

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**August 11, 2016**

*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 many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the government of Israel's attempts to weaken the growing success of the non-violent BDS movement in publicizing the oppression and repression of the Palestinians; support of BDS by the Black Lives Matter movement in the U.S.; the genesis and growth of the settlement movement; the de-facto forced "transfer" of Palestinians through destruction of their homes; the unfulfilled promise in the Declaration of Independence that the State of Israel "will invest in developing the land for the benefit of all its inhabitants based on the foundations of freedom, justice and peace"; and other articles of interest.

**Commentary:** There are different words and phrases with contrasting meanings being used by Israelis and Palestinians in the competing "narratives" of their common reality. A lexicon of some expressions used:

Democracy for Jews - disenfranchised Arabs; Judea/Samaria - occupied territories; IDF - occupying army; Arabs – Palestinians; soldiers – terrorists; bullets – stones; heroes – martyrs; reprimanded stone throwers - imprisoned stone throwers; civil Law - military Law; violent lethal force - non-violent protests; attacks on "Arabs - boycott, divestment, sanctions; settlements - protected colonies; settlement construction - illegal structures; direct paved roads – circuitous dirt roads; check points - control blocks; separation barrier- illegal wall; gardens and pools - limited water supply; de-legitimization - criticism of repressive policies; hasbara – propaganda.

A few days residence in both Israel and the West Bank (Bethlehem or Ramallah) will quickly inform any "visitor" of the more accurate words of this lexicon and the intelligibility and truth of the less known Palestinian narrative.

- Noura Erakat, Ingrid Jaradat Gassner, Diana Buttu, and Nur Arafah write in Al-Shabaka that Israel has been cracking down on human rights defenders. Top Israeli officials have targeted activists in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, calling for "targeted civil eliminations" of BDS leaders and declaring that they should "pay the price" for their work.
- Yotam Berger reveals in Haaretz that It has long been an open secret that the settlement enterprise was launched under false pretenses, involving the expropriation of Palestinian land for ostensibly military purposes when the true intent was to build civilian settlements, which is a violation of international law.
- Uri Savir writes in Al-Monitor that EU officials are preparing a list of demands designed to stop the flow of Israeli anti-democratic legislation and statements.
- The +972 Blog reports that Hagai El-Ad, the executive director of B'Tselem recently spoke to the members of the Knesset noting that over the last decade, Israel has demolished over 1,100 Palestinian homes in the West Bank, leaving homeless more than 5,199 people, including at least 2,602 minors. He stated that these extensive demolitions are part of a broader Israeli policy of forced transfer.
- Haaretz reports that a wide-ranging new platform of a coalition growing out of the Black Lives Matter movement in the US endorses the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign and includes harsh criticism of Israel, which it describes as an "apartheid state" that, it claims, perpetrates "genocide" against the Palestinian people.
- Anshel Pfeffer writes in Haaretz that the obsession that both Palestinians and Israelis have with the Balfour Declaration is symptomatic of how both sides prefer to cling to myths, rather than deal with reality.

**1) [Threats to Human Rights Defenders: How Far Will Israel Go?, Al-Shabaka Noura Erakat, Ingrid Jaradat Gassner, Diana Buttu, Nur Arafah , August 4, 2016](#)**

“Israel has been cracking down on human rights defenders. Top Israeli officials have targeted activists in the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement, calling for “targeted civil eliminations” of BDS leaders and declaring that they should “pay the price” for their work. BDS co-founder Omar Barghouti has been cited by name.

“Within Israel, the High Court in 2015 upheld a 2011 law that penalizes organizations and persons who call for the boycott of Israel or its illegal settlements and allows suits against them. Israel has also been investing considerable resources in fighting the BDS movement abroad.

“How far will Israel go in carrying out its threats against human rights defenders? What should Palestinians and the international solidarity movement do in order to protect themselves and to safeguard the progress of the movement? In this roundtable, Al-Shabaka Policy Advisors Noura Erakat, Ingrid Jaradat, and Diana Buttu examine specific threats to the BDS movement and other human rights defenders in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT), Israel, and beyond. Al-Shabaka Policy Fellow Nur Arafah served as the roundtable’s facilitator.” . . .

