

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**December 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 six featured articles and the related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes feature the address of Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General, reminding the member states that the General Assembly established an International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people to complete the unfinished task of resolving the question of Palestine; the contradictory statements of Netanyahu which are undermining Israel in world opinion; the controversy over Airbnb deleting rental sites in the Occupied Territories; the distinction between criticizing the Israeli government and anti-Semitism; David Friedman, the role of the current U.S. Ambassador to Israel as chief architect of the Trump administration's drive to kill the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; a copy of *The Lobby – USA*, a four-part documentary by Al Jazeera investigating Israel's covert influence campaign in the United States; and links to CMEP Bulletins and other items of interest.

**Commentary:** "Let us build walls" seems to be the motto of the present wall builders in Israel and they have succeeded in constructing two walls...not so much to keep the Palestinians out but to keep Israelis in! Their outer physical wall along with its new air and sea additions is restricting entry into the country; their inner wall of "orthodoxy" is alienating Jews of the US and world. The present government of Israel in its attempts to wall off and at the same time incorporate the Occupied Territories are immuring their own citizens in a walled prison of their own making.

- Antonio Guterres, the UN Secretary General, addressed the United Nations on November 28, 2018 reminding them that more than forty years ago, the General Assembly established an International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people to remind us of our collective, unfinished task of resolving the question of Palestine;
- Bradley Burston writes in Haaretz, that double standards are wrong when they are applied to Israel by Benjamin Netanyahu since they undermine and de-legitimize the State in the eyes of the world.
- Gideon Levy writes in Haaretz that Airbnb explained that it doesn't need to profit from land from which people have been uprooted. Is there a more just statement than this?
- Ofer Aderet also in Haaretz states that an open letter of from 35 prominent Israelis, including Jewish-history scholars and Israel Prize laureates, was published in the Austrian media calling for a distinction between legitimate criticism of Israel, "harsh as it may be," and anti-Semitism.
- Debra Shushan of Americans for Peace Now writes that APN wants to share its newest project: The Friedman File.
- The Electronic Intifada has made available a complete copy of *The Lobby – USA*, a four-part undercover investigation by Al Jazeera into Israel's covert influence campaign in the United States.
- Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletins

1) [UN Secretary-General's Remarks on the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People](#), UN Secretary General, November 28, 2018

“More than forty years ago, the General Assembly established an International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian people to remind us of our collective, unfinished task of resolving the question of Palestine. Over the decades, this has become one of the most intractable challenges for the international community, and we know only too well the tragic results.

“Demolitions, illegal continued settlement expansion and construction, forced evictions and collective punitive measures will not bring peace.

“The same goes for violence and incitement, and similarly, unilateral steps will not resolve final status issues or the conflict.

“Only constructive negotiations, in good faith, and adhering to the long-established and agreed parameters for a two-State solution, will bring the desired, long-lasting solution. Containing the situation is not sufficient.

“I call on all actors, and first and foremost the leadership of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, to take bold steps and restore faith in the promise of Resolution 181, of two states living side-by-side in peace and security, fulfilling the legitimate national aspirations of both peoples, with borders based on the 1967 lines and Jerusalem as the capital of both states - East Jerusalem being the capital of the Palestinian state.” ....

**See also:**

[6 condemnatory UN resolutions against Israel to be adopted for 2018 “International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People”](#), UN Watch, November 28, 2018

Six UN General Assembly resolutions against Israel were adopted on November 28, 2018 . For the full chart of the 20 UNGA country condemnations being adopted in November/December 2018.

[UNGA votes in favor of 8 pro-Palestine resolutions](#), Ma’an News, November 19, 2018

The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) voted, November 17, 2018, in favor of eight resolutions on Palestine and a ninth on the Syrian Golan Heights. Palestine's Permanent Observer to the UN Riyad Mansour said, commenting on the vote, that the votes are proof that the international community stands behind and supports the Palestinian cause despite of efforts by the United States to change that.

2) [The Seven Worst Double Standards Undermining Israel](#), Bradley Burston, Haaretz, November 27, 2018

“Let me begin by agreeing with Benjamin Netanyahu. I'm speaking here about one of the prime minister's most fervently stated positions:

“Double standards are wrong. When they are applied to Israel, they undermine and de-legitimize the state in the eyes of the world. So, in Israel's own words, let's see how this works in practice:

1. THE STANDARD: Israel maintains complete bipartisan neutrality regarding American politics. It neither takes sides nor interferes with the U.S. electoral process, nor with governance at the state and federal levels.

“THE PRACTICE: During Donald Trump's presidential campaign, Netanyahu's right-hand man, Israeli Ambassador to Washington Ron Dermer – a GOP operative prior to his moving to Israel – acted as a key adviser to [Trump's speechwriters](#).

