

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
November 15, 2012



[Read previous weeks' Middle East Notes here](#)

Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns (MOGC).

This week's Middle East Notes include articles on the Israeli response to the reelection of President Obama, the January 22, 2013 upcoming elections in Israel, developments in Gaza, lasting hope for the two state solution and other issues.

The MOGC staff extends early Thanksgiving greetings to all our readers. There will be no Middle East Notes next week; the next Notes will be sent on November 29.

- **November 9, 2012 Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletin:** As the post-election period begins the pundits are tackling an even harder task: prognosticating the future of the peace process in Obama's second term and providing advice for how he should proceed.
- **My president is busy:** Thomas Friedman writes in the New York Times that his best advice to Israelis is that they focus on their own election, Jan. 22.
- **Obama the Second:** Gideon Levy writes in Ha'aretz that Israel needs a furious and determined U.S. president, and the second Obama is expected to have greater self-confidence and be less concerned with considerations of survival than the first Obama.
- **Five takeaways:** Noam Sheizaf wonders in +972 that now President Obama has a second chance to challenge the status quo on the Palestinian issue, whether his personal dislike for Netanyahu will translate into effective pressure on Israel.
- **Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni can win the January 22 Israeli election:** Also in +972, Larry Derfner writes that if there is one loser in the U.S. election outside the U.S., it is Benjamin Netanyahu.
- **Israel reckons with unraveling Gaza policy:** Two articles, one from the Washington Post and the other in the Guardian, examine the implications of the visit of the Emir of Qatar.
- **Ehud Barak's cousin (mis)directs America's Christian Zionists:** Maidhc Ó Cathail, editor of the Passionate Attachment [blog](#), which focuses primarily on the U.S.-Israeli relationship, writes about David Brog, executive director of Christian United for Israel (CUFI), a U.S. Jew and cousin of Ehud Barak, the present defense minister of Israel.
- **What American Jews see in Obama:** Shlomo Shamir writes in Ha'aretz that the pro-Obama vote by many Jews was a protest against the ascendancy of the right in Israel and an expression of anxiety about Israel's future under a government led by Likud-Beiteinu.
- **Two state solution:** In his last Ha'aretz column before retirement, Akiva Eldar urges Israelis to keep the two-state solution alive. He watches with trepidation as the 1967 lines fade away, taking with them the outline of a peace that is within arm's reach.
- **Abbas to push UN vote this month on observer state status for Palestine:** Annie Robbins in Mondoweiss believes that Palestine will receive non-member status in the UN. Israel promises retaliation.
- **Holy Land religious leaders request support from Europe for Palestine's UN bid**

1) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin

November 9, 2012

Post U.S. election punditry: Now that the pundits can stop pouring over polls and statistical models, many are tackling an even harder task: prognosticating the future of the peace process in Obama's second term and providing advice for how he should proceed.

In the United States, President Obama received 70 percent of the Jewish vote, down only slightly from his 2008 levels. Republican nominee Mitt Romney's efforts to erode their support for the incumbent president proved ineffective. David Harris, president and CEO of the National Jewish Demographic Council, told *Politico*, "The powerful support given to the president today by American Jews shows that the more than \$150 million campaign undertaken by Republicans to woo Jewish voters with negative advertising, scare tactics, and outright lies simply did not work."

American Jewish groups advocating for a two-state solution took the opportunity to urge President Obama to continue working for peace. Americans for Peace issued a statement of congratulations to the president adding that: "Failure to strike an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal in the coming four years could well mean the loss of the two-state solution, opening the door for endemic instability, violence, and the loss of Israel's unique character as both a democracy and a Jewish state...Your second term in office offers an historic opportunity to push for Israeli-Palestinian peace. We urge you to resolutely pursue this goal, and we pledge to work indefatigably to mobilize American friends of Israel in support of your efforts."

