

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
July 28, 2016



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

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

The six featured articles and the many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on “perpetual violence” – the alternative to a just two state solution; the now equal number of Palestinians and Israelis in the Mediterranean to Jordan area; the US Republican Party no longer including a two state solution in their election platform; the success and failure of the international BDS movement; the Israeli occupation policy of humiliation of Palestinians; a history in process of the Israeli occupation; and other articles of interest.

Commentary: “Facts on the ground” has become a much used and useful name for factual reality rather than “spin” or “mis-statements.” Some of these “facts” about the Israeli Palestinian conflict are now reaching larger audiences especially in Europe and the progressive media in the U.S. “You can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all of the people all of the time.”

“Facts on the ground”: Israel is now a bi-national state; half of the population between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River is Palestinian; the Palestinian population is increasing even as their “habitable” land is diminishing; only Israelis have the democratic privilege and responsibility to vote and call their government to accountability; with the support of the Israeli government over 700,000 Israelis have “settled” in East Jerusalem and on the West Bank in over 100 settlements and “out-posts,” making the “two-state solution” impossible; the IDF is always prepared for “outside” attack while spending most of its time overseeing and controlling the Palestinians; BDS is the non-violent, pro-peace and justice choice of the Palestinians in their conflict with Israel both as a strategy for recognition and publicity of the occupation and of its unsustainability; the non-recognition of Palestinian rights can only be sustained by increasing military control and ultimately by “perpetual violence” between the Israelis and Palestinians; animosity between Israel and the Arab Nations; and weakening support of Israel by the democratic nations of the world.

- YnetNews reports that UNSCO Nickolay Mladenov said in an interview that the two-state solution was more remote than ever; its alternative is 'perpetual violence'; he assesses little chance of a quick return to peace talks.
- Ma’an News reports that the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) revealed that the population in the occupied Palestinian territory totaled 4.81 million people 2016. (West Bank-2.93 million, Gaza Strip-1.88 million people; not including the 1.77 million in Israel.)
- Rejecting policy embraced by both parties for decades, the Republican Party moved to approve a platform that does not include a call for a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.
- Richard Falk notes in Richardfalk.com, that the latest phase of Palestinian national struggle is mainly being waged nonviolently, and in a manner that accords with the best traditions of constitutional democracy. That Israel and Zionist hardliners should be opposing BDS by an ugly smear campaign exposes Israel’s vulnerability and should give the Palestinians hope that their cause is far from lost.
- Memo writes in JFJFP that the history of Israeli policy has far exceeded any “pragmatic” needs of an occupier to dominate and subdue a local population. The Israeli humiliation of Palestinians is an end in itself.
- Karin Laub writes in Haaretz of Irish author Colm Toibin’s tour the West Bank and the story of 50 Years of Israeli Occupation.

1) [UN: Without two-state solution, Middle East faces 'perpetual violence', YnetNews, Reuters, July 13, 2016](#)

“UNSCO Nickolay Mladenov said in an interview that two-state solution was more remote than ever; its alternative is 'perpetual violence'; he assesses little chance of a quick return to peace talks.

“A two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is more remote than ever, with the risk of generations of violence and radicalism unless leaders act, United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process Nickolay Mladenov said on Wednesday.

“In his first public comments since the publication on July 1 of a report by the Quartet of Middle East mediators, Mladenov said the situation was approaching a point of no return. ‘[The two-state solution] is perhaps the furthest away it's ever been, and in fact it is really worse than that—it is slipping away as we speak,’ he told Reuters in an interview, citing Israeli settlement building and Palestinian violence and incitement as among the most troubling obstacles.

“‘It's time for the international community and the leadership on both sides to wake up.’ ‘The only alternative (to a two-state solution) that I see is perpetual violence here in Israel and Palestine and entangling this conflict into the broader problems of the region,’ he said, adding it would be akin to ‘writing a blank check to violence and radicalism’ for generations to come.” . . .

“But the prospects are dim, with the last peace talks held in 2014. The Egyptians, the French and the Quartet—made up of the United States, the European Union, the United Nations, and Russia—are working to bring them the sides together but so far without success.

“‘At this stage to say they will come back to negotiate tomorrow would be close to day-dreaming... The collapse of trust has been really dramatic,’ said Mladenov.”

2) [PCBS reports Palestinian population growth to 4.81 million, Ma'an News, July 12, 2016](#)

“On the occasion of International Population Day on Monday, the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS) revealed new data about the population in the occupied Palestinian territory, which it said now totaled 4.81 million people 2016.

“According to PCBS, the occupied West Bank hosts an estimated 2.93 million Palestinians, while the besieged Gaza Strip is home to 1.88 million people.

