

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
May 3, 2018



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 featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the Israeli celebration of Independence Day and the Palestinians' awareness of the Nakba. (NB. This year Independence Day fell on April 19, the fifth day of Iyar according to the Hebrew calendar and will be celebrated again on May 14 according to the Gregorian calendar; May 15 is Nakba Day); the reality that Israel is only a democracy for little less than half the inhabitants under its control; the replacement of the now defunct "two state solution" with some sort of Israeli/Palestinian "partnership"; the on-going creation of the very conditions for a radical new Holy Land, a future Israeli-Palestinian confederation; and links to CMEP Bulletins.

N.B. Timely information concerning the "March of Return" conflict along the Israel-Gaza cease fire demarcation line will continue through weekly [Middle East Notes Special Updates](#).

Commentary: May 14, 1948 was the day on which David Ben-Gurion first read the Israeli Declaration of Independence from British control some 70 years ago. The following day is Yawm an-Nakba, meaning "Day of the Catastrophe" for the Palestinians who still await a day of Independence from Israeli control. 2018 Israel must depend on its military superiority for its independence and its military superiority depends on support from the United States. The Palestinian population under its control continues to grow and now equals or even surpasses its Jewish population. There is no independence for the people of Gaza, token independence for those of the West Bank/Jerusalem and but limited independence for "Arab Israelis." How independent is a nation that denies independence to half the population within its undeclared borders and to millions in "refugee settlements" adjacent to these borders?

- Nehemia Shtrasler states in [Haaretz](#) that Israel's citizens are in constant fear of the next war. The country is totally dependent on its main ally (the US). Is Israel genuinely independent?
- Ayman Odeh writes in the [NY Times](#) that 70 years ago, the world changed around my family. The establishment of the state of Israel represented self-determination for Jews, but a catastrophe — "nakba" in Arabic — for Palestinians. In the area around the Mediterranean city of Haifa, where my family has lived for six generations, only 2,000 Palestinians of a population of 70,000 remained.
- Gideon Levy notes in [Haaretz](#) that calling Israel a democracy when less than half its subjects live in freedom is a propaganda trick that has worked better than one would have thought.
- In a long and well written essay combining history with present reality and a hope for the future, A.B. Yehoshua in [Haaretz](#) gives reasons why it is time to say goodbye to the two-state solution and consider a proposal for an Israeli-Palestinian partnership.
- Bradley Burston writes in [Haaretz](#) that in all of his proud intransigence, Netanyahu may be creating the very conditions for a radical new Holy Land, a future Israeli-Palestinian confederation.
- [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Bulletins](#)

1) [Israel's Make-believe Independence](#), [Nehemia Shtrasler, Haaretz](#), April 25, 2018

It was impossible for anyone driving around Israel on Independence Day not to notice the buses that had been pressed into service as ad hoc roadblocks at celebration venues. Their purpose was to stop booby-trapped vehicles. In Tel Aviv, they were outside Rabin Square, at the Light Parade on Namir Road, on roads near the beaches where spectators gathered for the air force flyover and at neighborhood events.

The number of soldiers, police officers, security guards, watchtowers, drones and helicopters was also unusual. Never have so many people and modes of protection been mobilized to prevent terror attacks. Even the gas station at Hayarkon Bridge was cordoned off and closed.” ...

“If so, are we genuinely independent? The fact is that Israel is the only country on earth that is being threatened with destruction, and is constantly in danger of war. Another truth is that we are incapable of standing alone against all the surrounding threats.

“It’s the United States that provides us with military superiority. It’s the United States that gives us the most advanced aircraft, precision weapons, funding for the Arrow missile, engines for the Merkava tank and money for developing the Iron Dome missile interceptor.

“Every year the United States provides us with \$5.3 billion in advanced weapons systems, as well as intelligence and scientific cooperation. All this together creates a military advantage that enables us to survive.

“We’re dependent on the United States economically as well.”