The *New York Times* reports that Netanyahu "was widely perceived in Israel and the United States as having supported the Republican challenger, Mitt Romney." To sum up most observers' conclusions, Netanyahu's blunt Interior Minister from Shas, Eli Yishai, stated, "This is probably not a very good morning for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu."

The *Washington Post* commented that, "Obama's call in May 2011 for a peace agreement with the Palestinians based on Israel's 1967 borders got an icy reception from Netanyahu, who lectured Obama on the subject in the Oval Office. The two had clashed earlier over Israel's settlement construction in the West Bank and East Jerusalem."

With Israeli elections now scheduled for January, Netanyahu's critics saw Obama's victory as an opportunity. The *Guardian* says: "But the result of the U.S. contest may shape Israel's own election by encouraging the formation of a new centrist party or block, led by the former prime minister Ehud Olmert and former foreign minister Tzipi Livni, which would make the dysfunctional relationship between Netanyahu and Obama, and consequent threat to the 'special relationship,' a key plank of its campaign. Such a move could upset the electoral apple cart in Israel, and change the paradigm regarding both Iran and the Palestinians."

Olmert told a crowd of U.S. Jewish leaders November 7 that, "what Netanyahu did in the last few months raises the question whether or not our prime minister has a friend in the White House." Some Israelis are concerned that this poor relationship will make the U.S. go easy on the Palestinian Authority for seeking statehood in the UN. ...

[Read the entire piece on CMEP's website.](#)

2) My president is busy

Thomas L. Friedman, *New York Times*, November 10, 2012

Israeli friends have been asking me whether a re-elected President Obama will take revenge on Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu for the way he and Sheldon Adelson, his foolhardy financier, openly backed Mitt Romney. My answer to Israelis is this: You should be so lucky.

You should be so lucky that the president feels he has the time, energy and political capital to spend wrestling with Bibi to forge a peace between Israelis and Palestinians. I don't see it anytime soon. Obama has his marching orders from the American people: Focus on Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, not on Bethlehem, Palestine, and focus on getting us out of quagmires (Afghanistan) not into them (Syria). No, my Israeli friends, it's much worse than you think: You're home alone.

Of course, no one here will tell you that. To the contrary, there will surely be a new secretary of state visiting you next year with the umpteenth road map for "confidence-building measures" between Israelis and Palestinians. He or she may even tell you that "this is the year of decision." Be careful. We've been there before. If you Google "Year of decision in the Middle East," you'll get more than 100,000,000 links.

Is this good for Israel? No. It is unhealthy. The combination of America's internal focus, the post-Arab awakening turmoil and the exhaustion of Palestinians means Israel can stay in the West Bank indefinitely at a very low short-term cost but at a very high long-term cost of losing its identity as a Jewish democracy. If Israelis want to escape that fate, it is very important that they understand that we're not your grandfather's America anymore.

To begin with, the rising political force in America is not the one with which Bibi has aligned Israel. As the Israeli columnist Ari Shavit noted in the newspaper *Haaretz* last week: "In the past, both the Zionist movement and the Jewish state were careful to be identified with the progressive forces in the world. ... But in recent decades more and more Israelis took to leaning on the reactionary forces in American society. It was convenient to lean on them. The evangelists didn't ask difficult questions about the settlements, the Tea Party people didn't say a word about excluding women and minorities or about Jewish settlers' attacks and acts of vandalism against Palestinians and peace activists. The Republican Party's white, religious, conservative wing was not agitated when the Israeli Supreme Court was attacked and the rule of law in Israel was trampled." Israel, Shavit added, assumed that "under the patronage of a radical, rightist America we can conduct a radical, rightist policy without paying the price." No more. Netanyahu can still get a standing ovation from the Israel lobby, but not at U.C.L.A.

At the same time, U.S. policy makers have learned that the Middle East only puts a smile on our faces when it starts with them: with Israelis and Arabs. Camp David started with them. Oslo started with them. The Arab Spring started with them. When they have ownership over peace or democracy movements, those initiatives can be self-sustaining. We can amplify what they start, but we can't create it. We can provide the mediation and even the catering, but it's got to start with them.

