

**Middle East Notes,  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
December 7, 2017**



*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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**Editor's note:** *Christmas Blessings, Peace and Wonder in the New Year to all our readers. After a brief Christmas break the next Middle East Notes will be available on January 4, 2018.*

The four featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on a recent speech at the UN by a present Palestinian (“Arab Israeli”) member of the Israeli Knesset referring to the Partition Plan of 1947 and its repressive effects up to the present; the effect of the continuing occupation on Palestinians and Israelis; a must read informative article explaining the last 50 years of Israeli settlements, occupation, Gaza blockade, theft of land, water and minerals; another long and informative article on the use of the word “apartheid” to describe the circumstances of the Palestinian citizens of Israel (20 percent of the total population); and timely links to CMEP and to other articles of interest.

**Commentary:** On November 29, 1947, the UN General Assembly adopted the Partition Plan (Resolution 181) which provided for the termination of the British Mandate and recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States. The State of Israel was established on May 14, 1948; Seventy years after Resolution 181a Palestinian State still awaits establishment delayed by inaction in the UN, U.S. interference through its veto power on the UN Security Council, and Israeli policies, occupation and settlements. The “two state” solution of this Israeli/Palestinian conflict is still the position of the UN and most of its member states. However past and present governments of Israel have created and pursued the current unresolved “status quo” with its military control of East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank. The reality seems to be that a “one state” solution is already in effect, with Israel in political, social and military control of all its citizens, and all the Palestinian people between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

**Features:**

- Itamar Eichner reports in [Ynetnews](#) that Ahmad Tibi, an “Arab Israeli” member of the Israeli Knesset used the platform at the UN to pan Israel for celebrating the 1947 Partition Plan that led to its independence, criticizes Israeli discriminatory policies toward Palestinians.
- Alon Mizrahi writes in [+972 Blog](#) that an Israel that does not fight to free Palestinians from occupation is an Israel that will excel in occupation. This is the Left’s most urgent and important mission.
- Zena Tahhan in a long and very informative historical article in [Aljazeera](#) explains.
- Yara Hawari writes in another long but very informative article printed in [Al-Shabaka](#) that the term apartheid is often used to refer to the situation of the Palestinians under occupation. Yara Hawari examines the application of the term to the [Palestinian citizens of Israel](#) by focusing on citizenship, land, education, and politics. She also discusses whether such analysis can advance this community’s rights and counter fragmentation among Palestinians as a whole.
- Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins

**1) [Arab MK slams UN celebration of Israel's independence](#) Itamar Eichner Ynetnews, November30, 2017**

“MK Ahmad Tibi (Joint List) attacked Israel and a UN-held celebration of the 1947 Partition Plan vote which led to Israel's Declaration of Independence, saying it is hypocritical of the state to celebrate such an event while denying Palestinians independence.

“Speaking at a United Nations convention held in observance of the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, Tibi panned Israel for what he says are discriminatory acts.

“Instead of working for equality, peace and acceptance of the other, the Israeli government promotes the Nationality Bill that speaks of self-determination only for Jews and establishes communities without Arabs,” said Tibi, adding that “the Joint List is working together with democratic Jews against the flood of these laws in order to bring about a better life.’

“Tibi, who was one of the main speakers at the event, also attacked the conduct of Israeli security forces and ‘policemen who killed innocent and holy Palestinians are still walking freely.’” ...

“We have recently heard proposals by the US for mediation in a peace agreement, but we cannot accept a solution that does not include a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital,’ Tibi said.

“Israel seems to have succeeded in thwarting the two-state solution, and therefore there is no choice but to discuss the outline of one state with civil equality for all,’ he added.” ...

**See also:**

[Why there can never be a two-state solution](#)

[How Palestine became Jewish](#)

[Opinion Have Israelis Forgotten How to Be Jews?](#)

**2) [Israel is not a democracy as long as the occupation exists](#) , Alon Mizrahi, +972 Blog, November 5, 2017**

“As in every year, the run-up to the commemoration of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin last week was full of attempts to describe Jewish existence in Israel with as much pathos as possible. Questions such as ‘what are we struggling for?’ are answered as if life here is some kind of script or speech.

“The 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration is another reason for celebration, as well as an excuse for endless talk intended to put us in a national trance — the kind that nullifies our personal existence and turns the individual into a single drop in a giant wave. We suffered, we went to war, we had our prophets, we built, we traveled, we have a hi-tech sector, we must live together. The neutral observer may wonder: does Israel even exist, or is it all in our imagination?” ...

