bulbous mug of a cartoon flatfoot, if that flatfoot were descended from Lithuanian Talmudists and six generations of Jerusalemites. Rivlin's father, Yosef, was a scholar of Arabic literature. (He translated the Koran and "The Thousand and One Nights.") Ruvi Rivlin's temperament is other than scholarly. He is, in fact, given to categorical provocations. After a visit some years ago to a Reform synagogue in Westfield, New Jersey, he declared that the service was "idol worship and not Judaism."

And yet, since Rivlin was elected President, in June, he has become Israel's most unlikely moralist. Rivlin—not a left-wing writer from Tel Aviv, not an idealistic justice of the Supreme Court—has emerged as the most prominent critic of racist rhetoric, jingoism, fundamentalism, and sectarian violence, the highest-ranking advocate among Jewish Israelis for the civil rights of the Palestinians both in Israel and in the occupied territories. Last month, he told an academic conference in Jerusalem, "It is time to honestly admit that Israel is sick, and it is our duty to treat this illness."

Around Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, Rivlin made a video in which he sat next to an 11-year-old Palestinian Israeli boy from Jaffa who had been bullied: the two held up cards to the camera calling for empathy, decency, and harmony. "We are exactly the same," one pair read. A couple of weeks ago, Rivlin visited the Arab town of Kafr Qasim to apologize for the massacre, in 1956, of 48 Palestinian workers and children by Israeli border guards. No small part of the Palestinian claim is that Israel must take responsibility for the Arab suffering it has caused. Rivlin said, "I hereby swear, in my name and that of all our descendants, that we will never act against the principle of equal rights, and we will never try and force someone from our land."

Every Israeli and Palestinian understands the context of these remarks. In recent years, anti-Arab harassment and vitriol have reached miserable levels. The Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, who treasures his fragile ruling coalition above all else, is more apt to manipulate the darkling mood to his political advantage than to ease it.

"I've been called a 'lying little Jew' by my critics," Rivlin told the Knesset recently. "'Damn your name, Arab agent,' 'Go be President in Gaza,' 'disgusting sycophant,' 'rotten filth,' 'lowest of the low,' 'traitor,' 'President of Hezbollah.' These are just a few of the things that have been said to me in the wake of events I've attended and speeches I've made. I must say that I've been horrified by this thuggishness that has permeated the national dialogue."

Rivlin is no political innocent. A former speaker of the Knesset—like Netanyahu, he is a member of the Likud—he was a clubhouse pol, a backslapper, a vote trader. But he was never a first-rate campaigner, and in his long career he lost more than a few elections. ...

To read the full article, [click here](#).

2a) The State of Two States, Israel Policy Forum – Week of November 9

This week in Israel started with widespread riots across Arab towns, over the controversial death of Kheir al-Din Hamdan in Kafr Kanna by Israeli police. On Monday, two terrorist attacks were committed against Israeli citizens: A stabbing in Tel Aviv which led to the death of First Sargent Almog Shiloni, and a stabbing outside Alon Shut settlement, which led to the death of Dalia Lamkus and the wounding of two others. Amid the growing violence, members of the Knesset have introduced a controversial bill, known as The Norms Law Bill, which would officially apply Israeli Law to settlements in the West Bank. On Thursday, Secretary of State John Kerry held a meeting with His Majesty King Abdullah of Jordan and Prime Minister of Israel Benjamin Netanyahu, where both parties agreed to work together to defuse tensions over the Temple Mount.

“Israel’s behavior toward the Arab public is state terrorism...The footage that has been disseminated throughout the community has also frightened the children when they see policemen, who are supposed to protect public safety, shooting residents. This crime is a mark of shame on the brow of Israeli democracy, in which the killing of an Arab has become a matter of course.” Kafr Kanna Mayor Mujahid Awawida in a press conference about on the death of Kheir al-Din Hamadan, who was shot by Israeli police on Friday, as reported by Ma’ariv. (Sunday 11/9)

"Repeated attempts by members of Knesset to reach the Temple Mount is a provocation that incites Palestinians' to respond and significantly and unequivocally increases tensions in the Temple Mount and the capital," A senior Israeli police official, in an anonymous comment to Ynet News. (Sunday 11/9)

"[T]he real goal of this bill is to normalize an abnormal situation – an expanding occupation masquerading as civil rights." Justice Minister Tzipi Livni in a comment about The Norms Law Bill; a bill which is attempting to extend Israeli Law in settlements without official annexation. (Sunday 11/9)

“We are not prepared to tolerate more demonstrations in the heart of our cities in which Hamas or ISIS [Islamic State] flags are waved and calls are made to redeem Palestine with blood and fire, calling in effect for the destruction of the State of Israel...I have instructed the interior minister to use all means, including evaluating the possibility of revoking the citizenship of those who call for the destruction of the State of Israel.” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a comment about the growing demonstrations across Israel. (Sunday 11/9)

“The incitement we experience does not come only from Islamic radicals, but also from the Palestinian Authority, its leader, and the Fatah movement.” Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a comment made during a Likud Central Committee convention. (Sunday 11/9)