[Read the entire piece on the New York Times website.](#)

3) Obama the Second

Gideon Levy, Ha'aretz, November 8, 2012

They could turn out to be the winning duo, the ones who bring about an agreement with the Palestinians: a furious U.S. President Barack Obama opposite a gambling Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (who lost the gamble). If a second-term Obama obeys his heart and logic, his moral code and values, and American and world interests, then we can expect an old-new president in the White House. A president who will translate his anger against Netanyahu into pressure on Israel to finally end the occupation.

It is precisely this pair, who didn't get on together and didn't consult one another, that might lead to momentum. All those who know Obama personally have testified that his heart is in the Palestinian problem. Over the past few years, I have heard testimony to this effect more than once - sometimes from Israelis, sometimes from Palestinians and sometimes from Americans, but always from the horse's mouth.

But the first Obama decided to put his deep feelings and his sense of natural justice aside and became addicted to considerations of political survival. He tried, at the very start of his term of office, to deal with the Israeli occupation. His first telephone calls in office were to Netanyahu and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, and he appointed a special envoy immediately.

But that race was merely a sprint. As soon as he realized that tremendous forces were working to perpetuate the Israeli occupation, the strongest man in the world decided to throw up his hands and give up.

Obama looked like someone who had despaired and lost interest. He betrayed his position as leader of America and the world. Netanyahu humiliated and insulted him, blatantly ignored his pleas and went his own way, and Obama swallowed all the insults in a manner that obscured which was president of a world power and which the prime minister of a protectorate.

But the second Obama is expected to have greater self-confidence and be less concerned with considerations of survival. This is where the great opportunity lies: A new and very promising reality could arise if he is faced with a right-wing prime minister who has already shown that he couldn't care less about his requests, who intervened against him in the American elections and continually insults him.

It is difficult to believe that Obama will capitulate in his second term as well. It is difficult to believe he will forgive the behavior of an Israel that talks about two states for two peoples but refuses even to freeze construction in the settlements. This mask must be pulled from Israel's face, and no one can do it better than a furious and moral president in his second term of office. Israel needs a furious and determined American president. That is its last chance to save itself from the curse of the occupation. It will never do so of its own initiative - there is simply no chance. Absent American anger, it has no reason to do so when life in Israel is so good and the Palestinians are so weak. ...

[*Read the entire piece on Ha'aretz's website.*](#)

4) Obama's victory and Israel: Five takeaways

Noam Sheizaf, +972, November 7, 2012

The president gets a second chance to challenge the status quo on the Palestinian issue. But will his personal dislike for Netanyahu translate to effective pressure on Israel? I wouldn't bet on it.

1. Israel was mentioned 34 times in the final presidential debate, and in the end, it didn't matter. The Republican strategy in the last four years – going after the White House for “throwing Israel under the bus” – did not hurt Jewish support for the president. According to exit polls, [Obama got 70 percent of Jewish votes](#), a slight decrease from 2008, overall matching the votes he lost with the general public.

There are two possible explanations for the failure: either Jews don't think about Israel when they cast their ballots, or they didn't buy the GOP's story. My guess is more the former than the latter.

2. I wouldn't hold my breath waiting for Republicans to rethink their alliance with the Israeli hard right. These relations are so deep and strong that they will survive such a hiccup. The GOP and the Likud – the Republikud party – share common values and an ideology which despises human rights, turns its back to the international community and approaches politics with a monolithic and often Islamophobic worldview. The blow this camp and its ideology has suffered is in and of itself a good thing, but there are many battles ahead. So far, the Democrats have allowed the GOP to shape this conversation and have even contributed to the “[who is more pro-Israel](#)” contest. Maybe it's time they stop.

