

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**October 17, 2013**



*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 contains articles concerning the possibility and impossibility of the two-state solution, a review of *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel*, volunteerism in Palestine, continued settlement activity, apartheid, Gaza's isolation, and other issues.

- The CMEP Bulletins for October 5 and October 11: Peace negotiations, Netanyahu's speech to the UN and concerns about his realistic support for a just two-state solution, Biden's words to J Street conference attendees, house demolitions and other matters.
- Yitzhak Laor writes in Ha'aretz that the left and right might converge in the colonialist disregard of the Palestinian right to self-determination.
- Yousef Muayyer and Bernard Avishai shared their views on the present and future for Israelis and Palestinians in *The New Yorker*; Lisa Goldman and Dahlia Scheindlin offer their insights in +972.
- Akiva Eldar in Al-Monitor Israel Pulse reviews Max Blumenthal's book *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* in which the author sees the State of Israel no longer as David but rather as Goliath.
- Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzalez interview Max Blumenthal.
- Amira Hass writes in Ha'aretz that the United States is not about to apply any pressure on Israel, not as long as the weapons manufacturer's lobby, the Bible Belt, and Jewish votes and financial power are seen as U.S. public opinion.
- Daoud Kuttab in the Palestine News Network writes of international volunteerism in Palestine which continues to attract supporters from around the world.
- Ran Greenstein notes in +972 blog that there is no need to find identical practices to those prevailing in pre-1994 South Africa in order to determine whether apartheid exists elsewhere.
- Ran Greenstein continues his reflections on apartheid in +972, and emphasizes that only by fully understanding those core differences can Israel/Palestine draw valuable and useful lessons from South Africa's anti-apartheid struggle.
- Ma'an News Agency reports that a majority of Israeli Jews support the notion of Israel as a Jewish state but only a third of Palestinians in Israel share this view.
- Michael Omer-Man in +972 refers to a new report by Israeli and international rights groups demanding more protection for the right to protest.
- Donna Nevel in Muzzelwatch notes that the Al Jazeera News agency reports that Israeli right wing groups have tried to censor schoolbooks and silence organizations that make the Nakba visible to the Israeli public.
- Ramzy Baroud in the Palestine Chronicle concludes that since the Hamas election victory in January 2006, Gaza has undergone a disturbing human experiment of isolating and targeting the people of Gaza. He states that the U.S. and Israel have worked tirelessly to divide Palestinians and derail any chances of a unified government, let alone a cohesive national project.
- The Palestinian Information Centre reports that despite pleas for help to avert a humanitarian and environmental disaster, the people of Gaza still do not have the fuel to run their sewage works; sewage has been flowing into the sea for weeks.
- The July-August 2013 Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories prepared by the Foundation for Middle East Peace (FMEP) is now available.

## 1) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins, October 5 and October 11, 2013

The government is shut down but it's been a busy week for CMEP. We attended the J Street and Telos Group conferences and squeezed in a national conference call with Defence for Children International-Palestine and a peace vigil in front of the White House. We heard lots of fabulous speakers and we are working on ways to bring some of their voices and expertise to you! ...

[Read the entire October 5 Bulletin here](#), including links to articles recommended by CMEP.

**Netanyahu rains on peace talks:** Amid news that peace talks between Israeli and Palestinian negotiators will intensify their talks with more U.S. oversight, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu gave a speech that raised more questions about his willingness to make a deal. On Sunday evening, Prime Minister Netanyahu stood at the same podium where he gave his first speech recognizing the two-state solution four and a half years ago. He told the audience that it is not settlements and occupation that are obstacles to peace. Instead, he referred to the pre-1967 history, such as the Arab rejection of the Partition Plan in 1947 as evidence Palestinians are not ready to recognize Israel as a Jewish state.

Barak Ravid writes in Ha'aretz, "For over a month, right-wing members of the coalition have been telling anyone willing to listen that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is about to make a dramatic diplomatic move – a permanent agreement, intermediate arrangement or unilateral move that would necessitate a territorial withdrawal, uprooting settlements and establishing a Palestinian state...Sunday evening the prime minister allayed their fears."

Danny Dayan, the former head of the settler's YESHA Council, tweeted that it was "probably the best speech by Netanyahu as PM." Many politicians on the Israeli left were not as pleased. Israel's finance minister and rising star in Israeli politics Yair Lapid told PBS' Charlie Rose, "I don't feel we need a declaration from the Palestinians that they recognize Israel as a Jewish state. My father didn't come to Haifa from the Budapest ghetto in order to get recognition from Abu Mazen (Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas)."

Yet, the day after the speech, Israeli and Palestinian negotiators came together after agreeing to start meeting twice a week for up to eight hours at a time, with more U.S. involvement. Reports say that Secretary of State John Kerry's envoy Martin Indyk is "convinced current negotiations will yield results." Indyk expanded his team this week to help intensify talks.

