

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
October 31, 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 continuing settlement activity, a report of U.S. financial assistance to Israel, criticism and defense of Max Blumenthal's *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel*, plans for a "Truth Commission" concerning the foundation of the State of Israel, contradictions in defining Israel as a Jewish state, and other issues.

- Some of the many issues included in the CMEP Bulletins for October 18 and October 25 highlight the need to support the Kerry peace process, the possibility of Pope Francis visiting Israel and Palestine in 2014, settlement surge in 2013, water cooperation between Israel and Palestine, olive harvest difficulties, and further issues.
- Shirl McArthur gives the figures behind a conservative estimate of a total more than \$130 billion for direct financial aid to Israel since 1949. (Washington Report on Middle East Affairs)
- Eric Alterman writes a strong critique of *Goliath*; Max Blumenthal responds. (The Nation)
- James Wall reflects on the varying views of U.S. Jews over Blumenthal's *Goliath* as evidenced in Eric Alterman's article noted above.
- Jeff Wheelwright writes of the need to clean up the water in the Kidron valley as a needed and mutually beneficial project for Israelis and Palestinians. (New York Times)
- Zochrot is preparing for a public Truth Commission for the events of 1948 to take place in Beersheba, Israel in March 2014 with the hope of helping Israelis to accept the truth of the origin of their State.
- Jonathan Cook writes that Israel is gradually whittling away the foundations on which the Palestinians can build an independent economic life and a viable state; and that the World Bank's view is that there can be no Palestinian state, let alone economic revival, until Israel is forced out of the territories. (Counterpunch)
- Jonathan Cook notes that in some parts of Israel, voters in the next elections will be casting a ballot not on how well their municipality is run but on how to stop "Arabs," the country's Palestinian-Arab minority, comprising a fifth of the population, moving in next door and building mosques in their community. (Al-Jazeera)
- Ma'an News Agency reports that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said in an interview with a German television station that he blamed Israel's "demands in East Jerusalem" for having "transformed the conflict's political nature into a religious conflict."
- David Landau believes history will damn Netanyahu's obsessive demand for the Palestinians to commit to the idea of Israel as the "Jewish State" as a precondition for peace. (Ha'aretz)
- The Israel Policy Forum presents quotes from the week of October 20 pertinent to "the State of the Two States."
- Barak Ravid writes that the Palestinian Ministry has written to 50 countries asking that these companies should either freeze business dealing with settlements or withdraw investments entirely. (Ha'aretz)
- Mira Sucharov writes that those who accuse organizations such as J Street and the New Israel Fund as anti-Israeli while proclaiming themselves pro-Israelis are nullifying important questions which every Israeli patriot should be asking. (Ha'aretz)

1) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletin, October 18, October 25

The October 18 CMEP Bulletin includes many links to a variety of news reports; [find them here.](#)

Silence after Kerry-Bibi meeting

Details remain scarce on the status of the negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians. On [October 23], Secretary of State John Kerry met with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for seven hours in Rome. Four of those hours were private, with only Secretary Kerry and Prime Minister Netanyahu in the room. Reports before the meeting indicated "most of the meeting will be devoted to Israeli-Palestinian peace talks, with Kerry seeking clear answers from Netanyahu on what compromises he is willing to make to obtain a final status agreement." There were signs that the focus was more on Iran but little was revealed after the meeting.

The previous day, Secretary Kerry told members of the Arab League, "The two parties have been engaged now in 13 meetings - serious meetings. They had three meetings in the last four days," Kerry said. "All the core issues are on the table. And they have been meeting with increased intensity."

Next week, the next phase of the prisoner release that helped bring these negotiations to life should take place. Already, Ha'aretz reports that Israel's Housing Ministry intends on publishing tenders on hundreds of settlement units at the same time as the release of 25 prisoners in an "attempt to appease the right wing." The prime minister is walking a thin line in his mostly right-wing coalition. Many oppose a negotiated two-state solution and these settlement announcements could allay their fears and keep them from bolting the coalition for now while negotiations continue.