3. In his first term, Obama's Mideast policy was a complete disaster. The president began by promising not to turn his back to the Palestinians, than tried to confront Israel on the issue of settlements with an empty gun. The last couple of years were embarrassing: not only did the United States fail to reach its own policy goals, the administration ended up vetoing a UN Security Council resolution on the settlements, which used the language found in the State Department's press releases on the issue.

Will the second term be different? It's hard to tell. Chances are that it won't. I think the White House has realized that the Israeli-Palestinian issue costs a lot of political capital, but brings very little results. Furthermore, the administration continues to believe in the Oslo framework, as if two decades haven't passed. The Palestinian Authority hardly represents anyone these days, the government in Jerusalem is anxious to renew negotiations for the sake of negotiations, and the whole thing is clearly leading nowhere. The only way the White House can move things forward is by confronting the Israeli desire to maintain the current status quo. The undeniable dislike of Benjamin Netanyahu by many in American government will not bring about this change on its own. ...

[Read the entire piece on 972mag.com.](#)

5) After Bibi's bet on Romney, "peace camp" can beat him
Larry Derfner, +972, November 7, 2012

Ehud Olmert and Tzipi Livni can win the January 22 election.

If there is one loser in the U.S. election outside the U.S., it is Benjamin Netanyahu – and all of Israel knows it. No one is fooled by his denials that he backed Romney and opposed Obama as demonstratively as he possibly could. The widespread conviction, now that Obama has won four more years in the White House, is that Bibi has endangered Israel's relationship with America in a way that is unprecedented in its recklessness. No Israeli prime minister ever took sides in a U.S. presidential election like Netanyahu just did, and his side lost.

If Romney had won, people here would be hailing Bibi right now as a genius, a prophet. But Obama won, which makes Bibi, in Israeli eyes, a screw-up of historic magnitude. He went and tracked mud on the Oval Office carpet right in front of the president's eyes. The president couldn't say anything during the campaign because of American domestic politics, but the campaign's over and now Israelis are wondering when and how this newly-liberated president is going to take revenge on them for their prime minister's spectacular arrogance. Conclusion: The only way to get America back on our side is to get rid of Bibi.

That, I believe, is the mood in Israel on this fine morning.

It presents an opportunity, one that most people despaired seeing in the coming years, if ever – the opportunity to elect a left-of-center "peace government" on January 22. Because of Netanyahu's awesome blunder, the Israeli right is vulnerable as it hasn't been in 12 years, since the left's implosion at the start of the Second Intifada. Until today, the public was ready to go along with Bibi and the status quo for lack of an attractive alternative – but now the status quo is no longer tolerable. In the view of the broad Israeli center, Bibi has to go.

Which leaves the question – who is the alternative? Not Lieberman – Obama won't be able to stand him, either. It cannot be anybody from the right, it has to be somebody from the center, or center-left.

I don't think Yesh Atid's Yair Lapid or the Labor Party's Shelly Yacimovich can win because they just don't have the requisite leadership stature, and thank God for that, too. Lapid and Yacimovich are cowards who have built their campaigns on trying to airbrush the occupation out of existence, on pretending that "there's no left and right anymore," that it's all economics now. And when it comes to the Palestinians, the less said, the better. The status quo is fine with them.

It happens that the only politicians who have the leadership stature to defeat Netanyahu are also the only ones who are saying, above all, that Israel must negotiate peace with the Palestinians, and that by stonewalling Mahmoud Abbas from day one, Netanyahu turned his back on the most conciliatory Palestinian leader there ever was or ever will be, and threw away a chance for peace that may not come again. ...

[Read the entire piece at 972.com.](http://972.com)

6) Israel reckons with unraveling Gaza policy

Joel Greenberg, Washington Post, October 30, 2012

When the emir of Qatar paid the first visit by a head of state to the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip last week, there were two different reactions from the Israeli Foreign Ministry.

In one statement, Yigal Palmor, a spokesman for the ministry, accused the emir, Sheik Hamad Bin Khalifa al-Thani, of backing a terrorist organization and having “thrown peace under the bus.”

