

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**November 2019**



*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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**Important Announcement: December 2019 will be the last issue of Middle East Notes. We strongly encourage readers to subscribe to the Churches for Middle East Peace weekly bulletins at <https://cmep.org/resources/bulletins/>. Every CMEP Bulletin contains a curated list of news articles on Israel, Palestine, and the broader Middle East.**

**Commentary:** One State Solution or Impossibility: the Facts

There is one land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan; there are two peoples living on that land. Two separate states for the two peoples has been rejected by the Israelis, but still hoped for by the Palestinians, many Jews in the U.S., the UN and most nations of the world. The 8 million citizen population of Israel includes Palestinian citizens of Israel (approximately 20 percent of total citizens) named “Arab Israelis” by Jewish Israelis or “Arab citizens of Israel” or “Israeli Palestinians.” The Jewish Israelis exercise their democratic privileges and are under civil law. An equivalent number of Palestinians (other than “Arab Israelis” with restricted democratic privileges) have no democratic privileges and are under Israeli military law. The “status quo” now preferred and exercised by the Israeli government and people is in fact one apartheid state for two peoples. One vote for every person is the growing demand of the Palestinians. The Israelis have already created a bi-national state. Most observers are aware of this while most Israelis continue to deny the obvious.

**Featured Articles:**

- Jim Klutznick, chair of Americans for Peace Now (APN) writes a letter for Rosh Hashanah.
- If Americans Knew Blog reprints an article by Alasdair Soussi about the failure of the media to print the truth about the Palestinian contemporary story.
- Allison Kaplan Sommer writes in Haaretz about the growing divide between groups she differentiates as “Jewish liberals” and “Jewish leftists” over the place of Jews in American society during the Trump administration.
- Jeffrey Heller reports in Reuters that, for the first time in a decade, someone other than Benjamin Netanyahu will be asked to form a government in Israel.
- Khaled Abu Toameh reports in The Jerusalem Post that Palestinians have no plans to replace Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas.
- Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins

1) ["Appearances can be deceiving" - A letter for Rosh HaShana from Jim Klutznick, APN Chair, Americans for Peace Now \(APN\), September 17, 2019.](#)

"Appearances can be deceiving. The cafes of Tel Aviv bustle and are full. Families gather in the gardens of Haifa and float on the Dead Sea. Even in Jerusalem all appears calm, and the slight whiff of imminent apprehension is barely detectable. The conflict does not impinge upon the good life.

"And yet, tensions simmer. Another Israel exists. Check the budget and see how a constant state of alert devastates funding for Israeli education, for social services, and for investment in infrastructure. Stroll the cemeteries, and see dates of death following dates of birth in quick succession. Too quick. Examine the passerby and count the war injuries, visible in the wheelchairs and the prostheses. Read the public opinion polls giving voice to the low esteem in which the "Occupier," is held. Visit the mosques in Nablus or in Gaza and hear the hatred dripping venomously from the imams' tongues. And then ask yourself, soberly, is doing nothing but accepting the status quo the best possible program?

"In the years I have spent thinking about the conflict, thinking about the children, and thinking about the future, it has become increasingly clear that the struggle for peace and security based on a two-state solution can no longer be separated from the Israeli domestic sphere. Consider that, in a nation in which new medical discoveries are constantly unveiled and whose industries advance the frontiers of science and technology worldwide, every fifth Israeli lives in poverty and Israel has the highest child poverty rate of any OECD country. Inequality rates are amongst the highest in the western world and render nearly half of Israel's Arab citizens below the poverty line. Meanwhile, tens of billions of dollars have been spent on illegal West Bank settlements.

"The costs of the Occupation upon the economy, the health, the diplomacy, and the psyche of Israel speak for themselves. Settlers, who constitute less than five percent of the Israeli population, are siphoning disproportionate funding in the provision of services in the Occupied Territories, security spending, legalization of illegal outposts, and much more. Meanwhile, the children of Israel are not having their basic needs met. And the future flourishing of Israel is being stifled as spending on education, health, and welfare are curtailed to satisfy a burgeoning defense budget." ...

