

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
November 12, 2015



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This week's featured articles and links to other articles give information and background on the meeting of President Obama and Prime Minister Netanyahu at the White House on November 9, the violence experienced especially by Palestinians in East Jerusalem, the rage and frustration of Palestinian youth, as well as reflections on the long lasting results of the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, calls for Israel boycott, and the destructive effect of the prolonged occupation on Israeli society.

Commentary: *As spontaneous violence continues between Israeli citizens and Palestinian youth, the leaders of the U.S. and Israel met again after many months and talked again of increased military and financial aid to Israel and a two-state solution which is no longer a hope or reality to either the Israelis or Palestinians. To the former it is a forgotten dream of the past now replaced by a de-facto binational state of with voice, vote, military control only available to Israelis and disenfranchised Palestinians; to the latter such talk of the two-state solution is seen as code for continuation of the status quo of occupation, settlement development and ever diminishing living space. Reports of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict in US television, radio and printed media are now presenting more of the reality of this conflict from the perspective of the Palestinians and Israelis who are promoting BDS of Israeli products from the West Bank, opposing the occupation and working for equal justice for all.*

- Jeffrey Heller and Matt Spetalnick report in Reuters that at their November 9, 2015 meeting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu assured U.S. President Barack Obama on Monday that he remained committed to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as they sought to mend ties strained by acrimony over Middle East diplomacy and Iran.
- Zeina Azzam writes in Al Jazeera that the international community must safeguard Palestinians in East Jerusalem. At least 76 Palestinians and 10 Israelis have been killed in ongoing violence in the occupied East Jerusalem that began in September.
- Barak Ravid notes in Haaretz that the head of Military Intelligence, Maj. General Herzl Halevi in a cabinet meeting stated that feelings of rage and frustration, especially among younger Palestinians, are part of the reason for the wave of terror attacks in Jerusalem and the West Bank. This contradicts Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's message which blames the attacks on incitement and ingrained hatred.
- Dexter Filkins in a long The New Yorker article asks whether when Yitzhak Rabin was killed, did the prospects for peace perish, too? The killing of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, in 1995, by
- Yigal Amir, an Israeli extremist, bids to be one of history's most effective political murders.
- Steven Levitsky and Glen Weyl explain in the Washington Post why they have chosen to boycott Israel. They see a ethical dilemma for themselves and many American Jews: can we continue to embrace a state that permanently denies basic rights to another people? As Zionist Jews they believe that Israel has embarked on a path that threatens its very existence.
- Assaf Gavron writes in The Washington Post that he believes the occupation is destroying Israeli society; that Israelis must stop the occupation for themselves. So that they can look themselves in the eyes. So that they can legitimately ask for, and receive, support from the world. So that they can return to being human.

1) [Obama, Netanyahu at White House seek to mend U.S.- Israel ties](#)
Jeffrey Heller and Matt Spetalnick, Reuters, November 9, 2015

... “Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu assured U.S. President Barack Obama on Monday that he remained committed to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as they sought to mend ties strained by acrimony over Middle East diplomacy and Iran. Meeting Obama for the first time since the signing of the Iran nuclear deal, Netanyahu said he backed a vision of “two states for two peoples” but maintained that any Palestinian state must be demilitarized and recognize Israel as the homeland of the Jewish people, a condition Palestinians have rejected.”

... “The meeting was clouded by an ongoing wave of Palestinian stabbing and shooting attacks that have Israelis on edge at a time when Obama has concluded that a peace deal is beyond reach during the final 14 months of his presidency. Obama condemned the latest wave of Palestinian violence and backed Israel’s right to defend itself but said he wanted to hear Netanyahu’s ideas for lowering tensions and ‘how we can make sure that legitimate Palestinian aspirations are met.’”...

2) [Palestinians in occupied territories need protection](#)
Zeina Azzam, Al Jazeera, November 9, 2015 (N.B. Article contains useful links.)