But an Arabic-language spokesman for the ministry, Lior Ben Dor, told Radio Sawa, a U.S. - funded station heard across the Middle East, that Israel welcomed the visit of the emir, who pledged generous financial aid.

“Since our withdrawal from Gaza, the goal has been that Arab states come and help the residents of Gaza,” Ben Dor said, referring to the Israeli pullout in 2005.

The double message was a symptom of the unraveling of an Israeli policy toward Gaza that was put in place after Hamas, which is considered a terrorist organization by Israel and the United States, seized control of the territory in June 2007.

The Israeli government adopted measures to isolate Gaza, sharply restricting supply shipments at border points, tightening bans on movement out of the territory, and promoting an international diplomatic boycott of the Hamas government.

The policy, strongly backed by Washington, was coupled with moves to promote economic development and foreign aid in the West Bank, where the Fatah movement of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas is dominant. ...

[Read the entire piece on the Washington Post website.](#)

Qatari emir's visit to Gaza is a boost for Hamas

Ian Black and Harriet Sherwood, guardian.co.uk, October 23, 2012

Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani is used to basking in the limelight. But when the emir of Qatar arrived in Gaza on Tuesday – the first Arab leader in years to visit the impoverished coastal strip – he was hailed for breaking its siege, demonstrating his country's huge and growing influence in the Middle East.

Palestinians rolled out the red carpet for the emir as his black Mercedes bumped along a rutted main road that he has promised to rebuild, past white and maroon Qatari flags, the song Thank You, Qatar playing endlessly on local radio and TV.

Sheikh Hamad flew to Egypt and crossed the border into Gaza, a move billed as breaking the blockade in force since the Islamists of Hamas took power in 2007. It also underlined the ability of the tiny, fabulously rich Gulf state to punch above its weight internationally. ...

Qatar's ambitious move was a stunning boost for Hamas, shunned by Israel, the U.S. and western countries as a terrorist organisation. Ismail Haniyeh, its deposed prime minister, called it a historic event that had broken the “unjust blockade.”

[Read the entire piece on the Guardian's website.](#)

7) Ehud Barak's cousin (mis)directs America's Christian Zionists

Maidhc O Cathail, *The Passionate Attachment*

October 22, 2012

In an attempt to direct attention away from their influence over U.S. Middle East policy, the predominantly Jewish pro-Israel lobby sometimes points to the passionate support of many Christian evangelicals — usually referred to as Christian Zionists — for the Jewish state. The largest of these Christian Zionist groups, with over one million members, is Christians United for Israel (CUFI); thereby, also making it the largest U.S.-based pro-Israel organization. Most people familiar with the hardline pro-Israel group associate it with John Hagee, the theatrical San Antonio-based Christian Zionist pastor who heads CUFI. Less well known, however, is CUFI's executive director.

Revealingly, the person directing America's leading Christian Zionist group is not even a Christian. In a Q & A with readers of Israel's [Ha'aretz](#) newspaper some years ago, David Brog was asked if his theology required Israel to be in control of the entire Holy Land. "Just to clarify," Brog replied, "the evangelical theology I write about is not my theology? I'm Jewish." While the executive director of Christians United for Israel may not be Christian, there's no questioning his pro-Israel credentials. When another reader asked if he was related to the current Israeli Defense Minister, Brog congratulated him on his perspicacity. Explained the CUFI leader:

Former Prime Minister Ehud Barak is my cousin. He changed his last name from "Brog" to "Barak" during his time in the army. Given Barak's illustrious career in the Israeli army and government, this is a relation of which I'm very proud.

Given such close relations — pun intended — between the Israeli government and the man directing much of America's Christian Zionists, it's no wonder that Israeli leaders can afford to laugh at the [carefully cultivated beliefs](#) of these Zionized Christians. As former Prime Minister Menachem Begin, considered by a [prominent insider](#) to be the "father of the modern Christian Zionist movement," reportedly once joked:

I tell you if the Christian fundamentalists support us in Congress today, I will support them when the Messiah comes tomorrow.

