

**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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**Editor's note:** *Beginning this month, Middle East Notes is published monthly, on the first Thursday. The monthly format will continue to offer four or five pertinent articles with commentary and links. During the interim weeks between monthly issues, special Middle East Notes Alerts will be available via email, as needed. These alerts will consist of only one current article of special interest with a brief commentary.*

In this issue of the Middle East Notes, the four featured articles and the related links focus on the increasing contradiction between Zionism and a system that upholds human rights; the 50th anniversary of Israel's Military Order 101, a law that punishes Palestinians for peaceful political expression; and an analysis of the growth of Israeli settler colonialism alongside the neoliberal restructuring of the economy, resulting in an economic system that can be described as neoliberal racial capitalism.

**Commentary:** A commentary offered in Middle East Notes in March applies to this month's articles as well: "For centuries people held the belief that the sun revolved around the earth, until objective facts proving the opposite were finally accepted. Initially those offering such facts were ignored, ridiculed, and condemned. This issue of the Middle East Notes focuses on the crime of apartheid to which the government of Israel stands accused by an array of objective facts. The messengers of these facts are likewise being ignored, ridiculed, and condemned rather than the facts presented being refuted. Personal beliefs and emotional appeals ('post truth') continue to be used in an attempt to control public opinion."

**Featured articles:**

- Gideon Levy published a column in *Haaretz* that may go to the furthest extent in Israeli mainstream media to date in challenging Zionism. Levy calls out Israel Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked for a recent speech in which she promoted Zionism over individual rights. Levy writes that Zionism is a movement that "contradicts human rights, and is thus indeed an ultranationalist, colonialist and perhaps even racist movement, as proponents of justice worldwide maintain."
- Nadine Marroushi writes for Amnesty International about the effects of Military Order 101, a law that for the past 50 years has punished Palestinians in the West Bank for peaceful political expression.
- Al-Shabaka, an independent non-profit organization, writes in *Ma'an News Agency* about the evolution of Israel's current system of neoliberal racial capitalism.
- Michael J. Koplow writes in *Matza Blog* about the similarities and differences between the responses to the disaster caused by Hurricane Harvey and the disaster cause by the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory.
- Churches for Middle East (CMEP) Bulletin

1. [Opinion Israel's Minister of Truth, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, September 1, 2017](#)

“Thank you, Ayelet Shaked, for telling the truth. Thank you for speaking honestly. The justice minister has proved once again that Israel’s extreme right is better than the deceivers of the center-left: It speaks honestly.

“If in 1975, Chaim Herzog dramatically tore up a copy of UN General Assembly Resolution 3379, equating Zionism with racism, the justice minister has now admitted the truthfulness of the resolution (which was later revoked). Shaked said, loud and clear: Zionism contradicts human rights, and thus is indeed an ultranationalist, colonialist and perhaps even racist movement, as proponents of justice worldwide maintain.

“Shaked prefers Zionism to human rights, the ultimate universal justice. She believes that we have a different kind of justice, superior to universal justice. Zionism above all. It’s been said before, in other languages and other nationalist movements.

“Had Shaked not pitted these two principles against each other, we would have continued to believe what has been drilled into us since childhood: Zionism is a just, morally unflawed movement. It sanctifies equality and justice: Just look at our Declaration of Independence. We memorized ‘the only democracy in the Middle East,’ ‘a land without a people for a people without a land,’ ‘everyone is equal in the Jewish state’; we learned about the Arab Supreme Court justice and the Druze cabinet minister. What more could we ask? It’s so just, so equal, you could cry.

“If this were all true, Shaked would have no reason to come to the defense of Zionism in the face of human rights. For Shaked and the right, the debate on human and civil rights is anti-Zionist, even anti-Semitic. It seeks to undermine and destroy the Jewish state.

