

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
April 6, 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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We begin this issue of Middle East Notes with a special alert about the recent attack by Israeli forces on Palestinians at the peaceful and nonviolent “Great Return March” which started on March 30 in Gaza.

The six featured articles and the related links that follow the alert focus on the recent AIPAC conference in D.C.; the “Israel Lobby and American Policy 2018” conference held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. before the AIPAC conference; the Israeli Prime Minister’s often stated unwillingness to end the occupation; the apartheid implications of the sentencing of Ahd Tamimi; the figures presented by the IDF showing that more Arabs than Jews are presently living in Israel, West bank and Gaza; the massacre on the Gaza border showing that the killing of Palestinians is accepted in Israel more lightly than the killing of mosquitoes; and links to CMEP Bulletins.

N.B. There will be further information concerning the present Palestinian confrontation in Gaza and elsewhere with the government of Israel in special Middle East Notes Special Alerts_in the coming days.

Commentary: A story – There was once a wanderer in a wilderness who thrived on obstacles quite well; she made a desert bloom, established cities, and accomplished all kinds of wonderful things. One of her arms developed a bit faster than the other. At one time our wanderer decided to use only this arm to do these things. He also used this same arm to keep the other arm tied up because he thought that he only needed one arm and also because of fear of what that other arm might do to him if freed up after being so abused for so long. That one over used arm was getting stressed but the wanderer with growing fear just increased using it more and more to restrain the other arm. The other arm was getting stronger and angrier about the restraints but nonetheless seemed to want to work with the wanderer. Our wanderer was getting lost in the desert; her friends kept telling her that two arms can do and be much more than one. They are hoping she will listen before she gets completely lost; let go of her fear; and discover that both arms together can create an unimagined future. The wilderness lies between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. How much longer before our wanderer listens to her real friends, wakes up and creates with both arms?

- Special Alert: Israeli forces have killed at least 18 Palestinians participating in peaceful protests along the border in Gaza. Read statements by Churches for Middle East Peace and Pax Christi International; and send a letter to Congress demanding action.
- Doug Rossinow writes in [The Washington Post](#) that AIPAC (The American Israel Public Affairs Committee) was formed to spin positive PR after Israeli atrocities.
- Just before the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) policy conference and mass congressional lobbying day in Washington, D.C., the “[Israel Lobby and American Policy 2018](#)” conference was held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C..
- Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man states in [972 Mag](#), that the next time anyone tries to blame the Palestinians for refusing to return to the negotiation table, it would be good to remember that Israel’s prime minister repeatedly states his unwillingness to end the occupation.
- Gideon Levy writes in Haaretz that with Ahd Tamimi’s sentence to jail, the truth of an Apartheid Israel is more evident.

- Yotam Berger, notes in [Haaretz](#) that the [figures presented by the IDF show more Arabs than Jews are presently living in Israel, West bank and Gaza](#).
- Gideon Levy writes in [Haaretz](#) that on March 30 Israeli military snipers fired at hundreds of civilians, hitting over 750, killing 15 and wounding hundreds. The shooting on the Gaza border shows once again that the killing of Palestinians is accepted in Israel more lightly than the killing of mosquitoes.

1) [Special Alert: Stop the killing of Palestinians by Israeli forces at the Gaza border](#)

At least 18 Palestinians have been killed and hundreds injured by Israeli security forces confronting the peaceful and nonviolent “Great Return March” which started in Gaza on March 30, 2018. [Click here](#) to find the following resources:

- Send a letter to Congress urging immediate action to protect and aid the Palestinians, organized by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men.
- Read statements by Churches for Middle East Peace and Pax Christi International.

2) [The dark roots of AIPAC, ‘America’s Pro-Israel Lobby’](#), Doug Rossinow, [The Washington Post](#), March 6, 2018

“The group was formed to spin positive PR after Israeli atrocities. Doug Rossinow teaches history at the University of Oslo, and is currently writing a history of American Zionism from 1948 to 1995.

“AIPAC, the swaggering and influential American Israel Public Affairs Committee, which brands itself as ‘America’s Pro-Israel Lobby,’ is holding its annual policy conference. Top politicians from both parties vie for speaking slots at the group’s glitzy gala. Everyone pays AIPAC attention. And for good reason. Since the late 1970s, it has informally directed substantial campaign contributions toward chosen candidates for Congress. Its messaging on the Middle East is essential in Washington’s foreign-policy conversation.

“Some love AIPAC, some hate it, some fear it — but it is a huge factor in U.S. policy, in American politics and in American Jewish life.” ...

