

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
February 20, 2014



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.](#)

This week's Middle East Notes focuses attention on the Kerry framework for negotiations; Israeli actions in the West Bank; influence of AIPAC and the "industrial-military-congressional" complex; the growing spread of BDS; an Australian documentary on IDF treatment of Palestinian children; and other issues.

- The Feb. 6 Bulletin from Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) focuses on the Kerry Plan, the future of the Beit Jala Cremisan Valley, and many articles about Jerusalem, continued settler agitation and other issues.
- The Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (USA) has published a 74-page illustrated study guide, "Zionism Unsettled," including a free CD, to open a new dialogue and puts an "end to the silence surrounding the impact of Zionism."
- Saed Bannoura of IMEMC News writes that the Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) issues weekly reports on Israeli violations in the occupied territories. Included is the report for the period between January 30-February 5, 2014.
- The State of Two States includes pertinent quotes for the weeks of February 2 and 9.
- James Wall notes that Rep. Peter Roskam's introduction of a bill that would defend Israel against any criticism from U.S. academics is an example of what Eisenhower warned in his farewell address about guarding against the "unwarranted influence" of "the military-industrial complex."
- Three articles in Ha'aretz focus on Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions: A) Daniel Levy writes that Israeli propaganda campaigns won't obscure the realization in Europe and among Palestinians that the occupation will cease to be cost-free for Israel as boycotts and sanctions continue to grow; B) Hanan Ashrawi writes that BDS is gaining global traction as an effective and responsible protest against Israel's settlements; C) Avraham Burg believes that Israel will be helpless when the discourse moves from who's stronger/tougher/more resilient to a discourse on rights and values.
- Thomas L. Friedman of the New York Times believes that a third intifada is underway, not an intifada with stones or suicide bombers, but one propelled by nonviolent resistance and economic boycott. It is not being led by Palestinians in Ramallah but by the European Union in Brussels and other opponents of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank across the globe.
- Trita Parsi notes in the Huffington Post that the defeat of AIPAC's ill-advised push for new sanctions on Iran in the midst of successful negotiations is nothing short of historic. In the last year, it has suffered three major public setbacks, of which the sanctions defeat is the most important one.
- "Stone Cold Justice," a video report released in Australia, reveals evidence that shows the Israeli army is targeting Palestinian boys for arrest and detention and is now facing a backlash at home and abroad for its treatment of children in the West Bank.
- Dan Goldberg in Ha'aretz notes that Australian Jewish leaders have launched a blistering attack on "Stone Cold Justice" as a "quasi-documentary" and a "blanket demonization" of Israel "laced with sensationalism, inadequate skepticism and fact-checking."
- Ma'an reports that a member of Fatah Central Committee, Tawfiq Tirawi, told a reporter that "negotiations can reveal to the world that the Palestinians are seeking peace, but that the occupation (regime) doesn't want it."
- UN Middle East Peace Coordinator Robert Serry said in a press statement that the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas is eroding and that only reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority can pave way for progress towards peace.

1) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletin, February 6, 2013

Consequences of failure worry some Israelis: While Secretary of State of John Kerry has been discussing a framework for Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, perhaps to be revealed next month, many Israelis and pundits this week focused on the potential consequences of a failure to bridge the gaps between the two sides. There was particular concern about the economic and political costs for Israel should negotiations collapse while West Bank occupation and settlement construction continues.

Last week, Finance Minister Yair Lapid said, "If the negotiations with the Palestinians get stuck or break down and we enter a reality of a European boycott, even a very partial one, Israel's economy will retreat...Every resident of Israel will get hit straight in the pocket; the cost of living will rise, the education, health, welfare and defense budgets will be cut, and many international markets will be closed to us." According to the Israeli paper Ha'aretz, he said, "If talks with the Palestinians break down, a 'medium-range scenario; prepared by treasury experts shows the Israeli economy getting battered by a massive loss of trade with Europe, with 10,000 people getting fired 'immediately.'"

In Munich over the weekend, Secretary Kerry echoed this sentiment for the first time: "The risks are very high for Israel. People are talking about boycott. That will intensify in the case of failure. We all have a strong interest in this conflict resolution."

Kerry's statement swiftly raised the ire of Prime Minister Netanyahu and some of his ministers. At his weekly cabinet meeting, the prime minister said, "Attempts to impose a boycott on the state of Israel are immoral and unjust." Israel's strategic affairs minister called Kerry's comments "hurtful," "unfair" and "intolerable" and said, "Israel cannot be expected to negotiate with a gun to its head." ...

