

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
October 6, 2016



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The six featured articles and the many related links in this issue of the Middle East Notes focus on the life and legacy of Shimon Peres; and themes of the speeches given by the leaders of the US, Israel, and the Palestinian People at the recent meeting of the UN General Assembly: 'A nation ringed by walls will only imprison itself,' (Obama); return to the borders originally proposed in the UN's 1947 Partition Plan that divided Mandatory Palestine into two countries—a Jewish one and an Arab one. (Abbas); "Began as a moral force, the UN has become a moral farce," (Netanyahu).

Commentary: Unfulfilled and broken dreams:

- ✓ "His Majesty's Government view with favor the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavors to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country." (Balfour Declaration - 1917);
- ✓ The United Nations Partition Plan for Palestine recommended a partition of Mandatory Palestine at the end of the British Mandate. The resolution recommended the creation of independent Arab and Jewish States and a Special International Regime for the city of Jerusalem. On 29 November 1947, the U.N. General Assembly adopted the Plan as Resolution 181;
- ✓ "the State of Israel will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed or sex; will guarantee full freedom of conscience, worship, education and culture; will safeguard the sanctity and inviolability of the shrines and Holy Places of all religions; and will dedicate itself to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations. (Declaration of Independence – May, 1948;
- ✓ Stated goals of the Oslo Accords (1993-95) were among other things, Palestinian *interim* Self-Government (not the Palestinian Authority, but the Palestinian Legislative Council) and a permanent settlement of unresolved issues – (the most important of which are the borders of Israel and Palestine, the Israeli settlements, the status of Jerusalem,) within five years, based on Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338.

The "facts on the ground" in 2016: One de-facto bi-national state of Israelis and Palestinians between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River with political, military, and economic authority over the Palestinian half of the population exercised only by the Israeli government.

Recommended web site: [Israel-Palestine Timeline](#) focuses on the human cost of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

For the last 15 years, the organization "[If Americans Knew](#)" has provided information on the Israel-Palestine conflict. This new website <http://israelpalestinetimeline.org/> provides a list of Israelis and Palestinians killed since the Second Intifada began in 2000, records each person killed, and aims to remind us all that every single death is the end of a life, devastating and terrifying to parents, children, siblings, friends, neighbors, witnesses and even entire communities. A neighbor or friend murdered is a loss that doesn't go away.

Featured articles:

- Ofer Aderet in [Haaretz](#) gives a biography of Shimon Peres noting that Israel's elder statesman believed security and peace went hand in hand and that 'Dimona had paved the way for Oslo.'
- Chemi Shalev in [Haaretz](#) provides an analysis Obama's "anti-Israeli" Farewell Speech at the UN. 'A nation ringed by walls will only imprison itself,' the president said, and our analysts explained, without a hint of self-irony, that he meant Donald Trump.
- Eitan Goldstein & J.S. Herzog note in [YnetNews](#) that Abbas speaking at the UN General Assembly asserted that Israel should return land conquered in the 1948 War of Independence, called on the UK to apologize for issuing the Balfour Declaration and asked for a return to the borders originally proposed in the UN's 1947 Partition Plan that divided Mandatory Palestine into two countries—a Jewish one and an Arab one.
- Barak Ravid notes in [Haaretz](#) that Netanyahu Calls UN 'Moral Farce,' and says Israel welcomes the 'spirit' of the Arab Peace Initiative, thanks Obama for vetoing past Security Council resolution critical of Israel.
- An editorial in [Haaretz](#) in September states that Netanyahu is dreaming of a Jewish state in the territories, while at the same time lying to and endangering Israel's citizens by not clarifying the threat they face; will Israelis follow this pied piper into the abyss?
- An editorial in [Haaretz](#) in October noted that Barack Obama's Farewell to Shimon Peres reminded Israelis that 'Justice and hope are at the heart of the Zionist idea.'

1) [Shimon Peres, 1923-2016: From nuclear pioneer to champion of peace, Ofer Aderet, Haaretz, Sep 28, 2016](#)

"Shimon Peres, Israel's elder statesman and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, died early Wednesday morning at the age of 93, two weeks after suffering a massive stroke.