[Tell your representative to give peace a thumbs-up!](#)

Peace can't happen without your help! You give peace the thumbs-up! Now we need to you to help get your representative to give a thumbs-up for peace by co-sponsoring House Resolution 365. Click here to send a message to your representative to support peace and John Kerry's tireless effort for successful negotiations. Palestinians and Israelis who want peace don't have a voice on Capitol Hill, but you do! Raise yours today!

[Further reading in the October 25 CMEP Bulletin](#)

2) A conservative estimate of total U.S. direct aid to Israel: More than \$130 billion Shirl McArthur, Washington Report on Middle East Affairs, October/November 2013

The Washington Report's current estimate of cumulative total U.S. direct aid to Israel is \$130.212 billion, updating the estimate in the November 2011 issue. It is an estimate because arriving at an exact amount is not possible, since parts of U.S. aid to Israel are buried in the budgets of various U.S. agencies or in a form not easily quantified, such as the early disbursement of aid, resulting in a direct benefit of interest income to Israel and a corresponding loss to the U.S. Treasury.

As a conservative, defensible accounting of U.S. direct aid to Israel, this estimate does not include the indirect benefits to Israel resulting from U.S. aid, nor the substantial indirect or consequential cost to the U.S. as a result of its blind support for Israel. Especially, this estimate does not include the costs resulting from the U.S. invasion and occupation of Iraq—hundreds of billions of dollars, thousands of American and allied casualties, and untold tens of thousands of Iraqi casualties—which is widely believed in the Arab world, and by many non-Arabs as well, to have been undertaken for the benefit of Israel.

Among the real benefits to Israel that are not a direct cost to the U.S. taxpayer is the provision allowing Israel to spend 26.3 percent of each year's military aid (\$815.3 million in FY '13) in Israel rather than solely in the U.S. No other recipient of U.S. military aid gets this benefit, which has resulted in an increasingly sophisticated—and competitive—Israeli defense industry. As a result, the Congressional Research Service (CRS) reported that between 2004 and 2011 Israel was the eighth-largest arms exporter to the world, with sales worth a total of \$12.9 billion. Also, in contrast with other countries receiving U.S. military aid, [which] must purchase through the Department of Defense (DOD), Israel deals directly with U.S. companies, and is exempt from DOD review.

Loan guarantees: Another benefit to Israel is the loan guarantees that the U.S. has extended to Israel since 1972. While these have not yet been a cost to the U.S., they have enabled Israel to borrow from commercial sources at more favorable terms and lower interest rates, since the U.S. guarantees payment of the loans should Israel default.

The FY '03 war supplemental appropriations act authorized \$9 billion in loan guarantees over three years. In FY '05 these were extended until FY '07, and in '06 they were extended again through FY '11, with a "carryover" provision that Israel may draw on unused U.S. guarantees through FY '12. Last year Congress passed the so-called "U.S.-Israel Enhanced Security Cooperation Act of 2012," which extended the loan guarantee authority until 2015. CRS reported that \$3.8 billion in loan guarantee authority remains as of 2013. Israel has not borrowed any funds against these guarantees since FY '05, and CRS speculated that perhaps Israel views the U.S. guarantees as a "last resort" option should its unguaranteed commercial sources of funds become too expensive.

Subsidies for Israel's colonists and colonies: A real benefit to Israel that has been an unquantifiable cost to the U.S. taxpayer is the private, tax-exempt money—probably hundreds of millions of dollars—that has been collected by charitable U.S. Jewish and Christian Zionist groups that then send the money to support Israel's colonists ("settlers") ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

3) The "I Hate Israel" Handbook

Eric Alterman, *The Nation*, November 4, 2013

Max Blumenthal's *Goliath*, published by Nation Books, consists of seventy three short chapters, each one devoted to some shortcoming of Israeli society and/or moral outrage that the Jewish state has perpetrated against the Palestinians. Some are titled to imply an equivalence between Israel and Nazi Germany ("The Concentration Camp," "The Night of Broken Glass"); others merely evidence juvenile faux cleverness ("How to Kill Goyim and Influence People").

Israel is rarely wholly innocent in the stories Blumenthal tells. Its brutal military occupation of Palestinian land, now entering its forty-sixth year, has not only deeply damaged Israel's democracy, but also desensitized its citizens to the daily humiliations it inflicts on the Palestinians.

