

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
September 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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Commentary: Most modern-day Israelis, religious and secular, believe that all the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River belongs to them alone. The Palestinian people living in Israel, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza are considered to be aliens. These Palestinian aliens, probably equal to half the population of the total area under Israeli civil or military law, are subject to ever increasing levels of repression and oppression. The same modern-day Israelis who believe that this land was given to their ancestors and to them by God seem to ignore or forget the commands of God concerning the alien among them. God is however faithful and does not forget.

"You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in Egypt. (Exodus 22:20)

"When an alien resides with you in your land, do not molest him. You shall treat the alien who resides with you no differently than the natives born among you; have the same love for him as for yourself: for you too were once aliens in Egypt. I, the Lord, am your God. (Leviticus 19:33-34)

"There is but one rule for you and the resident alien, a perpetual rule for all your descendants. Before the Lord you and the alien are alike, with the same law and same application for the alien residing among you as for yourselves. (Numbers 15:15-16)

Featured Articles:

- Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, Executive Director of Churches for Middle East Peace, writes in *The Christian Citizen* about the failings of the Trump administration's new peace plan.
- Salem Barahmeh writes in *Haaretz* about the shrinking space abroad for Palestinians to speak in defense of their dignity and freedom.
- In the *MinnPost*, Gabe Schneider profiles U.S. Rep. Betty McCollum as a defender of Palestinian children living under Israeli military occupation.
- The *Middle East Monitor* shares details of a report by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights restrictions on the movement of people in Gaza Strip, including hundreds of patients referred by doctors to hospitals in the West Bank.
- Tovah Lazaroff writes in *The Jerusalem Post* about warnings at the United Nations about advancement of the annexation of the West Bank by Israel through its approval of new settler homes.
- Zachariah Barghouti and Nicholas Kattoura, Palestinians residing in New York, write in *Mondoweiss* about their understanding of the political barriers experienced by Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib when she was barred by Israel from returning to Palestine to visit her ailing grandmother.
- Links to the weekly bulletins for August 2019 produced by Churches for Middle East Peace.

1. [A true peace plan will be known by its fruit](#), Rev. Dr. Mae Elise Cannon, *The Christian Citizen*, August 2, 2019.

"After nearly a century of war in the Holy Land between Palestinians and Israelis, the temptation for Christian peacemakers is to jump onboard any plan that purports to offer a solution. Any skepticism about the fairness of the terms or the effectiveness of the deal can come across as scorning peace. After so many years of fighting, shouldn't we

just embrace any peace plan no matter how imperfect it may be? Why can't critics of the Trump Administration's newly announced "Peace to Prosperity, The Economic Plan: A New Vision for the Palestinian People" just accept that it's better than nothing? The reason: because it is actually worse. "Peace to Prosperity" is not just an incomplete peace or a less-than-ideal compromise. As a close look at its terms will show, the plan is an attempt to put an end to the conflict by buying out the Palestinian leadership while stifling the voices of the rest." ...

2. [America Joins Israel's Campaign to Smear and Silence Palestinians](#), Salem Barahmeh, Haaretz, July 31, 2019

"From where I live in Ramallah, I can see two Israeli settlements. Our access to legal justice, roads, even water, couldn't be more unequal. But the basic right to call for our freedom is under increasing legal threat across Europe and the U.S.

"Palestinian advocacy for freedom and rights faces a concerted campaign of suffocation and delegitimization around the world. When we speak out and challenge our oppression, we are silenced, attacked and called anti-Semitic. Now, there is also growing trend of legislation seeking to shut down our demand for justice and accountability - formalizing our exclusion.

"The latest iteration of this was the anti-BDS resolution passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. As Rep Rashida Tlaib – herself the daughter of Palestinian immigrants - noted, the resolution was an 'attack on our freedom of speech and the right to boycott the racist policies of the government and the state of Israel.'

"This shrinking space abroad is being promoted by those seeking to relegate us to a footnote in history rather than a people that can stand free and equal with dignity. It is an extension of the systematic Israeli occupation, discrimination and dispossession we face at home that penetrates every aspect of our lives."...

3. [Rep. Betty McCollum has become one of the strongest critics of Israeli policy in Congress](#), Gabe Schneider, MinnPost, August 9, 2019

"Israel's staunchest critic in Congress is from Minnesota. She has spent years talking about putting an end to human rights abuses around the world, including looking at human rights violations in Israel.

"It's not Rep. Ilhan Omar, who has been the target of criticism for her comments on Israel. It's her colleague: Rep. Betty McCollum.

"This year, McCollum, who represents Minnesota's Fourth District, introduced the second iteration of a bill that would prohibit the use of U.S. military funding by Israel to detain Palestinian children: the Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act or H.R. 2407.