“I don’t think the Bible says anything about democracy. I think God didn’t say anything about democracy...God talked about all the good things in life. He didn’t talk about Israel remaining as a democratic state, otherwise Israel isn’t going to be a democratic state — so what?” Jewish Philanthropist Sheldon Adelson, in a comment during the Israeli American Council’s inaugural conference. (Sunday 11/9)

“We lose sons, we lose brothers, and we lose friends. The society we live in is far from logical. Despite everything, and maybe because of it, we must decisively declare that violence is not our way. Violence is not the way for the State of Israel. Violence is not the way of the people of Israel. The time has come for us, the Jews and Arabs of this country, to take responsibility for our lives, our futures, our homes, our streets, and the community. Responsibility for our entire lives here as citizens. Responsibility for the state that we live in and within the civil framework which unites us. If we do not shoulder the responsibility, no one will do it for us.” President Rivlin in an op-ed published in Ynet. (Monday 11/10)

[Read the entire collection here.](#)

2b) The State of Two States, Israel Policy Forum – Week of November 16

This week in Israel began amid controversy over the nation-state bill. The bill, which seeks to define Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people, has many law makers worried that it would lay the legal groundwork for Israel's Jewish identity to supersede Israel's democratic identity, and lead to discrimination against Israel's minority populations. Also on Sunday, an internal European Union document was leaked which suggested imposing sanctions on Israel in the event Israel takes action in the West Bank that would make the two-state solution impossible. On Tuesday, five Israelis were killed in Jerusalem by two Palestinian terrorists in an attack on a synagogue. This was the deadliest attack on Israeli civilians since 2008. IPF strongly condemned this horrific act and will continue to support diplomatic initiatives that work to prevent terrorism and preserve the opportunity for two states.

"Let one thing be clear: We will never accept an approach that defines building in Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem as 'settlement activity.' We will not accept any limitations on construction in Jewish neighborhoods in Jerusalem." Foreign Affairs Minister Avigdor Lieberman, in a comment after a meeting with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Jerusalem, as reported by Israeli Army Radio. (Sunday 11/20)

"I will not give up on democracy...I will continue to fight for Israel to be both the Jewish state and a democracy. That is the basis of Zionism, as is written in the Independence Scroll, and that is what will be." Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, in a comment about why she postponed a vote on the nation-state bill. (Sunday 11/16)

"This bill has been promoted in a time in which tension between Jews and Arabs in Israel is at peak levels. This is a provocative initiative whose purpose is to subordinate the democratic principles to the supremacy of the state's Jewishness. Instead of promoting dialogue and equality, Netanyahu and his partners have continued to promote provocation and inflammation." Minister of Knesset Dov Khenin of Hadash, in a comment about the nation-state bill. (Sunday 11/16)

"When we joined the government, we demanded and signed an agreement that said they would pass a nation-state law. Yesterday, one of the sides pushed in a one-sided way. The nation-state law will pass this coming Sunday, and if it doesn't there will be no coalition – because everything will fall apart." Minister of Economy Naftali Bennett, in a comment about the nation-state bill, as reported by Israel Army Radio. (Monday 11/17)

"[T]oday, the presidency denounces the killing of worshipers at a place of worship in West Jerusalem...The presidency also denounces all violent acts no matter who their source is, and demands an end to the ongoing incursions into the Al-Aqsa Mosque and the provocative acts by Israeli settlers as well as incitement by some Israeli ministers." The office of President Mahmoud Abbas, in an official statement about the Jerusalem synagogue attack. (Tuesday 11/18)

"The murderers for today's outrageous acts represent the kind of extremism that threatens to bring all of the Middle East into the kind of spiral from which it's very difficult to emerge...But we have to remind ourselves that the majority of Palestinians and Israelis overwhelmingly want peace and to be able to raise their families knowing they're safe and secure." President of the United States Barak Obama, in a statement on the terror attack in Jerusalem. (Tuesday 11/18)

"Abbas is not interested in terror and is not inciting to terror. He's not even doing so behind closed doors." Chief of the Shin Bet Yoram Cohen, in a comment to the Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. (Tuesday 11/18)

[Read the entire collection here.](#)

3) Jerusalem: Israel is not crazy

Nassar Ibrahim, The Alternative Information Center, November 14, 2014

Some are surprised by Israel's unprecedented escalation in Jerusalem, particularly by its attack of the symbolically-laden al Aqsa mosque. Why does Israel need to provoke Palestinian and world public opinion, these pundits exclaim, given the war on Gaza, Arab world preoccupation with itself and the so-called war on ISIS? Why is Israel redirecting attention to Jerusalem and the al Aqsa mosque – doesn't this reflect a narrow political horizon, a form of craziness?

In fact, I am surprised by those who are surprised. What Israel is doing in Jerusalem is certainly not crazy or stupid. Israel plans and selects the correct moment to implement these plans. What is happening in Jerusalem is not spontaneous or a knee-jerk reaction, but political behavior that aptly describes Israeli politics.

