

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**September 13, 2012**



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

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

*This week's Middle East Notes include materials which focus on "price tag" targeting of Christians, the viability of the two-state solution, the plight of Christians on the West Bank and the detrimental effect of the continuing occupation of Palestinian territories on the Israeli people.*

**September 8, 2012 CMEP Bulletin** provides information on the "price tag" targeting of the Latrun Trappist monastery, the Jerusalem controversy at the Democratic National Convention, and other items.

**Israel is losing the battle for public opinion in America:** Rabbi Eric Yoffie in Ha'aretz writes that U.S. commentators are talking more loudly in the media about Israel's failure to engage with a two-state peace process – which could leave Israel out in the cold when it comes to fateful decisions on Iran as well as disconnecting Israel itself from a democratic future.

**Requiem for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict:** In two Ha'aretz columns, Carlo Strenger states that there are moments when the truth flies into your face and you realize your political program is no longer viable. But while he has no alternative to offer, he knows one thing is sure: the two-state solution is dead.

**Israeli colonialism in West Bank:** Oren Yiftachel in an op-ed printed in Ynet News states that continued colonization of territories is far more dangerous to Israel than nuclear Iran.

**After Zionism, into the void:** Ha'aretz writer Tal Niv reflects that this past summer was the toughest summer Israel has known, apart from wartime. Because the Zionist project - in its secular, liberal, civil and egalitarian form - failed. Not "will fail," but "failed" because he believes that the Zionist project that is turning its back on human rights.

**Why are Christians again the target?** After anti-Christian graffiti was painted on the Latrun monastery doors, the Assembly of Catholics Ordinaries of the Holy Land released a statement which asks: "What is going on in Israeli society today that permits Christians to be scapegoat and targeted by these acts of violence?"

**It's not normal: We need to end the occupation:** As an Israeli Jew, Rami Livni writes in Ha'aretz that "we need to end the occupation not only because of the Palestinians; we need to do it for ourselves.

**Book review: Palestinian Christians in the West Bank: Facts, figures and trends:** Stephen Sizer writes that this book is a welcome and timely assessment of the plight of Palestinian Christians living under Israeli military occupation. With up-to-date facts and figures this book will facilitate more accurate and informed debate on the future of the Church in Palestine.

## 1) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, September 8, 2012

Christian monastery targeted after Migron evacuation: On Tuesday September 4, monks in Latrun, a village 15 miles west of Jerusalem, woke up to find their monastery's doorway in flames and inflammatory graffiti on the walls. The incident bears the hallmark signs of a "price tag" attack, which Israeli police say they have been preparing for after the evacuation of settlers from the Migron outpost.

[Read Ha'aretz report: [Christian monastery near Jerusalem vandalized, door set on fire](#). Ha'aretz asks readers to register; free registration allows 10 articles per month.]

... The attack came just two days after the September 2 eviction of almost 300 settlers in Migron, an outpost built on private Palestinian property without the proper approvals from the Israeli government. The outpost has been the subject of legal wrangling for years and the government has repeatedly tried to avoid removing the families living there. The police had to forcibly remove a few holdouts, but most residents left without resistance and moved into the new temporary homes in a nearby settlement. Later this month, they will move into homes built by the government on a hillside a mile away from Migron.

Despite the evacuation process going smoothly, settler activists are angry and showing the Israeli government the "price tag" for such actions by vandalizing Palestinian and Israeli security property. The price is getting steeper as the attacks continue and the international community takes notice. After the attack on the monastery, the Israeli embassy in Paris sent a cable to the Foreign Ministry that reads, "The media coverage (of the vandalism) is causing grave damage to Israel's image in France." Ynet News reports that other embassies in Europe sent similar reports indicating the desecration "has resulted in a major hit to Israel's image in the continent."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the attacks saying, "Those responsible for this reprehensible act need to be punished severely. Freedom of religion and freedom of worship are among the most basic foundations of the State of Israel." Defense Minister Ehud Barak echoed the prime minister and stated, "We must fight this with an iron fist and end these kinds of incidents, which stain Israel. It is our duty to eradicate this phenomenon."