"Peres was a Knesset member for nearly 50 years, from the Ben-Gurion government in 1959 through the Olmert administration in 2007. He served as a minister in 12 different governments, including twice as prime minister. He is the only Israeli to have served as both prime minister and president." . . .

"Peres displayed a dual personality. He was a tragic figure who experienced crushing defeats but was also an incorrigible optimist and go-getter who chalked up enormous achievements. He was a controversial leader, riding waves of popularity while drawing bitter criticism.

"His life's work included extensive involvement in setting up and bolstering Israel's defense infrastructure. He armed the Israel Defense Forces with advanced weaponry, established and developed its military and aerial industries, founded Israel's nuclear program and was among the architects of 1976 Entebbe rescue mission. His diplomatic career included paving the way for the West Bank settlement enterprise as well as pursuing peace and signing the Oslo Accords. His political life was marked by bitter rivalries with his colleagues, intrigues and scheming. Eventually, as the country's ninth president, he became one of Israel's most beloved and illustrious representatives on the world stage." . . .

"The challenges that were put at Peres' doorstep as defense minister were many, including rebuilding the IDF after the Yom Kippur War. He did it well, equipping the army with missiles, tanks and fighter jets, some of them Israeli-made. A large portion of his achievements remains a secret. His well-known successes include the Entebbe operation to rescue Israeli hostages from a hijacked Air France jetliner in 1976 and establishing the Good Fence along the Lebanese border, which enabled Israel's Maronite Christian allies to work in Israel. Peres was responsible for implementing the separation agreements with Egypt and Syria after the Yom Kippur War, and laid the foundations for cooperation with the Christian leadership in Lebanon." . . .

“Peres was then 61, and had turned the search for peace into his main activity as prime minister. “Peace is like love – it requires a little closing of the eyes, much generosity and the main thing to remember is that you are again not alone, that you have a helpmate,” he said at the time. Another time, he said: ‘Poverty and ignorance, which beget terror, are not eradicated by firing artillery shells. Borders do not stop rockets, and barbed wire does not prevent terror.’” . . .

See also link A. - [Shimon Peres: Bigger than life](#); link B. - [A Palestinian perspective on the legacy of Shimon Peres](#); link C. - [Saying history ‘complicated,’ entire Arab party to skip Peres funeral](#); link D - [Palestinian president Abbas criticized for attending Shimon Peres funeral](#); link E. - [Abbas vows to ‘defeat occupation’ in fiery speech after Peres funeral](#)

2) [Analysis Obama’s anti-Israeli Farewell Speech at the UN, Chemi Shalev, Haaretz, September 21, 2016](#)

Barack Obama’s farewell address to the United Nations General Assembly Tuesday was starkly anti-Israeli, or at least the antithesis of the current Israeli zeitgeist. Not because of his praise for the Iran nuclear deal or his token words of condemnation of settlements and occupation, but in the deeper layers of his speech; in his shameless promotion of universal values, in the presentation of his vision as the presumptive leader of the free world, with emphasis on the word ‘free.’” . . .

“And when Obama coined the sentence for which the speech will be remembered, “A nation ringed by walls will only imprison itself”, the commentators said, without a hint of self-irony, that he was talking about Donald Trump.” . . .

“Obama didn’t allow these events to overshadow his belief that the world is healthier, more educated, more prosperous and more democratic than ever before.

“He is leaving that task to Benjamin Netanyahu, with whom he meets on Wednesday, who has already revealed that he will devote his speech to the War on Terror, his main ideological squeeze and Israel’s contemporary Light Unto the Nations.” . . .

“Like most politicians, Obama did not dwell on his failings and shortcomings, though he didn’t ignore them completely either. He knows that ‘our societies are filled with uncertainty, and unease, and strife’ and that he might be judged by “a much darker and more cynical view of history.” When he said that sentence, I could swear he was looking directly at us.”