But Blumenthal proves a profoundly unreliable narrator. Alas, his case against the Jewish state is so carelessly constructed, it will likely alienate anyone but the most fanatical anti-Zionist extremists, and hence do nothing to advance the interests of the occupation's victims.

Blumenthal evinces no interest in the larger context of Israel's actions. Potential threats that emanate from Hamas, Hezbollah, Al Qaeda, Syria, Iran, etc., receive virtually no mention in these pages. Israel's actions are attributed exclusively to the myopia of its citizens.

Blumenthal blames "Israeli society's nationalistic impulses," its politicians who struggle "to outdo one another in a competition for the most convincing exaltation of violence against the Arab evildoers," its "fever swamps," its "unprovoked violence against the Arab outclass," and its textbooks that "indoctrinate Jewish children into the culture of militarism." It would have been easy for him to at least pretend to evenhandedness here. Did it not occur to Blumenthal, for instance, that Palestinians have textbooks as well? ...

[Read the second part of Alterman's critique here; the original piece is behind the Nation's paywall.](#)

Max Blumenthal responds: I am eager to debate the issues raised in my new book, *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel* (Nation Books), the result of over four years of on-the-ground research and reporting. ...

For years, especially since the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin by a right-wing Jewish extremist, a contingent of self-appointed enforcers has attempted to suppress an honest, free and full debate. These enforcers, recently aided and abetted by Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government, have painted critics who do not toe the party line or journalists who report uncomfortable facts as anti-Semitic, self-hating Jews or cheerleaders for terror. Readers of the *Nation* should recognize this kind of smearing as a form of McCarthyism.

Eric Alterman's invective against my book in his column and blog in the *Nation* fits that last category of smear ("this book could have been published by the Hamas Book-of-the-Month Club"). Playing the enforcer, he is trying to frustrate debate ...

[Read the entire response here.](#)

4) U.S. Jews battle over Blumenthal's "Goliath"

James Wall, October 23, 2013

Max Blumenthal is a young Jewish American journalist whose father, Sidney Blumenthal, was a senior adviser to President Bill Clinton from August 1997 until January 2001. Preparing to write his latest book, *Goliath: Life and Loathing in Greater Israel*, he spent four years reporting from Israel and occupied Palestine. His father's political connections did not pave the way for his interviews. All the son needed was his American passport and Jewish identity.

Both Palestinians and Jews wanted to tell their stories. In his research Blumenthal had easy access to major Israeli literary figures like Israeli novelist David Grossman. In his interview with Grossman, which he reports in his book, Blumenthal refers to his father's earlier career in the Clinton administration. What provoked this rare reference to his father was Grossman's emotional defense of Israel as an essential safe haven for Jews.

Blumenthal writes: "For Grossman and liberal Zionists like him, the transformation of Israel from an ethnically exclusive Jewish state into a multiethnic democracy was not an option.

"Grossman told me when I asked why he believed the preservation of Zionism was necessary, 'we have been kept out, we have been excluded. And so for our whole history we were outsiders. Because of Zionism we finally have the chance to be insiders.'"

In response, Blumenthal had an answer few are more qualified to give. "I told Grossman that my father had been kind of an insider. He had served as a senior aide to Bill Clinton, the president of the U.S., the leader of the free world, working alongside other proud Jews like Rahm Emmanuel and Sandy Berger. I told him I was a kind of insider and that my ambitions had never been obstructed by anti-Semitism. 'Honestly, I have a hard time taking this kind of justification seriously,' I told him. 'I mean, Jews are enjoying a golden age in the United States.'"

Blumenthal then reports that Grossman, a man of words, "found himself at a loss. He looked at me with a quizzical look. Very few Israelis understand American Jews as Americans, but instead of belonging to the Disapora. But very few American Jews think of themselves that way, especially in my generation, and that too is something very few Israelis grasp." The gap is wide, and growing wider, between American and Israeli Jews, a fact that Blumenthal, with his cultural and political background, is uniquely qualified to understand and describe. ...