At this moment, when the world is preoccupied with other things, Israel decided it was the appropriate time to cross the Palestinian and Arab red line. This red line over which Israel crossed relates to geography, religion, morality and symbolism of the Palestinians and Arabs. Israel is making the strongest possible symbolic hit with its attacks on al Aqsa. This, in turn, opens the way for altering and damaging other dimensions of Jerusalem, be they demographic or spatial, economic or political. Then, after registering the weak global reactions to its provocations in Jerusalem, the occupation can advance in new ways throughout all of the occupied Palestinian territory. Israel emphasises that Jerusalem is its united and eternal capital based on the historical novel the Bible, and that the rights of other religious groups would be respected in accordance with the emerging new reality in the city.

Israel's escalation in Jerusalem is not merely political but also strategic. It is the culmination of the entire system of moves taken by the occupation since 1967. It seeks to change the heart of Jerusalem's reality on all levels and to reach the right moment in which these new facts are transformed into well-established structures that are difficult to alter.

In other words, this is the exact same strategy Israel uses vis-a-vis its settlements.

Israel is not bothered that it's violating international and humanitarian law. It continues, for example, settlement construction so that a new reality is created, one that creates a new spatial conception and can thus not be ignored. Israel sees itself as above international law, answering only to a "higher law" of a "divine promise" which gives it the right to control any geographical area in Palestine.

This long and complex ongoing process is further intended to bolster the internal political structure in Israel and to maintain cohesion. Israel acts based on its own public opinion, including that of religious, political and ideological extremist groups, and only after does it look toward global public opinion and international law, which are also used to serve Israeli public opinion.

In contrast we have the Palestinian and Arab political behaviour, where the top priority is for the so-called global public opinion and only after come the varying interests of internal public opinion. Israel's equation is thus to employ world opinion to promote its public opinion and gain political achievements, while using world opinion to control Palestinian public opinion and curb resistance.

The ceiling of Palestinian national rights is thus set by the determinants of international public opinion, which is always pushing for the "defense" of Israel and protection of its achievements; this is clear from the inability to halt any Israeli attack – whether against Jerusalem or Gaza – and Israel's continued violation of international law and covenants. Furthermore, any Palestinian reaction aimed at resisting these policies is deemed illegal and unethical. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

4) Secret EU document outlines sanctions to impose if Israel thwarts two-state solution

Barak Ravid, Ha'aretz, November 16, 2014

The European Union has distributed a confidential document to its 28 member states that contains the draft of a proposal for sanctions to be imposed on Israel if it takes action in the West Bank that could make the two-state solution impossible, European diplomatic sources and senior Israeli officials said.

The representatives, who received the document from the EU's European External Action Service (EEAS), were asked to keep its distribution limited and not to show it to Israel yet. Israeli diplomats in a number of European capitals reported the existence of the document to the Foreign Ministry, adding a few details about its content. However, they were unable to obtain the full document.

Three European diplomats and two senior Israeli officials, all of whom spoke on condition of anonymity ... said the document deals mainly with "sticks and carrots" for Israel with regard to maintaining the two-state solution, although they said the document contained mainly sticks.

"The peace process is in deep freeze, but the situation on the ground is not. There is big frustration in Europe and zero tolerance for settlement activity. This paper is part of the internal brainstorming being done in Brussels these days, about what can be done to keep the two-state solution alive," a European diplomat familiar with the details of the discussion around the document said.

According to current EU policy, any upgrading or development of ties to Israel is conditioned on actions it might carry out to advance the peace process and the two-state solution. The principle in the new document is that the EU will respond with sanctions and restrict its ties with Israel in response to actions that could make the two-state solution impossible.

European diplomats familiar with the document say it discusses Israeli actions that would constitute a red line for the EU. For example, it mentions advancement of construction in the E1 area between Ma'aleh Adumim and Jerusalem; construction of the Givat Hamatos neighborhood and additional construction in Har Homa south of Jerusalem, both of which are over the Green Line in Jerusalem. The EU believes that such construction puts at risk territorial contiguity of the Palestinian state and might make it impossible for Jerusalem to be the capital of both states.

Sanctions mentioned by the document include marking products manufactured in the settlements in EU supermarkets; limiting cooperation with Israel in various areas; and even restrictions on the free-trade agreement with Israel. The document is in the initial stages of discussion. So far, it been discussed in two meetings of the Mashreq/Maghreb Working Party (or MaMa), which consists of diplomats from all EU countries who are specialists in the Middle East. "This paper is an uncooked dish and the process is only beginning, but it is slowly continuing," a senior European diplomat told Haaretz.

The EU's embassy in Israel declined to respond to Haaretz's queries on the subject.

The document itself, and the great secrecy surrounding it, have led to concerns in Jerusalem. EU diplomats and senior Israeli officials noted that the framer of the document is Christian Berger, the director for Middle East of the EEAS. The Austrian was also behind EU sanctions against settlements in July 2013.