“What is the point of pretending that our argument is between a ‘fundamental’ democracy and a ‘popular’ democracy? Why argue over whether the independence of the courts or the media is an issue, rather than over the fact that the political, legal, and cultural establishment lives comfortably with the notion that Israel is a de facto military dictatorship?

“The enormous gap between reality and the reality portrayed by the media and the political establishment is not just a disaster for the intelligence of Israeli citizens — it turns the existence of our political opposition into a joke.

“Furthermore, when millions of people who lack basic political rights — some of them under direct military dictatorship — are entirely absent from the discussions of the Israeli Left, its criticism becomes groundless.” ...

... “The truth hurts. Uttering the words ‘Israel is not a democracy as long as occupation exists’ is difficult. It is certainly difficult to present such a position to the world, as it may entail being marked as a self-hating Jew or traitor.

“Moreover, it is difficult to sit around the dinner table and speak of the injustices of military dictatorship to your family. The most basic worldview in this country is one that views Arabs as sub-human.”...

“As long as occupation exists, Israel is not a democracy. When it is undemocratic, it can only be a national home for Jewish citizens who lack any sense of morality or critical outlook. When it is undemocratic, and it *is* undemocratic, the regime can only increase its attempts at brainwashing. As our national story — how we view ourselves — grows more disconnected from the truth, there is an urgent need to make our citizens stupider and less aware.” ...

### 3) [Israel's settlements: 50 years of land theft explained](#), Zena Tahhan, Aljazeera, November 21, 2017

“To the casual visitor or tourist driving through the occupied West Bank or Jerusalem, Israeli settlements may appear as just another set of houses on a hill. The middle-class suburban style townhouses, built fast and locked in a grid of uniform units, stand like fortified compounds, in direct contrast to the sprawling limestone Palestinian homes below.” ...

[The article includes answers for each of the following subheadings.]

- What are settlements and how did they come about?
- What happened in 1948?
- What Israel did with Jerusalem
- Israel’s settlement project after 1967: How is it different
- Why are they illegal under international law?
- What type of settlements are there?
- How does Israel take over land?
- Why the locations of settlements matter
- Does Israel hope to annex the West Bank as well?
- How do they impact Palestinians?

See also:

[Israeli gov’t minister says there will be one million West Bank settlers in the next 10-20 years](#)  
[European conference on settlement activity declares Israel 'apartheid regime'](#)

### 4) [Apartheid from Within? The Palestinian Citizens of Israel](#) Yara Hawari, Al-Shabaka, November 23, 2017

“Overview: Key figures in the international arena have described the situation in the West Bank as apartheid, citing such characteristics of segregation as settler-only roads, fortified settlements, and the separation wall. In his 2006 book *Peace Not Apartheid*, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter applied the term specifically to the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), while John Kerry in 2014 warned that Israel ‘could’ become an apartheid state should the two-state solution fail to materialize.

“However, more recently prominent voices have applied the term to the situation of the Palestinian citizens of Israel. Jodi Rudoren, former *New York Times* Jerusalem bureau chief, said: ‘I...think the issue of apartheid is more relevant to how Arab Israelis [Palestinian citizens of Israel] are treated within the framework of [Israel].’ The UN Economic Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) [published a report](#) earlier this year stating that Israel, from the very beginning,

“has established an apartheid regime that dominates the Palestinian people as a whole” – meaning Palestinians not only in the OPT, but those in exile as well as in Israel proper.” ...

“Apartheid and Its Beginnings: Customary international law and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court define apartheid as ‘inhumane acts...committed in the context of an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group or groups and committed with the intention of maintaining that regime.’” ...

“Yet the documents’ focus on Israel proper highlights their limitations, especially regarding fragmentation. Expanding this vision across the Green Line and beyond, and transforming it into a demand to end apartheid and enforced fragmentation, must take a central role in the Palestinian liberation struggle. Only through such a development can all aspects of the Israeli apartheid regime be brought into question.”

## **5) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins**

Nov 10, 2017 - [\[Bulletin\] Sussia Avoids Demolition for the Moment](#)

Nov 17, 2017 - [\[Bulletin\] Congressional Spotlight on Child Detentions](#)

Dec 1, 2017 - [\[Bulletin\] Israel/Palestine on the American Stage](#)