Blumenthal's book has suffered the twin burden of being ignored by mainstream media and, at the same time, drawing harsh criticism from within the liberal Zionist faction of American Jewry. Losing exposure in mainstream media is regrettable, since Blumenthal's book, as one non-mainstream reviewer writes, "is erudite, hard-hitting, and with the potential to influence American public opinion on Israel."

[In an interview on] Amy Goodman's Democracy Now, Blumenthal ... gives details of his journey through Israel and Palestine. Since he searched over a period of four years for the personal impact of the occupation on its Palestinian inhabitants, his highly negative reportorial conclusions are both enlightening and not surprising. ...

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

5) In a polluted stream, a pathway to peace
Jeff Wheelwright, New York Times, October 9, 2013

Peace talks are under way again in Jerusalem. If the past is any guide, the two sides are stymied over difficult issues like settlements and borders. The negotiators badly need a new approach, and one is right beneath their feet, in the Kidron Valley, the deep ravine that runs from the Old City through the West Bank toward the Dead Sea.

As it snakes its way through the Judean wilderness, the Kidron comes to Mar Saba, a spectacular monastery slung upon a cliff. Orthodox Christian prayers have been chanted there every day for some 1,400 years. The monastery and its domes and chapels are protected on one side by stone walls and on the other by the deep gorge of the Kidron, or Wadi Nar, as the Arabs call it. If you descend the innumerable steps to the fast-flowing Kidron Stream, a vile smell rises to meet you. The flow is raw sewage from Jerusalem, coursing at a rate of 8 to 10 million gallons a day.

Jerusalem treats two-thirds of its wastewater at a plant in the western part of the city. The remainder, which emanates mainly from Palestinian neighborhoods in East Jerusalem but also from Jewish housing, has been held hostage to the political impasse since 1967. Underground and out of sight near the Old City, the sewage breaks into the open at the separation barrier, where the West Bank begins; picks up additional loads from Bethlehem and the impoverished town of Ubeidiya; passes beneath the monastery; and eventually, though some is diverted by settlers for irrigation, it reaches the Dead Sea.

In the malodorous water lies a political opportunity. The Kidron Valley traverses an area holy to three world religions. Cleaning up the basin ought to be a lead item in the current talks, a cause instead of a consequence of peace. After all, the pollution is owned by both sides and breaches any possible future boundary between them. Compared with issues like the Palestinians' right of return, the Jewish settlements and the final status of Jerusalem — not to mention the borders themselves — solving the Kidron's problem is straightforward.

More important, if the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli government can work together on an uncontroversial civil project, one that improves the quality of life for all residents, they will start to develop a mutual trust. Over the last six years, an Israeli lawyer named Richard Laster ... has laid the foundation for a solution. Heading a team of Israeli and Palestinian officials and academics, Mr. Laster produced the Kidron Master Plan. The group proposes diverting the wastewater from the valley and constructing a sewage treatment plant in Ubeidiya.

The plant would be paid for largely by international development agencies but jointly owned and operated by Israelis and Palestinians. The managers would sell the treated wastewater for local agricultural use, and Ubeidiya would get a modern landfill for its trash. While the environment healed, a new park and tourist trail would link Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ubeidiya and the Mar Saba monastery. The Kidron would be, in Laster's words, "a platform for peace."

Water rights — and water quality — are crucial matters in this area of the world. If Palestinians and Israelis are going to live side by side, they will have to share the scarce rivers and aquifers that crisscross their national demarcations. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

6) Getting Israelis to accept the truth of the origins of their state Jews for Justice for Palestinians

[Zochrot is an Israeli NGO that works to raise awareness of the *Nakba* to the broad Jewish public. The *Nakba* is the name for the destruction of hundreds of villages and expulsion of hundreds of thousands of Palestinians in the 1948 war.]

From Zochrot: A first-of-its-kind event will take place in Beersheba, Israel in March 2014 with the hope of helping Israelis to accept the truth of the origin of their State.

Amnon Neuman, a Palmach fighter who took part in occupying several Palestinian villages in Southern Israel and expelling their inhabitants, calls upon his colleagues to “tell the truth about what really happened in 1948, to shatter the legend as though the Arabs just took off and fled. Knowing the truth about what happened is essential for planning a peaceful future.”