Also on Monday, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas "expressed optimism" a peace agreement could be reached within the nine month window in a meeting with Israeli politicians in Ramallah. The New York Times reports, "The conciliatory tone was a sharp contrast" to Netanyahu's speech the night before.

One of the Israeli Knesset members said after the meeting that he was surprised by Abbas' upbeat tone. He said, "I didn't think it was going in a good direction...To hear it from Abbas, it's meaningful."

[Read the entire October 11 CMEP Bulletin here.](#)

## 2) The left's one-state colonialism

Yitzhak Laor, Ha'aretz, September 30, 2013

Ian Lustick, a professor of political science at the University of Pennsylvania, wrote "Arabs in the Jewish State," which was published in 1980 and translated into Hebrew in 1985 - the best book on the subject of Arabs in Israel. Over the years he has published articles on colonialism in the occupied territories, Algeria and the conflict in Northern Ireland.

Two weeks ago, on the opinion pages of the New York Times, Lustick explained, in an article entitled "Two-State Illusion," his conversion. Lustick, who used to support the two-state solution, now believes this solution is no longer possible. A decade ago historian Tony Judt, who died in the meantime, underwent a similar conversion. This is part of what is occurring in the world of American intellectuals. There are a number of advantages to this, including the possibility of employment for Israeli professors. The transition from post-Zionism to anti-Zionism is quite simple in a certain environment in the United States.

And to tell the truth, "two states" now seems to be imprisoning the Palestinians in a nature reserve. It moves between dependence on the goodwill of the American empire and the Israeli colonial whip. Every time we imagined - at various points in history - that the vision of two states was being fulfilled - 1974, 1981, 1987, 1993 and 2000 - it moved further away, before the fall of the Soviet Union and after, before the founding of Hamas and after its ascent. Israelis love to blame "Palestinian terror," but it is clear that the governments of Israel, all of them, did everything possible to thwart the option of a Palestinian state. To do so they strung out the negotiations for years, before the Oslo Accords and after, and expanded settlements to deepen the occupation and bring it to a point of no return.

The weakness of the "one-state" solution is of course its utopianism. Lustick writes: "[S]ecular Palestinians in Israel and the West Bank could ally with Tel Aviv's post-Zionists, non-Jewish Russian-speaking immigrants, foreign workers and global-village Israeli entrepreneurs. Anti-nationalist ultra-Orthodox Jews might find common cause with Muslim traditionalists," etc. This is wonderful. It is also possible to write of a different utopia; for example, one could have written: "Refugees from Jalazun will enter Beit El and Neve Tzuf with tears in their eyes and the evacuated settlers will be welcomed with blue roses at the entrances to Tel Aviv: 'We have waited for you, our beloved ones,' the signs will say, 'and in the end you returned home.'" Lustick prefers a new illusion.

Except that this is not just an illusion, but a surrender to the settlers and a transformation of the central left-wing battle into matters that remind one of seminars for self-awareness. Moreover, not a single one of the advocates of the "one state," here or overseas, proposes a subject - in other words, someone who will carry the battle for a single state forward on his shoulders. Is there an organization capable of uniting Palestinians and Jews, and whose institutions will build the "one state in the making"? And how is it that despite all the activities at the fence, Sheikh Jarrah and other places Israelis and Palestinians fought since 2000, no such political organization has arisen to inherit the platform of "two states?" (The only Arab-Jewish movement in the entire Middle East region is Hadash, and it actually supports the two-state solution.) ...

[Read the entire article here.](#)

### 3) Three articles on the two-state solution

Use the hyperlink in the title to read the entire article.

#### [Thinking outside the two-state box](#)

*Yousef Muayyer, The New Yorker, September 20, 2013*

A National Intelligence Estimate prepared by the U.S. intelligence community said the following: “If Israel continues to occupy conquered territory for an extended period, say two to three years, it will find it increasingly difficult to relinquish control. Domestic pressures to establish paramilitary settlements in occupied areas would grow, and it would be harder to turn back to the Arabs land which contained such settlements.”

One might, as I’ve written before, think that that is a very grim prognosis and that by 2016 the two-state solution will surely be impossible. But that N.I.E. was written in 1968, only a year after Israel occupied the West Bank and when barely a couple thousand settlers lived beyond the Green Line. Now, some 650,000 Israelis are there, with well over a hundred colonies, turning maps of the West Bank into Swiss cheese. It is farcical to talk about the impending death of the two-state solution—it’s been long dead and decomposing before our eyes, yet few have had the common decency to bury it. ...

#### [Durham redux: One-state illusions, from Canada to Middle East](#)

*Bernard Avishai, The New Yorker, September 20, 2013*

During much of 1837, the French Catholic population of Lower Canada—still thickly settled in seigniorial landholdings along the St. Lawrence River—was roiled by rebellion. ... To this day, *Je me souviens* (I remember) appears on Quebec license plates. ...