As with most "price-tag" crimes, Israeli police have not made any arrests thus far. This does not surprise prominent settler leader Danny Dayan, who disagrees with the extremist settlers' violent tactics. He blames the Israeli security forces for the lack of arrests and prosecution for price tag criminals saying, "It's unacceptable that the Shin Bet produces zero indictments and 100 percent failures... It's inconceivable that our glorified Shin Bet cannot handle these groups of thugs."

[The Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries in the Holy Land released a statement condemning the attacks and elements in Israeli society that foster hatred. Read the entire statement in this issue of Middle East Notes, below.]

DNC and Jerusalem: Much ado about nothing? Controversy surrounded the Democratic National Convention in Charlotte this week over the language in the party platform that neglected to declare Jerusalem the capital of Israel, something that had appeared in years past.

Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney highlighted the omission as another example of, “Israel being thrown under the bus by the president.”

Jerusalem analyst Daniel Seidemann derided those turning the change into an issue. He writes that not mentioning Jerusalem is a tweak “that doesn’t signal even the tiniest shift in U.S. policy on the issue, but that in a modest way brings the platform in line with what has been U.S. policy dating back decades.” Since 1967, American presidents have supported Israelis and Palestinians deciding the status of Jerusalem in negotiations. Seidemann praised the Democratic Party for having “grounded their platform in reality, one informed by sound policy, not pandering politics.” ...

To address the issue, delegates voted Wednesday evening on an amendment to restore the language to the platform that read, “Jerusalem is and will remain the capital of Israel. The parties have agreed that Jerusalem is a matter for final status negotiations. It should remain an undivided city accessible to people of all faiths.” The vote also included an amendment on adding “God” back into the platform, which had been omitted.

The arena got chaotic when the chair called for a voice vote on the amendments and the “yea” and “no” supporters sounded even. After three tries, the chair decided the amendment passed by a two-thirds majority. Journalists report that delegates voting no did so for a myriad of reasons, not just opposing the addition of the Jerusalem language. Some disagreed with adding “God” and others did not approve of the process in which the amendments were discussed. ...The Jewish Telegraphic Agency reported that, “Few Jewish organizations publicly complained, but the groups lobbied behind the scenes. Once the language was changed, AIPAC, the Anti-Defamation League and the Orthodox Union quickly praised the Democratic National Committee.”

[Read the entire Bulletin on CMEP’s website.](#)

## 2) [Israel is losing the battle for public opinion in America](#)

Rabbi Eric H. Yoffie, Ha’aretz

August 6, 2012

The government of Israel wants to talk about Iran, but a lot of people did not get the memo. For an important group of public intellectuals, the occupation of the West Bank is becoming more rather than less important. And we are not talking here about the usual cast of anti-Israel characters, but of mainstream journalists, scholars, and opinion makers – those who write in middle-of-the-road, general publications with a broad readership. Something is happening—a turning point, I suspect. No matter how much Israel’s leaders want to change the subject, it’s not working.

Exhibit A, of course, is New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman, whose already-famous [column of August 1](#) ripped into Mitt Romney’s visit to Israel and, in the process, castigated Israel for its building of settlements and its less-than-aggressive advocacy for a two-state solution. Friedman has made these arguments before, although rarely with such vehemence. In the last week, efforts have been made yet again to dismiss Friedman as an Israel hater, and yet

again, they have failed; Friedman is a centrist, a moderate, and, by the way, the most important foreign policy columnist in the world.