Senior Foreign Ministry officials said Avigdor Lieberman raised the issue of the document in his talks with the EU's new high representative for foreign affairs, Federica Mogherini, two weeks ago in Jerusalem. Lieberman asked Mogherini to make sure that any action taken by Berger – who was appointed by Mogherini's predecessor, Catherine Ashton – conformed to her policies and directives. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

5) Wine, blood and gasoline

Uri Avnery, Gush-Shalom, November 15, 2014

On the fateful day, in Kafr Kanna the police was confronting a group of young Arabs protesting against the Israeli efforts to change the status quo on the Temple Mount (known to Muslims as “the Noble Sanctuary”). Such demonstrations were taking place that day in many Arab towns and villages all over Israel, and especially in occupied East Jerusalem.

According to the first police statement, the 22-year old Arab, Kheir a-Din Hamdan, attacked the police with a knife. In self-defense, they had no choice but to shoot and kill him. As so often with police reports, this was a pack of lies.

Unfortunately (for the police), the incident was recorded by security cameras. The pictures clearly showed Hamdan approaching a police car and beating on its windows with something, possibly a knife. When he saw that this had no effect, Hamdan turned around and started to walk away. At that moment, the policemen got out of the car and immediately started to shoot at the back of Hamdan, who was hit and fell to the ground. The officers surrounded him and, after some hesitation, obviously a consultation between them, started to drag the wounded youngster on the ground towards the patrol car, as if he were a sack of potatoes. They dumped him on the floor of the car and drove away (to a hospital, it appears), with their feet on or near the dying man.

The pictures show clearly, for everyone to see, that the policemen violated the standing police orders for opening fire: they were in no immediate mortal danger, they did not shout a warning, they did not shoot first in the air, they did not aim at the lower part of his body. They did not call an ambulance. The youngster bled to death. It was a cold-blooded execution.

There was an outcry. Arab citizens rioted in many places. Under pressure, the Police Investigation board (which belongs to the Ministry of Justice) started an investigation. The first investigation already uncovered several facts which put an even more severe face on the incident.

It appeared that before the cameras caught the scene, the police had arrested Hamdan’s cousin and put him into the car. Obviously, Kheir a-Din wanted to release the cousin and therefore beat on the car. The cousin saw him being shot and dumped on the floor of the car in which he was sitting.

The first reaction of the police command was to justify the behavior of the policemen, whose names and faces were withheld. They were spirited away to some other police unit.

I describe the incident at length, not because it is unique but on the contrary – because it is so typical. What was special about it was only the unnoticed presence of the camera. Several cabinet ministers lauded the exemplary behavior of the police in this incident. This can be dismissed as the publicity-hunting of extreme right-wing demagogues, who believe that their voters approve of all and any shooting of Arabs. They should know.

However, one statement cannot be ignored: the one made by the Minister of Home Security. A few days before the incident, Minister Yitzhak Aharonowitz, a protégé of Avigdor Lieberman and himself a former police officer, declared publicly that he did not want any terrorist to survive after an attack.

That is a manifestly illegal statement. Indeed, it is a call for crimes. Under the law, policemen are not allowed to shoot “terrorists” or anybody else after they are taken prisoner, especially when they are wounded and do not present any “mortal danger.” ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

6) The increasing isolation of Israel - Palestine, Israel and “rockets”

Robert Fantina, Counterpunch, Weekend Edition, November 14-16, 2014

It is with increasing frustration that one hears about Israeli atrocities in the West Bank, only through the skewed lens of the corporate-owned media. For example, *The New York Times* reported that two Israelis were stabbed to death in an act of terrorism by Palestinians, and a Palestinian was shot to death by Israeli soldiers in an act of self-defence.

It is vitally important to look beyond the biased viewpoint of the corporate media. The West Bank is part of Palestine, and is occupied illegally by Israel, and has been for 40 years. According to international law, an occupied people have the right and responsibility to resist their occupiers. The half-million Israelis settlers living in the West Bank are there illegally, as part of the occupation, and so should be aware that their personal safety is in jeopardy.

Equally frustrating are the stories coming out of the Gaza Strip, recently decimated by U.S.-provided bombs, dropped by Israel. Incredibly, Israel still seems to believe that by chanting the mantra of “national security” it can kill men, women and children by the thousands, and the world will say nothing. ... Benjamin Netanyahu stated that what he refers to as the “terror tunnels,” actually used mainly to smuggle into Gaza much-needed supplies that Israel forbids, needed to be destroyed, and that is why he had to bomb the entire strip. This brings up an interesting question: if Israel has the right to invade Palestine, why doesn’t Palestine have the right to invade Israel?

It’s also interesting to note that Egypt, with its corrupt, illegitimate leader, is also fearful of tunnels under its border with Palestine. In order to close those, it is building a moat, on the Egyptian side of the border, to prevent illegal tunnel crossings. It seems far more reasonable for a country to prevent a border crossing by blocking access on its own side of the border, but Israel apparently isn’t accountable to international law, or even common reasoning.