What could be done about this mortal hatred? [The] solution was radical. The nations should be united: Upper and Lower Canada should be forced to share a single area, with a single legislature. Because they could not stop hurling extreme nationalist claims at one another, granting each nation (read, the French Canadian nation) genuine autonomy would be unrealistic. One state ... would end the illusion of two nations. It would mean that French Canada, a people “without a history and without a literature,” would gradually assimilate into the larger, English-speaking continent. ...

#### [One state: Stop the hysteria and start thinking](#)

*Lisa Goldman and Dahlia Scheindlin, +972, October 2, 2013*

... [T]he idea of one state for Israelis and Palestinians has not been radical for quite some time now. As Mairav Zonszein documents in a post for +972, Members of Knesset from across the political spectrum have turned away from two-state rhetoric, including former Knesset Speakers Reuven Rivlin (Likud), and Avraham Burg from the left (a former Labor MK and Chairman of the Jewish Agency). Today, these two men agree with far-right politician Danny Danon and Likud hard-liner Tzipi Hotovely that the two-state solution is no longer possible (and for the Right, it never was desirable). Meanwhile, Tel Aviv University’s Yehouda Shenhav, a Leftist who recently published *Beyond the Two State Solution*, insists that exploring alternatives to two states is Israel’s “moral obligation.” ...

**4) Book review: No Longer David: The State of Israel as Goliath**  
**Akiva Eldar, Al-Monitor Israel Pulse, September 25, 2013**

*Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel*, by Max Blumenthal, translated by Ruti Sinai  
ISBN-13:9781568586342; published by Nation Books, 2013

Whenever you speak with an American Jew about Israel, you always end up at the same point. The conversation starts with Israel, but rarely ends there. It almost always ends with “them.” ... “Them,” of course, refers to the Palestinians. “They” are that same monolithic entity, faceless and devoid of a clear identity, that provides the wranglers with the ultimate response to any criticism of Israel: “They” teach their children to hate and kill; “they” don’t accept Israel’s right to exist; and why don’t “they” criticize their own society as Israelis criticize their own?

The experienced [Peter] Beinart has stopped answering claims and questions related to “them.” Instead, he suggests to his interlocutors that they would do well to refer their complaints to the Palestinians themselves. He knows that usually, this will be the end of the conversation. American Jews don’t know any Palestinians and aren’t interested in dialogue with real individuals from among this imaginary mass.

The rules of the Jewish student organization Hillel make it hard to invite Palestinian lecturers to speak on U.S. campuses. The 350,000 youths who have visited the Holy Land on Taglit (Birthright) programs have not toured Palestinian towns in the West Bank. The Jewish media is almost completely off-limits to Palestinian writers. Among the more than 200 speakers who took part in the various panel discussions at the last annual AIPAC conference in the United States, only two were Palestinians. ...

Against this backdrop, the new book by the American Jewish journalist and blogger Max Blumenthal is particularly noteworthy. *Goliath* is being published by Nation Books. Unlike most Jews — American or Israeli — Blumenthal chose to leave his comfort zone, go into disputed territory and examine the burning questions for himself. In fact, Blumenthal’s greatest strength and interest is in events on the ground and the people who live there, far from the “peace process” and diplomatic salons.

*Goliath* is a portrait of a modern-day Sodom, a society that years ago stopped being “David of the beautiful eyes” and is determined to sustain an image of being weak and victimized. Blumenthal points to the manipulative use made by Israelis of the memory of the Holocaust in order to shape a collective consciousness, strengthen the society’s inner cohesion and shut itself off from a world perceived as threatening and malevolent.

He focuses on a period starting in December 2008, when Israel launched the attack on Gaza code-named Operation Cast Lead. ... Blumenthal dives into the depths of Israeli society of recent years, describing the prevailing atmosphere and the individuals who shaped it. He tells of Israeli youths who take part in the demolition of a Bedouin village as part of a “summer camp” rife with nationalism and hatred, of the arrest of anti-war protesters in the name of “preserving the public peace” ... and about permanent, discriminatory ethnic division and separation. ...

[Read the entire review here.](#)

**5) Interview: Amy Goodman and Juan Gonzales with Max Blumenthal  
Democracy Now, October 4, 2013, posted at Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JFJFP)**

As Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is continuing a public campaign to cast doubt on U.S. diplomatic engagement with Iran, we speak to journalist Max Blumenthal, author of the new book, *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel*. Blumenthal looks at life inside Netanyahu's Israel and the Occupied Territories. "I was most surprised at the banality of the racism and violence that I witnessed and how it's so widely tolerated because it's so common," says Blumenthal about his four years of reporting in Israel. "And I'm most surprised that it hasn't made its way to the American public ... that's why I set out to do this endeavor, this journalistic endeavor, to paint this intimate portrait of Israeli society for Americans who don't see what it really is."

**TRANSCRIPT:** This is a rush transcript. Copy may not be in its final form [and slightly edited by JFJFP to omit some of the ums and you knows].

**JUAN GONZÁLEZ:** We end today's show with Israel. Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is continuing a public campaign to cast doubt on diplomatic engagement with Iran. Speaking before the UN General Assembly, Netanyahu accused new Iranian Prime Minister Hassan Rouhani of deceiving the world about Iran's nuclear program. ...