See also: [How We All Got Here](#)

Reflections on Israeli independence day, the Nakba and how the thugs of tribal and religious nationalism from both peoples are tightly grasping the fabric of the land

[Independence – when will it come?](#)

[Independence is being able to defend ourselves, Netanyahu says as Israel marks 70](#)

[Israel's Independence celebrations were a big show of insecurity](#)

2) [Israel Celebrates Its Independence, We Mourn Our Loss](#), Ayman Odeh, NY Times, April 18, 2018

“Seventy years ago, the world changed around my family. The establishment of the state of Israel represented self-determination for Jews, but a catastrophe — ‘nakba’ in Arabic — for Palestinians. In the area around the Mediterranean city of Haifa, where my family has lived for six generations, only 2,000 Palestinians of a population of 70,000 remained. My grandparents, A’bdel-Hai and A’dla, were among them. Their neighbors were expelled and dispossessed, and never allowed to return.

“More than 400 Palestinian communities were destroyed entirely — each one carried the memories and milestones of the families who called it home. My grandparents and all those Palestinian Arabs who remained and became citizens of the state of Israel were placed under military rule in Israel until 1966.” ...

“The Israeli educational system perpetuates the Nakba by refusing to teach about Palestinian society before 1948. Children in public schools throughout the country, Arab and Jewish, learn about European Zionists like Theodore Herzl, who died well before the establishment of Israel, but nothing about Palestinians before 1948. One would think there was not a Palestinian artist, poet or author before Israel’s founding.” ...

“To end the Nakba is to fully accept our humanity as Palestinians and to acknowledge that the only future for Israelis and Palestinians is a shared future. To end the Nakba, we must end the occupation and establish an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, with Eastern Jerusalem as its capital. To end the Nakba, we must implement a just solution for Palestinian refugees.”

See also: [Joint Israeli-Palestinian memorial goes ahead under eye of heavy security](#)

Over 7,500 Israelis and Arabs attend alternative memorial service in Tel Aviv as Israel marks Memorial Day, sparking anger among Israeli groups, who stage protests nearby against ‘the crazy Left’; writer David Grossman says during ceremony, ‘Enemies can connect out of grief.’

3) [Undemocratic From the River to the Sea](#), [Gideon Levy](#), Haaretz, April 15, 2018

“With the approach this week of celebrations marking Israel’s 70th birthday, 12 million people live in the country. Some of them are citizens, some are residents, some are detainees, and all are subjects. Everyone’s fate has been determined by the country’s governing institutions.

“On this Independence Day, we have to acknowledge that the country’s genuine borders are the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the Jordan River to the east, including not only the West Bank but also the Gaza Strip. Israel controls all this territory and everyone who lives there through various and sundry means, even if from a legal standpoint there’s no mention of this.” ...

“On Israel’s 70th birthday, the time has come to recognize that Israel is a binational state under whose control two peoples live, [equal in size](#). It maintains separate governing systems for them: a democratic one for Jews, discrimination for Israeli Arabs, and dictatorship for Palestinians. It’s not an equal democracy for all its subjects, meaning, of course, that it’s not a democracy.

“There’s no such democracy where what’s allowed for one people isn’t for another. Therefore, on its 70th anniversary, Israel being called a democracy when fewer than half its subjects live in freedom is nothing but a propaganda trick that has worked to a greater extent than one would have thought.” ...

“If the occupation isn’t temporary, it would be clear that Israel isn’t a democracy but rather an apartheid state par excellence. Two peoples and two systems of rights. That’s what apartheid looks like, even if it hides behind excuses ranging from temporariness to security grounds, from the right to the land to the concept of the chosen people, including the divine promise and messianic redemption.” ...

See also: [Why Gideon Levy Can't Stand Jerusalem](#), Yehudit Oppenheimer, Haaretz, Apr 27, 2018

If Levy so detests Jerusalem, how does he envisage life in the single state that he endorses?

[This is Zionism as racism. This is Israel at 70](#)

4) [Time to Say Goodbye to the Two-state Solution. Here's the Alternative](#), [A.B. Yehoshua](#), Haaretz, April 19, 2018

“Initially, it was customary to say ‘residents of the territories,’ not ‘[Palestinians](#)’ and the West Bank and the Gaza Strip were called ‘territories,’ which gradually morphed into ‘administered territories,’ and in the past 20 years into ‘occupied territories.’ The peace camp slowly introduced the term ‘Palestinians,’ in place of ‘Land of Israel Arabs’ into the public dialogue. The national camp, as it’s known, which attached the adjective ‘liberated’ to the territories, gradually insinuated the names ‘Judea and Samaria’ into the national discourse, as natural and legitimate parts of Israel itself, like East Jerusalem, which joined the western section, creating one city.” ...