2) ["Why media reports on Palestine are consistently inaccurate, If Americans Knew Blog, October 25, 2019.](#)

"The Israel lobby has created an atmosphere in which journalists shy away from honest reporting on the Israel/Palestine issue. They are so fearful of being labeled anti-Semitic, they 'daren't even ask the [necessary] questions.' by Alasdair Soussi, reposted from Al Jazeera

"Often dubbed an open-air prison on account of Israel's and Egypt's ongoing air, land and sea blockade of the coastal enclave, Gaza is, according to Amnesty International and several other rights groups, on the brink of a humanitarian disaster.

“In February, Antonio Guterres, the United Nations secretary-general, highlighted the crisis, saying that the near two million Palestinians of the besieged strip ‘remain mired in increasing poverty and unemployment, with limited access to adequate health, education, water and electricity.’

“But the mainstream media does not always succeed in telling Palestine’s contemporary story with accuracy and empathy.” ...

**3) [Left vs. Right? The Battle for U.S. Jews’ Hearts on the Israel Question Is Far More Complex](#), Allison Kaplan Sommer, Haaretz, October 26, 2019**

“On one side stands the minority: Staunch pro-Israel Republicans, many of them Orthodox Jews, and a few megadonors like Sheldon and Miriam Adelson. Their loyalty to the president and his administration has been earned by its unprecedented friendly policy steps — from moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, withdrawing from the Iran nuclear deal, withholding criticism of Israeli actions vis-à-vis the Palestinians and providing a clear-throated defense of the Jewish state in international forums.

“On the other side is the vast majority of American Jews who define themselves as Democratic liberals. Instead of praising President Donald Trump for his Israel policy, they blame him for empowering the conspiracy theory adherents on the alt-right with a wink and a dog whistle, and ushering in an era of unprecedented racial and religious discontent that led to the deadly synagogue attacks in Pittsburgh and Poway, California.

“This distinct divide between American Jews hit peak visibility in August when Trump pressured Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to bar left-wing Democratic congresswomen and ‘squad’ members Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar from entering Israel. The first group cheered and the second group booed, inspiring the New York Times to notice the ‘deeply uncomfortable debate over the growing distance between traditional liberal American Jewish values and the political realities of an Israeli government that’s embraced hard-line policies and a deep alliance with President Donald Trump.’” ...

“The leading institutions of American Jewry have refused to foster — indeed, have actively opposed — a Zionism that challenges Israel’s behavior in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and toward its own Arab citizens,’ [Peter] Beinart wrote in The New York Review of Books. ‘For several decades, the Jewish establishment has asked American Jews to check their liberalism at Zionism’s door, and now, to their horror, they are finding that many young Jews have checked their Zionism instead.’” ...

**4) [Israel's Netanyahu down but not out after failing to form government](#), Jeffrey Heller, Reuters, October 22, 2019**

“For the first time in a decade, someone other than Benjamin Netanyahu will be asked to form a government in Israel. The 70-year-old prime minister has called two elections this year, has twice been given the chance by the president to put together a ruling coalition, and has twice failed. President Reuven Rivlin will on Wednesday turn to Netanyahu’s centrist rival Benny Gantz, leaving Netanyahu even more vulnerable in his fight for political survival. But although he has failed, Gantz - a former general and political novice - also has no clear path to success.”

5) [Despite the view of Abbas, there's no plan to replace him](#), Khaled Abu Toameh, The Jerusalem Post, October 19, 2019

"Palestinians say they have become accustomed to Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas's 'zigzagging' policies on several issues, particularly toward Israel. The Palestinian public, however, does not seem to be seriously bothered by its leader's shifting policies – as long as the PA continues to pay salaries to its public servants and ensure economic and security stability in the West Bank. That's precisely why Abbas's decision earlier this month to accept reduced Palestinian tax revenues from Israel did not surprise many Palestinians. Since February, the PA had refused to receive the revenues, to protest Israel's decision to withhold more than \$12 million a month – the sum the PA pays to terrorists and families of Palestinians killed while carrying out attacks against the Jewish state."

6) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) News Bulletins

10/25/19 – [Bulletin](#)

10/18/19 – [Bulletin](#)

10/11/19 – [Bulletin](#)

10/04/19 – [October 2019 Monthly Update](#)