

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**October 16, 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.](#)

These Middle East Notes begin with Sweden's promise to recognize the State of Palestine and end with the UK Parliament's vote in favor of the Palestinian State. Other articles focus on continued Israeli settlement activity, the massive destruction in Gaza, the reality of Israel as a de facto binational state, and other issues.

- The CMEP Bulletins for October 2 and October 10 noted the increase of settlements, Abbas' and Netanyahu's speeches to the UN, Sweden's promise to recognize the State of Palestine, Gaza rebuilding, and other pertinent articles.
- Edith M. Lederer in Ha'aretz writes that the Palestinians are asking the UN Security Council to set a deadline of November 2016 for an Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, in a new push to achieve independence.
- A Ha'aretz editorial asks how can Netanyahu speak of regional peace and at the same time expand Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem?
- The State of Two States for the weeks of September 28 and October 5 give references to quoted remarks by Israeli, Palestinian and U.S. leaders.
- Gideon Levy states in Ha'aretz that Israel became a binational state 47 years ago .... All that's left is to decide whether it will be binational with a democracy or an apartheid regime.
- Mondoweiss reported that the Russell Tribunal on Israel's Operation Protective Edge has found evidence of war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes of murder, extermination and persecution and also incitement to genocide.
- Palestinian MP Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, member of the PLO's Central Council, and General Secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative, addressed Palestine Solidarity Campaign activists in London, saying what happened in Gaza is beyond description.
- Heads of churches and Christian clergy in Jerusalem wrote a letter to European Union officials: "From Jerusalem, our occupied capital, we send our urgent message to the whole world and particularly to Europe: We are yearning for justice and peace. Recognizing Palestine and defining Israel's borders is a first step towards that goal."
- Palestine News Network quotes Hanan Ashwari: "We utterly reject the position of those who insist that Palestinian sovereignty is subject to Israeli approval; our independence is a natural right as per international law, and it high time for freedom and justice to prevail."
- The Times of Israel notes that over 300 Israeli figures signed a letter on October 12 urging the British Parliament to vote in favor of recognizing a Palestinian state on Monday, when a non-binding motion by a Labour MP Grahame Morris is set to be debated.
- Avraham Burg writes in Ha'aretz that the Palestinian statehood bid in the UK Parliament is a necessary step in the only direction that is not violent.
- Jack Houry and Barak Ravid report in Ha'aretz that the UN secretary-general condemns Israeli settlement activity, while Palestinian PM says reconstruction impossible without opening borders.
- The Ma'an News Agency reports that Israel has warned that the 274/12 vote by the British parliament in favor of recognizing a Palestinian state risks undermining the prospects for peace.
- Anshel Pfeffer in Ha'aretz notes that the Parliament vote was a symbolic gesture to the Palestinians and a red warning light to Israel. However nothing has changed since Balfour: declarations and parliamentary motions are all very well, but at the end of the day, the British government does what it sees as being in its best interests.

## 1a) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, October 2, 2014

**Netanyahu meets with Obama:** Prime Minister Netanyahu met with President Obama October 1. In remarks to reporters before the meeting Obama stated that “[the U.S. and Israel] have to find ways to change the status quo.” Netanyahu said that he remained committed to “two states for two peoples.”

**Settlers in East Jerusalem:** Shortly before Netanyahu was scheduled to meet with Obama, Peace Now made public the final approval by Israeli authorities for the building of 2,600 new housing units in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Givat Hamatos. This announcement came less than two days after a group of Jews moved into apartments in the East Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan. All apartments were purchased through Eland a foreign supported pro-settlement group. In order to mitigate security concerns the move in took place late at night with police help. The mufti of Jerusalem called the entry of Jewish settlers into Silwan a “criminal act.” Israeli MK Moti Yogev told reporters that settlements in East Jerusalem “helped ensure that a ‘United Jerusalem’ [would remain] as Israel’s capital.”

The Obama administration said Israel was “endangering its relations with ‘even its closest allies’, [the U.S.], in response to the Israeli activity in East Jerusalem. White House spokesman Josh Earnest told reporters, “The U.S. condemns the recent occupation of residential buildings in Silwan by people whose agenda provokes tensions.” U.S. State Department Spokesperson Jen Psaki said, “We are deeply concerned by reports that the Israeli Government has moved forward the planning process in the sensitive area of Givat Hamatos in East Jerusalem. This step is contrary to Israel’s stated goal of negotiating a permanent status agreement with the Palestinians, and it would send a very troubling message if they proceed with tenders or construction. This development will only draw condemnation from the international community, distance Israel from even its closest allies; poison the atmosphere not only with the Palestinians, but also with the very Arab governments with which Prime Minister Netanyahu said he wanted to build relations; and call into question Israel’s ultimate commitment to a peaceful negotiated settlement with the Palestinians.”

Netanyahu responded to the U.S. condemnation saying, “Arabs are free to purchase apartments in [West Jerusalem]. I have no intention of telling Jews they can’t buy apartments in East Jerusalem. There cannot be discrimination.” Jerusalem’s Mayor Barkat claimed that “construction in Jerusalem is necessary” and that “discrimination based on religion, race and sex is illegal.” Unlike most of the West Bank, East Jerusalem was annexed by Israel in 1967 and most Palestinians living East Jerusalem are residents, not citizens, of Israel and are subject to different laws.

**Abbas’ speech to the UN General Assembly:** Mahmoud Abbas and Benjamin Netanyahu recently addressed the UN General Assembly ... Abbas said that “Israel [had] chosen to make a new war of genocide perpetrated against the Palestinian people.” Several commentators said that [his] use of the word genocide “[allowed] the right wing to sweep away” the rest of Abbas’ address, including his reaffirmation that the Palestinians are “commitment to achieve a just peace through a negotiated solution.”

... Jen Psaki said that President Abbas’ speech included “offensive characterizations” which the U.S. rejects. She then added, “Such provocative statements are counterproductive and undermine efforts to create a positive atmosphere and restore trust between the parties.”