See also link F - [Even in Their Last Meeting, Obama and Netanyahu's Settlement Spat Refused to Go Away](#); link G - [Six takeaways from another smiling display of mutual Obama-Netanyahu frustration](#); link H - [Abbas to UN: Declare 2017 year to end Israel occupation](#);

3) [Palestinian President Abbas calls to return to 1947 Partition lines, Eitan Goldstein & J.S. Herzog, YnetNews, September 22, 2016](#)

“Israel, since 1948, has persisted in its contempt for international legitimacy by violating UNGA Resolution 181 (II): The partition resolution, which called for the establishment of two states on the historic land of Palestine according to a partition plan... Israeli forces seized more land than those allotted to them,’ Abbas said during his address to the UN General Assembly.

“Regrettably, however, the Security Council is not upholding its responsibilities to hold Israel accountable for its seizure of the territory allotted to the Palestinian State according to the partition resolution. I appeal to you read this resolution once again.” . . .

“At the outset of his speech, the Palestinian leader accused Israel of putting stumbling blocks to peace, while maintaining a clear conscious himself. "There is no conflict between us and the Jewish religion and its people. Our conflict is with the Israeli occupation of our land," the president clarified.

“In a seemingly veiled threat, Abbas said that ‘continued Israeli aggressions against our Christian and Muslim holy sites amounts to playing with fire. No one knows what will happen if these aggressions continue.’” . . .

“He ended by asserting that ‘there is no way to defeat terrorism and extremism, no way to achieve security and stability in our region, without ending the Israeli occupation of Palestine and ensuring the freedom and independence of the Palestinian people. As such, terrorism will end.’” . . .

See also link I- [Occupation of Palestine Continues to Fuel Conflict in Middle East](#)

4) [Netanyahu Calls UN 'Moral Farce,' Says Israel Will Not Accept Any Dictates, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, September 22, 2016](#)

“Speaking after Abbas, who in his speech said he intends to present the UN Security Council a resolution against the Israeli settlements, Netanyahu said that Israel will not accept any attempt by the UN to dictate terms.

“Netanyahu thanked U.S. President Barack Obama for vetoing a 2011 UN Security Council resolution critical of Israel.”

See also link J - [US Presidents & Israel-related UNSCRs: The Historical Record, 1967-Present](#)

5) [Editorial Kerry's Bi-national State Warning: A Wakeup Call for Israel, Haaretz Editorial, September 26, 2016](#)

“U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is in a panic. Israel, he believes, will turn into a binational state, which means war. If the international community is interested in preventing this, ‘Either we mean it and we act on it, or we should shut up,’ he told a meeting of ministers from Palestinian Authority donor states.”

“The Obama administration’s approach has been far from anything similar, but it, too, has come to the conclusion that its efforts won’t be effective given Israel’s resistance and the difficulties posed by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. Ostensibly Kerry was laying the blame on both sides, but a careful reading of the “indictment” shows that in his eyes, Israeli obstructionism, and in particular continued building in the settlements, far outweighs Palestinian resistance.

“Netanyahu, who continues to peddle Netanyahu, who continues to peddle his hollow goods and promise a bright future, has managed until now to seal Israel’s borders against the infiltration of ideas, proposals and requests to conduct negotiations. Netanyahu is now counting on the Arab states to save him from having to negotiate with the Palestinians. The prime minister is dreaming of a Jewish state in the territories, while at the same time lying to and endangering Israel’s citizens by not clarifying the threat they face.”

6) ['Justice and hope,' Obama reminded us, 'are at the heart of the Zionist idea.', Haaretz Editorial October 2, 2016](#)

“U.S. President Barack Obama’s speech at Shimon Peres’ funeral on Friday surpassed all other speeches. And not only because, unlike Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, he mentioned the presence of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who came to the funeral despite harsh criticism being leveled at him.” . . .

“He went on to quote Peres: ‘The Jewish people weren’t born to rule another people,’ he would say. ‘From the very first day we are against slaves and masters.’”

“Obama added that Peres ‘insisted that as human beings, Palestinians must be seen as equal in dignity to Jews, and must therefore be equal in self-determination. Because of his sense of justice, his analysis of Israel’s security, his understanding of Israel’s meaning, he believed that the Zionist idea would be best protected when Palestinians, too, had a state of their own.’” . . .