“At least [76 Palestinians and 10 Israelis](#) have been killed in ongoing violence in the occupied East Jerusalem that began in September. The clashes began after dozens of Jewish settlers backed by Israeli security stormed Al-Aqsa Mosque compound. Palestinians oppose efforts by far-right Jewish groups who want to divide [the holy site and build a Jewish temple](#) there.

Palestinians in Jerusalem’s Old City say they have no one to safeguard their basic human rights. They are asking for an international force to protect them. On Oct. 24, the Jerusalemite Women’s Coalition, a group of women’s rights organizations and feminists, [called for international protection](#), citing increased violence by Israeli settlers and the Israeli army. It is urging the international community to defend Palestinians living in East Jerusalem.” ...

3) [IDF Intelligence Chief: Palestinian Despair, Frustration Are Among Reasons for Terror Wave](#)
Barak Ravid, Haaretz, November 3, 2015

... “The head of Military Intelligence, Maj. General Herzl Halevi, said at Sunday’s weekly cabinet meeting that feelings of rage and frustration, especially among younger Palestinians, are part of the reason for the wave of terror attacks in Jerusalem and the West Bank.” ...

“Halevi, the sources said, added that reports and comments on social media, as well as shared videos of previous attacks, are also a contributing factor. Another cause that is affecting some young Palestinians, who executed terrorist attacks, was discourse in social media and videos of other terrorist attacks.

“Leaders in the Palestinian Authority have little influence on these young people, who are alienated from them. Halevi noted that while Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has instructed the PA security forces to thwart attacks on Israelis and has taken other measures to introduce quiet, “on the other hand he has branches that are acting to keep some kind of activity in the field,” he was quoted as telling the cabinet.” ...

“Halevi’s assessment as for the causes of the wave of terror attacks substantially contradicts Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s message on the subject over the past few weeks. In a press conference with foreign reporters on October 15 Netanyahu said “Now they say: you have terrorist attacks because

there is no peace. Neither is true. They're attacking us not because they want peace or don't want peace. It's because they don't want us here." ...

4) [Shot in the Heart](#)
Dexter Filkins, The New Yorker, October 26, 2015

... "Assassination is an unpredictable act. Historically speaking, high-profile political killings have been as likely to produce backlashes and unintended consequences as they have been to achieve the assassin's goal, if he had one." ...

"Yet the killing of Yitzhak Rabin, the Israeli Prime Minister, in 1995, by Yigal Amir, an Israeli extremist, bids to be one of history's most effective political murders. Two years earlier, Rabin, setting aside a lifetime of enmity, appeared on the White House lawn with Yasir Arafat, the leader of the Palestine Liberation Organization and a former terrorist, to agree to a framework for limited Palestinian self-rule in the occupied territories; the next year, somewhat less painfully, he returned to the White House, with Jordan's King Hussein, to officially end a forty-six-year state of war. Within months of Rabin's death, Benjamin Netanyahu was the new Prime Minister and the prospects for a wider-ranging peace in the Middle East, which had seemed in Rabin's grasp, were dead, too. Twenty years later, Netanyahu is into his fourth term, and the kind of peace that Rabin envisaged seems more distant than ever." ...

"On the day of his death, Rabin considered staying home from a peace rally, because he feared that he'd be embarrassed by a low turnout. The crowd, at Kings of Israel Square, in Tel Aviv, was enormous—about a hundred thousand people—dwarfing anything the anti-Oslo camp had put together. The main fear among the security services was a Palestinian suicide bomber; Rabin himself could not imagine that he would be killed by a Jew. Neither, apparently, could his bodyguards; when the moment came, Amir pushed through the crowd and shot Rabin twice in the back. Later that night, Amir asked the police for a glass of schnapps to toast the Prime Minister's death. Arafat, hearing of the assassination, wept." ...

