

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**

**May 11, 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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The six featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on a recent meeting of Jewish Voice for Peace and an opportunity to link to the presentations given by many speakers; the continuing hunger strike by Palestinian prisoners; implications for Israel of the occupation begun after the 1967 War; hopes and concerns about President Trump's wish to make a deal to resolve the Israeli/Palestinian conflict; two issues of the CMEP Bulletin, which include links to articles of special interest.

**Commentary:** The month of June will mark 50 years of the "temporary" Israeli occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Golan Heights. Renewed interest in resolving Israeli control of the Palestinians is evidenced by the mainly younger Jewish participants in the recent meeting in Chicago of Jewish Voice for Peace, the continuing hunger strike of Palestinians in Israeli jails, commemoration of the War of Independence and Six Day War in Israel, and the promise of President Trump to work with the Israelis and Palestinians "to work a deal" to finally resolve their conflict. Without an end to the occupation, the establishment of two autonomous states, or of one state with equal rights and responsibilities for all Israelis and Palestinians, the future promises only more and increasing conflict and violence for the people between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River. The Israeli need for security and the Palestinian need for freedom must be acknowledged before any creative negotiations can take place between those controlling and those under their control.

- *Jewish Voice for Peace* presents a video introducing their recent 2017 National meeting. An explanation of JVP is provided along a link to the video which includes all the presentations at this meeting.
- *Kairos Palestine* has issued a statement on Palestinian prisoners' Hunger Strike now taking place as an appeal to humanity in Israel and worldwide to draw attention to the torture, deprivation and human rights violations faced by prisoners in Israeli political prisons.
- Steven Klein states in *Haaretz* that Israelis in 2017 are enslaved to the maintenance of the occupation. This wasn't supposed to be Israel's story.
- Ben Caspit writes in *Al-Monitor* that the 1967 Six-Day War with the occupation of the West Bank marks a watershed in Israel's history; Israel has since turned into a prosperous, developed country, albeit with a divided society with elements that lean to extremes.
- Orly Azoulay writes in *Ynetnews* that if only the US president understood what Abbas put on the table is the exact solution Netanyahu doesn't want to and can't accept, he would've known there is no point in dipping his toes into the Middle Eastern swamp.
- Links to two *CMEP Bulletins* with their many links to timely articles, and to the CMEP website are provided.

**1) [Video: Jewish Voice for Peace opposes anti-Jewish, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab bigotry and oppression.](#)**

"Jewish Voices for Peace (JVP) seeks an end to the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem; security and self-determination for Israelis and Palestinians; a just solution for Palestinian refugees based on principles established in international law; an end to violence against civilians; and peace and justice for all peoples of the Middle East. Jewish Voice For Peace members are inspired by Jewish tradition to work together for

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peace, social justice, equality, human rights, respect for international law, and a U.S. foreign policy based on these ideals.

“For more information on JVP please click: <https://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/mission/>

“To watch a video introducing the 2017 National meeting, please click: <https://nmm.jewishvoiceforpeace.org/>

“To become a member of JVP and watch every plenary and featured workshop of this recent JVP national meeting, please make a donation to JVP and click: [Virtual Pass](#)

## 2) [Kairos Palestine Statement on prisoners' Hunger Strike](#)

“The voice of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails is being heard since April 17 when they announced an all-out hunger strike; around 1,500 prisoners have joined in this hunger strike.

“The hunger strike is an appeal to humanity in Israel and worldwide to draw attention to the torture, deprivation and human rights violations faced by prisoners in Israeli political prisons.

“This strike asserts the just demand by Palestinian prisoners for their basic rights and human dignity to be respected. They have rights that are guaranteed under international humanitarian law such as the Geneva Convention, and human rights laws and norms oblige the occupation state to observe the basic rights of prisoners.

“There are around 6500 Palestinian detainees and prisoners in Israeli prisons and detention centers, including 300 children, 61 women and 13 members of the Palestinian Legislative Council. These prisoners represent all sectors of the Palestinian people; their detention is a source of concern and distress for their families and all Palestinians. Their detention is a blatant violation of human dignity and Palestinian sovereignty.” . . .

“The key demands made by prisoners and detainees in this strike is to end the practice of administrative detention, increase family visits, and expand the circle of family members permitted to visit.” . . .

“In the name of the humanitarian values espoused by every religion, and in the name of Christian values and teachings, we express our support for prisoners as human beings who possess dignity granted to them by their creator. We support them and demand their freedom; we support their humanitarian demands. Prisoners risk their lives with this demanding step of a hunger strike, but it also proves that their demands and stance are justified and sound.”