Israeli Deputy Minister Ofir Akuni responded saying that “Abbas is not a partner for peace.” Housing and Construction Minister Uri Ariel said that Israel should answer the speech with a “return to building in Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria [West Bank].” The leader of the opposition in the Knesset said that the Palestinians have lost faith in Netanyahu as a partner for peace and “accused Netanyahu of ‘continuing to manage the conflict instead of solve the conflict.’” Others said that “Netanyahu’s endgame is maintaining the status quo.” ...

[Read the entire Bulletin here.](#)

## **1b) Churches for Middle East Peace Bulletin, October 10, 2014**

**Sweden “will recognize the State of Palestine”:** Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven announced October 3 that Sweden will recognize the State of Palestine. If Lofven’s government follows through with its plans, Sweden would become the first EU member country to recognize the State of Palestine. Currently over 100 mostly smaller countries recognize Palestine. The UN General Assembly gave Palestine the status of “non-member observer state” in 2012.

In response, U.S. State Department Spokeswomen Jen Psaki told reporters, “[The U.S. believes] international recognition of a Palestinian state is premature. We believe that the process is one that has to be worked out through the parties to agree on the terms of how they’ll live in the future of two states living side-by-side.” Israeli Foreign Ministry Official said the announcement “gives the Palestinians the unrealistic expectation that [they] may achieve their goal unilaterally, rather than through negotiations with Israel.” The Swedish Ambassador said “that in deciding to recognize a Palestinian state, Sweden was making a statement of support for the resumption of peace negotiations.”

**EU responds to Silwan and Givat Hamatos:** British lawmakers are scheduled to hold a parliamentary vote October 13 on whether the government should recognize Palestine as a state.

In France, the City Council of Lille vote to freeze its twinning agreement with the Israeli city of Safed October 6. Lille is also twinned with the Palestinian city of Nablus. The City Council’s vote is one of multiple initiatives by the European Parliament to put pressure on Israel to end the conflict with the Palestinians by “freezing” privileged agreements with Israel.

A spokesperson for EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said, “We stress that the future development of relations between the EU and Israel will depend on the latter’s engagement towards a lasting peace based on a two-state solution,” in response to Jewish settlers moving into apartments in Silwan, East Jerusalem and Israel’s announcement of settlement expansion in Givat Hamatos last week. EU officials are currently working on mechanisms that would respond to “every Israeli action deemed detrimental to the peace process” with a consequence. Among the potential consequences would be the implementation of an EU law requiring the labeling of all products from West Bank settlements.

**Netanyahu defines American values:** Following U.S. criticism of Israeli expansion in East Jerusalem last week, Netanyahu told CBS “Face the Nation” on October 5 that he was “baffled” by the American response and that criticism of Israelis moving into Palestinian neighborhoods is “against American values.” White House spokesman Josh Earnest responded, “When it comes to American values, it’s American values that led to this country’s unwavering support of Israel. It’s American values that have led us to fund and build an Iron Dome system to protect the lives of countless Israelis.”

**Temple Mount; Noble Sanctuary; Al Aqsa Mosque Compound:** Hanan Ashrawi said Tuesday that a plan by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism to allow Jews to enter the Temple Mount through a second gate would “[create] a new reality at the expense of Palestinians, their religious rights, sites, and historical identity.” The Temple Mount is the site of Al-Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock. Called the Noble Sanctuary by Muslims, it is a holy site for both Jews and Muslims.

Tuesday Netanyahu told police chiefs and Shin Bet security service to “aggressively” crack down on Palestinian protestors in East Jerusalem. Clashes erupted Wednesday between Palestinian protestors and Israeli police on the eve of the Jewish Holiday of Sukkot. Director of the Jerusalem Wakf, Sheikh Azzam el-Khatib, said the disturbance was provoked by Israel allowing non-Muslim worshipers to enter the Temple Mount through the normally locked Mugrabi Gate. ...

[Read the entire Bulletin here.](#)

## **2) Palestinians ask UN: Set 2016 as deadline for ending Israeli occupation**

**Edith M. Lederer, Ha'aretz, October 1, 2014**

The Palestinians are asking the UN Security Council to set a deadline of November 2016 for an Israeli withdrawal from all Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, in a new push to achieve independence.

The circulation of the draft resolution to council members follows Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' announcement to the UN General Assembly last Friday that he would ask the council to set a deadline for a pullout and dictate the ground rules for any talks with Israel.

The draft resolution ... would affirm the Security Council's determination to contribute to attaining a peaceful solution that ends the occupation "without delay" and fulfill the vision of two states - "an independent, sovereign, democratic, contiguous and viable state of Palestine" living side by side with Israel in peace and security in borders based on those before the 1967 Mideast war.

The draft calls for intensified efforts, including through negotiations, to reach a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and "a just resolution" of the status of Jerusalem as the capital of two states and of the Palestinian refugee problem.

Its key provision calls for "the full withdrawal of Israel, the occupying power, from all of the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, as rapidly as possible and to be fully completed within a specified timeframe, not to exceed November 2016, and the achievement of the independence and sovereignty of the state of Palestine and the right to self-determination of the Palestinian people." The Palestinians already have the status of an observer state at the United Nations. But they are likely to face an uphill struggle in the UN's most powerful body where the United States, Israel's closest ally, has veto power and has used it to block many Palestinian-related resolutions.

U.S. Ambassador Samantha Power, asked Tuesday about Abbas' call for a deadline, said: "We strongly believe that the only way of a negotiated solution is through negotiations between the two parties." Israel's UN Ambassador Ron Prosor said that by pursuing this draft resolution, "once again, the Palestinians are shooting in all directions, missing the real target."

"Their habit of bypassing negotiations by taking unilateral action and blaming everyone but themselves will only move the region further away from stability," Prosor said in a statement to AP. "It's time for the Palestinians to aim higher and find constructive solutions, instead of avoiding a real dialogue. Only when they start taking responsibility, we will be able to move forward."