“Meanwhile, even more aggressive colonization of the OPT, including East Jerusalem, and more repressive measures against human rights defenders may broaden international support for those who advocate for the Palestinian people. This would accelerate the process of isolation of Israel’s regime of settler colonialism, apartheid, and occupation. However, sustained and proactive BDS campaigning and action supporting the defense of civil and political rights, including the right to BDS, will be required from human rights defenders. This is particularly true at present, with powerful Western governments launching yet another Oslo-type ‘peace initiative’ to protect Israel’s regime and the oppressive status quo.

“To that end, the wider pro-justice movement can lobby, invite Palestinian human rights defenders targeted by Israel to speak in their country, and join local or regional efforts for effective legal support of BDS campaigners.

On the Palestinian side, activists should draft diplomatic initiatives asking EU governments to condemn extrajudicial assassinations and hold Israel accountable for its crimes. Palestinians also need a media strategy and a legal team to pursue cases against Israeli soldiers. Although several human rights organizations and activists are working on this, their efforts are usually uncoordinated and sporadic; there is a need to achieve cohesion through collaboration. In addition, human rights NGOs should work together to address the restrictions on their funding, whether due to the new Israeli law mandating disclosure of foreign funds or the coordinated attacks on their funding by Israel and Israeli-backed NGOs.

**2) [Secret 1970 Document Confirms First West Bank Settlements Built on a Lie, Yotam Berger, Haaretz, July 28, 2016](#)**

“It has long been an open secret that the settlement enterprise was launched under false pretenses, involving the expropriation of Palestinian land for ostensibly military purposes when the true intent was to build civilian settlements, which is a violation of international law.

“Now a secret document from 1970 has surfaced confirming this long-held assumption. The document, a copy of which has been obtained by Haaretz, details a meeting in the office of then-defense minister Moshe Dayan at which government and military leaders spoke explicitly about how to carry out this deception in the building of Kiryat Arba, next to Hebron.

“The document is titled ‘The method for establishing Kiryat Arba.’ It contains minutes of a meeting held in July 1970 in Dayan’s office, and describes how the land on which the settlement was to be built would be confiscated by military order, ostensibly for security purposes, and that the first buildings on it would be falsely presented as being strictly for military use.

Aside from Dayan, the participants include the director general of the Housing Ministry, the Israel Defense Forces’ commander in the West Bank and the coordinator of government activities in the territories.” . . .

"The system of confiscating land by military order for the purpose of establishing settlements was an open secret in Israel throughout the 1970s, according to people involved in creating and implementing the system. Its goal was to present an appearance of complying with international law, which forbids construction for civilian purposes on occupied land. In practice, everyone involved, from settlers to defense officials, knew the assertion that the land was meant for military rather than civilian use was false." . . .

See also: Link A - [Dem rep: Israeli settlers are like termites](#); Link B – [How the American Jewish Establishment Silences U.S. Politicians About Settlements](#); Link C - [US State Department: Israeli settlements entrenching region in 'perpetual occupation and conflict'](#)

### 3) [\*\*Why EU fears for Israeli democracy, Uri Savir, Al-Monitor, July 24, 2016\*\*](#)

"Alarm bells went off at European Union headquarters after the Knesset approved July 11 the transparency bill, which mandated that Israeli nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that receive more than half of their income from foreign funds must disclose this in any report or contacts with government officials. The fact that left-wing, pro-peace and human rights organizations are targeted by the Israeli government is seen in Brussels as an affront to Israel's already flawed democracy. There are those at EU headquarters who are beginning to question the preferential treatment of Israel. They note that countries have to adhere to democratic standards in order to enjoy their preferential agreements with the EU (such as in the area of scientific research)." . . .