**See also:**

[The Prisoners' Revolt: The Real Reasons Behind The Palestinian Hunger Strike](#)

[Palestinian prisoners enter 20th day of mass hunger strike](#)

[50 Palestinian political leaders to join mass prisoner hunger strike in Israeli custody](#)

[Israeli Prisons Relent on Palestinian Strikers' Meetings With Lawyers](#)

## 3) [Opinion Israel Lost Its Independence in 1967](#) Steven Klein, Haaretz, May 2, 2017

“In Israel, it’s the season for stories of heroism – from the Holocaust, the War of Independence and the Six Day War. But the overriding narrative of today’s Israel is the wrong story, and decidedly unheroic. We are essentially living a story parallel to the one Israel’s founding fathers had intended for us.

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“What distinguishes today’s stories from the past is that before Israel’s statehood we as a people did not control our own fate, and now we do. We now possess the power to choose our story, but it’s a power our leaders try hard to persuade us we lack.” . . .

“But there is an inverse narrative neither our leaders nor most Israelis like to consider: that since 1967, Israel’s story has been an active, conscious subjugation of the will of the Palestinians to its own.” . . .

“The Six Day War put Israel on a parallel path. The story shifted from Israel the unapologetic David to being Israel the apologetic Goliath. From being a light unto other nations to hasbara in defense of the occupation

**See also:**

[Opinion The Miracle of Occupation Nation](#)

[Opinion To Honor Israel's Memorial Day, They Attacked My Family](#)

**4) [After 69 years of independence, Israel more prosperous and divided than ever](#) Ben Caspit, Al-Monitor, May 1, 2017**

“On May 2, Israel will celebrate the 69th anniversary of its independence that was achieved against all odds in 1948. Next month, on June 5, the Jewish state will mark another historic event. It also will be the 50th anniversary of the Six-Day War. In that war, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) fought against the armies of Egypt, Syria and Jordan (as well as troops from other Arab states), conquered the Sinai Peninsula, the Golan Heights and the West Bank in a whirlwind attack and liberated East Jerusalem, including the Western Wall. It was the culmination of 2,000 years of longing to return to that site.” . . .

“Now that it has seemingly reached green pastures, Israel knows no rest. Something is tearing it up inside. Social divisions are only intensifying, while political divisions pose a real threat. The sense of solidarity has vanished; tolerance has faded away. Instead, its tribes are lashing out at one another. The streets, and especially the social networks, are seething with hatred. Israel is being torn apart like never before.

“Confronting the camp that will celebrate the ‘liberation’ this June is a smaller but no less determined camp, which regards that war as a kind of curse, which brought us the "occupation" and with it the domination of another people. Israel is having a hard time reaping the benefits of its victory over its adversaries and enemies. It is as if it is now determined to attain victory over itself as well.” . . .

“Meanwhile, the internal debate that has plagued Israel since the Six-Day War — and has long since become a deep-rooted, unresolvable structural rift — continues. Israel is the only country in the world that has yet to decide what it wants from itself. It is the only country without permanent borders. It has controlled the West Bank for some 50 years, but it has yet to decide what it wants to do with that territory, and particularly with the approximately 2 million Palestinians living there.” . . .

**See also:**

[Israel has never recognized its Palestinian citizens](#)

**5) [Trump’s new toy: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#) , Orly Azoulay, Ynetnews, May 5, 2017**

“Donald Trump lacks any deep knowledge about the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, its history and the great dreams that were shattered. He is unaware of the emotions creating the animosity and is ignorant about the injustices that have been caused for decades. The rivers of blood that fed the never-ending battles over the land and over honor were something he sort of heard about, in his impatient manner, in a short report.

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“And he doesn’t really care. His ambition is to score an impressive foreign policy achievement, a success of his own, which he will be able to put his name on in golden letters, as he likes to do. After a little over 100 days of a chaotic presidency, with record-low approval ratings, Trump is in desperate need of a victory shot.

“That was not the only thing he brought along to the meeting, however. Unlike Trump, who kept all the cards close to his chest, Abbas put on the table—in front of the media—the only possible solution as far as he is concerned: Two states, east Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine, the 1967 borders, a solution to the refugee problem, and an Israeli recognition of the state of Palestine like the Palestinians recognize the State of Israel.” . . .

***See also:***

[Abbas Told Trump: Peace Talks Should Resume From Where 2008 Negotiations With Israel Left Off](#)

[Israelis Want Peace, Palestinians Want Freedom](#)

[Trump’s Meeting With Abbas: Should We Laugh Or Cry](#)

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

April 28, 2017 - [\[Bulletin\] Gaza Electricity: UN Resets the Breaker](#)

May 05, 2017 – [\[Bulletin\]: Broader Middle East](#)

Editor’s Note: These Churches for Middle East Peace, (CMEP) Bulletins are highly recommended for their content and excellent links. To obtain more information on CMEP, visit their website at: <http://cmep.org/content/about-cmep>