Perhaps Arlen Specter, another [pro-Israel stalwart](#), is also smiling at the thought of his longtime aide and chief of staff going on to have so much influence among the Christian Right which the late senator [denounced](#) during a 1995 presidential bid as an extremist "fringe" that plays too large a role in setting the Republican Party's agenda.

Update: According to an [article](#) in the Jewish Georgian Newspaper in Atlanta, whenever Ehud Barak visits Washington he always spends time with his cousin David Brog.

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8) What American Jews see in Obama

Shlomo Shamir, Ha'aretz, November 12, 2012

Analysts and experts on American-Israeli relations tend to focus their forecasts and assessments on the White House's policy toward Israel in the coming four years. However, from Israel's point of view the real problem is not connected with the newly re-elected president of the United States. In fact the real problem is not being debated at all.

The results of the election have underscored a fact that not everyone in Israel likes to hear or internalize, namely that Israel was not relevant in the voting considerations of American Jews. On the other hand, the significant scope of the Jewish majority that voted for Barack Obama for a second term - according to surveys, it was close to 70 percent - could have unpleasant implications with regard to relations between Israel and the biggest Jewish community in the Diaspora. This is an inevitable conclusion, particularly among those who are aware of a process that is gaining in momentum - the erosion of Israel's ties with large sections of the community and the lack of satisfaction that many Jews feel about the policies of the right-wing government in Israel on the issues of peace and social affairs.

The Jewish majority that supported Obama constitutes a reservoir of criticism and potential anger that will be directed at the political arena in Israel. This will lead to further widening of the gap between Israel and the American Jewish community and the strengthening of the animosity between them.

It is possible that very few, if any, Jews thought about Israel when they cast their vote in America. Nevertheless, the vote by many of the Jews in favor of Obama was a protest on their part against the ascendancy of the right in Israel and an expression of anxiety about the future of Israel under a right-wing government led by Likud-Beiteinu - if that party wins the elections. Unlike the Hispanics who voted en masse for Obama because they see him as someone who does not threaten the future of illegal immigrants, and unlike the blacks who gave him their votes because he is "one of them," the support of the Jews for Obama sprang from an unqualified love. The reference is to a huge bloc of liberal Jews who genuinely and honestly believe in the values of democracy and who espouse human rights with sincerity. Protecting the rights of minorities is important to them. The way they see it, the role of the government is to care for the wellbeing of the simple citizen.

In parentheses, it is worthwhile refuting the common explanation that the sweeping support of the Orthodox Jews for Republican candidate Mitt Romney was motivated by their concern for Israel. Most of the Orthodox public in the religious suburbs of Brooklyn, for example, is ignorant about what happens in Israel and does not take an interest in it. Large sections of this public voted for Romney out of racist motives, out of pent-up hatred for Obama whom they call "the Black Muslim."

Following almost four years of right-wing government in Jerusalem, Israel has lost its status as a source of pride among the large liberal camp in the American Jewish community, and has turned into an object of criticism. ...

[Read the entire piece on Ha'aretz's website.](#)

9) Before the 1967 lines retire, too

Akiva Eldar, Ha'aretz, November 13, 2012

On Saturday afternoon light rain greeted the long column of cars crawling through the narrow lanes of the Palestinian village of Jayus in the heart of the northern West Bank. At the head of the column was a battered truck dragging behind it a cart laden with black plastic chairs. Little children gathered around the visitors, proudly showing off their knowledge of Hebrew. Curious onlookers looked out of windows at the strange men and women, most of them gray-haired and a few of them young. On one doorstep a mustached man surrounded by youths waved at the people arriving.

Yuval Roth, an Israeli man and a gentle soul who lost his brother in one of Israel's wars, introduced the guests to their host, the Palestinian man with the mustache: Naim Albeida, who has experienced much suffering and dedicated himself to peace. One after another the guests climbed up to the roof and made their way gingerly between the puddles on the eastern parapet.