The spat over Secretary Kerry's remarks have sparked a debate over the degree of seriousness of the economic threat Israel would face should peace not be achieved. In a New York Times column "The Third Intifada," Thomas Friedman wrote that Israelis should fear "not an intifada with stones or suicide bombers, but one propelled by nonviolent resistance and economic boycott." He provides a potential solution, "If Israel really wanted to slow down the boycott campaign, it would declare that as long as Kerry is trying to forge a deal, and there is hope for success, Israel will freeze all settlement activity to give peace its best chance."

Take action: This week the Supreme Court in Israel gave the people of the Cremisan Valley and its supporters a reason to be hopeful. Instead of issuing a ruling, the judges delayed a decision and instead asked the Israeli State Attorney to answer: why were no alternative paths for the fence in the area considered? They now have until April 10 to provide this information. Until the Israeli authorities respond to this request, all work in the valley has to be stopped. The court also asked the Ministry of Defense and the Commander of the West Bank to cancel the seizure orders issued in Cremisan.

The judges set a new hearing for July 30, bringing "new hope and optimism for the families affected in Beit Jala and the certainty that they will not be dislodged in the next six months." Advocate Zvi Avni, lawyer of St. Yves representing the Salesian Convent and School, says, "The case is not over, until a final ruling is given. The court's decision is an indication that it is not inclined to adopt the State's position. We definitely have new hope – the answer of the court is a good sign."

This is good news! But until there is a final ruling, the residents of the Cremisan Valley residents will face continued uncertainty about the future. [Write your member of Congress](#) today and tell them express concern to the State Department and Israeli officials over the proposed route of the barrier in the Cremisan Valley.

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

2) Presbyterian network pushes a new dialogue on Zionism

January 15, 2014

Press Release

The Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) is pleased to announce the publication of its newest educational resource, *Zionism Unsettled: A Congregational Study Guide*. This study guide is a condensed and edited version of a longer book entitled *Zionism and the Quest for Justice in the Holy Land* which will be published in 2014 by Pickwick Publications, an imprint of Wipf and Stock Publishers.

... *Zionism Unsettled* is published to help bring about an end to the silence surrounding the impact of Zionism, and to encourage open discussions on the topic in church and society.

Rev. Cliff Kirkpatrick, Visiting Professor of Ecumenical Studies and Global Ministries at Louisville Presbyterian Theological Seminary and former Stated Clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) sees a need for a deeper understanding of Zionism. "I encourage pastors and congregations to take advantage of this new publication. *Zionism Unsettled* provides a valuable opportunity to explore the political ideology of Zionism. Our congregations need to understand not only the humanitarian crisis or the specific policies involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but also to examine the basic framework that lies behind these policies and crises," said Kirkpatrick.

Walter Brueggemann, professor emeritus at Columbia Theological Seminary in Atlanta, remarks "The urgency of the Palestinian plight in the face of Israeli intransigence indicates that intentional, concrete, and sustained public action is necessary to respond credibly to the crisis. *Zionism Unsettled* is a welcome study guide. It will prove an effective vehicle for helping to mobilize public opinion so that both attitudes and policies can be transformed in the face of an imperious and exploitative ideology."

What role have Zionism and Christian Zionism played in shaping attitudes and driving historical developments in the Middle East and around the world? How do Christians, Jews, and Muslims understand the competing claims to the land of Palestine and Israel? What steps can be taken to bring peace, reconciliation, and justice to the homeland that Palestinians and Israelis share?

Zionism Unsettled embraces these critical issues The booklet and DVD draw together compelling and diverse perspectives from Jews, Muslims, and Christians in Israel, Palestine, the U.S., and around the globe. By contrasting mainstream perceptions with important alternative perspectives frequently ignored in the media, *Zionism Unsettled* serves as a guide to deeper understanding. ...

Dr. Rashid Khalidi, Edward Said Professor of Arab Studies at Columbia University in New York, notes, "The denial of the rights of the Palestinians is largely driven by the exemption of Zionist ideology and its real-world implications from any serious scrutiny. *Zionism Unsettled* explains accurately and concisely why it is essential to look at the theological roots of Zionism, and how it has appealed to both Jews and Christians, in order to understand the true nature of the long ordeal suffered by the Palestinian people, as well as the real roots of so much of the strife in the Middle East."