“PCBS did not give data regarding Palestinians living in Israel and abroad. However, the Israel Central Bureau of Statistics (ICBS) estimated earlier this year that 20 percent of the population in Israel – or 1.77 million people – was Palestinian.

“Based off of this data, the total population of Palestinians in historical Palestine, which includes present-day Israel – some 6.58 million – outnumbers the ICBS’ I estimation of the Jewish Israeli population, which it said totaled 6.38 million, confirming 2014 projections by PCBS.

“As of 2010, PCBS estimated that 4.88 million Palestinians lived in the Arab world, while another 626,824 lived in other countries.

“Based off of these statistics, the global Palestinian population can be estimated to count more than 12 million people.

“The Gaza Strip, already believed to be the most densely populated place on earth, has a population density of 5,154 persons per square kilometer, PCBS reported -- 10 times more than the West Bank density of 519 people per square kilometer.

“Palestinians are overwhelmingly urbanized, with PCBS estimating that 73.9 percent of the population lives in urban areas, as opposed to 16.6 percent of in rural areas and 9.5 percent in camps.

“PCBS added that the Palestinian population was fairly young, with 39.2 percent of Palestinians aged 14 and younger -- 36.9 percent of the population in the West Bank and 42.8 percent in the Gaza Strip -- while Palestinians more than 65 years old only constituted 2.9 percent of the population -- 3.2 percent in the West Bank, and 2.4 percent in Gaza.” . . .

3) [In Major Shift, GOP Rejects Two-State Solution; Says Israel is Not an “Occupier”, Nathan Guttman, Forward, July 10, 2016](#)

“Rejecting policy both American parties have embraced for decades, the Republican Party moved Monday to approve a platform that does not include a call for a two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

“The new language, approved by a large majority of votes in the platform subcommittee, omits any reference to a solution which would establish an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel, according to the text of the document, which the Forward obtained from a source who was not permitted to share it. Instead, the plank defers to Israel to determine whether it is interested in negotiating a deal with the Palestinians based on territorial withdrawal from the West Bank.

“‘The U.S. seeks to assist in the establishment of comprehensive and lasting peace in the Middle East, to be negotiated among those living in the region,’ the Republican platform states. ‘We oppose any measures intended to impose an agreement or to dictate borders or other terms, and call for the immediate termination of all U.S. funding of any entity that attempts to do so. Our party is proud to stand with Israel now and always.’”

“In omitting support for a two-state solution from its platform, the Republican platform committee reflected a growing sentiment among activists wishing to challenge the notion that only territorial compromise will bring peace to the region.

“Advisers to presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump have sounded this theme as well. ‘I don’t think that a two-state solution is a productive way for people to be spending their time in the short term,’ David Friedman, a bankruptcy lawyer and one of Trump’s advisers on Israel, told the Forward in a May interview. Friedman is a strong supporter of Jewish settlements in the West Bank and heads an American fundraising operation for one of the settlements.

“The previous Republican platform, adopted in 2012, clearly expressed support for a two-state solution, stating that Republicans ‘envision two democratic states – Israel with Jerusalem as its capital and Palestine – living in peace and security.’ The full platform committee will vote on the issue Monday or Tuesday; then, the Republican convention will approve it next week. A convention rarely makes changes to its platform language.” . . .

4) [Smearing BDS Supporters, Richard Falk, Richardfalk.com, July 5, 2016](#)

“End of the Road?”

“There are many reasons to consider the Palestinian struggle for self-determination a lost cause. Israel exerts unchallenged paramilitary control over the Palestinian people, a political reality accentuated periodically by brutal attacks on Gaza causing massive civilian casualties and societal dislocation. Organized Palestinian armed resistance has all but disappeared, limiting anti-Israeli violence to the desperation of individual Palestinians acting on their own and

risking near certain death by striking spontaneously with primitive knives at Israelis encountered on the street, especially those thought to be settlers.

“Furthermore, the current internal dialogue in Israel is disinclined to view ‘peace’ as either a goal or prospect. This dialogue is increasingly limited to whether it seems better for Israel at this time to proclaim a one-state solution that purports to put the conflict to an end or goes on living with the violent uncertainties of a status quo that hovers uncomfortably between the realities of ‘annexation’ and the challenges of ‘resistance.’ Choosing this latter course means hardening the apartheid features of the occupation regime established in 1967. It has long had the appearance of a quasi-permanent arrangement that is constantly being altered to accommodate further extensions of the de facto annexations taking place within the Palestinian territorial remnant that since the occupation commenced was never more than 22% of British administered Palestine. It is no secret that the unlawful Israeli settlement archipelago is constantly expanding and Jerusalem is becoming more Judaized to solidify on the ground Israel’s claim of undivided control over the entire city.