“Earlier in the campaign, Netanyahu took the rare step of addressing a joint session of Congress, excoriating then-President Obama's signature Iran nuclear deal, and by extension, the Democratic Party as a whole.

“Netanyahu remains joined at the Republican hip through his crucial media and funding ties to GOP uber-donors Sheldon and Miriam Adelson. (See also: Number 7 on this list.)” ...

### 3) [Hurray for Airbnb](#), [Gideon Levy](#), [Haaretz](#), November 22, 2018

“One single tourism company did more this week to end the occupation than anything the Zionist left has ever done. Airbnb is threatening to strike a blow at the illegal livelihood of 200 settler families. Another 200 companies like Airbnb and the settlement project will begin to feel it in the pocketbook, and then its participants will ask, together with other Israelis, whether it's worth it. There is no better news than this. Thanks and blessings to this international accommodations network, which after inventing a successful tourism enterprise, was courageous enough to take part in a just political initiative. Airbnb explained that it doesn't need to profit from land from which people have been uprooted. Is there a more just statement than this?

“But that's not all it did. It also revealed to the world, unintentionally, the best of the lies, the extortion, the demagoguery and the double standards of the settlers and their supporters in the government.” ...

See also:

[Israel: Airbnb to End Settlement Rentals](#), Human Rights Watch, November 20, 2018

The decision by Airbnb to stop listing properties in unlawful Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank is a positive step that other global tourism companies should follow, Human Rights Watch and Kerem Navot said in issuing a report today about the activities in settlements of Airbnb and Booking.com.

[Airbnb's Ban on Israeli Settlements Is Big Win for BDS, Not Necessarily for anti-Semites](#), David Rosenberg, Haaretz, November 20, 2018

It won't even scratch the Israeli economy, or even that of the settlements, but it did drive the government into hysterics.

### 4) [Israeli Academics and Artists Warn Against Equating anti-Zionism With anti-Semitism](#), [Ofer Aderet](#), [Haaretz](#), November 20, 2018

“An open letter from 35 prominent Israelis, including Jewish-history scholars and Israel Prize laureates, was published Tuesday in the Austrian media calling for a distinction between legitimate criticism of Israel, “harsh as it may be,” and anti-Semitism.

“The letter was released before an international gathering in Vienna on [anti-Semitism](#) and anti-Zionism in Europe.

“The event this week, ‘Europe beyond anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism: Securing Jewish life in Europe,’ is being held under the auspices of Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz. His Israeli counterpart, [Benjamin Netanyahu](#), had been due to take part but stayed in Israel to deal with the crisis in his coalition government.” ...

### 5) [The Friedman File](#), [Debra Shushan](#), [APN](#), November 21, 2018

“Americans for Peace Now is pleased to share with you our newest project: [The Friedman File](#).

“In it, we provide the definitive record of the words and deeds of David Friedman, President Trump’s former bankruptcy lawyer and current U.S. Ambassador to Israel. Based on his actions and statements, and thanks to our discussions with informed insiders, we know that this long-time supporter of West Bank settlements is the chief architect of the Trump administration’s drive to kill the two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.” ...

**See also:**

[Erekat: 'Israel should be condemned at UN, not Hamas'](#), Ma’an News, November 21, 2018

RAMALLAH (Ma'an) -- Secretary General of the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO) Executive Committee, Saeb Erekat, denounced, on Wednesday, United States' efforts at the United Nations to condemn the Hamas movement, stressing that “Israel should be condemned for its war crimes record against the Palestinian people.”

#### **6) [Watch the film the Israel lobby didn't want you to see](#), The Electronic Intifada 2 November 2018**

“The Electronic Intifada has obtained a complete copy of *The Lobby – USA*, a four-part undercover investigation by Al Jazeera into Israel’s covert influence campaign in the United States.

“We are releasing the leaked film simultaneously with France’s *Orient XXI* and Lebanon’s *Al-Akhbar*, which have respectively subtitled the episodes in [French](#) and [Arabic](#).

“The film was made by Al Jazeera during 2016 and was completed in October 2017.

“But it was [censored](#) after Qatar, the gas-rich Gulf emirate that funds Al Jazeera, came under intense [Israel lobby pressure](#) not to air the film.” ...

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

11/30/18 – [\[Bulletin\] Trump’s Mideast Peace Plan Inches Closer to Reveal](#)

11/16/18 – [\[Bulletin\] Escalating Violence in Gaza Halts with a Controversial Truce](#)

11/09/18 – [\[Bulletin\] U.S. Church Leaders and Politicians Speak Up for Christians in Israel](#)