**AMY GOODMAN:** For more, we're joined by journalist Max Blumenthal, best-selling author of *Republican Gomorrah: Inside the Movement that Shattered the Party*. His new book is *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel*. Max, welcome back to Democracy Now! Can you first respond to Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, and Israel, the government's response to the openings between the United States and Iran? ...

**MAX BLUMENTHAL:** This is a culmination of four years of my reporting from inside Israel-Palestine, from inside Netanyahu's Israel. He came to power in 2009 at the helm of the most right-wing government in Israeli history. And he's kind of occupying the center in Israel. He appears in my book as the salesman, and he markets himself as a man who can go to the U.S. and market a lemon, who can sell a lemon to the American public, because he speaks English perfectly, he was educated at MIT, he worked at Boston Consulting with Mitt Romney. And here he's returned to the U.S. to sell the Israeli position to an American public that wants diplomacy, that welcomed Barack Obama's historic phone call with Hassan Rouhani. And Obama has been forced to sit with Netanyahu for 2.5 hours in the White House, during a government shutdown, to hear Netanyahu's complaints and lecturing. He's effectively become the Bibi-sitter, meeting with Netanyahu more times than any foreign leader, the head of this country the size of New Jersey. And so, Netanyahu really looks kind of desperate and diminished at the UN, and he's ... concocted this very belligerent and stentorian speech that really would maybe appeal to elderly evangelicals or an AIPAC crowd, but it's not resonating with the American public.

**JG:** Well, in an interview on Tuesday with CBS News's Charlie Rose, Netanyahu diminished the significance of Jewish settlements that many see as an obstacle to peace between Israelis and the Palestinians. ...

**[Read the entire transcript on the Jews for Justice for Palestinians' website.](#)**

## 6) [No fear of U.S. pressure on Israel](#)

Amira Hass, Ha'aretz, October 2013

In recent weeks, it seems, some dissonant chords have interrupted Israel-U.S. harmony. The majority of Americans appear to have the audacity to twice disagree with Benjamin Netanyahu. First, they were unwilling to widen U.S. military involvement in the Middle East by attacking Syria, and then, they supported diplomatic negotiations with Iran. Never mind the masses. What's worse is, President Barack Obama seems to be listening in earnest to the will of his people.

For Netanyahu's dovish opposition this discord serves as a sort of a futuristic proof that the United States is finally about to put pressure on Israel. Is the American administration indeed considering a change regarding the solution to the problem of the Israeli occupation?

The answer is probably found in the good grade given by a U.S. official to Mahmoud Abbas' address to the United Nations General Assembly. In this official's eyes, it appears, the troublemaker pupil in the American school, has mended his ways. "Abbas' speech wasn't confrontational and aggressive as in previous years," the official said. "After we've already grown accustomed to the Palestinians pursuing unilateral steps, suddenly there's nothing." The official's comment smacked of paternalism. Incidentally, appealing to the UN and its 193 member states is as multilateral as moves can get. It's an appeal to a world that doesn't include only the United States and Israel.

The Obama administration's latest notable achievement in the Israeli-Palestinian sphere was to give in to the stronger side and allow Israel to carry on with its wild unilateral moves. In return, the leader of the weaker side was forced to break his promises to his people. Abbas returned to the negotiating table, and for the second time, he curbed the momentum behind Palestine joining international organizations, and gave up his minimalistic demand, that Israel stop planting cluster bombs also known as the settlements. Still, despite condescension toward the Palestinians, might the United States take some measures to force Israel to comply with UN resolutions? The United States will not carry out a military strike against Israel, though it did do so to other states that ignored international law, such as Iraq and Serbia. Neither will it pass sanctions that would actually endanger Israeli food and medical supplies, as it did to Iran and Iraq. But what about the financial aid to Israel?

According to last April's report from the Congressional Research Service, Israel, since it was found, has received \$118 billion from the United States, making Israel the largest benefactor of U.S. foreign aid since World War II. In 2014, the president's request for Israel would encompass approximately 52% of total foreign military financing worldwide. Considering the sums involved, the word "aid" would be a euphemism. The United States is paying top dollar for intelligence and security services it receives from Israel, as well as for the shared interests of both world powers and their intertwined post-modern arms industries. So how could the U.S. administration withhold such sums as a form of pressure?

The United States is not about to apply any pressure on Israel; not as long as the weapons manufacturer's lobby, the Bible Belt, and Jewish votes and financial power are seen as "U.S. public opinion." Peace efforts today mean Washington will continue to apply pressure where it can, on the weaker side. Can Abbas persuade his people that the "United Federation of Palestinian Bantustans (minus Gaza)" is a reasonable final agreement? Can he afford to sign the declaration of surrender as Israel demands? The United States was certainly pleased to see that the Palestinian leader has freed himself of democratic processes and institutions. But Abbas knows that his signature on such a paper is not worth the ink it'll be written with.