Israel, and its purse-string puppet, the U.S., try to make mountains out of the proverbial mole hill of Hamas “rockets.” They talk about 4,000 of these “rockets” raining down on Israel, with only the U.S.-provided Iron Dome to protect Israeli citizens. These statements, too, need further scrutiny. Dr. Norman Finkelstein, son of Holocaust survivors, noted Palestinian rights activist and persona non grata in Israel, refers to these “rockets” as “enhanced fireworks,” hardly on a par with the sophisticated, deadly weaponry that the U.S. freely provides to Israel.

And what of the Iron Dome, and the money the U.S. spent to build it, and continues to spend to maintain it? In the 2008 – 2009 Israeli attack on Gaza, pre-dating the Iron Dome, an estimated 1,000 “rockets” were fired into Israel, resulting in three civilian deaths and \$15,000,000 in property damage. In Israel’s most recent savage massacre of Palestinians, 4,000 of these so-called “rockets” were fired, resulting in seven civilian deaths and \$15,000,000 in property damage. Israel is known for, among other things like unspeakable cruelty and racism, its civil defense system. If 1,000 “rockets” caused three deaths, one could suppose that four times that many rockets would cause four times as many deaths (12). That it resulted in only seven may be seen as a sign of the success of the Iron Dome, but why then, one must ask, was the amount of property damage the same? Could it be that the civil defense system, coupled with the inefficiency and ineffectiveness of Palestine’s “enhanced fireworks,” and not the much-flaunted Iron Dome, was actually responsible for the low death rate? Why did the dollar amount of property damage remain the same? Would not the Iron Dome have also protected buildings? Realistically, it is estimated that the Iron Dome disabled about 10 percent of the “rockets” fired by Palestine into Israel. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

7) In Israel, only Jewish blood shocks anyone

Gideon Levy, Ha'aretz, November 20, 2014

There was a massacre in Jerusalem on November 18th in which five Israelis were killed. There was a war in Gaza over the summer in which 2,200 Palestinians were killed, most of them civilians. A massacre shocks us; a war, less so. Massacres have culprits; wars don't. Murder by ax is more appalling than murder by rifle, and far more horrendous than bombing helpless people trying to take shelter.

Terror is always Palestinian, even when hundreds of Palestinian civilians are killed. The name and face of Daniel Tragerman, the Israeli boy killed by mortar fire during Operation Protective Edge, were known throughout the world; even U.S. President Barack Obama knew his name. Can anyone name one child from Gaza among the hundreds killed?

A few hours after the attack in Jerusalem, journalist Emily Amrousi said at a conference in Eilat that the life of a single Jewish child was more important to her than the lives of thousands of Palestinian children. The audience's response was clearly favorable; I think there was even some applause.

Afterward Amrousi tried to explain that she was referring to the way the Israeli media should cover events, which is only slightly less serious. This was during a discussion on the ridiculous question: "Is the Israeli media leftist?" Almost no one protested Amrousi's remarks and the session continued as if nothing had happened. Amrousi's words reflect Israel's mood in 2014: Only Jewish blood elicits shock.

Israeli deaths touch Israeli hearts more than the deaths of others. That's natural human solidarity. The bloody images from Jerusalem stunned every Israeli, probably every person. But this is a society that sanctifies its dead to the point of death-worship, that wears thin the stories of the victims' lives and deaths, whether it be in a synagogue attack or a Nepal avalanche. It's a society preoccupied with endless commemorations in the land of monuments, services and anniversary ceremonies; a society that demands shock and condemnation after every attack, when it blames the entire world.

Precisely from such a society is one permitted to demand some attention to the Palestinian blood that is also spilled in vain; some understanding of the other side's pain, or even a measure of empathy, which in Israel is considered treason. But this doesn't happen. Aside from exceptional murders and hate crimes by individuals, there is total apathy — and the obtuseness is frightening. Killings (we dare not say murders) by soldiers and policemen will never shock Israel. The propaganda machine will whitewash everything, and the media will be its mouthpiece. No one will demand condemnations. No one will express shock. Few will even consider that the pain is the same pain, that murder is murder.

How many Israelis are willing to give a thought to the parents of Yousef Shawamreh, the boy who went out to pick wild greens and was killed by an army sniper? Why is it exaggerating to be upset by, or at least give some attention to, the killing of Khalil Anati, a 10-year-old boy from the Al-Fawar refugee camp? Why can't we identify with the pain of bereaved father Abd al-Wahab Hammad, whose son was killed in Silwad, or with the Al-Qatari family from the Al-Amari refugee camp, two members of which were killed by soldiers within a month? Why do we reserve our horror for the synagogue and not consider these killings disturbing?

Yes, there is the test of intent. The typical Israeli argument is that soldiers, unlike terrorists, do not intend to kill. If so, then what exactly is the intent of the sniper who fires live bullets at the head or chest of a demonstrator a distance away who poses no threat? Or when he shoots a child in the back as he's running for his life? Didn't he intend to kill him?