"It appears that in the coming weeks, the EU office for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy will do its utmost to impress upon Israel the seriousness of a possible deterioration in EU-Israel relations and to quell the voices in the EU, mainly by socialist parliamentarians who are demanding that the EU's future agreements with Israel be linked to the level of Israel's democracy.

"In Washington, similar criticism was expressed on the transparency bill. State Department spokesman John Kirby said at a briefing July 12 that the administration is deeply concerned of 'the chilling effect that this new law could have on NGO activities. As the president has made clear, a free and functional civil society is essential.'" . . .

"In the end, this is not about Europe, but about Israel's very identity as a Jewish democracy. It's in Israeli strategic interest to adhere to its own values of the 1948 Declaration of Independence and to maintain a Jewish majority based on a two-state solution."

### 4) [\*\*Home demolitions are organized state violence, Hagai El-Ad, By +972 Blog, July 28, 2016\*\*](#)

"Esteemed Members of the Knesset, colleagues from the human rights and diplomatic communities and B'Tselem staff. Thank you for taking the initiative to convene this session and for taking ongoing and important actions in this area. "More than 5,000 people, including 2,602 minors. Over 1,100 homes. These are the figures for the last 10 years, from 2006 through June of this year.

"Nearly 500 people, including 287 minors. One hundred and twenty-five homes. These are the figures for 2015. "Seven hundred and forty people, half of them minors. One hundred and sixty-eight homes. These are the figures for this year, from January through June of 2016.

"This total does not include homes that Israel demolished more than once, nor the so-called 'punitive demolitions' – i.e., collective punishment that targets the families of perpetrators of attacks. These figures refer only to demolitions that Israel carried out on the cynical grounds that these homes were constructed unlawfully – meanwhile, the reality is that Israel ensures that Palestinians are unable to undertake lawful construction.

"First and foremost, these figures deal with human lives. Lives that Israel ruins, deliberately, as part of a broader strategy designed to dispossess Palestinians from vast areas of the West Bank, to make their lives unbearable until they finally take the hint and move, to move them into smaller concentrated areas, to push them out.

"We at B'Tselem present these figures and explain their import to the Israeli public, to you – members of Knesset, and to the world. We show how Israel managed to perfect to a veritable art form the knack of employing bureaucratic mechanisms to promote the big move of dispossessing Palestinians in the West Bank, and to justify it all on administrative and legal grounds. This is organized state violence, and all the Israeli branches of government are party to it, each playing its own role: the planning mechanisms, the military, the Civil Administration, and also the settlers, and last but not least, the courts that serve as the crowning jewel in whitewashing the injustice." . . .

"We are here today to discuss demolitions targeting Palestinians living in the 60 percent of the West Bank that were designated Area C in a temporary arrangement that was supposed to be over 15 years ago, and that Israel takes advantage of to further its own interests. But this is a fiction. Ultimately, all Palestinians living in the West Bank are affected. Israel's actions in Area C impact everyone, because whoever controls the land reserves, farmland, area for development, all the land that lies between Palestinian cities, whoever prevents development there and is constantly engaged in dispossession of Palestinians, whoever controls those 60 percent of the West Bank, controls 100 percent of the Palestinians." . . .

"We will continue to do our best to carry on fighting this policy, documenting it, telling the truth about it here and elsewhere, everywhere, and to call on people and governments here and abroad to oppose it and bring it to an end, until the occupation is over."

See also Link D - [B'Tselem: Israel demolished more Palestinian homes in past 6 months than in all of 2015](#)

##### **5) [Black Lives Matter Endorses BDS: Israel Is 'Apartheid State', Haaretz, August 4, 2016](#)**

"The Movement for Black Lives,' a coalition that includes Black Lives Matter and others, released this massive online platform: <https://policy.m4bl.org/platform/>

"It contains a few sections on Israel/Palestine, including a call to end US military aid to Israel, and a call to organize against anti-BDS bills.