The Palestinian quest for Security Council action follows the failure of U.S.-brokered peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians led by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry, and the recent 50-day war between Israel and Hamas. More than 2,100 Palestinians were killed in Gaza, the vast majority civilians according to the UN, while 66 Israeli soldiers and six civilians in Israel were killed.

The draft resolution calls on the parties to consolidate the August 26 cease-fire agreement that ended the Gaza conflict and refrain from provocative actions, incitement and inflammatory rhetoric, especially with regard to East Jerusalem, which the Palestinians want as the capital of their independent state.

It calls for the opening of all border crossings in the Gaza Strip and demands an end to all Israeli military operations, settlement activities, and "collective punishment" of Palestinians. It also calls for stepped up humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians and calls on UN member states to contribute to the urgent reconstruction and economic recovery of war-battered Gaza. ...

**[Read the entire piece here.](#)**

### **3) What does Netanyahu mean when he talks about peace?**

**Ha'aretz editorial, October 2, 2014**

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted that his recycled speech before the UN General Assembly be colored not only in the shades of war, despair and intimidation, but also in the hues of opportunity and peace. Thus he peppered his address with promising phrases such as “historic compromise” and “new opportunities.”

Only a few hours after his speech, however, the Netanyahu government continued to prove that any phrases or declarations that deviate from its prophecies of doom about Israel’s future are nothing but empty slogans.

The occupancy by dozens of Jewish settlers of seven buildings in the East Jerusalem Arab neighborhood of Silwan, facilitated by the right-wing Elad organization and under heavy police security, received the blessing of Economy Minister Naftali Bennett. Bennet, a member of Israel’s inner cabinet, said he viewed it as “an event of historic proportions,” proving that words like “historic compromises” and “peace” are a “normality” fee. That is, a fee that Netanyahu must pay so as not to be seen by the Israeli public and the international community for what he really is, an enthusiastic supporter of annexing the territories and of handing the State of Israel, including its resources, its taxes and its security forces, to the settlers.

The seizure of the homes in Silwan, where some 500 Jews now live, is another nail in the coffin of the peace process. That’s essentially its purpose — to make any territorial compromise in Jerusalem as difficult as possible in order to shoot down any chance for an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians.

Netanyahu knows that no dominant power in the region would sign a peace treaty with Israel without the evacuation of the settlements. Neither the coalition against the Islamic State, nor water and gas agreements nor any kind of regional cooperation will ever obscure the damage caused by the occupation.

Even if Netanyahu were to seek peace in Saudi Arabia, it is not clear with whom he would make peace, in light of the fact that Israel’s illegitimate colonialist policies infuriate not only the Arab world but also Israel’s closest friends.

Given the sensitive situation in Jerusalem, where tensions are higher than they have been in years, this was a destructive move. The tension in the city increased sharply after the murder of Mohammed Abu Khdeir and Operation Protective Edge, leading to violent demonstrations and requiring significant police resources to keep the situation “under control.” The expansion of Jewish settlement in East Jerusalem could exacerbate the tense situation and spark another round of violence. Is that what Netanyahu means when he talks about peace?

#### 4a) [The State of Two States - Week of September 28](#)

*This week began with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu delivering his annual speech at the United Nations General Assembly, where he focused on Israel's regional threats and opportunities. On Tuesday, it was reported that dozens of Jewish Israelis moved into the Arab neighborhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem. On Wednesday, Prime Minister Netanyahu met President Obama at The White House. Just prior to the meeting, it was released that the Jerusalem municipality had given final approval to build 2,610 houses beyond the Green Line. On the eve of Yom Kippur, IPF would like to wish everyone Shana Tovah and G'mar chatima tovah. May the coming year be more peaceful than the last.*

"The old template for peace must be updated. It must take into account new realities and new roles and responsibilities for our Arab neighbors. Ladies and Gentlemen, There is a new Middle East. It presents new dangers, but also new opportunities. Israel is prepared to work with Arab partners and the international community to confront those dangers and to seize those opportunities. Together we must recognize the global threat of militant Islam, the primacy of dismantling Iran's nuclear weapons capability and the indispensable role of Arab states in advancing peace with the Palestinians." Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a speech to the United Nations General Assembly. (Monday 9/29)

According to a new poll conducted by the Palestine Center for Policy Survey research, the belief that Hamas has won the Gaza War has dropped from 79% a month ago to 69%. In addition, 22% believe the two sides were both losers. In the Gaza Strip, only 58% say Hamas came out a winner. (Monday 9/29)

"[Israel is being run] by the settlers and for settlers. It serves the objective of altering the character of Jerusalem through isolating, containing and confining Palestinian existence, allowing for more Israeli land grabs and attempts at changing the identity and demography of Palestine and particularly of occupied East Jerusalem." Palestinian Authority negotiator Saeb Erekat, in a comment about the dozens of Jews who moved into the Arab neighborhood of Silwan in East Jerusalem. (Tuesday 9/30)

"I think we also recognize that we have to find ways to change the status quo so that both Israeli citizens are safe in their own homes and schoolchildren in their schools from the possibility of rocket fire, but also that we don't have the tragedy of Palestinian children being killed as well." President Barack Obama, in a comment made during his meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. (Wednesday 10/1)

"We are deeply concerned by reports that the Israeli Government has moved forward the planning process in the sensitive area of Givat Hamatos in East Jerusalem. This step is contrary to Israel's stated goal of negotiating a permanent status agreement with the Palestinians, and it would send a very troubling message if they proceed with tenders or construction. This development will only draw condemnation from the international community, distance Israel from even its closest allies; poison the atmosphere not only with the Palestinians, but also with the very Arab governments with which Prime Minister Netanyahu said he wanted to build relations; and call into question Israel's ultimate commitment to a peaceful negotiated settlement with the Palestinians." State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki, in a comment made during a press briefing. (Wednesday 10/1)