The attack in Jerusalem was a horrendous crime; nothing can justify it. But the blood that flowed there is not the only blood being spilled here murderously. The degree to which it is forbidden to say that is incredible.

8) What is fueling rising tensions in Jerusalem?

Charlotte Alfred, The Huffington Post, November 15, 2014

Tensions in Jerusalem have been boiling for months. In July, Palestinian teenager Mohammed Abu Khdeir was burned to death in the city in revenge for the killing of three Israeli teens in the West Bank. Soon after, war broke out between Israeli forces and Hamas militants in the Palestinian Gaza Strip, fueling more protests in Jerusalem. In recent weeks, the attempt to assassinate a controversial Jewish activist and deadly driving attacks on Israelis have heightened the city's unease.

In East Jerusalem, Palestinian protesters have fought fierce street battles with Israeli security forces almost daily. In an effort to quell the unrest, Israeli authorities restricted access to the Jerusalem holy site known to Muslims as al-Haram al-Sharif and Jews as Temple Mount for Palestinian men under the age of 35. On Thursday, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said Israel, Jordan and Palestinians had agreed a plan to avert violence at the contentious site, and Israel on Friday re-opened the compound to all Muslims.

The WorldPost spoke with Daniel Seidemann, an Israeli lawyer who specializes in legal and public issues in East Jerusalem, about the recent unrest. Seidemann is the founder of the Israeli non-profit Terrestrial Jerusalem, which tracks developments in the city related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Seidemann said life in Jerusalem has become "unbearable" for many Palestinians, and the city is more divided than ever.

What is the atmosphere like on the streets of Jerusalem now? We are in a new situation and it appears that even after things calm down, we will never go back to the status quo ante. Since Mohammed Abu Khdeir was killed, the hatred has become more personalized, wider spread, and deeper ingrained. It's different now than it was four and a half months ago, and it wasn't idyllic then. There's a border in Jerusalem today, although not the kind discussed at peace talks. Israelis do not go into East Jerusalem. My Palestinian friends won't go into West Jerusalem. The degree of separation is as stark as I've ever seen. It's worse than during the Second Intifada (the 2000-2005 Palestinian uprising against Israel.)

What makes thing different today? The Second Intifada was a popular uprising, but not in Jerusalem. This is a popular uprising in Jerusalem, in a way the Second Intifada never was.

Why now? This is spontaneous combustion. No individual or group has started this, and no one has the power or authority to put a stop to it. The Israeli government says it has asked Palestinian leaders to put a stop to the violence. But Israel has crushed every form of Palestinian political expression in the city that is more radical than a scout meeting -- and sometimes even scout meetings. This is an uprising led by kids. What possesses kids to go out night after night and clash with the police? Not sophisticated politics. They felt something and they're expressing it.

What are they reacting to? The immediate triggers were the murder of Abu Khdeir, the expansion of Israeli settlement construction and the hostilities in Gaza. The underlying reasons help explain why this has lasted for four months. These kids feel life sucks and it's not getting better. They live under a government that at best ignores them and at worst treats them as an alien, hostile population. Then the incidents at the Temple Mount created a perfect storm. They feed into each other -- the mundane reasons of life being unbearable in Jerusalem, and the mythical power of Temple Mount.

Could you describe why life in Jerusalem is hard for these kids? Life is made more difficult because Palestinians have trouble getting building permits, their buildings are demolished, government taxes are higher. But the larger issue is the message that Israeli leaders' actions send to the Palestinian youth -- "You don't count." ...

[Read the rest of the interview here.](#)

9) Welcome to Netanyahu's "resolution" to the conflict

Noam Sheizaf, +962, November 18, 2014

Following [the November 18] horrifying terror attack, it's not so difficult to imagine how Naftali Bennett, Avigdor Lieberman or Benjamin Netanyahu might describe the current government if they weren't its leaders. You can almost see them showing up at the scene of the attack and screaming into the microphones denouncing the "wicked government," recalling every last pogrom in Jewish history.

But ... [this] is all taking place on their watch. If they think that Mahmoud Abbas is the problem – as their public statements declared – then they should deal with him. We all know that's not going to happen. This government needs Abbas much more than the Palestinians need him. The Palestinian leader has a dual role: he maintains quiet in the West Bank, and is also the punching bag the Israeli Right uses to explain away its reverberating failures.

Netanyahu promised Israelis prosperity and quiet without having to solve the Palestinian conflict. That has been his promise since the 1990s. To Netanyahu, terrorism is just card we've been dealt, and only military force can resolve it. There is no problem with continuing to build in the settlements, including inside the Palestinian neighborhoods of Jerusalem, because there is no connection between the settlements and the actions of the Palestinians. That's what Netanyahu has been saying for decades already — both to the world and to Israelis.