“But above all, the two-state solution is fading because of the constantly expanding settlements in Judea and Samaria. Indeed, according to many experts who are familiar with the demographic and geographic reality, it is no longer possible to divide the Land of Israel into two separate sovereign states. Similarly, the possible partition of Jerusalem into two separate capitals with an international border between them is becoming increasingly untenable.” ...

“Yet, just when the term ‘Palestinian state’ is becoming a staple fixture in the international sphere, I and some of my good friends who fought for it for 50 years feel – and I hope I am proved wrong – that this vision is no longer viable in practice. Indeed, it has become only a deceptive and crafty cover for a slow but ever-deepening slide into a condition of vicious occupation and legal and social apartheid with which we in the peace camp – Israelis and Palestinians alike – have come to terms out of weariness and fatalism.” ...

“The fact is that recently, ideas have been raised in both the national camp and the peace camp about various sorts of federations and confederations, along with plans for “two states in one homeland” and other notions. I consider all

these to be highly positive efforts amid the conceptual stagnation that has seized large segments of the Israeli public, and certainly many political circles. It's true that wherever a new idea leads, a land mine, real or possible, will immediately go off beneath you, but the apartheid process that is striking deep roots in our life is far more dangerous, and uprooting it will soon be impossible." ...

"Therefore, instead of talking about peace or a settlement or conciliation, I suggest that we use the term "de facto partnership." That's a less ambitious but more practical term, and the amazing fact is that there has long been security cooperation between Israel and the Palestinians in the West Bank." ...

"The proposal put forward here, and many other proposals that are now under consideration and discussion by people from across the political spectrum, raise serious problems, but there is always hope that partnerships will be able to moderate the obstacles in attempts to cope with them. Let's not forget that all these plans are, after all, attempts to extricate ourselves from the principal moral quagmire into which we are relentlessly sinking."...

[See also: 'Israel is a fortress, but not yet a home': David Grossman's Memorial Day speech to bereaved Israelis and Palestinians](#)

5) [Israel Will Not Survive Netanyahu. And That's a Good Thing](#), Bradley Burston, Haaretz, April 24, 2018

"It's no stretch to suspect that in his heart of hearts, Benjamin Netanyahu would like to be Israel's prime minister for life. The question is, though: Whose life - Netanyahu's or Israel's?

"In Israel, North America, the world over, many Jews are going through something unfamiliar these days, something disturbing on a level which is both new and profound: Thanks to Netanyahu, the Israel you know – or thought you knew - is fast disappearing.

"In fact, Netanyahu's every move may be propelling the Holy Land into a future which just a short while ago seemed impossible – and to Netanyahu's own vision, distinctly undesirable: The replacement of a single independent Israel with a confederation in which Israel and Palestine are self-governing, co-equal, co-existing, culturally distinct, independent, self-governing entities. In all of his proud intransigence, Netanyahu may be creating the very conditions for a radical new Holy Land, a future Israeli-Palestinian confederation.

"As public opinion analyst Dahlia Scheindlin has shown, a majority of Israelis may support the general approach of confederation. It won't happen any time soon. But given present realities, a confederation may one day prove inevitable.

"The government's entire direction is not only rendering the Oslo-model two-state solution impossible, it is making untenable and unsustainable the present one-state/no-state reality of a monstrous form of triceratops rule (literally, a "three-horned face" - one entire body of law and enforcement for pre-1967 Israel, a second for West Bank settlers, a third for West Bank Palestinians)"...

6) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins

April 06, 2018 - [Bulletin: Gaza Protests to Continue After Deadly Weekend](#)

April 13, 2018 - [Bulletin: Israel Launches Probes into Deadly Gaza Crackdown](#)

April 20, 2018 - [Bulletin: Talking Peace at the J Street Conference](#)

April 27, 2018 - [Bulletin: Protest Casualties Compound Gaza's Humanitarian Crisis](#)