"If Lieberman and Netanyahu still haven't internalized this reality, then perhaps it's time for those same advisers to inform them that the alternative to Abbas [...] is Hamas." Journalist Avi Issacharoff, in a column with The Times of Israel. (Friday 10/3)

#### **4b) The State of Two States - Week of October 5**

*This week began with condemnation by Israeli officials over the Swedish decision to recognize the State of Palestine. Sunday also saw the flare up of violence along the Israeli-Lebanese border. The violence increased Tuesday, with the detonation of two Hezbollah bombs along the border. On Thursday, the Palestinian unity government, headed by Palestinian Authority Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, held its first cabinet meeting in Gaza. In the midst of this holiday season, unrest in Jerusalem continues to unfold. At IPF we want to wish everyone Chag Sukkot Sameach.*

“The conflict between Israel and Palestine can only be resolved through a two-state solution, negotiated in accordance with the principles of international law. It must guarantee the legitimate demands of both the Palestinians and the Israelis for national self-determination and security. A two-state solution requires mutual recognition and a will to coexist peacefully. Therefore, Sweden will recognise the State of Palestine.” Prime Minister of Sweden Stefan Löfven, in an announcement made during his inaugural address to parliament. (Friday 10/3)

“The declarations were apparently made prior to having had the time to delve into the issues[,] and without understanding that the one that represents the obstacle to progress and to reaching an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians over the last 20 years —is the Palestinians.” Minister of Foreign Affairs Avigdor Lieberman, in a response to Sweden’s announcement officially recognizing the State of Palestine, as reported by mako.co.il. (Sunday 10/5)

“We encourage the Jewish presence in the City of David. People ask if the timing was right, I say that any time is the right time. For Jews to buy homes, to live in homes in the Land of Israel—any time is the right time for this.” Minister of the Economy Naftali Bennett, in a comment supporting Jewish settlement in Silwan, as reported by Army Radio. (Sunday 10/5)

“Well, I did see the Prime Minister’s remarks, and it did seem odd for him to try to defend the actions of his government by saying that our response did not reflect American values. The fact is, American policy has been clear and unchanged under several administrations, both Democrat and Republican. We oppose any unilateral actions that attempt to prejudice final status issues, including the status of Jerusalem. These can only be legitimately determined through direct negotiations between the parties that this President has worked hard to try to facilitate...The fact is, when it comes to American values, it’s American values that lend this country’s unwavering support to Israel. It’s American values that have led us to fight for and secure funding to strengthen Israel’s security in tangible ways. It’s American values that have led us to fund and build an Iron Dome system that has protected the lives of countless innocent Israeli citizens. It’s American values that have led the United States to fully support Israel’s right to defend itself. And it’s American values that have led us to defend Israel in a variety of international forums, including a variety of United Nations forums.” White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest, in a press briefing. (Monday 10/6)

“This is a message...Even though we are busy in Syria and on the eastern front in Lebanon our eyes remain open and our resistance is ready to confront the Israeli enemy.” Hezbollah Deputy Secretary General Sheikh Naim Qassem, in a comment to Lebanese OTV television about the two boarder blasts. (Tuesday 10/7)

“Israel bears responsibility for incidents at Al Aqsa Mosque, and in recent days we have warned of the consequences of opening Mugrabi Gate.” Director of the Jerusalem Wakf, Sheikh Azzam el-Khatib, in a comment about a non-coordinated action, which allowed non-Muslim worshippers into the Temple Mount for Sukkot. (Wednesday 10/8)

[Read the entire collection here.](#)

## 5) [Israeli binationalism is old news](#)

Gideon Levy, Ha'aretz, October 5, 2014

It's a judgment-day weapon: the binational state. The left warns against it as if it were a national disaster, a near-holocaust; the right, meanwhile, won't even recognize it as a possibility. And to support it? God forbid. It barely exists. The Jewish state is the mother of all consensuses, the holiest of holy cows, the *raison d'être*, even if no one knows what it is exactly and even if the "Jewish" is in effect nationalist. For nearly all Israelis, binational is the end of the story. And now Israeli journalist Rogel Alpher has joined the alarmists (Hebrew edition, October 2).

"Stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone and face reality: Israel is on its way to being a binational state. What do you intend to do about it?" Alpher asked. My telephone line hasn't been cut, my clocks have not stopped and I tried to face reality: The binational state is already here, and has been for a long time. It's less scary than it's made out to be, and what remains is to fight over its character.

It's hard to believe how the denial and repression machine succeeded even in this – in depicting the binational state as being in the future. Around six million Jews and nearly five million Palestinians (Israeli Arabs and West Bank Palestinians) live under one government, in one state, and it's not binational? If not, what is it? Mononational?

Two nations, one government – and it's not binational? For 47 years it has been totally binational. Not even binational in the making or temporarily binational. A binational state, for all intents and purposes. If it looks like a binational state, walks like a binational state and quacks like a binational state – then what is it? Seeing as Israel never – absolutely never – seriously intended to relinquish its occupied territories, this binational state has already raised two generations of binational citizens and subjects.

It is true that Israel has never dared to formally annex all its occupied territories and to extend civil rights to its non-Jewish inhabitants. But that does not make it any less binational, and the claim to be temporary has long since expired. True, there is a shocking gap between the rights of the two nations, but that too doesn't make it any less binational. A Palestinian in Hebron and a Jew in Tel Aviv are subject to the same government, even if that government is democratic for the Tel Avivian and dictatorial for the Hebronite, and even if the former government is civilian and the latter military. The source of its authority is the same: The Jewish government in Jerusalem decides the fate of both. The Palestinian Authority has less freedom of action than a regional council.

So what do we have here? One state, two nations. For years the left tried to put up an alternative: two states. Now, when it is obvious that the chance of this happening is presumably gone forever – and perhaps never really existed – all we can do is concern ourselves with the character of the state, which has been binational for two generations and neither egalitarian nor democratic for even a moment. Any further discussion of two states is nothing but a way to kill even more time, in order to further entrench the occupation. With more than half a million settlers and zero trust, it's a lost cause. Israelis, Palestinians and the world must draw their conclusions from this.