"Here is some of the language found in the invest/divest section:

"The US military accounts for over 50 percent of discretionary federal spending, a total of 598.5 Billion dollars spent annually, as compared to 70 billion spent on education, 66 billion spent on healthcare, \$63.2 billion spent on housing and 29.1 billion spent on social security and unemployment. In addition, approximately 3 billion dollars in U.S. aid is allocated to Israel, a state that practices systematic discrimination and has maintained a military occupation of Palestine for decades. Together with aid to Egypt — Israel's most important regional ally — this figure represents nearly 75 percent of all US aid dollars." . . .

"The US justifies and advances the global war on terror via its alliance with Israel and is complicit in the genocide taking place against the Palestinian people. The US requires Israel to use 75 percent of all the military aid it receives to buy US-made arms. Consequently, every year billions of dollars are funneled from US taxpayers to hundreds of arms corporations, who then wage lobbying campaigns pushing for even more foreign military aid."

##### **6) [Netanyahu and Abbas' March of Historical Folly, Anshel Pfeffer, Haaretz, July 30, 2016](#)**

"The obsession that both Palestinians and Israelis have with the Balfour Declaration is symptomatic of how both sides prefer to cling to myths, rather than deal with reality." . . .

"No Israeli prime minister has ever articulated how the state should go about fulfilling the promise in the Declaration of Independence that the State of Israel "will invest in developing the land for the benefit of all its inhabitants; will be based on the foundations of freedom, justice and peace in the vision of the prophets of Israel; will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its citizens irrespective of religion, race or sex; will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture." That's a tall order and, 69 years later, we still haven't got around to explaining how we plan to do it." . . .

"The obsession that both Palestinians and Israelis have with the Balfour Declaration is symptomatic of how both sides prefer to cling to myths, rather than deal with reality. The letter from Foreign Secretary Arthur Balfour to Lord Rothschild in 1917 expressing the British government's support for the establishment of a 'national home for the Jewish people in Palestine' ultimately amounted to nothing. In the succeeding three decades of the British mandate, instead of setting the foundations for Jewish statehood, the British limited Jewish immigration at a time when Jews were desperate to flee Nazi-dominated Europe." . . .

"When the Jewish State finally became a reality, the Balfour Declaration was a worthless scrap of paper. Israel was established through the sweat and blood of its people, with a renewed mandate from the United Nations, with the help of weapons bought from Czechoslovakia, with Joseph Stalin's blessing and money donated by American Jews, whose country, crucially, immediately recognized the new state, minutes after David Ben Gurion read out the Declaration of Independence.

"If the Palestinian Authority really wants to sue someone for denying them a state, the UN, the United States, Russia, the Czech Republic, Jordan and the other Arab countries which invaded Palestine in 1948, are the culprits. Not Britain, which did nothing." . . .

"Abbas' version of history is just as false as Netanyahu's claims to have a clear policy on how Jews and Arabs can live and prosper together in this land. The false historian clutching the discredited Balfour Declaration and the historian's son living behind high walls on Jerusalem's Balfour Street are both experts at missing out on the ample opportunities provided them by history."

#### Other articles of interest:

A) [\*\*Dem rep: Israeli settlers are like termites, Mark Hensch, The Hill, July 25, 2016\*\*](#)

Rep. Hank Johnson (D-Ga.) compared Israeli settlers to termites while discussing Israel-Palestine relations. "There has been a steady [stream], almost like termites can get into a residence and eat before you know that you've been eaten up and you fall in on yourself," he said, according to The Washington Free Beacon.

B) [\*\*How the American Jewish Establishment Silences U.S. Politicians About Settlements, , Peter Beinart, Haaretz, August 2, 2016\*\*](#)

When U.S. Jewish leaders falsely accused Rep. Hank Johnson of 'anti-Semitism' they proved to American politicians that expressing moral outrage about the occupation can imperil their careers.

C) [\*\*U.S. State Department: Israeli settlements entrenching region in 'perpetual occupation and conflict', Ma'an News, July 28, 2016\*\*](#)

The US Department of State released a statement Wednesday slamming Israel's continued settlement expansion in the occupied West Bank, while expressing concern over the recent increase of demolitions on Palestinian homes that have left dozens of Palestinians homeless this week.