## **7) International voluntarism in Palestine**

**Daoud Kuttab, Palestine News Network, September 19, 2013**

The Palestinian cause continues to attract supporters from around the world. Volunteers wishing to give some of their time and expertise in solidarity with Palestinians have become a regular feature in Palestinian society. Many young people wanting to spend a year or so in a conflict area choose Palestine for many reasons.

By volunteering in Palestine a person is clearly and publicly siding with the oppressed in their just struggle for freedom and independence. Some of the volunteers involve themselves in Palestinian nation building while others take on a more direct role in the resistance to the Israeli occupation.

Even those who are involved in overt acts of solidarity with Palestinians and resistance to occupation can be divided into a number of groups. Some express their solidarity by joining Palestinian demonstrators protesting various symbols of occupation.

Perhaps the most repeated act of international solidarity in recent years has been the participation of internationals in the weekly Friday demonstrations against the Israeli segregation wall built deep in Palestinian territories.

Internationals expressing solidarity are seen weekly in protests at Bilin, Nabi Saleh and other Palestinian locations. The international and Israeli protests against the wall were featured in the Oscar-nominated documentary "Five broken cameras."

While these protests are largely nonviolent, they tend to end with a round of stone throwing by Palestinian youth, to which Israeli troops respond with tear gas or rubber-coated metal bullets. Internationals and Israelis do not take part in these activities, although their presence is credited for keeping the Israeli response from being much more brutal.

[Other] international volunteers chose to participate in acts of solidarity with Palestinians, but on a slightly different track. They are totally committed to absolute nonviolent acts.

These pacifists are willing to put their lives on line protecting Palestinians as long as no violence is committed on the Palestinian side. Among them is the Christian Peace Team, an international movement that works in many hot spots around the world. The Christian Peace Team, which was established by what is called the peace churches (Mennonites, Quakers and Brethren) chose Hebron as their main theatre of operations and have been working with volunteers in this turbulent city for years.

The most visible act of solidarity that the team members carry out on daily basis is touring the volatile old city of Hebron and helping Palestinian schoolchildren reach their schools. The presence of a small but boisterous group of settlers in the heart of Hebron has made the lives of these schoolchildren a hell. In order to get from their homes to school, the children have to cross areas where the settlers are regularly present and try to bully the Palestinian children in order to make them and their families quit getting to the area ...

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



## **8) If this isn't apartheid, then what is it?** **Ran Greenstein, +972, September 30, 2013**

For a few years now, opinion pieces and articles in the South African and Israeli press have shown confusion regarding the meaning of the comparison between Israel and apartheid South Africa. How can we sort out the conceptual mess that afflicts the debates around the issue?

First, let us examine the meaning of apartheid. The term defines the race-based regime of political domination and social marginalisation that ruled South Africa from 1948 to 1994. Alongside this meaning, another definition emerged in international law, drawing on the South African example but gradually moving away from it. With the demise of the apartheid regime in 1994, its legal meaning took a decisive step away from South African realities. The 2002 Statute of the International Criminal Court contains no references to South Africa and regards apartheid as “an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group.” We must also bear in mind that the 1965 International Convention on eliminating racial discrimination extends the term to cover “any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, color, descent, or national or ethnic origin.” In other words, it is not restricted to ‘race’ in the common meaning that invokes real or imaginary biological differences in its definition.

While apartheid remains associated in our minds with its South African origins, legally it has no necessary relation to South Africa. We do not need to find identical practices to those prevailing in pre-1994 South Africa in order to determine whether apartheid exists elsewhere. The key question is the identification of a regime that practices systematic oppression and domination by one group over another. How then does it apply to Israel?

To answer that, we need to clarify another concept: Israel. While usually seen as residing within its pre-1967 boundaries, the Israeli regime exercises control over Palestinians in the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza. For the last 46 years, all residents within Greater Israel have lived under the same regime, which claims to be the sole legitimate political and military authority. The state controls the territory between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, ruling over eight million rights-bearing citizens (75 percent of whom are Jews) and four million Palestinian subjects denied civil and political rights. To complete the picture, millions of Palestinian refugees (who were born in the territory or their direct ancestors were) cannot set foot in their homeland, let alone determine its political future as citizens.

How is the notion of apartheid relevant to this reality? The Israeli regime is based on an ethnic/religious distinction between Jewish insiders and Palestinian outsiders. It expands citizenship beyond its territory, potentially to all Jews regardless of their links to the country, and contracts citizenship within it: Palestinians in the occupied territories and refugees outside have no citizenship and cannot become Israeli citizens.

The regime combines different modes of rule: civilian authority with democratic institutions within the Green Line (pre-1967 boundaries), and military authority beyond it. In times of crisis, the military mode of rule spills over the Line to apply to Palestinian citizens in Israel. ...