The only question still open is what kind of state it will be: a binational democracy, or binational with an apartheid regime. Everyone who in the past considered the state's Jewish character to be sacred – that is, the overwhelming majority of Israelis – must ask themselves where they were when there was still a possibility of two states. But now, when the right and the settlers have won, there is no point in continuing to discuss it. True, the solution of a single, egalitarian, democratic and binational state currently looks like either a fantasy or a nightmare. But what other alternative is there, exactly?

And so, stop all the clocks, cut off the telephone and face reality: Start fighting for a just (binational) state.



## **6) Russell Tribunal finds evidence of incitement to genocide, crimes against humanity in Gaza Mondoweiss, September 25, 2014**

The Russell Tribunal on Palestine's Emergency Session on Israel's Operation Protective Edge held yesterday in Brussels has found evidence of war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes of murder, extermination and persecution and also incitement to genocide.

The Jury reported: "The cumulative effect of the long-standing regime of collective punishment in Gaza appears to inflict conditions of life calculated to bring about the incremental destruction of the Palestinians as a group in Gaza."

"The Tribunal emphasises the potential for a regime of persecution to become genocidal in effect, In light of the clear escalation in the physical and rhetorical violence deployed in respect of Gaza in the summer of 2014, the Tribunal emphasises the obligation of all state parties to the 1948 Genocide Convention 'to take such action under the Charter of the United Nations as they consider appropriate for the prevention and suppression of acts of genocide.'"

The Jury heard evidence from eyewitnesses to Israeli attacks during the Gaza war 2014 including journalists Mohammed Omer, Max Blumenthal, David Sheen, Martin Lejeune, Eran Efrati and Paul Mason, as well as surgeons Mads Gilbert, Mohammed Abou Arab, Genocide Expert Paul Behrens, Col Desmond Travers and Ivan Karakashian, Head of Advocacy and Defence for Children International. In terms of the crime of incitement to genocide, the tribunal received evidence 'demonstrating a vitriolic upswing in racist rhetoric and incitement' during the summer of 2014. 'The evidence shows that such incitement manifested across many levels of Israeli society, on both social and traditional media, from football fans, police officers, media commentators, religious leaders, legislators, and government ministers.'

The Tribunal also found evidence of the following war crimes:

- Willful killing
- Extensive destruction of property not justified by military necessity
- Intentionally directing attacks against a civilian population and civilian objects
- Disproportionate use of force
- Attacks against buildings dedicated to religion and education
- The use of Palestinians as human shields
- Employing weapons, projectiles, and material and methods of warfare which are of a nature to cause superfluous injury or unnecessary suffering which are inherently indiscriminate
- The use of violence to spread terror among the civilian population

The Tribunal further stated: "It is recognised that in a situation where patterns of crimes against humanity are perpetrated with impunity, and where direct and public incitement to genocide is manifest throughout society, it is very conceivable that individuals or the state may choose to exploit the conditions in order to perpetrate the crime of genocide."

It further noted: "We have a genuine fear that in an environment of impunity and an absence of sanction for serious and repeated criminality, the lessons from Rwanda and other mass atrocities may once again go unheeded."

The Tribunal calls on Israel to fulfill its obligations under international law and for the state of Palestine to accede without further delay to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, fully cooperate with the human Rights Council Commission of Inquiry and fully engage the mechanisms of international justice. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## **7) Moving and powerful: Mustafa Barghouti's speech on the destruction of Gaza Palestine Solidarity Campaign, September 9, 2014**

*On September 9, Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, the Palestinian MP, member of the PLO's Central Council, and General Secretary of the Palestinian National Initiative, addressed Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) activists in London.*

*Dr. Barghouti, a medical doctor, was in Gaza during Israel's latest massacre. He spoke to a packed hall of 400 people on the day of PSC's National Lobby of Parliament for Palestine. Activists then went on to meet their MPs and put the case for justice for Palestine and sanctions on Israel.*

*This is Dr Barghouti's speech:*

Thank you for everything you have done for Palestine and Gaza. We have been watching the demonstrations. What you have done has given the people a great amount of moral support and I hope you can continue with this, because it is very important. I ask you to continue with this solidarity work because we have a very, very big fight ahead of us.

I want to give you a glimpse of what I saw and experienced in Gaza. No footage, no speech, no camera, no television can really show the reality that you can see with your own eyes. Please go there if you can. It's so important for you to know the reality and it's also important for the people there to see you there.

What happened is beyond description. Even describing it as an act of disproportionality is an insult to humanity. Describing it as an imbalance of power is also an insult.

After slaughtering thousands of people and destroying thousands of homes and to speak about reconstruction and to immediately allow Israeli companies to make a profit from this is also an insult to humanity.

What happened in Gaza, as has happened before in the West Bank is nothing but war crimes and crimes against humanity. What happened was nothing but massacres against the civilian population and Israel couldn't have done that without a feeling of impunity and without having impunity from international law, and this couldn't have happened if so many Western world leaders hadn't been complicit in what happened.

When major world leaders come out and speak about the right of Israel to self defence and not a single word about the Palestinian right to self-defence when Palestinians are slaughtered and occupied for 47 years, this is an insult to humanity.

And let me tell you frankly, after all these days and all this suffering, I have no patience for diplomatic talk. The destruction was beyond description. Even in the Second World War, there was not so much destruction in such a small area. This was not about one house being destroyed and the house next to it being destroyed. This was intentional bombardment by the Israeli army and navy and air force to destroy whole neighbourhoods.

Shujaya, which was completely destroyed was not a neighbourhood. It was a town, it was a city, with 150,000 people and it was destroyed, one house after another. Every house, every clinic, every mosque, every building was destroyed. Even a home for people with disabilities was destroyed. The destruction was beyond belief, and it is there for people who want to see. Huge buildings, of five, six, seven, eight storeys were completely destroyed. ...