"However slim the chances for a comprehensive peace agreement were in the nineteen-nineties, today they are effectively zero. Until recently, it was heretical to suggest that a two-state solution was implausible. Today, it seems nearly impossible to imagine one at all. What this portends for Israeli society may be disturbing—depending on which estimate you choose, the combined population of Palestinians in Israel and the occupied territories will exceed the number of Jews there as soon as 2020—but it doesn't make peace any more likely. There are now four hundred thousand settlers in the West Bank, and they are more powerful and more organized than they were when Rabin was killed. Since then, the Israeli center has moved steadily rightward." ...

5) [We are lifelong Zionists. Here's why we've chosen to boycott Israel](#)
Steven Levitsky and Glen Weyl, Washington Post, October 23, 2015
(See also "A" in "Other articles of interest" below)

"We are lifelong Zionists. Like other progressive Jews, our support for Israel has been founded on two convictions: first, that a state was necessary to protect our people from future disaster; and second, that any Jewish state would be democratic, embracing the values of universal human rights that many took as a lesson of the Holocaust. Undemocratic measures undertaken in pursuit of Israel's survival, such as the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza and the denial of basic rights to Palestinians living there, were understood to be temporary.

“But we must face reality: The occupation has become permanent. Nearly half a century after the Six-Day War, Israel is settling into the apartheid-like regime against which many of its former leaders warned. The settler population in the West Bank has grown 30-fold, from about 12,000 in 1980 to 389,000 today. The West Bank is increasingly treated as part of Israel, with the green line demarcating the occupied territories erased from many maps. Israeli President Reuven Rivlin declared recently that control over the West Bank is “not a matter of political debate. It is a basic fact of modern Zionism.” ...

“Israel, of course, is hardly the world’s worst human rights violator. Doesn’t boycotting Israel but not other rights-violating states constitute a double standard? It does. We love Israel, and we are deeply concerned for its survival. We do not feel equally invested in the fate of other states.

“Unlike internationally isolated states such as North Korea and Syria, Israel could be significantly affected by a boycott. The Israeli government could not sustain its foolish course without massive U.S. aid, investment, commerce, and moral and diplomatic support.” ...

6) [Confessions of an Israeli traitor](#)
Assaf Gavron, The Washington Post, October 23, 2015
(See also “B” in “Other articles of interest” below)

... “But as an Israeli, I am more concerned with the actions of my own society, which are getting scarier and uglier by the moment.

“The internal discussion in Israel is more militant, threatening and intolerant than it has ever been. Talk has trended toward fundamentalism ever since the Israeli operation in Gaza in late 2008, but it has recently gone from bad to worse. There seems to be only one acceptable voice, orchestrated by the government and its spokespeople, and beamed to all corners of the country by a clan of loyal media outlets drowning out all the others. Those few dissenters who attempt to contradict it — to ask questions, to protest, to represent a different color from this artificial consensus — are ridiculed and patronized at best, threatened, vilified and physically attacked at worst. Israelis not “supporting our troops” are seen as traitors, and newspapers asking questions about the government’s policies and actions are seen as demoralizing.” ...

“The cumulative effect of this recent mindless violence is hugely disturbing. We seem to be in a fast and alarming downward swirl into a savage, unrepairable society. There is only one way to respond to what’s happening in Israel today: We must stop the occupation. Not for peace with the Palestinians or for their sake (though they have surely suffered at our hands for too long). Not for some vision of an idyllic Middle East — those arguments will never end, because neither side will ever budge, or ever be proved wrong by anything. No, we must stop the occupation for ourselves. So that we can look ourselves in the eyes. So that we can legitimately ask for, and receive, support from the world. So that we can return to being human.” ...

Other articles of Interest:

- A) [When Zionists Boycott, Michael J. Koplow, Israel Policy Forum, October 29, 2015](#)
Last weekend,(10/25/15) the Washington Post ran an op-ed by Steven Levitsky and Glen Weyl, professors respectively at Harvard and Chicago arguing for a boycott of Israel.