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

## 9) What can we learn from the Israel apartheid analogy?

Ran Greenstein, +972, October 4, 2013

In a previous post [above] I argued that the Israeli regime between the River and the Sea is a form of apartheid as defined in international law (“an institutionalized regime of systematic oppression and domination by one racial group over any other racial group”). This refers to the regime as an integrated whole, ruling both Israel “proper” and the Occupied Territories. It includes or excludes and allocates or denies rights to different groups in the population in a differentiated manner, based on ethno-religious affiliation.

Having established the apartheid “credentials” of the Israeli state, we must note it is different in important respects from historical apartheid in South Africa. This difference is related both to the nature of the regime and the possibilities for resistance and change. It is tempting but misleading to assume that “family resemblance” leads all oppressive regimes in identical directions. Their specific historical legacies shape their current and future prospects in different ways. What are these legacies then and how relevant are they for analysis and activism in Israel/Palestine? To answer that we have to look at the South African experience.

Apartheid in South Africa was the product of a centuries-long history, which saw colonial forces (the Dutch East India Company and the British Empire, Afrikaner and English settlers, Christian missionaries, big landlords and industrial capitalists), collaborate and compete with each other over land and labour resources, and political control over indigenous groups. Both settlers and natives were highly diverse populations, and their encounters – spread over a long period and large territory – created a multi-layered system of domination, collaboration and resistance. Apartheid was a link in this historical chain, seeking to close loopholes and entrench white domination. During that period, the nature of indigenous resistance also changed, from attempts to retain or regain independence in the 18th and 19th centuries, to a struggle for civil and political equality in the 20th century, based above all on the thorough incorporation of indigenous people into the white-dominated economy and society.

The legal foundation of apartheid in South Africa was a racial distinction between white and black people (further divided into many racial and ethnic sub-groups), rather than a dichotomous ethno-religious distinction. Racial groups were not homogeneous, but internally divided on the basis of language, religion, ethnicity, and political affiliation. And, people forged important links across the color line. For example, white people were divided between English and Afrikaans speakers, and many black people too speak one of these as a mother tongue. Christian churches brought together some white and black believers in some churches (though usually not worshipping together), and separated them from other mixed groups of white and black believers. In contrast, lines of division in Israel/Palestine usually overlap. Potential bases for cross-cutting affiliations – anti-Zionist orthodox Jews, Arab Jews, indigenous Palestinian Jewish communities – were undermined by the rise of Zionism and Arab nationalism in the 20th century. This left no space for people straddling multiple identities.

Under South African apartheid, the central goal of the state was to ensure that black people performed their role as providers of labor, without making disruptive social and political demands. The strategy used to achieve that focused on externalizing them. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## **10) Nearly half of Jewish Israelis support discrimination against non-Jews**

**Ma'an News Agency, October 11, 2013**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- A majority of Israeli Jews support the notion of Israel as a Jewish state, a new survey published Sunday said.

The Guttman Center for Surveys of the Israel Democracy Institute published an extensive survey on public opinion in Israel. Among the findings, the report said that 74.8 percent of Jews in Israel believe the state "can be both Jewish and democratic."

A third of Palestinians in Israel share this view, according to the survey. Around 32 percent of Jews think the Jewish nature of Israel's state is more important, while 37 percent prefer the combination of Jewish and democratic.

Nearly 48 percent of Jewish Israelis believe Jewish citizens should have more rights than non-Jewish citizens, while in the overall sample 68 percent of respondents view the rift between Jews and Palestinians as the greatest source of friction in Israeli society, the survey said. Around 43 percent of Israeli Jews support government policies to encourage Palestinians to emigrate from Israel, according to the study.

Although this number was slightly down from past years, it suggests support for policies of transfer of Palestinians from Israel, as right-wing parties have previously proposed. Over 47 percent of Israeli Jews expressed an aversion to having a Palestinian family as neighbors, second only to foreign workers at 56.9 percent. Foreign workers in Israel are primarily of African and East Asian descent, and their presence has been a target of large protests in Israel in recent years.

Only 28 percent of Palestinian-Israelis feel a sense of belonging to the Israeli state.

Sixty-one percent of both Jewish and Palestinian Israelis feel that they have "little or no ability to influence government decisions." More than 760,000 Palestinians -- estimated today to number 4.8 million including their descendants -- were forced into exile or driven out of their homes in the conflict surrounding Israel's creation in 1948.

Around 160,000 Palestinians were able to remain inside what became Israel in 1948. They now number around 1.36 million people along with their descendants, or about 20 percent of the country's population.

The survey did not include the 2.5 million Palestinians in the West Bank, which has been under Israeli military occupation since 1967, nor did it include the 1.7 million Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, who have been under an Israeli military blockade since 2007 and are considered to be occupied by Israel according to the United Nations, as Israel controls the Gaza Strip's airspace, territorial waters and movement of people and goods.