“Israel feels decreasing pressure, really no pressure at all aside from the ticking bomb of demographics, to pretend in public that it is receptive to a negotiated peace that leads to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state. The regional turbulence in the Middle East is also helpful to Israel as it shifts global attention temporarily away from the Palestinian plight, giving attention instead to ISIS, Syria, and waves of immigrants threatening the cohesion of the European Union and the centrist politics of its members. This gives Israel almost a free pass and Palestinian grievances have become for now a barely visible blip on the radar screens of public opinion.” . . .

“ The policy focus of the global solidarity movement is upon various facets of the boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign (or simply BDS) that is gaining momentum around the world, and especially in the West, including on American university campuses and among mainstream churches. This recourse to militant nonviolent tactics has symbolic and substantive potential if the movement grows to alter public opinion throughout the world, including in Israel and the United States. In the end, as happened in South Africa, the Israel public and leadership just might be induced to recalculate their interests sufficiently to become open to a genuine political compromise that finally and equally safeguarded the security and rights of both peoples.

“At this time, Israel is responding aggressively in a variety of rather high profile ways. Its official line is to say that its continued healthy rate of economic growth shows that BDS is having a negligible economic impact. Its governmental behavior suggests otherwise. Israeli think tanks and government officials now no longer hide their worries that BDS poses the greatest threat to Israel’s preferred future, including increasing isolation and perceptions of illegitimacy. As one sign of the priority accorded this struggle against BDS, the Israeli lobby in the United States has enlisted the Democratic Party and its presidential candidate has signed up to be militant anti-BDS activist.” . . .

“It is notable that this latest phase of Palestinian national struggle is mainly being waged nonviolently, and in a manner that accords with the best traditions of constitutional democracy. That Israel and Zionist hardliners should be opposing BDS by an ugly smear campaign exposes Israel’s vulnerability when it comes to the legitimacy of its policies and practices, and should give the Palestinians hope that their cause is far from lost.” . . .

5) [Humiliation: The hammer crushing Palestinian society, Memo, JFJFP, June 30, 2016](#)

“While the exercise of military control over an occupied country may be expected to inflict inevitable pain and trauma on the citizens of that country, the history of Israeli policy has far exceeded any ‘pragmatic’ needs of an occupier to dominate and subdue a local population. The Israeli humiliation of Palestinians is an end in itself. Humiliation is thus one of the most important injuries experienced in the Palestinian context and yet, it is under-reported to such a degree that humiliation is viewed as almost normal.

“Despite resolutions by the United Nations, the global acquiescence to the occupation of Palestine by the previous colonial powers has denied Palestinians their freedom, their status as citizens, and their exercise of human rights on an international level. At the level of society, the occupation has generated layers of humiliation through the maintenance of inequity within power relationships and perceptions of cultural status. In addition to these broad sources of injury, there are endless repetitive personal experiences of humiliation from which no Palestinian individual is spared.” . . .

“These omnipresent acts of personal humiliation are not simply collateral by-products of occupation, but its core policy. An essential feature of the occupation is to target and undermine every facet of Palestinian identity, especially those aspects of identity that are a source of pride for the emerging intellectual and moral development of a Palestinian nation. Humiliation acts to crush the sources of autonomy and independence. It aims to reduce Palestinians to a state of passive silence. At the same time, humiliation of Palestinians is a tool that relieves the anxieties and apprehensions of the Israeli forces and their beneficiaries among the Israeli public.” . . .

“Liberation requires the abandonment of policies of exclusion, deprivation, or submission to tyranny which crushes resistance through inducing passivity or inducing vengeance and social fragmentation. Out of experiences of humiliation and through our insight into these experiences, Palestine can forge a liberated identity focused on human rights and human dignity.”

6) [50 Years of Israeli Occupation, Told Through the Eyes of an Author, Karin Laub, Haaretz, July 18, 2016](#)

“The troubled city [Hebron] is the last stop on Toibin's weeklong visit to Israel and the West Bank. He's collecting material for an essay, his contribution to an anthology on Israeli occupation that will be published at the 50-year mark in June 2017. The book will include essays from 20 international writers, including Nobel and Pulitzer Prize winners, and six local authors.

“Each tackles a different subject, from Israel's military court system to grieving Jewish and Arab families who lost loved ones to violence. The work is based on observations during tours similar to Toibin's.

“Toibin, who last visited in 1992, said he was struck most by the elaborate system of Israeli control over Palestinians, including roadblocks and fences, and the energy spent on maintaining it.

“‘All of us have been surprised by the amount of architecture and engineering required to make sure one side is locked in and the other side is free to move,’ said Toibin, who has won several literary awards and whose novel ‘Brooklyn’ about an Irish immigrant was adapted into a movie last year.

“The anthology is meant to introduce a wider audience to this reality through the power of story-telling, said those involved in the project.” . . .