Zionism Unsettled, released today, consists of a 74-page illustrated booklet and an accompanying free DVD. A how-to guide for class leaders with focused discussion prompts makes this an ideal resource for multi-week exploratory educational programs in churches, synagogues, mosques and all classroom settings, faith-based or secular.

[Use this link to order.](#)

3) PCHR Weekly Report On Israeli Violations

Saed Bannoura, International Middle East Media Center (IMEMC) News, February 7, 2014

The Palestinian Center for Human Rights (PCHR) issued its weekly reports on Israeli violations in the occupied territories for the period between January 30 to February 5, 2014.

The PCHR stated that the army carried out more than 72 invasions into Palestinian communities in the occupied West Bank, and kidnapped 58 Palestinians, including three children and one woman. The Center said Israeli soldiers and settlers have continued their crimes and escalations against the Palestinian people, their lands and holy sites, while Israeli officials continued their incitement against the Palestinian people, and the Palestinian Authority.

“Such incitement encourages the settlers to escalate their assaults; numerous attacks have been carried out by extremist settlers, and the soldiers protected them instead of removing them”, the PCHR said. “Israel is ignoring complaints filed by the Palestinians against fanatic settlers, who commit crimes, while Arab countries, and the international community, remain idle, an issue that encourages Israel to continue to act as a state that is above the law”.

The PCHR stated that eight Palestinians, including three women and two children, were injured in two Israeli Air Strikes targeting Khan Younis, in the southern part of the Gaza Strip. The strikes caused excessive property damage to several homes and structures in the area. The PCHR said a resistance center was bombarded, and partial damages were reported in four homes, a school, and a maintenance workshop, in the first air strike. While a well, a home and five hothouses were destroyed, in addition to partial damage in another home and eleven hothouses, in the second strike. Furthermore, seven Palestinian civilians were shot and wounded after Israeli soldiers, stationed across the border, opened fire at them while working in Palestinian lands close to border areas.

In the West Bank, the PCHR has reported that the army continued the use of excessive force against Palestinian, Israeli and international peace activists protesting the illegitimate apartheid wall, and settlements. Soldiers shot and injured two Palestinian civilians after attacking the weekly nonviolent protest in Kufr Qaddoum, northeast of Qalqilia, in the northern part of the West Bank. The army violently attacked nonviolent protesters against the Wall and settlements in Bil'in village, near the central West Bank city of Ramallah.

Israeli and international peace activists participated in the weekly protest, and marched against the Wall and settlements, and against the killing of Mohammad Mubarak, who was shot and killed by the army on January 29, 2014. As the protesters reached Palestinian orchards close to the Wall, soldiers fired rounds of live ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets, gas bombs, concussion grenades, and sprayed ... sewage water mixed with chemicals. Several protesters suffered the effects of tear gas inhalation, while many protesters suffered cuts and bruises after being violently assaulted by the soldiers.

The army also attacked nonviolent protesters in Ni'lin village, west of Ramallah, and prevented the residents, Israeli and international peace activists from reaching Palestinian orchards isolated behind the wall. They fired gas bombs, concussion grenades, and rubber-coated metal bullets, and sprayed the protesters with waste-water mixed with chemicals. Several Palestinians were injured.

In addition, soldiers attacked dozens of Palestinian, Israeli and international peace activists, conducting the weekly nonviolent protest in Nabi Saleh village, northwest of Ramallah. Soldiers isolated the village, and attacked the ... protesters with rounds of live ammunition, rubber-coated metal bullets, and gas bombs, and also used waste-water mixed with chemical against them. Several protesters suffered the effects of tear gas inhalation; many suffered cuts and bruises after being attacked and beaten ...

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

4) The State of Two States Weeks of February 2 and February 9, 2014

At the close of last week, Secretary of State John Kerry noted, with regret, that the boycott movement could potentially cause significant damage to the Israeli economy if peace negotiations fail. This comment brought about a wave of criticism from certain Israeli politicians. Also this week, PA President Abbas said he would be willing to extend the amount of time IDF troops would be allowed to stay in a future Palestinian state and he would allow NATO troops to be stationed indefinitely.