But especially interesting are the many other voices, silent until now, that are suddenly being heard. Jonathan Tepperman, the Managing Editor of Foreign Affairs, [wrote in the Atlantic Monthly](#) in August that Israel's case against Iran would be immeasurably strengthened by taking the initiative to diminish its presence in the West Bank. Alan Dershowitz, a ferocious and admirable defender of Israel who rarely addresses settlement issues except in passing, [wrote in The Wall Street Journal](#) in June that Israel's leaders, under certain conditions, needed to consider a settlement freeze. And Alan Wolfe, of Boston College and The New Republic, a political scientist and brilliant observer of American religious life, wrote a few months ago ... about his personal struggles with Israel and his rejection of leftist anti-Israel critiques, while sharply criticizing the lack of energy on Israel's part to advance a two-state plan.

[Read the entire piece on Ha'aretz's website.](#)

3) Two columns by Carlo Strenger, Ha'aretz

1) [Requiem for a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict](#)

August 29, 2012

There are moments when the truth flies into your face and you realize your political program is no longer viable. But while I have no alternative to offer, I know one thing is sure: the two-state solution is dead.

Nachum Barnea is considered to be one of Israel's most influential journalists, independent in his judgment, fair and balanced in his reporting and analysis. A few days ago he wrote [an outspoken column](#) in which he comes to the conclusion that the settlement project has reached its goal: the situation on the ground is irreversible, and the two-state solution is no longer possible.

The context of the column was Barnea's visit to Migron, an outpost currently under the spotlight of Israeli media. The Palestinian owner of the land claims he never sold it, and Israel's High Court ruled that it must be evacuated.

But Barnea is not impressed with this ruling. Around Migron there are many other settlements that no one touches, because they are not built on private land. Barnea claims that this turns the High Court into an accomplice of the settlement project:

*"The original sin was committed by the High Court. In the second decade after the six-day war, when the settlement enterprise transformed from a marginal whim to the government's primary policy in the territories, the High Court was asked to present its stance by ruling on a series of petitions. Over the years the court's judges ignored the international law, which forbids the establishment of a settlement on conquered land, and instead focused on the issue of ownership: Jews are permitted to settle anywhere in the West Bank as long as the land is not Palestinian-owned."*

Barnea rarely expresses such outspoken views. [He was interviewed](#) in the popular TV program “London and Kirschenbaum,” and said that the governments of both Israel and Palestine are not willing or able to pay the price of implementing the two-state solution, concluding that “Everybody knows how this will end.” When asked what he means, he answers, “There will be a bi-national west of the Jordan... the two-state solution is no longer possible.”

This was, of course, a surprise: most center-left politicians and commentators have a standard line: “Everybody knows how the Israel-Palestine conflict will end.” It is generally taken as a matter of course that they imply the two-state solution as proposed by Clinton in 2000. Barnea assumes that this received wisdom is, at this point, devoid of any realistic foundation.

As of late summer 2012, I cannot see any coherent plan to deal with reality on the ground. Only Israel’s extreme right takes a clear stance: National religious rabbis quite simply say that Palestinians will not have political rights in the Greater Land of Israel, and some of the leading settlers say that Israeli [democracy must be replaced by a theocracy](#).

[Read the entire article on Ha’aretz’s website.](#)

II] [We’ve lost: It’s time to think about one state](#)

September 7, 2012

[Migron has been evacuated](#), but this doesn’t save the two-state solution. It was evacuated, because it was built on private land, not because it is part of the future state of Palestine. Dozens of other settlements remain standing, and there are now more than 300,000 settlers east of the Green Line, not including East Jerusalem.

For decades, Israel’s left has defined itself by its commitment to the two-state solution. But it is time to take a cold, hard look at reality: We’ve lost. Last year, Palestinian philosopher, peace activist and president of Al Quds University Sari Nousseibeh has said so in his book [What is a Palestinian State Worth?](#) He called upon fellow Palestinians to realize that Jews are too traumatized by their history to give up sovereignty over the West Bank, and that a Palestinian state was not worth further blood and mayhem.