“The perception that AIPAC represents a consensus among American Jews has always been a key to its political influence, which explains the group’s sometimes seemingly outsized opposition to Jewish dissent from its line. ‘America’s Pro-Israel Lobby,’ born in awful knowledge, has always existed to make Israeli realities and priorities palatable to Americans.”

See also:

[Opinion Why Young Jews and Democrats Are Waving Goodbye to AIPAC](#)

Emily Mayer writes that her generation has only known Israel as an occupier. We won’t back anyone who supports that injustice – including the powerful lobby that is AIPAC

[At AIPAC, Israel's problems went unmentioned](#)

Although AIPAC activists regularly acknowledge that, of course, Israel is not perfect, it felt like the people there were cheering and stomping for a different country.

[AIPAC, the U.S. Branch of Netanyahu's Likud Party](#)

The group’s message is loud and clear: We’re not interested in nonsense like investigations, corruption, bribery, arrests and people who turn state’s evidence.

3) [The Israel Lobby & American Policy 2018](#), March 2, 2018 at the National Press Club, Washington, D.C.

Just before the annual American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) policy conference and mass congressional lobbying day in Washington, D.C., the “Israel Lobby and American Policy 2018” conference was held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C..

"Maybe you are holding the key for any kind of change, for any kind of hope, because, as I'll try to claim later on, the hope for change within Israeli society is so limited. It's nonexistent. When the United States is still so crucial, people like you really can make the difference. People like you can really be a game changer, and I mean it. Never before have Israel and the United States shared the same values as in these days. The only place on earth that Donald Trump is beloved, admired, adored and appreciated is Israel. The only place that Binyamin Netanyahu is admired, adored, beloved is the United States. If this is not shared values, what is shared values?" -- Gideon Levy

[Click here to continue reading and for full video of the speech by Gideon Levy.](#)

4) [Netanyahu: Even in peace, the occupation will never end](#), Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man, 972 Mag. March 8, 2018

“He’s said it countless times before in myriad ways. But he usually only says it in Hebrew. This week, however, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said in English, and on camera, that under his leadership Israel will never end the occupation of Palestine.

“Speaking at the Economic Club of Washington earlier this week, Netanyahu dodged a question about whether he supports a one- or two-state solution, and outlined a vision that sounds a lot like an entrenched and enhanced version of the occupation as it exists today.

“I don’t want the Palestinians as citizens of Israel and I don’t want them as subjects of Israel. So I want a solution where they have all the powers they need to govern themselves but none of the powers that would threaten us,’ the prime minister said.

“What that means is that whatever the solution is, the area west of the Jordan — that includes the Palestinian areas — would be militarily under Israel,’ he continued. ‘The security, the overriding security responsibility would be Israel’s.’” ...

“None of that is to suggest that Netanyahu alone is responsible for the lack of peace or Palestinian statehood. His views are not all that different than the vast majority of Israeli politicians who hope to replace him one day. But next time anyone tries to lay blame on the Palestinians for ‘refusing to return to the table,’ remember how Benjamin Netanyahu keeps openly stating his unwillingness to ever end the occupation.”

See also:

[An Exchange on Best Path To Peace for Israel/Palestine \(Jeff Warner & Yossi Khen & response by Richard Falk\)](#)

Neither of these positions represents Tikkun's position which calls for a focus on healing the PTSD on both sides (including recognizing the partial legitimacy of both sides' narrative) while simultaneously calling for a campaign for "One Person/One Vote" in an Israel/Palestine.

[Ron Lauder: No Two-state Solution, Lack of Religious Pluralism Could Endanger Israel’s Existence](#)

President of the World Jewish Congress will speak at an anti-Semitism conference in Jerusalem on Monday before Education Minister Naftali Bennett, whose Habayit Hayehudi party rejects two-state solution.

[Israel's Self-Inflicted Wounds](#)

As the state of Israel approaches its 70th anniversary, I am filled with pride as I watch the vulnerable Jewish state of my childhood evolve into the strong and prosperous nation it is today.

[What is Palestinian-Israeli Co-resistance?](#)

Palestinian-Israeli co-resistance is a political, social and cultural necessity imposed by the reality of the protracted occupation.

5) [You Bet It's Apartheid, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, March 26, 2018](#)

"They work in a military unit with a biblical name: the 'Judea Military Court,' and they decide people's fate. No doubt they're certain they're working in a legal system, like they were taught at university. There are, after all, prosecutors and defense attorneys in it. There's even a translator.

"Most of the work attracts no attention. In Israel, who cares what happens in the prefabs at the Ofer military base? They have sent thousands of people to an aggregate tens of thousands of years of imprisonment, and almost never exonerated anyone; at their workplace, there's no such thing. They have also approved hundreds of detentions without hearings, even though there is no such thing in a country of law. Day after day, it's just another day at the office.