“For Israel there’s an increasing de-legitimization campaign that has been building up. People are very sensitive to it. There are talk of boycotts and other kinds of things. Are we all going to be better with all of that? ... President Obama and I and our Administration are as committed to this as anything we’re engaged in because we think it can be a game-changer for the region.” – John Kerry remarking at the Munich Security Conference (Saturday, 2/1)

“[NATO troops can stay] for a long time, and wherever they want, not only on the eastern borders but also on the western borders, everywhere ... For a long time, for the time they wish. NATO can be everywhere, why not? They can stay to reassure the Israelis, and to protect us.” – PA President Mahmoud Abbas discussing NATO troops with NYT columnist Thomas Friedman (Sunday, 2/2)

“Only the IDF will guard our kids. To any other patent, we say, no thanks.” – Economy Minister Naftali Bennett’s reacting to Abbas’ NATO proposal (Monday, 2/3)

“Attempts to impose a boycott on the state of Israel are immoral and unjust. Moreover, they will not achieve their goal...threats to boycott the state of Israel will not achieve their goal.” – Prime Minister Netanyahu speaking at the weekly cabinet meeting (Monday, 2/3)

“Only security will produce economic stability, not a terrorist state next-door to Ben-Gurion Airport. We expect of our friends in the world to stand by our side against the attempts to impose an anti-Semitic boycott on Israel, and not to be their mouthpiece.” – Economy Minister Naftali Bennett’s response to Kerry’s Munich remarks, as quoted in Yediot Achronot (Sunday, 2/2)

“Israel has performed an economic miracle in the past 30 years. In a reality of globalization, however, this miracle is completely linked to the reciprocal relations between Israel and the Western world. But success, any success, has a permanent weakness: what’s given can also be taken back.” – Nadav Eyal writing in Hebrew for Ma’ariv (Sunday, 2/2)

“Now we will see if those same international actors, who until now have solely put pressure on Israel, will make clear to the Palestinian Authority what exactly will happen to the Palestinians if there will not be an agreement.... Because, unless the Palestinians understand that they will pay a price for the failure of peace talks, they will prefer not to continue the talks.” – Prime Minister Netanyahu speaking at the Likud faction meeting (Monday, 2/3)

“When a U.S. secretary of state is willing to invest so much time, prestige, strategic capital and American power in the Israeli-Palestinian issue, he should be appreciated and commended, even when you disagree with his idea. Otherwise, he and his successor may choose to disengage, and consequently, the US-Israeli alliance will weaken and crack. Calling him names and accusing him of being anti-Israel is not only untrue, it is plain stupid.” – Alon Pinkas, IPF Israel Fellow, writing on tensions between Israeli politicians and Kerry in the Jerusalem Post (Thursday, 2/6) ...

[Find the links for the State of Two States at the Israel Policy Forum website.](#)

5) What Ike feared “has come upon us”

James M. Wall, February 10, 2014

On February 3, Illinois Sixth District Republican Congressman Peter Roskam introduced a bill in the U.S. Congress that would defend Israel against any criticism from U.S. academics. Roskam is responding to the December, 2013 vote of the American Studies Association (ASA) to boycott Israeli academic institutions for their role in the illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

The American people were told this day would come. In his Farewell Address, delivered on January 17, 1961, U.S. President Dwight Eisenhower warned the nation to guard against the “unwarranted influence” of “the military-industrial complex.”

Fifty-three years later, to paraphrase Job, “that which Ike feared has come upon us.”

Melvin A. Goodman, a 24-year veteran of the CIA, and now a professor himself, was an undergraduate student at John Hopkins University in 1961. In his book, *National Insecurity: The Cost of American Militarism*, Goodman writes: “In 1959 President Dwight Eisenhower began a dialogue with his brother, Milton, the president of Johns Hopkins University, regarding U.S. military policy. In the spring of 1961, a small group of undergraduates met with Milton Eisenhower to discuss the president’s farewell address. Eisenhower informed us that he and a John Hopkins professor of political science, Michael Moos, played major roles in the drafting and editing of the farewell speech of January 1961. Milton Eisenhower explained that one of the drafts of the speech referred to the ‘military-industrial-congressional complex,’ with the president himself inserting the reference to the role of Congress. When the farewell address was given, the reference to Congress did not appear.”

Milton asked his brother why he had not included his specific reference to the Congress. Eisenhower responded: “It was more than enough to take on the military and private industry. I couldn’t take on the Congress as well.”

This is the key sentence in Eisenhower’s address: “In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.”

