

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
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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: This will be the last issue of Middle East Notes.

We strongly encourage readers to subscribe to the [Churches for Middle East Peace weekly bulletins](#). Every CMEP Bulletin contains a curated list of news articles on Israel, Palestine, and the broader Middle East. We will occasionally send out a “Israel/Palestine Alert” which will highlight an article of special interest.

Commentary: “Do not put your trust in these deceptive words: *The State of Israel! The State of Israel! The State of Israel!* Only if you thoroughly reform your ways and your deeds; if each of you deals justly with your neighbor; if you no longer oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow; if you no longer shed innocent blood...only then will I let you continue to dwell in this place...”(Jeremiah 7:4-7) *The State of Israel* has been substituted for *The Temple of the Lord* in the words of Jeremiah. Most informed people and some Israelis and Jews believe such a substitution is both justified and prophetic. They are again speaking Jeremiah’s words to the present State of Israel and its supporters. Will they listen?

Featured articles:

- Robert Fisk reports in the If Americans Knew Blog that the latest UN report states that Israel’s “civilian settlements” in occupied territory are a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a “war crime” under the Rome Statute.
- Avigdor Feldman addresses in Haaretz a question: ““What is the source of the legal authority by which the State of Israel imposes a military government on some two and a half million people, who have been born and died, who are being born and dying for the 52 years in the occupied territories?”
- Ami Ayalon wrote in the The Washington Post an adaptation of a speech he gave at the J Street National Conference on Oct. 26, 2019.
- Noa Landau writes in Haaretz about the surprising timing of the recent U.S. policy shift.
- Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) News Bulletins

1) [UN Report On Israeli Settlements Speaks Truth, World Refuses To Listen](#), Robert Fisk, If Americans Knew Blog, November 22, 2019.

“The latest UN report states that Israel’s ‘civilian settlements’ in occupied territory are a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a “war crime” under the Rome Statute. ‘The world should take the necessary steps to collectively construct a list of effective countermeasures...’

“In his latest UN report, he reminds readers that the creation of Israel’s ‘civilian settlements’ in occupied territory is a breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and a “war crime” under the Rome Statute. So you can see why the 67-year old Lynk, a labour lawyer by training, has been having a tough time since his appointment to the voluntary, unpaid UN post three years ago.”

... “Lynk rather disingenuously told me he’s just ‘a stodgy absent-minded law professor with two kids’ – which may or may not be true – but in his report, he is far from stodgy in his attacks on the decades of Israeli occupation.

“Try this paragraph, for example: ‘No occupation in the modern world has been conducted with the international community so alert to its many grave breaches of international law, so knowledgeable about the [Israeli] occupiers’ obvious and well-signalled intent to annex and establish permanent sovereignty, so well-informed about the scale of suffering and dispossession endured by the protected [Palestinian] population under occupation, and yet so unwilling to act upon the overwhelming evidence before it...’”

2) [So Pompeo Said It](#), Avigdor Feldman, Haaretz, November 21, 2019

“What is the source of the legal authority by which the State of Israel imposes a military government on some two and a half million people, who have been born and died, who are being born and dying for the 52 years in the occupied territories?”

“Oom-pah-pah, oom-pah-pah, Trump-Pompeo, Trump-Pompeo. “The establishment of Israeli civilian settlements in the West Bank is not per se inconsistent with international law.” The Trump-Pompeo declaration is worth about as much as the statement that the Earth is flat. Trump-Pompeo can push on the Earth from both sides, rest their chins on it until their faces turn as red as a ripe strawberry – and the ball will remain round. Or elliptical, to be more precise.

“But the declaration brings back into our consciousness the question, which in the past was asked many times in the Supreme Court: What is the source of the legal authority by which the State of Israel imposes a military government on some two and a half million people, who have been born and died, who are being born and dying for the 52 years in the occupied territories? ...”

3) [The occupation is tearing Israel apart. We need the United States’ help to end it](#), Ami Ayalon, The Washington Post, November 22, 2019

“Ami Ayalon is a former commander in chief of the Israeli Navy and former director of Israel’s Shin Bet security service. This article is adapted from a speech given at the J Street National Conference on Oct. 26.

“As someone who has spent almost my entire adult life working for the security and best interests of Israel, I’m glad to see that a serious and robust discussion has broken out in American politics about the future structure of the U.S.-Israel relationship. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo’s recent assertion about the legality of Israeli settlements in the occupied territories merely underlines the urgency of the need for a rethink.” ...

Read more:

[Hanan Ashrawi: The latest shot in the Trump administration’s war on Palestinian rights](#)

[David Ignatius: America is now implicitly endorsing a one-state solution](#)

[Robert Kagan: Israel and the decline of the liberal order](#)

[Daniel Pipes: How Trump put Netanyahu in an untenable position](#)

[Mohammad Shtayyeh: Palestinians want freedom, not Trump administration bribes](#)

[Hanan Ashrawi: I am a Palestinian negotiator. I was denied a visa — and I think I know why.](#)

4) [After Jerusalem and the Golan Heights, the Latest Trump Statement Isn't Going to Make Settlements Legal](#), Noa Landau, Haaretz, November 19, 2019

“With both Trump and Netanyahu facing political troubles at home, timing of U.S. policy shift is surprising, as Secretary Pompeo insists all his administration is trying to do is 'advance peace.'

“After slashing the budgets of the Palestinian Authority and the UNRWA – the United Nations' agency to aid Palestinian refugees, recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and the Golan Heights as Israeli sovereign territory, there was only one card left up the American sleeve – and the Trump administration decided to generously draw it now: an announcement that the settlements in the West Bank are not necessarily “illegal” in the eyes of the United States, contradicting international law.

“And just like the announcement concerning Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem and the Golan Heights – and even more so because of the ramifications for the Palestinians, mainly in Area C – this latest declaration is also largely a symbolic and emotional, at least for now.

“The situation on the ground will not change overnight, nor will the international law shift just because the U.S. decided it no longer recognizes it. On the governmental level, some actual changes beyond the State Department's festive declarations – budgeting, for example – will require the Congress' approval.” ...

5) [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) News Bulletins](#)

[11/22/19 – Bulletin](#)

[11/15/19 – Bulletin](#)

[11/08/19 – Bulletin](#)