There's no reason to give Palestinians their rights because that endangers Israel: they can make due with "economic peace." It's okay to discriminate and legislate against Israel's Arab citizens. Hell, they should be saying thank you that we even let them live here; things are much worse in every other country in the Middle East. The government is here to serve the Jews, and the Jews only. And if we continue to act this way, aggressively and determinedly, we'll enjoy stability, security and economic prosperity. That's Netanyahu's theory, and the Israeli public bought it because the price was so low and the payoff sky high. We're not responsible for anything that happens and we don't have to make any compromises on anything.

At this point any reasonable person should realize what nonsense Bibi has been selling. In recent years Netanyahu has benefited from mere coincidence: Palestinians were tired from the intifada; Abbas decided to try the diplomatic track; the Arab world imploded; and Israel's high-tech economy was booming. It seems as if Netanyahu has been delivering, but none of those things had anything to do with him. It was all an illusion, an ongoing deception.

Since this June we have woken up to the true meaning of Netanyahu's vision, in which Israel rules over six million Palestinians — Israeli citizens, East Jerusalem residents, the subjects of military rule in the West Bank and those besieged in Gaza — and the only thing he's offering them is more of the same: the cruel hand of the military law, discrimination, violence, land expropriation, home demolitions, mass arrests and bombs from the sky.

For half a decade Netanyahu and Jerusalem Mayor Nir Barkat have been selling us lies about Israel's unified and prosperous capital, all while 40 percent of its residents live in impoverished neighborhoods and are not represented politically, aren't given building permits or even full municipal services. Some of those neighborhoods have been shoved eastward into a strange no-man's land on the other side of the wall, an area into which neither the police nor the municipality dare to venture. At the same time, with the encouragement of the city and under the protection and cover of the police, settlers are being put into the hearts of the Jerusalem's Arab neighborhoods, and right-wing members of Knesset are marking new targets for their projects — the Temple Mount, Silwan and Mount of Olives. After all that, is anybody really surprised that Palestinians have no trust in the police? ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

10) The Unholy City

Uri Avnery, Counterpunch, November 21, 2014

In its long and checkered history, Jerusalem has been occupied by dozens of conquerors. Babylonians and Persians, Greeks and Romans, Mamluks and Turks, Britons and Jordanians – to mention just a few. The latest occupier is Israel, which conquered and annexed Jerusalem in 1967. (I could have written "East Jerusalem" – but all of historical Jerusalem is in today's East Jerusalem. All the other parts were built in the last 200 years by Zionist settlers, or are surrounding Arab villages which were arbitrarily joined to the huge area that is now called Jerusalem after its occupation.)

This week, Jerusalem was in flames - again. Two youngsters from Jabel Mukaber, one of the Arab villages annexed to Jerusalem, entered a synagogue in the west of the city during morning prayers and killed four devout Jews, before themselves being killed by police. Jerusalem is called "the City of Peace." This is a linguistic mistake. True, in antiquity it was called Salem, which sounds like peace, but Salem was in fact the name of the local deity.

It is also a historical mistake. No city in the world has seen as many wars, massacres and as much bloodshed as this one. All in the name of some God or other. JERUSALEM WAS annexed (or "liberated" or "unified") immediately after the Six-day War of 1967. That war was Israel's greatest military triumph. It was also Israel's greatest disaster. The divine blessings of the incredible victory turned into divine punishments. Jerusalem was one of them.

The annexation was presented to us (I was a member of the Knesset at the time) as a unification of the city, which had been cruelly rent asunder in the Israeli-Palestinian war of 1948. Everybody cited the Biblical sentence: "Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together." This translation of Psalm 122 is rather odd. The Hebrew original says simply "a city that is joined together."

In fact, what happened in 1967 was anything but unification. If the intent had really been unification, it would have looked very different. Full Israeli citizenship would have been automatically conferred on all inhabitants. All the lost Arab properties in West Jerusalem, which had been expropriated in 1948, would have been restored to their rightful owners who had fled to East Jerusalem.

The Jerusalem municipality would have been expanded to include Arabs from the East, even without a specific request. And so on. The opposite happened. No property was restored, nor any compensation paid. The municipality remained exclusively Jewish.

Arab inhabitants were not accorded Israeli citizenship, but merely "permanent residence." This is a status that can be arbitrarily revoked at any moment – and indeed was revoked in many cases, compelling the victims to move out of the city. For appearance's sake, Arabs were allowed to apply for Israel citizenship. The authorities knew, of course, that only a handful would apply, since doing so would mean recognition of the occupation. For Palestinians, this would be paramount to treason. (And the few that did apply were generally refused.)

The municipality was not broadened. In theory, Arabs are entitled to vote in municipal elections, but only a handful do so, for the same reasons. In practice, East Jerusalem remains occupied territory. The mayor, Teddy Kollek, was elected two years before the annexation. One of his first actions after it was to demolish the entire Mugrabi Quarter next to the Western Wall, leaving a large empty square resembling a parking lot. The inhabitants, all of them poor people, were evicted within hours.