“Thus Shaked believes, as do so many around the world, that Israel is built on foundations of injustice and therefore must be defended from the hostile talk of justice. How else can the repulsion to discussing rights be explained? Individual rights are important, she said, but not when they are disconnected from ‘the Zionist challenges.’ Right again: The Zionist challenges indeed stand in contradiction to human rights.” ...

2. [50 years of Israeli Occupation: Four Outrageous Facts about Military Order 101, Nadine Marroushi, Amnesty International, August 25, 2017.](#)

“Did you know that Israel has been banning Palestinians from organizing any protests for 50 years? This is what daily life under Israeli occupation is for Palestinians.

“27 August marks 50 years since Israel issued Military Order 101, a law that punishes Palestinians for peaceful political expression. Anyone breaching the order faces imprisonment for up to 10 years and/or a hefty fine. 50 years on, Military Order 101, which is almost as old as Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territory, continues to apply to Palestinians in the West Bank, and may be enforced at any time.

“Here are four facts that bring home the true impact of this draconian law on the daily lives of Palestinians.

“1- Unless an Israeli military commander provides authorization in advance, Palestinians in the West Bank are banned from attending and organizing a procession, assembly or vigil of 10 or more people for a political purpose, or where a speech is being made on a political subject, or for a matter that may be construed as political, or even to discuss such a subject.”...

“2- The display of flags or emblems, and the publication of any document or image with politically significant content, without a permit from an Israeli military commander is banned.”...

“3 - Verbal or other expressions of support or sympathy for the activities and aims of any organization deemed illegal under military orders is prohibited. This includes many Palestinian political parties and student unions.”...

“4- Anyone breaching Military Order 101 faces imprisonment for up to 10 years and/or a hefty fine.

“Virtually all cases of Palestinians brought before Israeli military courts end in convictions. Most convictions are the result of plea bargains. This is because Palestinian defendants know the entire system is so unfair that if they go on trial, they will be convicted and given a longer sentence.”

3. [Rethinking our definition of apartheid: not just a political regime \(Part II\), Al-Shabaka, Ma’an News Agency August 28, 2017.](#)

... “This is the second of a two-part policy brief written by Haidar Eid and Andy Clarno. Part I was [published on Sunday](#). The full report can be read [here](#).

“Seeing apartheid through this lens [of racial capitalism in Palestine/Israel] also allows an understanding that Israeli settler colonialism now operates through neoliberal racial capitalism. Over the last 25 years, Israel has intensified its settler colonial project under the guise of peace. All of historic Palestine remains subject to Israeli rule, which operates by fragmenting the Palestinian population. Oslo enabled Israel to further fragment the OPT and supplement direct military rule with aspects of indirect rule. The Gaza Strip has been transformed into a ‘concentration camp’ and a model ‘native reserve’ through a deadly, medieval siege described by Richard Falk as a “prelude to genocide” and by Ilan Pappé as an ‘incremental genocide.’ In the West Bank, Israel’s new colonial strategy involves concentrating the Palestinian population into Areas A and B and colonizing Area C. Instead of granting Palestinians freedom and equality, Oslo restructured relations of domination. In short, Oslo has intensified, rather than reversed, Israel’s settler colonial project.

“The reorganization of Israeli rule has occurred alongside the neoliberal restructuring of the economy. Since the 1980s, Israel has undergone a fundamental transformation from a state-led economy focused on domestic consumption to a corporate-driven economy integrated into the circuits of global capital. Neoliberal restructuring has generated massive corporate profits while dismantling welfare, weakening the labor movement, and increasing inequality. The Oslo negotiations were central to this project. Shimon Peres and Israeli business elites argued that the “peace process” would open the markets of the Arab world to U.S. and Israeli capital and facilitate Israel’s integration into the global economy. After Oslo, Israel quickly signed free trade agreements with Egypt and Jordan.” ...