**[Read the entire speech here.](#)**

## **8) Palestinian Christian leaders: Europe must recognize the State of Palestine, Jerusalem**

### **Pax Christi International**

*Over a hundred Church leaders, diplomats, and civil society leaders and organizations, have issued a statement conveying their conviction that "recognizing the State of Palestine on the 1967 border is the first step towards changing the current status quo." Their statement calls on the international community and Europe, in particular, to recognize that there have been "66 years after the beginning of the Palestinian Nakba and 47 years after the occupation." They now call for a "principled position to recognize the State of Palestine and to abide by your legal responsibilities towards a nation under occupation, in order to be able to celebrate justice and peace in the land of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ."*

*The statement ([available in full length here](#)) is signed among others by former Pax Christi International President Patriarch Emeritus Michael Sabbah, Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem.*

October 2014

In a Middle East region that continues to suffer from the consequences of violence, the people of Palestine continue to live under occupation and in exile. Palestinian Christians, the descendants of the first Christians, are an integral part of the Palestinian people, continue to suffer, just like our Palestinian Muslim and Samaritan brothers and sisters, we have been denied of our national and human rights for almost a century. From Jerusalem, our occupied capital, we send our urgent message to the whole world and particularly to Europe: We are yearning for justice and peace. Recognizing Palestine and defining Israel's borders is a first step towards that goal.

We have endured dispossession and forced exile since 1948, when the majority of Palestine's Christians were forcibly expelled from their homes in the Holy Land. We have persevered through 66 years of exile and 47 years of occupation, holding on to the message of peace of Our Lord. We are tired of calls for resumptions of negotiations while we can't reach our churches due to a foreign power and our people continue to be humiliated by an undesirable occupation. We are waiting for the day that our churches will ring celebrating freedom and justice.

Christians have a duty to resist oppression. We believe the international community and particularly Europe has not done enough in order to achieve a just and lasting peace. You cannot continue holding our right to freedom and self-determination as an Israeli prerogative. We have a natural right to be free and Europe has a moral, legal and political duty to hold Israel accountable and support Palestinian non-violent initiatives to end the Israeli occupation, including the recognition of the State of Palestine on the 1967 border with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Until when will you continue accepting Israel's violations of your own resolutions? Until when will you allow that the prospects of peace will continue to be destroyed by Israeli colonization? Until when should we be allowed to be treated as foreigners in our own homeland? Ending Israeli occupation is the only way for Palestinians, Christians and Muslims, to enjoy a life of prosperity and progress. It is also the surest way to secure continued Christian presence in this, our Holy Land, and to grant Israel the security that it continues to demand. Without Justice there can be no peace nor security.

It is time for Europe to understand that the only way to defeat extremism and terrorism in our region is to bring justice for all, starting by ending the historic injustice inflicted against the Palestinian people, an open wound that continues to bleed as the hopes for an independent Palestinian state are more elusive due to the expansion of Israeli settlements and the many restrictions imposed on our own people, including forced displacement. ...

**[Read the entire statement on Pax Christi International's website.](#)**

9) ["The recognition of Palestine is a human, moral, legal, and political imperative"](#)

Hanan Ashwari, Palestine News Network, October 9, 2014

A few days ahead of the British parliamentary vote on the recognition of the State of Palestine, PLO Executive Committee member, Dr. Hanan Ashrawi, met with correspondents from British media outlets in Palestine to reiterate the official call of the PLO for all states to recognize the State of Palestine as a "human, moral, legal, and political imperative."

Dr. Hanan Ashrawi said, "We welcome and appreciate the initiative of a group of British parliamentarians to ask their government to recognize the State of Palestine. If the British parliament vote reflects British public opinion, it will support the motion. This would be the first clear step taken by the UK as part of the process of historical rectification of the disastrous consequences of the Balfour Declaration and the British Mandate over Palestine that ended in 1948 with the creation of the State of Israel."

"During the past few weeks we have received many messages from British friends representing political parties, civil society, churches, and others in support of the motion to recognize the State of Palestine. We call upon all of them to pursue such efforts in order to obtain a victory on October 13 for the universal cause of justice in the British Parliament. Regardless of the non-binding nature of the vote, it will have a significant impact on the British government's policies and upcoming decisions on Palestine."

"We utterly reject the position of those who insist that Palestinian sovereignty is subject to Israeli approval; our independence is a natural right as per international law, and it high time for freedom and justice to prevail," concluded Dr. Ashrawi.

## **10) [Ex-ministers among Israeli figures urging UK MPs to recognize Palestine](#)**

**Times of Israel, October 13, 2014**

Over 300 Israeli figures signed a letter Sunday urging the British Parliament to vote in favor of recognizing a Palestinian state on Monday, when a non-binding motion by a Labour MP Grahame Morris is set to be debated.

“We, Israelis who worry and care for the well-being of the state of Israel, believe that the long-term existence and security of Israel depends on the long-term existence and security of a Palestinian state. For this reason we, the undersigned, urge members of the UK parliament to vote in favor of the motion to be debated on Monday 13th October 2014 calling on the British Government to recognize the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel,” the letter reads.

The signatories include an Israeli Nobel Prize winner, several Israel Prize winners, academics, former education minister Yossi Sarid, and former minister of industry and trade Ran Cohen.

Former director-general of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Dr. Alon Liel, a former ambassador to South Africa and charge d’affaires to Turkey, is one of the organizers of the letter. Liel has expressed his support for the boycott of products originating in West Bank settlements and cultural boycotts of Israel to protest the lack of a peace process.

Ilan Baruch, a former envoy to Pretoria who in 2011 quit his post claiming he could no longer represent Israel because of its allegedly indefensible policies, is also a signatory.

Later Monday, British lawmakers are set to vote on the motion to recognize a Palestinian state, a move that is being closely watched in the region for signs of shifting attitudes.