But Kollek was a genius in public relations. He ostensibly established friendly relations with the Arab notables, introduced them to foreign visitors and created a general impression of peace ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

11) What lies ahead for Israel

Yuval Diskin, Ynetnews, November 21, 2014

During these difficult times, I believe it is possible to slow the escalation of violence, and even stop it altogether. The formula is determination on the security front combined with stately and political enterprise and courage. The only problem is that these are traits that are lacking in the current government.

As a graduate of two "intifadas" and numerous conflicts, military operations as well as wars, I am convinced that the approach claiming that the only solution is more power – as we are told over and over again by the right-wing parties – is outdated.

Moreover, this situation in Jerusalem is a preview to the reality we are going to face if Bayit Yehudi (Jewish Home party) has its way with its delusional plan for a bi-national state.

The current situation also teaches us how dangerous right-wing inflammatory extremism is, when combined with the inexperience of its leaders in issues of security and the Middle East. This can lead us to grave complications that we may not know how to resolve.

In order to deal with the severe deterioration, one needs a profound understanding of what is really happening on the ground, without placing the blame on whoever is found to be politically convenient. Without this understanding, we have no chance of succeeding. An intifada is not something determined by fate. It is a state of mind of a population (the reasons for which is essential to understand), which produces a succession of events and terrorist acts that spiral out of control. The biggest challenge is in understanding how this stream of events can be stopped.

A year ago I published an article calling "to prevent the big explosion now," in which I specified my recommendations regarding the ways to avoid it. Unfortunately, the succession of security events from that time until today point, as expected, to a very severe escalation: a continuous flow of terror attacks that reached a peak with the kidnap and heinous murder of the three youngsters Gil-Ad, Naftali and Eyal, may they rest in peace; the just as heinous murder of the Palestinian youth, Mohammed Abu Khdeir; the wave of incitement and racism that washes over all of us; the escalation we are dragged into against Hamas in Gaza, that translated into 50 days of battle in Operation Protective Edge, with more than 70 casualties among our finest boys; the Jerusalem Intifada with the wave of tractor and vehicular attacks, shootings, axes and knives that accompany it, which reached another peak with the massacre during morning prayers in the synagogue in Har Nof.

These grave developments allow us to understand where we are heading before the events spin completely out of control. The escalation in Jerusalem gives us a glimpse into the future that the right-wing would lead us: A bi-national state with mixed populations and no borders, where all the problems that are the root of the conflict still continue to exist.

Despair, frustration and revenge – East Jerusalem is a microcosm for all the problems and the ailments of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The relative calm that sometimes prevails in Jerusalem is extremely fragile, and exists thanks to a delicate alignment of balance and brakes that require an educated and cautious policy.

But in an era of no political hope, of governmental weakness (both municipal and state), this alignment can be easily and quickly dismantled, especially when we let the pyromaniacs on both sides stroll around with matches in the most fuel-saturated flammable area in the Middle East - the Temple Mount. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

12) [Israel sows despair and senseless violence](#)

Jeff Halper, Mondoweiss, November 19, 2014

A statement of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHD)

And the “Zionist answer” to the downward cycle of senseless violence in which Jerusalem finds itself: house demolitions, mass arrests, revoking the “residency” of native-born Jerusalemites, closing Palestinian neighborhoods with concrete blocks, arming Israeli Jewish vigilantes and cheap shots at the last person who believes in a two-state solution, Abu Mazen. Everything, that is, except an end to occupation and a just political solution. This is what happens when a powerful country forgoes any effort to address the grievances of a people under its control and descends into raw oppression.

Israel is not in “the grip of a terrorist onslaught,” as Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu stated in this press conference tonight; it is in the grip of senseless violence spawned by despair and repression. The Palestinians, having lost all hope of the Occupation ending and a tiny state of their own, imprisoned in tiny islands of their country, victimized, impoverished, lacking the minimum in individual and collective rights, displaced, even their only place of refuge, their homes, demolished (some 48,000 Palestinian homes have been demolished in the Occupied Territory since 1967), have been reduced to lashing out. Threats to al Aqsa mosque – and there are palpable threats coming from the Israeli right, which wants to partition the holy site as it did to the Ibrahimi mosque in Hebron – only add to the danger that what has been until now a political conflict that can be resolved may turn into an uncontrollable religious war.

Israel, having given up all pretense of seeking a just solution, has answered Palestinian despair with pure, atavistic repression. Once again Prime Minister Netanyahu’s analysis is dead wrong: the “core of the violence,” as he puts it, is not the Palestinians’ refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state (they recognized the state of Israel on 78 percent of historic Palestine 26 years ago), but Israel’s refusal to address – even acknowledge – Palestinian national rights and claims. His “Zionist answers” of increased repression are empty of any political policy that could ease the conflict; not only do they not deter, as an IDF commission concluded in 2005, but they inflame the situation and lead to an endless downward spiral of violence. The Israeli political scene has deteriorated to raw revenge – and revenge for both crimes and acts of resistance that could have been avoided by a genuine Israeli aspiration for a just solution.

In the meantime, the people suffer and hatred prevails, stoked by the only party strong enough to end it all, the Occupying Power, Israel.