I wasn’t ready to hear this then, but it is simply no use to continue closing our eyes. I do not give up on the two state solution on ideological grounds -with all its faults, at least it made moral, political and demographic sense. I give up on it, because it will not happen.

[Read the entire piece on Ha’aretz’s website.](#) Ha’aretz asks readers to register.

4) [Israeli colonialism in West Bank](#)

Oren Yiftachel, Ynet News

August 30, 2012

Netanyahu recently decided to shelve the report submitted by Justice Edmond Levy, and security forces are preparing for the imminent evacuation of the [Migron outpost](#). But don’t let this fool you – the Levy Report may have been officially dismissed and Migron may be moved to

an alternate location a few meters away, but the report's conclusions continue to guide Jewish colonization in the territories.

The report shocked many by determining that [Israel](#) is not an occupying power in the West Bank and recommended that most outposts and settlements be legalized. The recognition of the [Ariel University Center](#) as a full-fledged university added fuel to the fire. These developments drew the predictable reactions from centrist and leftist Israelis who stressed that Israel is an occupying power in the West Bank and therefore the establishment of Israeli and communities and institutions there is forbidden.

But perhaps Justice Levy did get one thing right. Maybe the term "occupation" is no longer relevant to the Israeli regime in the West Bank. I claim that the occupation has transformed into colonization a long time ago – including expulsion, settlement and the continuous nationalization of the territory and its resources – and all this while preserving the local Palestinian population's inferior status.

Occupation is temporary and is military in nature. Israeli presence in south Lebanon was an example of occupation as it did not involve permanent civilian settlement or expulsion. True, the Levy Report is riddled with falsifications, including the claim that the Balfour Declaration grants the Jews sovereignty over all of Palestine - as though international law has not evolved since 1917. In the spirit of colonialism, the Levy Report ignores the collective rights of 90 percent of the West Bank's population – the Palestinians - as if they did not exist.

[Read the entire piece on the Ynet News website.](#)

#### 5) [After Zionism, into the void](#)

Tal Niv, Ha'aretz

September 5, 2012

This summer was the toughest summer Israel has known, apart from wartime. Because the Zionist project - in its secular, liberal, civil and egalitarian form - failed. Not "will fail," but "failed." The reasons can be listed one after the other, but it's enough to think about the little four and a half-year-old boy whose hands and face were covered with burns after a Molotov cocktail was hurled at the car in which his family was traveling on August 16, near the Bat Ayin settlement. The boy's name is Mohammed Hassan Jayada. All six family members, Palestinians from Nahalin, were wounded, two of them critically.

Not long after the attack, pictures appeared in the media of the three children who were being held for the crime. They were arrested on August 26 at the Jerusalem yeshiva they attend. The boys were just 12 and 13 years old, with long, fair sidelocks hanging down below broad skullcaps, their faces blurred because of their status as minors, wearing striped shirts with their tzitzit visible underneath, handcuffed. These young boys are the suspects in this terror attack.

It's impossible not to feel the pain when a child is a victim of terror, and it's impossible not to cringe when a child is a terrorist. But by the look of these children - whose guilt is yet to be proven, and one wholeheartedly hopes that they were not the ones who did this - it's clear that something has become completely twisted. The boys are suspected of deliberately hurling a

Molotov cocktail at a car and setting six people on fire, permanently scarring the children in the car. It's clear something has become twisted because the moment that nationalist crimes are being committed by children, we have entered a void.

[Read the entire piece on Ha'aretz's website.](#)

#### 6) [Why are Christians again the target?](#)

Declaration of the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land (ACOHL)

September 4, 2012

The Assembly of Catholics Ordinaries of the Holy Land published the following declaration after anti-Christian graffiti defaced a monastery in Latrun.

The Christian community awoke this morning, Tuesday, September 4, 2012, to discover with horror that once again it is the target of forces of hatred within Israeli society. In the early hours of the morning, the door of the Cistercian (Trappist) monastery in Latroun was burned and anti-Christian graffiti was sprayed on the walls.