“If the vote is a success it would put a tremendous amount of pressure on the current government and the next government, which is likely to be a Labour government, to recognize Palestine as a state,” Morris said in an email. “The UK recognizing Palestine could give decisive momentum to more EU states following suit,” he said.

“Recognition now would be a clear and legitimate message that Britain and others recognize Palestinian rights and that the illegal settlement enterprise has no validity.”

The move comes after newly-elected Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven earlier this month announced his intention to recognize a Palestinian state, provoking anger in Israel, which summoned the Swedish ambassador. Foreign Minister Avigdor Liberman also chided Lofven and his government in an op-ed published in a major Swedish newspaper. Morris’s team said he would have the support of his party as well as some lawmakers from the ruling Conservatives.

An AFP count shows 112 countries have recognized the state of Palestine.

Britain abstained in 2012 from a vote in the United Nations on giving the Palestinians the rank of observer state, which was granted despite opposition from the United States, Israel and other countries.

## **11) Abbas, the last patriot of peace**

**Avraham Burg, Ha'aretz, October 13, 2014**

The reports about how the British parliament is about to hold a session on recognizing Palestine as a state stayed on the margins of the news in Israel. Among other things, it was reported by Ha'aretz's Barak Ravid that MK Hilik Bar of Israel's Labor Party sent a letter to his counterparts in the British Labour Party, reading in part:

"I understand why many of you will want to vote for anything which claims to be a contribution to peace. But immediate and unilateral recognition of Palestinian statehood does nothing to advance this vital cause. In fact, precisely the opposite. ... Unfortunately, unilateral moves simply play into the hands of those on Israel's hard right, which wants to suggest that we have no partner for peace, and that the Palestinians do not want to sit down and negotiate with us. ... To counter such arguments and get the peace process moving again, we in the Israeli Labor party need your help, which is why I urge you to stick to your party's long-standing policy of a negotiated two-state solution, and oppose any unilateral moves which threaten that goal."

This fascinating letter contains so many psychological characteristics of the Labor Party's weakness. It supports the right wing even when it kills innocent Palestinians, as in the recent war in Gaza, is an accomplice in stopping any chance for peace and hope, and keeps non-violent measures whose purpose is to promote the peace process, even slightly, from taking place.

Unlike the respected letter writer, who says for some reason that he belongs to the left wing, I would like to express a different position here. I hope that the entire British parliament, including the members of Labour, will vote in favor of recognizing Palestine immediately as the state of the Palestinian people.

The reasons are spread out across the entire spectrum of responsibility. From the British government's problematic legacy to the terrible results of the British Mandate in 1948, to the international conservative hypocrisy that embraces the Palestinians with words and fears to be branded immediately by Israel as anti-Semitic, to the simple answer to the complex question of what is the right thing to do.

The Palestinian reality has been bound up with international alignments since its first days. From the UN resolution in 1947 to the international norms that allow Israel to think of itself as "the only democracy in the Middle East" though it is the one in the West that is still colonialist in the full sense of the term. An ethnic democracy that is responsible for the bad situation of all the people who live in the hostile space between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

The truth must be told: We have been living for decades in a de facto reality of one state for two peoples. A state that has no common space of equal rights for all its citizens and subjects. The opposite is true: Discrimination here has an obviously ethnic character – supremacy and far-reaching benefits for anyone whose genetics are Jewish, and attacks and worsening conditions for anyone who is Palestinian.

Very few legitimate options are left for the Palestinian fighters for hope. It appears that terrorism has at least three weaknesses: It is ineffective, it is no longer legitimate and it is damaging to Palestinian society. After terrorism comes the boycott. But every effort to boycott Israel is doomed to failure at present because it is characterized immediately as anti-Semitism, even though it is a legitimate act of non-violent civil disobedience.

In the meantime, right-wing Israel (and for several decades, political Israel has become more and more right-wing, and I include the Labor Party on the right) is doing all it can to weaken the moderate political powers with which it is still possible to reach an agreement. How very simple, how very cynical. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## **12) UN chief: Time is not on the side of Palestinian-Israeli peace**

**Jack Khoury and Barak Ravid, Ha'aretz, October 13, 2014**

United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on Monday expressed concern that time is running out for a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. "We urge the Palestinians to show courage and continue with the peace process, and we urge Israel to do the same," Ban said during a two-day visit to the region.

"I welcome renewed international political leadership and action. Time is not on the side of peace. We need to act immediately to prevent a deepening of an already unsustainable status quo... this is the only way to avoid yet another tragic conflict in the future," he said.

Speaking at a news conference in the West Bank city of Ramallah following a meeting with Palestinian Prime Minister Rami Hamdallah, Ban called on both sides to end the cycle of violence. "We must give renewed attention to the West Bank," Ban said.

"I once again strongly condemn the continued settlement activity by Israel. I am also deeply concerned by repeated provocation at the holy sites in Jerusalem. These only inflame tensions and must stop," he said, referring to clashes between Palestinians and Israeli police in the Old City of Jerusalem that day.

On Gaza, Ban and Hamdallah said they had reached an agreement on a mechanism that would allow the entry of construction materials, following the recent 50-day conflict. They said the reconstruction process would be monitored by the UN and enforced by the Palestinian Authority with consent from Hamas. "I am confident that this mechanism, if implemented in good faith by the parties, would allow for large scale reconstruction urgently needed in Gaza," Ban said.

On Sunday, donor states and the European Union pledged 5.4 billion dollars at a conference in Cairo for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip. Half of those funds will go to the reconstruction process, and the remainder will be given to the Palestinian Authority over the next three years, Hamdallah said. Hamdallah described the mechanism as a temporary solution to allow speedy rebuilding in the Gaza Strip before the start of winter. He added that without Israel's cooperation, which involves opening border crossings to the free movement of goods, it will be difficult to start rebuilding.

Israel, which controls entry to Gaza, has imposed a blockade since 2007, preventing the entry of vital building material and other essential goods, citing security concerns.