“The anthology, to be published in English, Hebrew, Arabic and several other languages, was conceived by Shaul and Waldman, who say they are Israeli patriots and want to contribute to ending occupation by helping shift public opinion at home and abroad.

“‘It is on our shoulders to stop the occupation and save Israel,’ said Shaul, 32, who spent part of his military service in Hebron and a decade ago founded ‘Breaking The Silence,’ a veterans' group that collects soldiers' testimony about abusive practices in the West Bank.” . . .

See also Link C – “APN Board member Martin Bresler in The New York Jewish Week: Why I Do Call Israel Out On The Occupation”

Other articles of interest:

- A) [In About-face on U.S. Foreign Policy, GOP Platform to Drop Support for Two State Solution, Jacob Kornbluh, Jewish Insider July 11, 2016](#)
'We reject the false notion that Israel is an occupier,' reads platform draft. According to people involved in the draft, Trump's Israel advisers and pro-Israel groups in Republican Party worked together to take out support for Palestinian state.
- B) [BDS is a war Israel can't win, Stanley L Cohen, Al Jazeera, July 11, 2016](#)
Israel's apologists would call the BDS campaign "immoral," but the slander is laughably false.
- C) [The coming battle over Israel in US presidential race, Yousef Munayyer, The New Arab, July 22, 2016](#)
As has been made clear over the past several months and years, there is little that both Republicans and Democrats can agree on. But Israel is one of the few issues where there is some shared ground, and fighting the Palestinian rights movement's use of BDS tactics is a common plank they have both adopted. While this may be seen as a blow to the movement for Palestinian rights, it is instead a reflection of the growth and strength of a movement. Only a few years prior, BDS was not mentioned by officials, and was generally ignored or scoffed at.
- D) [APN Board member Martin Bresler in The New York Jewish Week: Why I Do Call Israel Out On The Occupation, APN, July 15, 2016](#)
David Bernstein has written an articulate defense of those who, like him, refuse to denounce the Israeli occupation of the West Bank arguing that simply calling for an immediate end to the Occupation does not recognize the complexity of the situation and will not bring peace and security to Israel. He missed the mark. The occupation can be denounced without calling for immediate withdrawal. The occupation is evil. It is immoral. It is un-Jewish.
- E) [Will upcoming local elections unite Palestinians, or divide them even further?, Al-Monitor, Adnan Abu Amer, July 7, 2016](#)
The Palestinian government has set a date for local elections in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The elections, which will include 414 local bodies, will be held Oct. 8, according to a June 21 announcement. Hamas is reluctant to sign onto an electoral process it suspects will marginalize it.
- F) [EU: NGOs law risks undermining democracy, Associated Press, July 13, 2016](#)
European Union says new law, which mostly affects liberal groups critical of Israeli policies towards the Palestinians, goes 'beyond the legitimate need for transparency'; US concerned law could have a 'chilling effect' on the activities of NGOs.
- G) [CMEP Bulletin - Settlement Activity Continues - July 14, 2016](#)
- H) [CMEP Bulletin - International Players Push for Peace – July 22, 2016](#)
- I) [Using stolen water to irrigate stolen land, Dror Etkes, +972 Blog, July 16, 2016](#)
Settlers are trying to spin water shortages as a problem that affects both Palestinians and Jews in the same manner. That couldn't be further from the truth.
- J) [Israel passes law slammed by critics as a move to silence Palestinian lawmakers, Ma'an News Agency, July 20, 2016](#)
Israel's parliament, the Knesset, passed into law late Tuesday night a bill that would allow Knesset members to vote to oust their colleagues from office, legislation that has been slammed by critics as targeting Palestinian MKs and harmful to “the very building blocks of democracy.”

- K) [Will Hamas Participation in West Bank Elections Mend Political Rift? Amira Hass, Haaretz, Jul 24, 2016](#)
Optimists hope that Hamas' participation in elections for the first time in ten years will pave the way for a new Palestinian government, but it's still unclear how tolerant Fatah will be and whether Israel will intervene.
- L) [BDS movement targets Palestinian investors in West Bank mall, Ahmad Melhem, Al-Monitor, July 19, 2016](#)
Pro-Palestinian activists are working with a consumer advocacy group to urge Palestinian investors to back out of a new shopping mall in northern Jerusalem, warning that not only will the project harm the Palestinian economy, the investors themselves could face legal action.
- M) [EU to push Israel-Palestine peace process as Quartet report flops, Uri Savir, Al-Monitor, July 17, 2016](#)
The recent report by the Middle East Quartet bluntly criticized Israel's systematic settlement expansion and large land takeovers in Area C, targeted at preventing a two-state solution. Nevertheless, the report was met with considerable disappointment at the highest levels of the Palestinian Authority, and also a sigh of relief in the prime minister's office in Jerusalem.