“At the start of the new Jewish year, it is appropriate that Obama’s remarks about justice and hope, about an end to ruling another people and about granting the Palestinians sovereignty — an important reminder of the principles of equality and democracy upon which Zionism is based — should serve as a beacon for the citizens of Israel and its leaders.”

Other articles of interest

- A. [**Shimon Peres: Bigger than life, Attila Somfalvi, YnetNews, September 28, 2016**](#)
Op-ed: It’s hard to say goodbye to Shimon Peres, a leader who evoked feelings of astonishment and envy, admiration and contempt, love and hate. It’s hard to say goodbye because of the illusive feeling he created that he was here to stay.
- B. [**A Palestinian perspective on the legacy of Shimon Peres, Nadia Naser-Najjab, +972 Blog, September 29, 2016**](#)
The distrust with which Palestinians treat the Israeli peace camp frequently appears as something of a surprise, and even affront, to international observers. But the difference between Israeli left and right is all too frequently one of degree, rather than kind.
- C. [**Saying history ‘complicated,’ entire Arab party to skip Peres funeral, TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF September 29, 2016**](#)
Joint List head Ayman Odeh calls Peres part of ‘tragedies for my people,’ says it’s most respectful to stay silent
- D. [**Palestinian president Abbas criticized for attending Shimon Peres funeral, Philip Sweigart FMEP, September 30, 2016**](#)
The passing of former Israeli president Shimon Peres, the last of Israel’s founding generation of statesmen, has prompted an avalanche of eulogies from the international community. It was the first time Abbas had stepped foot in Israel since 2010. The domestic backlash to Abbas’s attendance reveals that Peres is remembered quite differently among many Palestinians, and highlights Abbas’s increasing isolation at home.
- E. [**Abbas vows to ‘defeat occupation’ in fiery speech after Peres funeral, TIMES OF ISRAEL STAFF October 1, 2016**](#)
PA leader expresses hope that Palestinian state will be established in 2017, vows to push for full UN membership
- F. [**Even in Their Last Meeting, Obama and Netanyahu's Settlement Spat Refused to Go Away, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, September 22, 2016**](#)
The PM Netanyahu fails once again to convince the U.S. president the settlements are not an obstacle to peace, as the two leaders ignore the elephant in the room: A possible UN Security Council move to secure Obama's legacy.
- G. [**Six takeaways from another smiling display of mutual Obama-Netanyahu frustration, David Horowitz, Times of Israel, September 22, 2016**](#)
Netanyahu hails ‘Barack,’ as Obama hails Shimon Peres; Netanyahu focuses on ‘unremitting fanaticism,’ while Obama worries about settlements