Zochrot hereby invites Jewish fighters who took part in the 1948 war (especially those who fought in the south, but also in other areas), members of their family or whoever has relevant information to testify on their involvement in the war within the framework of a Public Truth Commission – the first of its kind in Israel – to be convened during 2014. During the commission’s hearings, Palestinian refugees and Jewish fighters, second- and third-generation Israelis and expert witnesses will talk publicly about 1948.

They will testify before a panel of philosophers, historians, researchers, human rights lawyers and civil society organization representatives, as well as the public at large. Subsequently, panel members will write and publish a report summarizing the findings and suggesting recommendations for redress.

The commission 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. We believe that the 1948 events are at the core of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so that admitting the truth, promoting acknowledgement and taking responsibility are essential to facilitating a process of historic justice and peace.

The commission is not a court, but an informal forum designed to create a new historic archive and promote processes of reconciliation and understanding, public acknowledgement and healing the trauma of 1948.

Jewish fighters and/or their family members or anyone willing to provide substantive information (without necessarily testifying in public) who want to take part or receive further details are welcome to contact Project Coordinator Debby Farber at debby@zochrot.org or +972-3-695-3155.

[Learn more at the Jews for Justice for Palestinians’ website.](#)

7) The disappearance of Palestine

Jonathan Cook, Counterpunch, October 17, 2013

Two recent images encapsulate the message behind the dry statistics of last week's report by the World Bank on the state of the Palestinian economy. The first is a poster from the campaigning group Visualising Palestine that shows a photo shopped image of Central Park, eerily naked. Amid New York's skyscrapers, the park has been sheared of its trees by bulldozers. A caption reveals that since the occupation began in 1967, Israel has uprooted 800,000 olive trees belonging to Palestinians, enough to fill 33 Central Parks.

The second, a photograph widely published last month in Israel, is of a French diplomat lying on her back in the dirt, staring up at Israeli soldiers surrounding her, their guns pointing down towards her. Marion Castaing had been mistreated when she and a small group of fellow diplomats tried to deliver emergency aid, including tents, to Palestinian farmers whose homes had just been razed. The demolitions were part of long-running efforts by Israel to clear Palestinians out of the Jordan Valley, the agricultural heartland of a future Palestinian state. Ms. Castaing's defiance resulted in her being quietly packed off back to Europe, as French officials sought to avoid a confrontation with Israel.

The World Bank report is a way of stating discreetly what Castaing and other diplomats hoped to highlight more directly: that Israel is gradually whittling away the foundations on which the Palestinians can build an independent economic life and a viable state.

This report follows a long line of warnings in recent years from international bodies on the dire economic situation facing Palestinians. But, significantly, the World Bank has homed in on the key battleground for an international community still harbouring the forlorn hope that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will end in Palestinian statehood.

The report's focus is on the nearly two-thirds of the West Bank, known as Area C, that is exclusively under Israeli control and in which Israel has implanted more than 200 settlements to grab Palestinian land and resources. The World Bank report should be seen as a companion piece to the surprise decision of the European Union in the summer to exclude entities associated with the settlements from EU funding. Both in turn reflect mounting frustration in European capitals and elsewhere at Israeli intransigence and seeming U.S. impotence. Europeans, in particular, are exasperated at their continuing role effectively subsidising through aid an Israeli occupation with no end in sight.

With Israel and the Palestinians forced back to the negotiating table since July, and after the U.S. secretary of state, John Kerry, warned that this was the "last chance" for a deal, the international community is desperate to exercise whatever small leverage it has on Israel and the U.S. to secure a Palestinian state.

The World Bank's concern about Area C is justified. This is the location of almost all the resources a Palestinian state will need to exploit: undeveloped land for future construction; arable land and water springs to grow crops; quarries to mine stone and the Dead Sea to extract minerals; and archaeological sites to attract tourism. ...

[Read the entire piece at Jonathan Cook's website.](#)

8) Israel's elections bring "racism" to the fore

Jonathan Cook, Al-Jazeera, October 21, 2013

In some parts of Israel, voters in the next elections will be casting a ballot not on how well their municipality is run but on how to stop "Arabs" moving in next door, how to prevent mosques being built in their community, or how to "save" Jewish women from the clutches of Arab men.