The monks of Latroun have dedicated their lives to prayer and hard work. The monastery is visited by hundreds of Jewish Israelis each week and they are received with love and warmth by the monks. A number of the monks have learned Hebrew and promote mutual understanding and reconciliation between Jews and Christians, according to the teachings of the Catholic Church.

Sadly, what happened in Latroun is only another in a long series of attacks against Christians and their places of worship. What is going on in Israeli society today that permits Christians to be scapegoat and targeted by these acts of violence? Those who sprayed their hateful slogans, expressed their anger at the dismantlement of the illegal Jewish settlements in the West Bank. But why do they vent this anger against Christians and Christian places of worship? What kind of "teaching of contempt" for Christians is being communicated in their schools and in their homes? And why are the culprits not found and brought to justice?

This morning, the Christians in Israel are asking many questions as they grieve and seek consolation and assurances. The time has come for the authorities to act to put an end to this senseless violence and to ensure a "teaching of respect" in schools for all those who call this land home.

"Which of you desires life, and covets many days to enjoy good? Keep your tongue from evil, and your lips from speaking deceit. Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it."  
(Psalm 34:12-14)

Signed by

Fouad Twal, Patriarch of Jerusalem for Latins

President, ACOHL

and 21 additional bishops, vicars, and other leaders of the Catholic church in the Holy Land



## 7) [It's not normal: We need to end the occupation](#)

Rami Livni, Ha'aretz

September 6, 2012

It is difficult to persuade a person who feels happy that he is in fact depressed and despondent. Why should he believe it? With regard to everything about the occupation, the citizens of Israel feel fine. They brush off arguments about the effect it has on morals, about the demographic problem, the economic damage and the undermining of our international relations. Their apathy does not stem only from "proof" that Israel must not budge from the position in which it is entrenched, because of the failure of the diplomatic process and changes in the Arab world. The apathy stems also from the loss of the value of peace.

From the point of view of the Zionist left, from the moment that Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion drew up the Declaration of Independence and up to the days of assassinated Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, the lack of peace remained an open wound in the Jewish national project, which had succeeded in achieving its other aims. This wound led Israel's leaders to examine, time and again, whether it was possible to reach an agreement that would close the circle of enmity that began with the establishment of the state, despite the strong Arab opposition. The awareness of the wound was not restricted to the left. Because of it, the Herut party's leader who became prime minister, Menachem Begin, signed the peace treaty with Egypt, and on both sides of the political barrier people stressed that "everyone is in favor of peace."

However, alongside the yearning for peace, the readiness in Israel to pay the price for it has yet to be found. In fact, a self-righteous and manipulative tendency has developed here to put it off and to blame the other side for refusing to make peace, as opposed to Israel, "which extends its hand to peace."

In the current climate, the yearning for peace - which despite its self-righteous aspects also contained healthy elements, as well as a readiness for action - is now beginning to disappear.

[Read the entire piece on the Ha'aretz website.](#)

## 8) [Book review: Palestinian Christians in the West Bank: Facts, figures and trends](#)

Stephen Sizer, September 1, 2012

... [This book – edited by Mitri Raheb, Rifat Odeh Kassis, and Rania Al Qass Collings](#) – aims at creating a reliable database that is essential in developing a shared, comprehensive and ecumenical strategic vision for Christian support in Palestine, so that Christianity survives and thrives. [It] includes different forms of information: statistics, charts and tables about the Christian presence in Palestine, a study on the emigration trends of Palestinian Christians, a study on the attitudes of Christians towards church-related organizations, as well as a comprehensive directory of all church-related organizations and institutions in the West Bank.

This is a welcome and timely assessment of the plight of Palestinian Christians living under Israeli military occupation. With up to date facts and figures this book will facilitate more accurate and informed debate on the future of the church in Palestine.