- B) [‘Most-read’ article at Washington Post calls Israel ‘savage, unrepairable society, Philip Weiss, Mondoweiss, October 25, 2015](#)
The left wing movement of criticism of Israel is getting more and more mainstream. The Washington Post, a hotbed of neoconservative ideas for the last 15 years, has another article harshly critical of Israel written by an Israeli.
- C) [Green Party Presidential Candidate Dr. Jill Stein says U.S. Policy Towards Israel, Palestine and the Middle East Must Change. The American People need no longer fund terror, The Peace Source, August 29, 2015](#)
Dr. Jill Stein, the Green Party presidential candidate, released a clear and comprehensive policy statement on Israel, Palestine and the Middle East on her [website](#). Jill Stein is the only American Presidential candidate to insist on a Middle-East policy platform grounded in international law, human rights, equality, peace, freedom and justice for everyone.)
- D) [Hillary Clinton Is No Friend of Israel, Gideon Levy, Haaretz, November 8, 2015](#)
The Democratic presidential candidate’s love letter to Israel last week was simply embarrassing, and proves she is an obstacle to what is best for the Israeli state. Hillary Clinton's election as U.S. president would ensure Israel’s continued decline and degeneration.
- E) [Can we call it one state and be done with it?, Mjad Iraqi, 972 Magazine, November 8, 2015](#)
The debate over whether we are living in a single state is irrelevant – the answer is a resounding yes. The real problem is that freedom and equality are only extended to some of its subjects
- F) [CMEP Bulletin - Responding to the Ongoing Violence, October 30, 2015](#)
Please note that CMEP Bulletins offer useful links
- G) [CMEP Bulletin - IDF Says Abbas Not to Blame for Current Violence, November 6, 2015](#)
- H) [Palestinians Need Hope, Not Calm, John V. Whitbeck, Palestine Chronicle, October 18, 2015](#)
Since the current upsurge of violence in Israel and occupied Palestine began, numerous foreign leaders, as well as the UN Security Council, have cited the urgent need to restore “calm”. It is not calm, a euphemism for Palestinian submission that is urgently needed but, rather, genuine and credible hope for freedom and some measure of justice.
- I) [Young Palestinians sound off on current unrest, Israeli occupation, Al Jazeera, October 14, 2015](#)
With talk of third intifada, Palestinians under the age of 30 discuss where they see latest violence heading. Thousands of young Palestinians have taken to the streets of Israel, East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza Strip to demand an end to Israel’s decades-long occupation, protest violence by Israeli forces and settlers, and call for recognition of their human rights.
- J) [What Americans Don’t Know About the Middle East Conflict and Why, Sam Bahour, Forward, October 28, 2015](#)
Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu knows better than anyone else that if we Palestinians are permitted to engage non-violently, odds are we will expose Israel’s military occupation for what it is, a system of modern-day apartheid or worse.
- K) [Israel’s Top Generals Split with Benjamin Netanyahu on Roots Terror Wave, J.J. Goldberg, Forward, November 3, 2015](#)
Two active-duty IDF generals who are among the army’s top experts on Palestinian affairs spoke out publicly to state that Palestinian violence is driven to a considerable degree by anger at Israeli actions. One of the two went a step further, warning that only a serious Israeli diplomatic re-engagement with the Palestinians will help to quell such violence over the long term.

- L) [Unintended Consequences of Anti-Iran Accord Campaign by Israel, U.S. Jewish Groups, Allan C. Brownfeld, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, October 2015, pp. 42-43](#)

No longer can anyone say, with any degree of credibility, that AIPAC and its allies speak in behalf of American Jews. No longer can anyone say that Prime Minister Netanyahu speaks for Jews outside of Israel. Nor can anyone say that Israel, the major recipient of U.S. aid, does not interfere in our domestic political affairs.

- M) [Obama and Netanyahu's "Make Nice" Meeting: Bad for Peace, Bad for Israel, Michael Lerner - Editor, Tikkun Magazine, Huffington Post, November 9, 2015](#)

When Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Obama meet in the White House today, their goal will be to make amends in light of Netanyahu's unprecedented attempts to manipulate the U.S. Congress and the American public into opposition to the Iran Nuclear deal negotiated by six countries including the U.S.