Naim pointed to the valley on the outskirts of the village. "That's the separation fence," he said, indicating a yellow clearing in the middle of an olive grove, "and there, beyond the fence, those are our trees. The trees my father planted." ...

What can decent Israelis say to a neighbor when members of their own people have robbed him of his land and stolen its fruit? (Under the Ottoman law adopted by Israel, the state is entitled to transfer to settlers any land that has been "neglected" for at least 10 years.) How can one bear hearing that the inhabitants of Jayus, among them Naim himself, have been barred by the Shin Bet security service from crossing the separation fence to work their own land? How can one listen to this without looking down in embarrassment?

It is not within the capacity of the enlightened sons and daughters of an occupying people to rescue Naim and his neighbors from the evils of the occupation. All that remains to them is to make it a bit more bearable. Two of the great-grandmothers on the visit to Jayus have been reporting to duty for years at roadblocks, to monitor Israeli soldiers' conduct ... The others volunteer with the Road to Recovery, a project of Yuval Roth's that provide transportation for sick Palestinian children from the West Bank and Gaza who need to get to hospitals in Israel. Yuval wanted them to meet Naim, a friend who is like a brother to him

Naim embarked on a monologue in fluent Hebrew. For 24 years he has been a construction worker in Israel ... and knows us from up close. He paused only to clear his throat and wipe away a tear.

"I have invited you here in order to talk to you about peace," he said. "Even when our peoples are fighting each other, we must not give up. Cousins also fight with each other and reconcile. If I need help, my neighbor will get here faster than my brother living in Jordan. What is it that I want, after all? To sleep in quiet and to think about a beautiful tomorrow. What have the children done wrong so they have to suffer? How has my wife, who is standing alongside you, sinned, to the extent that she has to wake up in the middle of the night and find armed soldiers facing her?" ...

[Read the entire piece on Ha'aretz's website.](#)

10) [Abbas to push UN vote this month on observer state status for Palestine, Israel promises retaliation](#) -- Annie Robbins, Mondoweiss, November 2, 2012

It's coming down to the wire. On November 29, 2012 Abbas will go to the UN General Assembly to seek non-member observer state status for Palestine and my prediction is he will succeed. Israel knows it, they will likely retaliate, but it's coming down this month one way or another. Maybe sooner on the 15th.

Abbas has been [visiting European counties drumming up support](#) and the last ditch [squawking](#) has begun. He's promised an immediate return to peace talks after the UN vote but that is meaningless as far as Israel is concerned because they have no intention of pursuing anything other than more expansion.

PLO negotiator Saeb Erekat is warning Palestinians institutions to prepare for a [state of emergency](#) as a result of the UN upgrading. They are expecting a number of retaliatory measures by Israel and the U.S. which naturally include "severe economic restrictions." But the retaliation could get ugly, which provides context for [Abbas's statement](#): "I will not allow an intifada." Also, probably the reason he went on Israeli television and made statements about having [no right to live on land he was displaced from](#), which obviously pissed off lots of Palestinians.

November is therefore more than just an important month; it's a turning point for the Palestinian people. The Palestinian issue has been drawn out for decades, with the chances for a peaceful solution diminishing more quickly than ever.

The Palestinian people have struggled for the realisation of their inalienable rights for almost a century. We have gone through different stages within our struggle. Despite appalling Israeli measures, many of which are reminiscent of those of South African apartheid, the Palestinians have remained steadfast to safeguard their most basic human rights. The PLO and the Palestinian people know that international humanitarian law and international conventions affirm their right to self-determination. And yet, in turning a blind eye to Israeli violations, the international community allows Israel to remain above international law.

The Palestine question began with the UN in 1947. In 1967, the UN Security Council passed a resolution (242) emphasising the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war" and calling for "the withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict." This month, we are taking the issue back to where it all began. We are asking the most representative body in the world to recognise our State of Palestine and, in doing so, recognise their moral and legal responsibility to resolve this question.