That misplaced power takes many forms. The bill Congressman Roskam presented to the Congress is a direct attack on the freedom of speech. The bill proposes to “amend the Higher Education Act of 1965 to prohibit an institution that participates in a boycott of Israeli academic institutions or scholars from being eligible for certain funds under that Act.” Roskam calls his bill the “Protect Academic Freedom Act,” an oxymoronic title which contradicts itself by making it illegal for members of the academic community to exercise their academic freedom.

In contrast to Congressman Roskam’s subservience to Israel’s demands, a Jewish Member of England’s Parliament, Sir Gerald Kaufman, told the Parliament, “We must impose sanctions.” On February 5, Kaufman spoke during a debate in the British Parliament on the humanitarian situation in Gaza: “I once led a delegation of 60 parliamentarians from 13 European parliaments to Gaza. I could no longer do that today because Gaza is practically inaccessible. The Israelis try to lay the responsibility on the Egyptians, but although the Egyptians’ closing of the tunnels has caused great hardship, it is the Israelis who have imposed the blockade and are the occupying power. ...

“Again and again, Israel seeks to justify the vile injustices that it imposes on the people of Gaza and the West Bank on the grounds of the holocaust. Last week, we commemorated the Holocaust; 1.7 million Palestinians in Gaza are being penalized with that as the justification. That is unacceptable.” ...

[Read the entire piece on Wall’s blog, Wallwritings.](#)

6a) On sanctions, Israel hasn't seen anything yet

Daniel Levy, Ha'aretz, February 6, 2014

Israel's governing coalition has been much seized of late by the issue of potential boycotts and sanctions in response to its policies in the occupied Palestinian territories. The centrist and rightist wings of Netanyahu's coalition have been trading accusations over how severe the threat is, and who is to blame – is it the Livni-Lapid camp for acknowledging that boycotts are a problem, thereby encouraging the phenomenon?

Or is the Bennett-Miri Regev camp to blame for shouting from the rooftops about annexing the territories rather than quietly building on Palestinian hilltops as all Israeli governments have done for four decades? Israel's cabinet even considered convening to officially respond to this threat. Public ministerial statements have followed familiar lines around whether to play nice with the peace process and deflect criticism (the centrist position) or to conduct a more effective PR and hasbara push-back campaign (the rightist position).

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

6b) The boycott is our Palestinian non-violent resistance

Hanan Ashrawi, Ha'aretz, February 10, 2014

The SodaStream controversy, which recently caught the attention of media worldwide, has highlighted Israel's ongoing military occupation and contributed to the growing awareness of global consciousness and social responsibility towards Palestine. It has laid wide open the whole issue of Israeli impunity and the imperative of multifaceted intervention and accountability.

Scarlett Johansson's choice to be the face of SodaStream, a company that operates a factory in the illegal settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, has brought to the forefront the debate on continued Israeli settlement activity and the real cost of such a dangerous and irresponsible policy. Ms. Johansson, who was also an ambassador of the human rights organization Oxfam, suddenly faced a conflict of interest and the challenge of individual responsibility and choice. The fact that Ms. Johansson decided to cast her lot with SodaStream, is, at best, naïve, and, at worst, an expression of a total lack of regard for justice and human rights.

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

6c) What's wrong with BDS, after all?

Avraham Burg, Ha'aretz, February 3, 2014

Talk of sanctions has been filling the air lately. Israelis, as always, are certain that the whole world is against us ... and that all the world's overt and covert conspiracies are focused solely on us – out of hatred and anti-Semitism, of course.

Few notice the wonderful paradox whereby official Israel, together with mobilized world Jewry, fights the scourge of sanctions by whining and screaming anti-Semitism, Holocaust and Jew-hatred in chorus. Yet in the very same breath these exact same people utilize any possible tool to advance and intensify the sanctions against Iran, as they did against Hamas until recently. And with useful diplomatic hypocrisy they make every effort not to hurt Syria's Bashar Assad too much, or Egypt, or another few corrupt targets of Israel's foreign policy.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement is gaining momentum and is approaching the turning point (rather slowly, it must be said) in which the civic action from below will meet the official policies of governments and parliaments from above, and sanctions against Israel will become a *fait accompli*. ... Research institutions are already mapping out their boycotts and sanctions while offering avenues for formulating appropriate Israeli policies. The media are also making their serious or frenzied contributions. Among all this talk, what is conspicuously missing is a real discussion of the ethical meaning of sanctions and their alternatives.