"And then Ahed Tamimi came to them. Almost 2 million people around the world signed a petition calling for her release. And the forces of Israeli military justice just kept at it, clerks devoted to the system. Now they must be thanked. This time they exposed to the world the naked truth: They are working for an apartheid system. They are its harbingers. They are its formulators. They are its contractors, small cogs in a big machine, but reflective of reality."

See also:

[An Israeli and a Palestinian slap a soldier. Guess who's still in prison?](#)

A reminder that Israelis and Palestinians who commit the same crime face radically different consequences.

6) [Figures Presented by Army Show More Arabs Than Jews Live in Israel, West Bank and Gaza, Yotam Berger, Haaretz, March 26, 2018](#)

"This is how Israel inflates its Jewish majority

"The Israeli army presented data on Monday to a Knesset panel which show that more Arabs than Jews live between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River.

"According to Civil Administration's deputy commander Col. Haim Mendes, five million Palestinians live in the [West Bank](#) and the [Gaza Strip](#). This figure does not include the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians living in East Jerusalem, or the 1.8 million [Israeli Arabs](#). According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, as of September 2017 some 6.5 Jews live in Israel.

"The data presented by Mendes at a session of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee is based on figures compiled by the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics. The reliability of the bureau's data has been questioned in the past, and Israeli security services usually refrain from relying on it." ...

"MK Ayman Odeh, head of the Joint List in response tweeted that, 'Between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean there is an equal number of Palestinians and Jews, and that's nothing new. That's why the crossroads where we

presently find ourselves is clear: either two states based on 1967, or one state that is an apartheid state, or one democratic state in which everyone has the right to vote. There is no other option, and at least this simple truth has to be stated clearly.”

See also:

[Israeli expert backs stats pointing to Arab-Jewish parity](#)

Sergio Della Pergola, a demographer from Hebrew University, says it's 'quite childish' for nationalist lawmakers to dismiss Palestinian demographic figures pointing to equal number of Jews and Arabs living from river to the sea.

[To the Settler Chief Who Insists Jews Must Rule Israel Even if Arabs Become the Majority](#)

If nothing else, the right has persuaded me of this: We need to offer every West Bank Palestinian the option of voting in Israeli elections. If you refuse to allow them a country, for God's sake, allow them the vote.

[How Many Palestinians Live in Gaza and the West Bank? It's Complicated](#)

According to Palestinian statistics, by 2020 there will be 7.12 million Arabs and 6.96 million Jews living in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza. But some in Israel consider the data unreliable.

7) [Gideon Levy: The Israel Massacre Forces](#), Haaretz, April, 1, 2018

“Israeli military snipers fired at hundreds of civilians, hitting over 750 and killing 15, but two Palestinians who dared return fire at the soldiers who were massacring them are ‘terrorists,’ their actions labeled ‘terror attacks’ and their sentence – death. The shooting on the Gaza border shows once again that the killing of Palestinians is accepted in Israel more lightly than the killing of mosquitoes.

“The death counter ticked away wildly. One death every 30 minutes. Again. Another one. One more. Israel was busy preparing for the Seder night. TV stations continued broadC.asting their nonsense.

“It’s not hard to imagine what would have happened if a settler had been stabbed – on-site broadC.asts, throw open the studios. But in Gaza the Israel Defense Forces continued to massacre mercilessly, with a horrific rhythm, as Israel celebrated Passover.

“If there was any concern, it was because soldiers couldn’t celebrate the seder. By nightfall the body count had reached at least 15, all of them by live fire, with more than 750 wounded. Tanks and sharpshooters against unarmed civilians.”...

“The test by which the IDF and the pathological indifference of public opinion should be judged is the following: What would happen if Jewish Israeli demonstrators, ultra-Orthodox or others, threatened to invade the Knesset? Would such insane live fire by tanks or sharpshooters be understood by the public? Would the murder of 15 Jewish demonstrators pass with silence? And if several dozen Palestinians managed to enter Israel, would that justify a massacre?

“The killing of Palestinians is accepted in Israel more lightly than the killing of mosquitoes. There’s nothing cheaper in Israel than Palestinian blood.”

8) Churches for Middle Peace (CMEP) Bulletins

Mar 02, 2018 - [Bulletin: Tensions Over Jerusalem Status Quo Persist](#)

Mar 09, 2018 - [Bulletin: Contested Territory Beneath Planned U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem](#)

Mar 16, 2018 - [Bulletin: Early Talks Around Trump Peace Plan Begin](#)

Mar 23, 2018 - [Bulletin: The Two-State Solution at Risk](#)

Mar 30, 2018 - [Bulletin: Holy Week in the Holy Lands](#)