“Overall, therefore, neoliberalism coupled with Israel’s settler colonial project has transformed the Palestinians into a disposable population. This has enabled Israel to carry out its project of concentration and colonization. Understanding the neoliberal dynamics of Israel’s settler-colonial regime can contribute to the development of strategies to challenge Israeli apartheid not only as a system of racial domination but as a regime of racial capitalism.

“An important question for the Palestinian liberation movement is how to avoid the pitfalls of post-apartheid South Africa in developing a vision for post-apartheid Palestine/Israel. As Black radicals predicted, an exclusive focus on the racial state has led to serious socioeconomic problems in South Africa since 1994. Palestinian liberation does not have to end with the same “solution” as that offered by the ANC. This will require attention not only to political rights but also to difficult questions about land redistribution and economic structure to ensure a more equal outcome. One crucial place to begin is by continuing conversations about the practical dynamics of Palestinian return.

“It is also important to recognize that the current situation in Palestine is closely connected to processes reshaping social relations around the world. South Africa and Palestine, for example, are experiencing similar social and economic changes despite their radically different political trajectories. In both contexts, neoliberal racial capitalism has produced

extreme inequality, racialized marginalization, and advanced strategies for protecting the powerful and policing the racialized poor. Andy Clarno refers to this combination as neoliberal apartheid.” ...

“Unlike South Africa, Israel remains an aggressive settler-colonial state. In this context, neoliberalism is part of Israel’s settler-colonial strategy to eliminate the Palestinian population. But the combination of racial domination and neoliberal capitalism has produced growing inequality, racialized marginalization, and advanced securitization in many parts of the world. As movements and activists build connections between struggles against racialized poverty and policing in Palestine, South Africa, the U.S. and beyond, understanding Israeli apartheid as a form of racial capitalism could contribute to the expansion of movements against global, neoliberal apartheid. It could also help shift the political discourse in Palestine from independence to decolonization.” ...

4. [What Israel can learn from Hurricane Harvey, Michael J. Koplou, Matzav Blog, August 31, 2017](#)

“As Hurricane Harvey continues its path of destruction across the southeastern United States, there are some lessons for Israel in the storm’s aftermath. While Harvey is an epic natural disaster, the takeaways for Israel have nothing to do with storms, acts of God, climate change, or how to deal with unprecedented destruction. The damage from Harvey and the immense work it will take to set things back to normal should instead provide a set of lessons for Israel’s leaders on managing the outcome of a different type of disaster coming Israel’s way that, unlike Harvey, can be planned for in a far more adequate way.

“One of the constant themes espoused by Prime Minister Netanyahu and those on the right of center of the Israeli spectrum is that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict cannot be solved, but instead must be managed. In this line of thinking, Israel should not try to solve the conflict because conditions do not allow it; rather it is better off biding its time and riding out the current situation, hoping that conditions will change. This may make sense when dealing with a hurricane such as Harvey, when you are truly at nature’s mercy with no power to affect the underlying environment. It makes less sense in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, where problems can be prevented because Israel has the power to actually shape the conditions.

“Netanyahu’s declaration this week that Israel will never again evacuate a settlement, and will in fact deepen its roots in the West Bank, is a good example of why this is so. Assume for a moment that Netanyahu’s assumption is correct and that conditions right now do not in any way allow for a permanent peace with the Palestinians. Even if that is true, Israel has to constantly deal with the fallout of increasing settlement in the West Bank in a variety of ways, from rising security costs to global reputational costs to the threat of future severe economic costs. Expanding Israel’s presence in the West Bank, as Netanyahu is vowing to do, creates a larger problem to manage down the road, whereas there is a simple way right now to prevent a larger problem by at the minimum freezing things in place. Unlike a hurricane, the conditions creating the headaches for Israel are not going to change of their own accord and provide a period of calm that can be used for clean up.” ...

5. [Churches for Middle East Peace \(CMEP\) Bulletin: New School Year. New Push for Peace? August 25, 2017.](#)

[Click here](#) for other excellent sources of information and links to articles concerning the State of Israel and the Palestinian people.