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

7) The Third Intifada

Thomas L. Friedman, *New York Times*, February 4, 2014

For a while now I've wondered why there's been no Third Intifada. That is, no third Palestinian uprising in the West Bank, the first of which helped to spur the Oslo peace process and the second of which — with more live ammunition from the Israeli side and suicide bombings from the Palestinian side — led to the breakdown of Oslo. You get many explanations from Palestinians: they're too poor, too divided, too tired or that they realize these uprisings, in the end, did them more harm than good, especially the second. But being here, it's obvious that a Third Intifada is underway. It's the one that Israel always feared most — not an intifada with stones or suicide bombers, but one propelled by nonviolent resistance and economic boycott.

But this Third Intifada isn't really led by Palestinians in Ramallah. It's led by the European Union in Brussels and other opponents of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank across the globe. Regardless of origin, though, it's becoming a real source of leverage for the Palestinians in their negotiations with Israel.

Secretary of State John Kerry was recently denounced by Israeli leaders for warning publicly that the boycott and campaign to delegitimize Israel will only get stronger if current peace talks fail. But Kerry is right.

Finance Minister Yair Lapid told Israel Army Radio on Monday that if no two-state solution is reached with the Palestinians, "it will hit the pocket of every Israeli." Israel's economy depends on technology and agricultural exports to Europe and on European investments in its high-tech industries. According to Lapid, even a limited boycott that curbed Israeli exports to Europe by 20 percent would cost Israel more than \$5 billion a year and thousands of jobs. That's why he added: "Israel won't conduct its policy based on threats. But to pretend that the threats don't exist, or that they're not serious, or it's not a process happening in front of us, is also not serious."

Just recently, the Israeli daily Ha'aretz reported that the Netherlands' largest pension fund management company, PGGM, "has decided to withdraw all its investments from Israel's five largest banks because they have branches in the West Bank and/or are involved in financing construction in the settlements." And The Jerusalem Post reported that Danske Bank, Denmark's largest bank, has decided to boycott Israel's Bank Hapoalim for "legal and ethical" reasons related to its operating in the settlements.

This Third Intifada, in my view, has much more potential to have a long-term impact because, unlike the first two, it is coinciding with the offer from the Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, as part of a two-state deal, to let Israeli troops stay for five years as they make a phased withdrawal from the West Bank to the 1967 lines and to then let U.S.-led NATO forces fill in any strategic void to reassure Israel. To put it differently, the Third Intifada is based on a strategy of making Israelis feel strategically secure but morally insecure.

The first two intifadas failed in the end because they never included a map of a two-state solution and security arrangements. They were more raw outbursts of rage against the occupation. You cannot move the Israeli silent majority when you make them feel strategically insecure and morally secure, which is what Hamas did with its lunatic shelling of Israel after it withdrew from Gaza; few Israelis were bothered by pummeling them back. President Anwar Sadat of Egypt, though, got all he wanted by making Israelis feel strategically secure but morally insecure about holding any of his land. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

8) The illusion of AIPAC's invincibility

Trita Parsi, president, National Iranian American Council

Huffington Post, February 8, 2014

The defeat of AIPAC's ill-advised push for new sanctions on Iran in the midst of successful negotiations is nothing short of historic. The powerful and hawkish pro-Israeli lobby's defeats are rare and seldom public. But in the last year, it has suffered three major public setbacks, of which the sanctions defeat is the most important one.

AIPAC's first defeat was over the nomination of Chuck Hagel for secretary of defense. In spite of a major campaign defaming Hagel, even accusing him of anti-Semitism, his nomination won approval ...

The second was over President Barack Obama's push for military action against Syria. AIPAC announced that it would send hundreds of citizen lobbyists to the Hill to help secure approval for authorization of the use of force. But AIPAC and Obama were met with stiff resistance. The American people quickly mobilized and ferociously opposed the idea of yet another war in the Middle East. By some accounts, AIPAC failed to secure the support of a single member of Congress.

The third defeat was over new Iran sanctions. ... The interim nuclear agreements from November of last year, explicitly stated that no new sanctions could be imposed. Yet, backed by Senators Mark Kirk and Robert Menendez, AIPAC pushed for new sanctions, arguing that it would enhance America's negotiating position. The White House strongly disagreed, fearing that new sanctions would cause the collapse of diplomacy and make America look like the intransigent party. The international coalition the president had carefully put together against Iran would fall apart, and the U.S. and Iran would once again find themselves on a path towards military confrontation.