D) [\*\*B'Tselem: Israel demolished more Palestinian homes in past 6 months than in all of 2015, Ma'an News, July 28, 2016\*\*](#)

Israeli authorities have demolished more Palestinian homes in the West Bank in the first six months of 2016 as they did in all of 2015, Israeli human rights group B'Tselem revealed in a report released on Wednesday, in a worrying

confirmation of Israel's ongoing crackdown on Palestinian communities in Area C of the West Bank.

E) [\*\*UN: Israel 'systematically' emptying Area C of Palestinians, DOV LIEBER, Times of Israel, July 28, 2016\*\*](#)

Opposition MKs also accuse government of embittering West Bank residents to facilitate future annexation; Israel categorically denies allegations.

F) [\*\*Stop Living in Denial, Israel Is an Evil State, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, July 31, 2016\*\*](#)

Israel may not be Nazi, nor even a fascist state. Yet it is a member of the same terrible family, the family of evil states. Just consider these acts of evil perpetrated by the state...

G) [\*\*New Law Allows Imprisonment of East Jerusalem Palestinians Aged 14 and Under, IMEMC News, August 4, 2016\*\*](#)

The Israeli parliament of the Knesset passed a bill into law, on Wednesday, which permits the imprisonment of children under the age of 14 if the child committed acts of "terrorism," according to a statement released by the Knesset.

H) [\*\*Yes to a Boycott - but Not Just Any Boycott, Dmitry Shumsky, Haaretz, Aug 4, 2016\*\*](#)

An effective boycott would have to focus strictly on the settlements. Now is the time to discuss how to do that.

I) [\*\*Fate of Hebron Hills village likely to be decided by Israeli defense minister, Ma'an News Agency, August 2, 2016\*\*](#)

In the latest development in a decades-long legal battle by Palestinian residents of the village of Susiya in the southern Hebron Hills to remain in their ancestral lands, an Israeli supreme court hearing confirmed on Monday that a decision regarding the fate of the threatened village could likely be decided by ultra-right Israeli Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman.

J) [\*\*CMEP Bulletin - Building Israeli Settlements, Demolishing Palestinian Homes, July 29, 2016\*\*](#)

K) [\*\*CMEP Bulletin - Fair Legal Process?, August 5, 2016\*\*](#)

L) [\*\*The Dishonest Democratic Platform on Israel, Peter Beinart, Haaretz, July 25, 2016\*\*](#)

Saying Israelis and Palestinians can reach peace without outside intervention is like saying George Wallace and MLK could have ended discrimination without federal help.

M) [\*\*The Profound Chasm in How Israelis and Palestinians See the Occupation, Ala Hlehel, Haaretz, August 5, 2016\*\*](#)

Equipped with notebook and camera, Nir Baram headed out to the field, spoke to settlers and Palestinians, and has offered some possible answers to the question preoccupying us for almost 50 years: What is occupation?

N) [\*\*Barghouti Suggests a Five-pillar Alternative Approach for Palestine, Palestine Chronicle Staff, August 2 2016\*\*](#)

Dr. Mustapha al-Barghouti, the General Secretary of the Palestinian Initiative, has suggested a five-pillar approach for the Palestinian cause to succeed. Al-Barghouti's remarks came during talks organized by Masarat, the Palestinian Center for Policy Research and Strategic Studies, held in Ramallah and Gaza.

O) [\*\*Palestinians Tell Kerry Beating ISIS Requires End to Israeli Occupation, Jack Khoury, Haaretz, July 30, 2016\*\*](#)

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry holds meeting with Palestinian President Abbas, says White House will continue to work towards a two-state solution until Obama leaves office.

P) [\*\*Gaza children protest Israel's abduction of "humanity's rescuer", Palestine News Network, August 8, 2016\*\*](#)

Dozens of Palestinian children and activists rallied in the blockaded Gaza Strip on Sunday in protest at Israel's abduction of Mohammad al-Halabi, manager of the World Vision charity operations in Gaza.