- H. [Abbas to UN: Declare 2017 year to end Israel occupation, Al-Jazeera, September 2-, 2016](#)
Palestinian leader tells UN Israel's settlement expansion in occupied West Bank destroys hopes of a two-state solution.
- I. [Occupation of Palestine Continues to Fuel Conflict in Middle East, Mina Al-Oraibi, Lobelog, September 16, 2016](#)
The Palestinian question remains at the heart of any effort to resolve many of the Middle East's challenges. Unless the international community resolves the question of Palestinian statehood, many of the other problems for states in the region will continue to fester.
- J. [US Presidents & Israel-related UNSCRs: The Historical Record, 1967-Present, Lara Friedman, APN, September 9, 2016](#)
Every president since 1967 - except one - permitted passage of and/or supported numerous UN Security Council resolutions opposed by Israel. That one exception is President Obama, who as of this writing remains the only U.S. president who during his time in office has not allowed the UN Security Council to pass a single resolution opposed by Israel.
- K. [Kerry: Israel and Palestinians Headed for Binational State, World Must Act or Shut Up, Barak Ravid, Haaretz, September 25, 2016](#)
In closed meeting in New York an extremely agitated Kerry accused Israel of breaking its promises and warned that status quo is unsustainable. Sources say Kerry also criticized Palestinians, but placed onus on Israel.
- L. [Don't Call Us 'Israeli Arabs': Palestinians in Israel Speak Out, Sam Bahour, Haaretz, September 26, 2016](#)
Palestinian citizens of Israel are its Achilles' heel; they refuse to become Zionists, refuse to leave Israel, and refuse to vanish into thin air. And, increasingly, they are refusing to remain silent.
- M. [Voices on both sides are increasingly saying it may be time to end US aid to Israel, Douglas Bloomfield, Washington Post, September 21, 2016](#)
The signing of a 10-year, \$38 billion military assistance package for Israel gives the Jewish state more US aid than all other countries combined. Yet there is a chorus of complaints from Israel and some of its American friends that it is not enough.
- N. [Opinion America's Love for Israel Doesn't Come at a Real Price, Zvi Bar'el, Haaretz, Sep 23, 2016](#)
Maybe the United States ought to have stipulated that the billions of dollars of aid that were approved would go toward pre-determined diplomatic purposes.
- O. [Where death reigns, Nahum Barnea YnetNews, September 26, 2016](#)
Op-ed: The young Palestinians heading to IDF roadblocks are not doing it for the sake of Palestine, for the sake of Islam or for the sake of killing Jews. Their goal is to die, and the soldiers are their tool.
- P. [Editorial Open the 'Nakba File', Haaretz Editorial, September 22, 2016](#)
Declassifying documents is crucial to studying history. The attempt to deny the Nakba encourages the occupation and stifles any chance for peace.
- Q. [CMEP Bulletin - Playing Politics With Israel Aid Deal, September 22, 2016](#)
- R. [CMEP Bulletin - Kerry Talks Tough, Warns of Binational State](#)
- S. [BDS Is a Lot of Things, but It's Not anti-Semitic, David Rosenberg, Haaretz, September 21, 2016](#)
People legitimately upset over Israel's conduct find themselves allied with people who don't like Jews.

- T. [Over 70 American Intellectuals Call for 'Targeted Boycott' of Israeli Settlements, Times of Israel, September 26, 2016](#)
Signatories say they oppose a boycott of Israel proper but call for settlements to be excluded from U.S. trade benefits and tax exemptions.
- U. [For an Economic Boycott and Political Non-recognition of the Israeli Settlements in the Occupied Territories, , Peter Beinart, Peter Brooks, Michael Walzer, and Edward Witten, et al., The New York Review of Books, October 13, 2016 issue](#)
We, the undersigned, oppose an economic, political, or cultural boycott of Israel itself as defined by its June 4, 1967, borders. We believe that this so-called Green Line, as defined by the 1949 armistice, should be the starting point for negotiations between the Israeli and Palestinian parties on future boundaries between two states. To promote such negotiations, we call for a targeted boycott of all goods and services from all Israeli settlements in the Occupied Territories.
- V. [Israel's Anti-BDS Task Force Enjoys Unchecked Power to 'Struggle Against Terror', Sergio Yahni IMEMC News & Agencies September 12, 2016](#)
Even Israeli occupation officials question the amount of secrecy afforded to the Ministry of Strategic Affairs' anti-BDS campaign. Yossi Melman details in his recent [article](#) in the Hebrew-language newspaper *Maariv* what little is known about the Israeli government's efforts to undermine the Boycott Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) through the Ministry of Strategic Affairs (MoSA).
- W. [Jerusalem bishop: Two-state solution key to Holy Land peace, Tony Magliano, NCR, September. 26, 2016](#)
Auxiliary Bishop William Shomali of Jerusalem, said one of the most pressing problems facing Palestinians is Israeli-imposed restrictions on movement. Another is the ongoing illegal building of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land in the occupied territories which is an extremely serious roadblock to a peaceful solution. To correct these and other injustices, Israel needs to participate in good-faith negotiations toward the two-state solution. He emphasized that the Holy See continues to firmly support the two-state solution.
- X. [Opinion Dear AIPAC, Get a Life, and Stay Out of Mine, Rogel Alpher, Haaretz, September 24, 2016](#)
To AIPAC, my job is to represent it here in Israel. AIPAC has appointed itself my protection gang. It operates like the Mafia.