But AIPAC insisted. Its immense lobbying activities secured 59 cosponsors for the bill, including 16 Democrats. Its aim was first to reach over 60 cosponsors to force the bill to the floor, and then more than 67 cosponsors to make it veto proof.

But 59 cosponsors turned it to be a magical ceiling AIPAC could not break through. Supporters of diplomacy put up an impressive defense of the negotiations policy, building both off of years of careful development of a pro-diplomacy constituency and coalition machinery as well as the grassroots muscle of more recent additions to the pro-diplomacy camp. (To get a hint of who these forces are, see the coalition letter against new sanctions signed by more than 70 organizations and organized by Win Without War, FCNL and my own organization, the National Iranian American Council.)

The watershed moment came when the White House raised the temperature and called out the sanctions supporters for increasing the likelihood of war.

"If certain members of Congress want the United States to take military action, they should be up front with the American public and say so," Bernadette Meehan, National Security Council spokeswoman, said in a statement. "Otherwise, it's not clear why any member of Congress would support a bill that possibly closes the door on diplomacy and makes it more likely that the United States will have to choose between military options or allowing Iran's nuclear program to proceed."

The prospect of coming across as "warmongers" incensed AIPAC and its supporters. But the White House knew exactly what it was doing. It was tapping into the only force that could stop AIPAC -- the war wariness of the American public. The very same energy among the public that put a stop to the White House's war plans for Syria, would now be used to put a stop to AIPAC's efforts to sabotage the last best chance to avoid war with Iran.

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

**9) “Stone Cold Justice,” an Australian report on Israeli treatment of children in West Bank
February 10, 2014**

“Stone Cold Justice,” a video joint investigation by The Australian newspaper and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s Four Corners program, reveals evidence that shows the army is targeting Palestinian boys for arrest and detention. Reporter John Lyons travels to the West Bank to hear the story of children who claim they have been taken into custody, ruthlessly questioned and then allegedly forced to sign confessions before being taken to court for sentencing. The full version of the report is 45 minutes and available [here](#). Short version available [here](#).

**10) Jewish Australian leaders slam documentary about alleged Israeli abuse of Palestinian children
Dan Goldberg, Ha’aretz, February 17, 2014**

Jewish leaders in Australia have launched a blistering attack on a “quasi-documentary” they claim was a “blanket demonization” of Israel “laced with sensationalism, inadequate skepticism and fact-checking.”

The backlash followed the broadcast on February 10 of “Stone Cold Justice,” a joint investigation into the justice system for Palestinian children in the West Bank by The Australian daily and “Four Corners,” the Australian Broadcasting Corporation’s flagship investigative journalism program. The documentary alleged that Israel has a “new policy” of targeting Palestinian children for physical abuse, and that Palestinian kids are forced into false confessions.

The countercampaign included a call by the Zionist Federation of Australia to “set the record straight ... for the sake of balance, reason and so the deaths of countless Israeli terror victims is not in vain.” However, Michelle Gunn, editor of The Weekend Australian, defended reports in the newspaper by John Lyons, who also presented the documentary. “The Weekend Australian stands by the stories written by our Middle East correspondent John Lyons on the treatment of Palestinian youth,” she told Ha’aretz.

“His investigation of the issue was both exhaustive and meticulous, and we note that no complaint or challenge has been issued by the Israeli government or the Israel Defense Forces.” Sue Spencer, the executive producer of ABC’s “Four Corners,” told Ha’aretz: “‘Four Corners’ absolutely stands by its story.”

Their comments came as an article was published Sunday by the Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting in America (CAMERA), quoting an unnamed IDF official who branded the documentary “simply fictitious.” Among a slew of rebuttals, the IDF official debunked the allegations of torture, and branded Lyons’ portrayal of the court system as “fictitious, blatant and malicious.”

Israel’s main advocate in the documentary, Foreign Ministry spokesman Yigal Palmor, rejected the allegations of a policy of fear conducted by the IDF. “The only policy is to maintain law and order, that’s all,” he said. “If there’s no violence, there’s no law enforcement.” But Palmor admitted that a UNICEF report last year detailing human rights abuses was “intolerable.”