"Like most members, McCollum has said that she is pro-Israel and supports Israel as a key U.S. ally. But she is different from other members of Congress in her consistent, vocal criticism of Israeli human rights abuses — and for taking legislative action to try to address them.

"Since 2000, Israeli security forces have detained more than 10,000 Palestinian children. The U.S. State Department has documented numerous instances of human rights abuses against Palestinian minors in Israeli prisons since at least 2013.

"McCollum's bill, citing the State Department's reports, says that the 2016 report noted 'significant increase in detentions of minors' and also 'highlighted the renewed use of 'administrative detention' against Palestinians, including children, a practice in which a detainee may be held indefinitely, without charge or trial, by the order of a military commander or other government official.' Organizations like The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International have all come to similar conclusions.

“McCollum’s chief of staff, Bill Harper, said the reason for the bill is simple to articulate: ‘Human rights violations are being committed by the government of Israel. That’s why. Period.’” ...

4. [Israel stops 661 Gaza patients from travelling for treatment](#), Middle East Monitor, August 28, 2019

“The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights (PCHR) said that Israel continued to impose severe restrictions on the movement of people in Gaza Strip during July, impeding 661 patients and reducing exports by 42.2 per cent.

“PCHR declared in a monthly report, Tuesday: ‘the Israeli occupation authorities refuse to allow most of the residents of the Gaza Strip to leave or return to it through Beit Hanoun (Erez) crossing. However, it allows patients with serious health issues, subject to a lengthy and complicated process to obtain a pass and strict security measures, to pass through the crossing.’

“During the period covered by the report, the Israeli authorities prevented 661 patients referred to Israeli or to West Bank hospitals, including occupied Jerusalem.

“According to the report, the Israeli authorities justified denying patients the right to travel through various pretexts, including security reasons and request to change facilities, responses’ delay and request for new appointments and the patient’s request for a security interview.” ...

5. [UN: Israel advancing annexation with new settlement homes](#), Tovah Lazaroff, The Jerusalem Post, August 7, 2019.

“The United Nations and the United Kingdom warned that Israel was promoting annexation after the Higher Planning Council for Judea and Samaria advanced plans for 2,304 new settler homes on Monday and Tuesday.

“‘By advancing the effective annexation of the West Bank, it undermines the chances for establishing a Palestinian state based on relevant UN resolutions, as part of a negotiated two-state solution,’ US Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov said.” ...

“On Wednesday morning, Meretz Party head Nitzan Horowitz toured the West Bank, going to a new outpost next to the Mitzpe Yericho settlement that was built three months ago, called Mitzpe Ha-Torah. It is part farm and part religious seminary, said Hagit Ofran of Peace Now.

“Her organization recently published a report showing that since 2012, some 32 new West Bank outposts have been established, including the one her group showed Horowitz.

“During the tour, Peace Now also put up a sign by the entrance to Mitzpe Ha-Torah, stating that it was an illegal outpost.

“Horowitz warned that, ‘construction in the settlements is rampant – even in the isolated settlements and in the illegal outposts.’ He added that Netanyahu, along with United Right MKs Transportation Minister Bezalel Smotrich and former justice minister and party leader Ayelet Shaked, were leading Israel into the ‘abyss’ by wanting to annex Palestinian territory – a move that would destroy any chance of a two-state solution.” ...

6. [Refusing to cross Israel’s ideological borders](#), Zachariah Barghouti and Nicholas Kattoura, Mondoweiss, August 22, 2019

“The hashtag #MyPalestinianSitty trended on social media last week after Michigan Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib was barred from returning to Palestine to visit her ailing grandmother. In an attempt to remedy the public backlash to their decision, Israel allowed Tlaib access under one condition: that she not promote the BDS movement during her visit. Tlaib ultimately turned it down, citing that it would be her Sitty’s wish for her to liberate Palestine from abroad rather than concede her political ideologies and familial histories to visit once. For many, this was the straw that broke the camel’s

back. After citing itself as the “only democracy in the Middle East,” the exclusionary nature of settler colonial states reared its ugly head. This was not a democracy, but rather an ethnonationalist state predicated on the displacement and ethnic cleansing of an entire indigenous population. In response, #BoycottIsrael trended on Twitter and center democrats such as Nancy Pelosi condemned the state’s actions.

“However, the sad fact of the matter is that Rashida Tlaib’s experiences entering Palestine are a microcosm for every Palestinian that has ever tried to go home. What Tlaib and Omar’s delegation prove, is that Israel’s borders are not just physical, they are political. They transcend lines on a map and constitute ideological values as well.”...

7. Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins:

[08/30/19 – Bulletin](#)

[08/23/19 – Bulletin](#)

[08/16/19 – Bulletin](#)

[08/09/19 – Bulletin](#)