Hamdallah said Israel had prevented the entry of building material to Gaza last week, and that he had demanded of the UN secretary general and his envoy Robert Serry to raise the issue in their meetings later Monday with Israeli officials.

He argued it is also necessary to give the private sector a free hand in the rebuilding process and to ease restrictions to encourage investors. Ban urged the international community to address the underlying issues at the heart of the conflict.

"We must also tackle the root causes of instability in Gaza. This is the only way to avoid yet another tragic conflict in the future," he said.

Hamdallah recalled at the press conference that many countries never followed through on the pledges they made to reconstruct Gaza in the wake of the 2008-09 Gaza war. No aid would be effective if Israel continues its blockade policy against the Gaza Strip, according to Hamdallah. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

### **13) Israel says UK Palestine vote undermines peace prospects**

**Ma'an News Agency, October 14, 2014**

JERUSALEM (AFP) -- Israel warned Tuesday that a vote by the British parliament in favor of recognizing a Palestinian state risked undermining the prospects for peace.

"Premature international recognition sends a troubling message to the Palestinian leadership that they can evade the tough choices that both sides have to make, and actually undermines the chances to reach a real peace," said a statement from the Israeli foreign ministry.

Late Monday, British MPs voted 274 to 12 for a non-binding motion to "recognize the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel as a contribution to securing a negotiated two-state solution".

The resolution was welcomed by the Palestinians. "It will enhance the European voices calling for the recognition of the State of Palestine and will create the right environment for the international community to grant the Palestinian people legal parity and rights," senior Palestine Liberation Official Hanan Ashrawi said in a statement.

Britain's ambassador to Israel, Matthew Gould, said that although the vote was not binding on the British government it was significant. "I think that this vote is a sign of shifting public opinion in the UK and indeed beyond," he said in an interview Tuesday morning with Israeli public radio.

The debate in the House of Commons came after the Swedish government announced it would recognize a Palestinian state -- it would be the first EU member in Western Europe to do so -- drawing anger from Israel.

It follows the collapse of peace talks between Israel and Palestine, and this year's conflict in Gaza in which more than 2,000 Palestinians and dozens of Israelis were killed, mostly soldiers.

"The conflict in the summer over Gaza had a big impact on British public opinion and has affected Israel's standing," Gould said. "Announcements on settlements since the summer have also had an impact and so although this vote won't affect government policy I think it is right to be concerned about what it signifies in terms of the direction of public opinion."

The Palestinian Authority estimates that 134 countries have recognized Palestine as a state, although the number is disputed and several recognitions by what are now European Union member states date from the Soviet era.

Britain abstained in 2012 from a vote in the United Nations on giving the Palestinians the rank of observer state, which was granted over the objections of the United States and Israel.



#### **14) A symbolic gesture to the Palestinians – a red warning light to Israel**

**Anshel Pfeffer, Ha'aretz, October 14, 2014**

LONDON – Was Monday night's 274-12 vote in the British parliament in favor of a motion calling upon the government (to "recognize the state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel as a contribution to securing a negotiated two-state solution") a "historic moment," as some have sought to portray it? Like most questions of this kind, only history will give us the answer.

In the hours leading up to the vote, it certainly didn't feel very historic. There was a larger-than-usual line of people waiting for admission to the Visitors' Gallery in the House of Commons, many of them wearing T-shirts with Palestinian flags and kaffiyehs, interspersed with young men with kippot. All were standing politely together, with no feeling of anticipation or tension between them. As the wait lengthened, it transpired that the debate would take place much later than expected, as there was more urgent government business to be discussed first: Britain's preparations for the spreading Ebola virus and the implications of last month's referendum on Scotland's independence.

Most of the excitement in the House was reserved for the appearance of the United Kingdom Independence Party's (UKIP) first elected member of parliament, Douglas Carswell. The former Conservative MP – who had defected, resigned and last week won a by-election by a landslide majority – made his entrance through the public gate, before his re-swearing-in and was mobbed by the press. No, he wouldn't be voting in the Palestine debate he said, "I am a passionate supporter of Israel." Not passionate enough though to show up and vote against, it seems.

Outside parliament, a small, sodden group of pro-Palestinian activists held a demonstration with a giant banner calling on MPs to vote in favor of the motion. A second banner said "Time to start giving back what we had no right to take." This seemed to be a historical reference to the 1917 Balfour Declaration promising the Jewish people a "national home" in Palestine. A few meters from the demonstrators stood the statue of David Lloyd-George, the pro-Zionist prime minister whose government had issued the Declaration. In some Palestinian circles, they still haven't forgiven Britain, and a few of the speakers in Monday's debate mentioned the Declaration as a justification for their "historical responsibility" in recognizing Palestine.

It's an interesting comparison. The Balfour Declaration may have boosted the morale of the Zionist movement, but it hardly put the Jews on the path to statehood, which would take three more decades, a Holocaust and a War of Independence to achieve. And Britain had hardly given the Jews anything – it actually abstained in the partition vote at the UN in 1947, and when its soldiers left Palestine six months later, they did nothing to help the Jews defend their newborn state from the invading Arab armies.

Similarly, Monday's vote was of no more than symbolic significance for the cause of Palestinian statehood and will change nothing on the ground in the region. Even Ian Lucas, Labour's Shadow Minister for Africa and the Middle East, who was the senior member speaking on behalf of his party to support the motion, said in a rather muddled speech that it was "a matter for any Government to recognize another state at any point of their choosing." So what was the point of the motion anyway? Nothing has changed since Balfour: declarations and parliamentary motions are all very well, but at the end of the day, the British government does what it sees as being in its best interests.

Another interesting comparison to the Balfour Declaration is the role played by prominent British Jewish politicians. One of the moving forces behind the Declaration in 1917 was Zionist cabinet minister Herbert Samuel, who would later become the first commissioner of Mandatory Palestine. At the same time, another Jewish minister, Edwin Samuel Montagu, was a fierce opponent and played a role in watering down the original wording of the Declaration. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)