... [T]he UN bid is a necessary and highly significant step for Palestine. On a legal level, it will mean that Palestine will be formally recognised as a State under occupation. It will consolidate the two-state solution. This will solidify the position from which we negotiate: it will set the framework for meaningful negotiations, based on the 1967 border. On a symbolic level, international support in the UN General Assembly will make good the international community's promise to the Palestinians, by taking a positive and concrete step towards fulfilling their inalienable right to self-determination. ...

[Read the entire piece on the Mondoweiss website.](#)

11) Holy Land religious leaders request support from Europe for Palestine's UN bid

The Palestinian Authority plans to hold a vote in the UN General Assembly, probably on November 29, to make it an observer state, in defiance of retaliation threatened by the U.S. and Israel. Such a designation would give the Palestinian Authority the right over its airspace and territorial waters, which are now under Israeli control, and to press charges against Israelis before the International Criminal Court. Following is a statement signed by 100 Christian leaders in Palestine, requesting support from European nations for this bid. [Read the list of signers on the Holy Land Christian Ecumenical Foundation website.](#)

Palestine, the Holy Land is our homeland. Our roots here stretch for centuries. We, Palestinian Christians are the descendants of the first Christians. We are also an organic and integral component of the Palestinian people. And just like our Palestinian Muslim brothers and sisters, we have been denied our national and human rights for almost a century.

We have endured dispossession and forced exile since 1948, when two thirds of Palestine's Christians were forcibly expelled from their homes in the Holy Land. Our presence in our Holy Land has been under threat since then, choked by a snaking wall that has devoured our land and deprived our congregations of hope and peace in the land that was blessed with the birth of the Prince of Peace. We have persevered through 64 years of exile and 45 years of occupation, holding on to His message of peace. We, Palestinian Christians say enough! Our message is simple: to achieve peace, the world must also say enough to occupation and the degradation of human dignity.

As Christian community leaders in Palestine, we are entitled to seek a just peace that will lead to reconciliation and the realization of our people's natural rights. The current status quo is untenable. On one side, there is a people under occupation and on the other, a belligerent occupying power that works tirelessly to distance us from the peace we seek and pray for. We Christians have a duty to confront oppression. In our Kairos document, we Palestinian Christians declare that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a sin against God and humanity because it deprives Palestinians of their basic human rights, bestowed by God.

Ending Israeli occupation is the only way for Palestinians, Christians and Muslims, to enjoy a life of prosperity and progress. It is also the surest way to secure continued Christian presence in this, our Holy Land. It is the way to preserve our history and help tear down the occupation's wall that disconnected Jerusalem and Bethlehem for the first time since the birth of Christianity.

We ... have witnessed the changes of this land over the centuries. We have suffered the loss and have carried the cross for all these years. The occupation, oppression, exile and Apartheid, have made of everyday a good Friday. We hope that your actions and prayers, along with ours, will help us get closer to the day of our own resurrection as a free nation.

We believe the Palestine Liberation Organization's initiative to enhance Palestine's status in the UN to an Observer State is a positive, collective, and moral step that will get us closer to freedom. This is a step in the right direction for the cause of a just peace in the region. We fully endorse this bid, just as we supported Palestine's application for full membership of the UN a year ago. That is why we call upon European governments to fully endorse the just Palestinian plight for freedom and independence.

The international community, and particularly Europe, have a historic responsibility towards Palestine's rights. Europe has long championed the values of peace and human rights. Now, Europe can reflect this principled position by helping Palestine. We call on you to support our effort in bringing about a real peace by aligning their positions and actions with international law and UN resolutions and supporting Palestine's United Nations bid. From the Holy Land, we call on you to take this peaceful, righteous, and collective step towards deliverance so that our halleluiah soon becomes a celebration of a peace we live and not a yearning for a reality we are unjustly denied.