

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
July 2019



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

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The five articles and secondary links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the Trump administration's economic peace plan and meeting in Bahrain and reactions by Palestinian political and business leaders. events and discussion of politics and human rights related to Israel-Palestine, the involvement of U.S. companies in the production of weapons used against civilians in Gaza, the support from Israelis for ending the blockade in Gaza and the recommendation of a senior advisor to the European Court of Justice for products from Israeli occupied territories to be labelled as such to inform consumers. Finally, a link to the latest Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin is provided.

- Matt Spetalnick reports in Reuters that Palestinian officials rejected the Trump administration's economic peace plan.
- Rami Ayyub reports in Reuters that Palestinian business leaders boycotted the Trump administration's Bahrain workshop and called for a diplomatic path to statehood.
- Maureen Clare Murphy reports in The Electronic Intifada that the bombs dropped by Israel which killed civilians in Gaza in May were made by U.S. company Boeing.
- Anna Ahronheim, reports in The Jerusalem Post that nearly half of Israelis favor ending the blockade on the Gaza Strip.
- Agence France-Presse reports that a senior advisor to the European Court of Justice recommends that products from Israeli-occupied territories be clearly labelled as such to avoid misleading consumers.
- Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin

1. [U.S. economic plan decried by Palestinians but gets cautious nod in Gulf](#), Matt Spetalnick, Reuters, June 26, 2019.

“Palestinians on Wednesday poured scorn on the Trump administration's \$50 billion investment plan to help achieve Middle East peace, but U.S. Gulf Arab allies said the economic initiative had promise if a political settlement is reached. President Donald Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, the plan's main architect, sought to build support for his ambitious economic proposals for the Palestinian territories at an international meeting in Bahrain.

“Neither the Israeli nor Palestinian governments attended the two-day gathering that took place amid a years-long stalemate in other international efforts to resolve a conflict that has lasted more than seven decades.” ...

2) [In rebuff to Trump, Palestinian businesses call for freedom, not cash](#), Rami Ayyub, Reuters, June 20, 2019.

“Palestinian businessmen boycotting the Trump administration's Bahrain workshop designed to encourage investment in the territories say only a diplomatic path to statehood can end decades of conflict with Israel. The United States has billed the June 25-26 gathering in the Gulf kingdom as an economic overture to its long-delayed Israeli-Palestinian peace plan, widely referred to as President Donald Trump's ‘deal of the century.’

“The West Bank remains under Israeli occupation, scattered with Israeli settlements and military bases and sealed off by checkpoints and a razor wire and concrete barrier. The Israeli government cites security considerations for the restrictions it and Egypt impose on Gaza, whose Islamist rulers Hamas refuse to recognize Israel's right to exist.” ...

“But the World Bank says close to a quarter of Palestinians live in poverty and that the Palestinian economy grew by just 1% in 2018, with a 7% contraction in Gaza.”

“Unemployment in the Palestinian territories reached 31 percent last year, with the jobless rate standing at 52 percent in Gaza, the World Bank says.” ...

3) [Bombs made by Chicago company killed Gaza civilians](#), Maureen Clare Murphy, The Electronic Intifada, June 13, 2019.

“Israel used ‘bunker buster’ bombs made by a US arms company in two attacks on Gaza in which civilians were killed last month. The deadly strikes occurred in intense violence between 4 and 6 May during which 25 Palestinians, half of them civilians, and four civilians in Israel were killed. Remnants of the GBU-39 series guided “small diameter” bomb manufactured by Boeing were found by Human Rights Watch at the site of the Zoroub building in Rafah, southern Gaza. Three civilians were killed in an Israeli attack on the six-story commercial building on 5 May. Ahmad Zoroub, a relative of the building’s owner, was sitting in a basement cafe with two friends when the building was hit by three munitions.”

The 1997 Leahy Law, named for the senator who sponsored it, prohibits the US from providing military assistance to units of foreign militaries when there is credible information that those units violated human rights with impunity.

4. [Half of Israel is in favor of removing the blockade on Gaza: study](#), Anna Ahronheim, The Jerusalem Post, June 13, 2019.

“Close to half of Israelis are in favor of removing the 12-year-long blockade on the Hamas-run Gaza Strip, a new study by the Academic Institute for Structural Reforms has found.

The study, carried out by Panel Project, surveyed a sample of 608 Jews and Arabs, examining their attitudes towards Gaza and its economic situation in relation to violence, the effectiveness of Israel’s policy towards the Strip and possible solutions for the economic and humanitarian crises.

According to the study’s findings, 80% of respondents think that the economic situation in Gaza is “difficult to severe,” while another 61% agree that the difficult economic situation in Gaza is directly related to the violent conflict between Hamas and Israel.

The survey found that 65% of respondents view Hamas as responsible for the economic crisis, and another 7% blamed the Palestinian Authority and Mahmoud Abbas, while only 4% held Israel accountable.

According to the survey, 51% of respondents believe that Israel should care about the economic and humanitarian situation in the coastal enclave – but are more hesitant when it comes to steps that the government should take, preferring that private businesspeople or other countries step in instead of the Jewish state.” ...

See also:

[Israeli jets hit Gaza after rocket fire into Israel](#)

[Israel wounds 92 Palestinian civilians at weekly protest, including 28 children, 4 paramedics](#)

[Israel closes Gaza fishing zone, blames ‘incendiary balloons’](#)

[Gaza: Isolation and control](#)

[WHO: 3 children a month in Gaza left disabled for life](#)

[5. Israel settlement goods should be labelled, EU court advised, Luxembourg, Agence France-Presse \(AFP\), June 13, 2019.](#)

A senior advisor to the EU’s top court said Thursday it was his legal advice that products from Israeli-occupied territories must be clearly labelled as such to avoid misleading consumers. The European Court of Justice is not obliged to follow Advocate General Gerard Hogan’s advice, but the former Irish judge’s legal opinions are seen as highly influential in the bench’s deliberations. The ECJ is considering a request from France’s top tribunal for clarification of rules on labelling goods from the West Bank, including annexed east Jerusalem, which the international community considers occupied Palestinian land, as well as the Golan Heights, which Israel took from Syria in 1967. In legal advice to the court, Hogan said that, under EU rules, labels must make it clear if products originate in the occupied territories, and in particular if they come from Israeli settlements in those areas....

See also:

[Inside Israel’s million dollar troll army](#)

6) [Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin for June 2019](#)