## 11) Fighting for the right to protest in a land with no rights

Michael Omer-Man, +972, October 9, 2013

*If freedom of expression is the grievance system of democracies, the right to protest and peaceful assembly is democracy's megaphone. It is the tool of the poor and the marginalized – those who do not have ready access to the levers of power and influence, those who need to take to the streets to make their voices heard. (Take back the streets: Repression and criminalization of protests around the world, International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations.)*

With an introduction like that, it was slightly strange to find a case study on Bassem Tamimi and Nabi Saleh in a report highlighting the repression and criminalization of protests around the world. In the West Bank, and especially in Nabi Saleh, there is no democracy and there is certainly no right to protest or peaceful assembly.

Israeli military law, which is the law of the land in the West Bank, “prohibits virtually all protest activity, including vigils, processions, publications, and even personal items expressing a political viewpoint,” notes the report by International Network of Civil Liberties Organizations, a group made up of 10 organizations including the Association for Civil Rights in Israel and the American Civil Liberties Union.

Nevertheless, Tamimi and his village of Nabi Saleh have embraced the democratic principle of protest in order to air their grievances to the non-democratic military government that rules over them, to the democratic government of Israel that empowers the military government, and to the world at large.

Tamimi has paid a particularly heavy price for his and his village's decision to begin popular protests: he has spent over a year in prison for his role in organizing protests against illegal settlement expansion and the theft of Nabi Saleh's land and fresh-water spring. As a result, Amnesty International named him a prisoner of conscience.

Hundreds of others have been arrested, dozens injured and two killed in the village of 500. But perhaps the part of the INCLC report most relevant to Nabi Saleh and Palestinian popular protest is not actually in the section dealing with Tamimi and Nabi Saleh.

One of the most common criticisms Israelis voice against Palestinian popular protests are articulated as challenges to their nonviolent character. Some point to stone throwing – fairly common in most protests in the West Bank – as an act of violence, and they are right, irrespective of questions of proportionality, self-defense and harm caused.

But as the INCLC report notes, “the right to peaceful assembly must be interpreted in a way that ensures that individuals who are exercising their peaceful assembly rights continue to receive protection, even when other individuals within a crowd commit acts of violence.”

In other words, even if a number of individuals in an otherwise peaceful protest employ acts of violence, that, in and of itself, does not make the protest itself violent. And the protections granted to peaceful protest are not invalidated by the acts of a few ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

## 12) Muzzling Discussion of the Nakba and Palestinian History

Donna Nevel, Muzzelwatch, October 12, 2013

We know all too well how adamantly pro-Israel forces in the U.S. Jewish community and Israel consider certain conversations and actions critical of Israel “beyond the pale,” and how blatant their hasbara (pro-Israel propaganda) attempts are to silence and suppress them.

Although the parameters (of what is “acceptable”) may change at times, what doesn’t seem to change is how hasbara intensifies as efforts to reveal historical and current truths and demand change become more visible and powerful.

Most recently, Al Jazeera reports that right wing groups have tried to censor schoolbooks and silence organizations that make visible to the Israeli public the Nakba, an Arabic word meaning catastrophe that refers to the forced dispossession and expulsion of over 700,000 Palestinians from their homes and land before, during, and after the creation of the Jewish state.

A bit of context: Some of these recent attempts at muzzling come as Zochrot, an Israeli organization, was planning (and recently held) a monumental conference, “From Truth to Redress: Realizing the Return of the Palestinian Refugees.” The conference had as its focus “the implication of Return for the country’s physical, cultural and economic space, on the nature of its future society, the status of Palestinians and Jews living here, the nature of its regime, and last but not least, the practicalities of returning property after 65 years of refugeehood and the destruction of Palestinian life on the one hand, and the establishment of a Jewish State and the resulting new reality on the other.” This conference aligned with Zochrot’s ongoing commitment to “challenge the Israeli Jewish public’s preconceptions and promote awareness, political and cultural change within it to create the conditions for the Return of Palestinian Refugees and a shared life in this country.” ...

But we also know that attempts to erase the Nakba have been standard policy and practice since the creation of the State, and they have been undertaken by people and groups across the political spectrum.

Although the opposition may step up its tactics—of censoring; spying on organizations; prohibiting groups from even referring to the Nakba; shutting down funding; intimidating justice workers—that won’t change the fact that the history, the stories, the evidence, the documentation about the Nakba are indisputable.

Zochrot is having a truth commission for the events of 1948, to be held in March 2014, “that will seek to collect and document information about the 1948 events, focusing in particular on the actions that led to the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. By exposing the public to this information, the event will seek to encourage various audiences in Israel to acknowledge these actions and take personal and collective responsibility for them.” This critical work continues. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

### **13) As Gaza dies slowly, waiting game is on** **Ramzy Baroud, Palestine Chronicle, October 8, 2013**

Since the Hamas election victory in January 2006 — and particularly after the Hamas-Fatah clashes and split between Gaza and the West Bank in the summer of 2007 — Gaza has undergone a disturbing human experiment, whose toll is unprecedented in the history of the impoverished Strip. The plotters involve the usual suspects, each with a clear set of objectives behind the isolation and targeting of Gaza. The U.S. and Israel have worked tirelessly to divide Palestinians and derail any chances of a unified government, let alone a cohesive national project.