Leaders from major Jewish organizations this week stopped short of confirming whether they would submit a formal complaint to the Rupert Murdoch-owned newspaper or the public-funded broadcaster. Last Friday, The Australian published a rebuttal by Dr. Colin Rubenstein, executive director of the Australia/Israel & Jewish Affairs Council, who argued that the documentary “recycled uncorroborated allegations by arrested Palestinian minors and then wove a conspiracy theory based on them. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

11) Fatah official: Palestinians want peace, but Israel doesn't

Ma'an, February 13, 2014

The Palestinians cannot reach a peace agreement with the current Israeli government or even with a future government because there is currently an imbalance between the two sides of the conflict, a Fatah official said on Thursday.

Member of Fatah Central Committee Tawfiq Tirawi told a Ma'an reporter in Ramallah Thursday that "negotiations can reveal to the world that the Palestinians are seeking peace, but that the occupation (regime) doesn't want it."

"Our just cause has the power of right, but we have never used this right," he added.

He explained that the Palestinians need to take advantage of the rights they are entitled to either take their case to the United Nations or to organize popular resistance activities. He stressed that these activities would support Palestinian negotiators and help them achieve better results.

The Israelis can reach a peace agreement, Tirawi said, "but they do not want to because according to their religious beliefs, this land belongs to them, which is neither real nor true."

Tirawi pointed out that negotiations are a means of resistance and it could be the weakest of all means. However, it is still a means to defy the occupier and prove to the world that "this occupation along with its American supporters are arrogant."

He added that Israel is occupying the land and people of Palestine and is practicing oppressive and aggressive acts against them.

"Negotiations can reveal to the world that the Palestinians are seeking peace, but that the occupation (regime) doesn't want it."

Commenting on the security pretexts Israel repeatedly cites, Tirawi said it is the Palestinians not the Israelis who should be worried about their security, because Israel possesses all types of weapons, while the Palestinians are seeking to establish a demilitarized state.

Direct negotiations began in July between Israel and the Palestinians in a US-led attempt to restart the deadlocked peace process. Israel has announced plans to build thousands of homes in illegal settlements across the West Bank over the course of the talks, inhibiting US efforts.

The Palestinian negotiating team resigned in protest against continued Israeli settlement construction in mid-November, dealing a major blow to negotiations between Israel and the PLO that had already been stalled.

The internationally recognized Palestinian territories of which the West Bank and East Jerusalem form a part have been occupied by the Israeli military since 1967.

12) [UN Mideast envoy: Ceasefire between Israel and Hamas eroding](#)

Ynetnews, February 13, 2014

The ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas is eroding, UN Middle East Peace Coordinator Robert Serry said in a press statement on Wednesday. "I am worried we are seeing more and more signs that the understanding on a ceasefire reached in November 2012 is eroding in both of its main requirements – the end of all hostilities and the opening of the crossings for people and goods," Serry said.

The Egyptian-mediated agreement came on the heels of the eight-day 2012 Operation Pillar of Defense in which more than a 100 Palestinians and six Israelis were killed.

"During the past two months, we have seen more rockets being fired at Israel, border incidents, and Israeli retaliatory operations causing death or injury to civilians. The United Nations condemns the rise in violence, and all parties must act in accordance with international law," Serry noted.

Serry asserted that "only the reunification of Gaza and the West Bank under the legitimate Palestinian Authority, based on the PLO commitments, can pave the way to a durable solution for Gaza, as part of political progress towards peace." At the same time, Serry decried the deteriorating social and economic conditions in the Gaza Strip as a result of continued closures of border crossings.

UN construction work in the Strip has suffered delays as a result of the closures, and over 20 projects remain stalled since November 2013. "The closure of illegal tunnels has not been turned into an opportunity to increase the entry of construction material through legal crossings," Serry said. "I sincerely hope that the Israeli authorities will fully adhere to their commitment to reopen Gaza for construction materials for UN projects," he added.

The Special UN coordinator did note the recent decision to allow 1,000 tons of cement and other construction materials for flood relief into Gaza as a positive step.

In 2010, Israel eased the restrictions to allow imports for internationally supervised projects. But in October of last year, it halted the entry of all construction materials after discovering a concrete-lined tunnel along the border.

Israel said the tunnel was to be used by militants for attacks and abductions of Israelis – a claim that Palestinian armed groups later confirmed.