This helped Israel achieve two objectives: Blaming Palestinians for a lack of leadership (as in “we don’t have a peace partner”) for the collapse of the so-called peace process and creating distractions as it continued with the construction of its Apartheid Wall and colonies throughout the Occupied Territories. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has assumed the role of the local collaborator and has done its outmost to undermine Hamas at every turn. The U.S. has ensured that no unity agreement is signed between Hamas and the PNA’s ruling Fatah party and if any such agreement is ever reached, it will never be honored.

Israel moved into Gaza from time to time to test the resolve of Palestinian resistance, to “teach Gaza a lesson” and to ensure that Hamas’ reign comes at a heavy price. PNA President Mahmoud Abbas’s Fatah was spoiled with much “aid” and perks. Its officials are well paid, even when the rest of the Palestinians are not paid at all. According to VisualizingImpact.org, Palestinian politicians are the second highest paid in the world after Kenya, as a multiple of gross domestic product per capita. Abbas, his officials and PNA security bosses have no reason to abandon such a sweet arrangement, especially if the other option will be to let go of their riches and embrace a national liberation project, the cost of which could be too high for pampered men to bear.

Isolated, lacking political savvy and out of options, Hamas made some costly mistakes, especially following the Arab upheaval that promised change, but threw the entire region into a high-stakes political gamble. Hamas became even more isolated, especially after the July military coup against Egypt’s first elected president. Mohammad Mursi, despite immense pressure, was much kinder to Palestinians in Gaza than his predecessor Hosni Mubarak, who was an important player in the Gaza experiment. His regime worked diligently to ensure that the siege on Gaza was complete and that an Islamic movement at his country’s doorsteps had no chance of proving politically viable. ... For his tenacious efforts to contain “radical Islamists” in Gaza, Mubarak was spared the sham democracy crusade launched by former U.S. president George W. Bush.

The U.S. was and remains completely oblivious to numerous human rights violations carried out by Egypt’s security apparatus, the curtailing of freedoms and the brazen denial of basic rights of Egyptian citizens. U.S. Congress seemed much more forgiving of Egypt’s abuses, compared to rights abuses carried out by other regimes, thanks in part to Egypt’s six-year-long crackdown on Gaza. Out of the four crossings that connect Gaza to the world, Israel is sealing three, while Egypt is choking the fourth and in the last two months, it has destroyed all tunnels that Gazans had dug to smuggle food and other urgent supplies. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

#### **14) Government warns of environmental disaster due to shortage of fuel**

**Palestinian Information Centre, September 17, 2013**

The Palestinian government warned of an environmental disaster in Gaza due to the siege, especially as untreated sewage water is pumped into the sea, which increases the problem of pollution and its impact on the environmental situation and human health.

Minister of Local Government, Dr. Mohammed Al-Farra said: “The municipalities in the Gaza Strip began to pump sewage water into the sea, after sewage treatment plants stopped working due to lack of fuel.” He expected that the municipalities will officially announce next Thursday that they are out of fuel as a result of the tightening of the siege on Gaza, the demolition of tunnels on the borders with Egypt, and the prevention of the entry of the Egyptian diesel fuel to the Gaza Strip.

He added: “All the countries of the Mediterranean are threatened by the pollution if the blockade continues.” Farra pointed out that the epidemics and health crises will not be prevented by geographical borders, in reference to Israel. He appealed to international and humanitarian organizations to shoulder their responsibilities and exert pressure on Israel, to lift the siege on Gaza and to allow necessary materials into the Strip before it is too late. The Gaza Strip has been suffering from a tight blockade for the seventh year running. However, the siege has dramatically intensified two months ago after the dismissal of the Egyptian President Mohamed Morsi and the destruction of almost all tunnels between Gaza and Egypt by the Egyptian army.

#### **15) Foundation for Middle East Peace (FMEP) Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories, September/October 2013**

**Negotiations commence and settlement expansion continues:** The government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu announced wide-ranging increases in settlement expansion in the West Bank and East Jerusalem just as talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) commenced. This latest wave of settlement construction and planning advancements represents not only opportunistic measures by the Netanyahu government to reward coalition partners and others intent upon pre-empting the possibility of Palestinian sovereignty west of the Jordan River. These actions also offer fresh evidence of Israel’s single-minded intent to settle anywhere and everywhere in the territories it has controlled for almost half a century in a manner unencumbered, and in some respects encouraged, by an uncertain diplomatic engagement sponsored by Washington.

**To our readers:** There is no longer much doubt that the government of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is unwilling to accept a genuine two-state peace with Palestine. As Jeff Aronson describes in this Report, Netanyahu’s right wing coalition is determined to control permanently the West Bank and East Jerusalem by continuing aggressive settlement.

**[Read the latest issue of the Report on Israeli Settlement in the Occupied Territories here.](#)**