While the far-right's rise in Israeli national politics has made headlines, less attention has been paid to how this has played out in day-to-day relations between Israeli Jews and the country's Palestinian-Arab minority, comprising a fifth of the population.

According to analysts and residents, Israel's local elections have brought a tide of ugly racism to the fore, especially in a handful of communities known as "mixed cities," where Jewish and Palestinian citizens live in close proximity. Jewish parties, including local branches of the ruling Likud party, have adopted openly racist language and fear-mongering suggesting an imminent Muslim takeover of Jewish communities in a bid to win votes.

"Israeli society has become more and more racist, and the candidates are simply reflecting this racism back to voters knowing that it will win them lots of support," said Mohammed Zeidan, director of the Human Rights Association in Nazareth. Last week, as electioneering intensified, Salim Joubran, an Arab judge, stepped in to ban adverts by the Likud party of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the cities of Karmiel and Tel Aviv. Joubran, who is the first Arab in Israel's history to chair the Central Elections Committee, which oversees elections, said the ads were "racist and almost certain to hurt the feelings of Arab Israelis and disrupt public order." In doing so, Joubran overruled the advice of the attorney-general, Yehuda Weinstein, who had argued that the committee had no authority to regulate online ads and posters.

Notably, Netanyahu and his ministers have refused to condemn or distance themselves from the campaigns run by their local branches. In Jaffa, the commercial capital of Palestine before Israel's creation in 1948 and now a mixed suburb of Tel Aviv, Likud ran ads against local Muslims. A third of Jaffa's population are Palestinian, but they face increasing pressure to leave under a programme of "gentrifying" neighbourhoods. One ad – using the slogan "Silence the muezzin in Jaffa? Only Likud can" – echoed threats Netanyahu made in late 2011 to ban mosques from using loudspeakers to call Muslims to prayer.

A Likud party spokeswoman declined to comment on Joubran's criticisms. Sheikh Ahmed Abu Ajwa, an imam in Jaffa, said: "This is a racist campaign but we must not forget that those who promote hatred against Muslims and Christians in Jaffa are simply following the lead of the government. "It is a great impertinence to tell us we need to silence our mosques. We were here – and so were our mosques – long before Israel's creation. If they don't like it here, they are welcome to leave." Another poster, implying that Palestinian citizens are not loyal to Israel and that Likud would intensify moves to remove them from the city, said the party would "Return Jaffa to Israel."

Joubran similarly banned a phone ad used by the Likud party in Karmiel, a so-called "Judaisation" city in the Galilee designed to bring Jews to a region with a large Palestinian population. ...

[Read the entire piece on Jonathan Cook's website.](#)

**9) Abbas: Israel has transformed political conflict into religious one
Ma'an News Agency, October 20, 2013**

BETHLEHEM (Ma'an) -- Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas said in an interview with a German television station that he blamed Israel's "demands in East Jerusalem" for having "transformed the conflict's political nature into a religious conflict in a region already burdened with sensitivities."

Abbas said that he rejected any attempt to make the Palestinian-Israeli political conflict a religious issue "on the basis of our rejection of extremism and terrorism in all its forms." Abbas stated his desire for a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict, but warned that Israeli attempts to annex East Jerusalem and the desecration of the Al-Aqsa mosque had transformed what was an essentially political conflict into a religious struggle.

He said he "looks forward to achieving a just peace for the two peoples, Palestinian and Israeli" through the "establishment of an independent state of Palestine... on the entire Palestinian land occupied in 1967." The fully sovereign Palestinian state would have East Jerusalem as its capital and would exist in "peace and security alongside the State of Israel," he said.

Abbas said that he envisioned a "comprehensive and lasting agreement" that would entail Jerusalem becoming the capital of both states, but that "Jerusalem should be open for worship for the followers of the three religions, Islam, Christianity and Judaism."

He also stressed the necessity of solving the Palestinian refugee issue "in a just way agreed upon in accordance with UN resolution 194, and as stipulated in the Arab Peace Initiative."

Abbas warned that the failure of these ongoing negotiations would have "undesirable consequences for our region and the world," and he asked the international community to "intensify action and seize the opportunity" for the good of both the Israeli and the Palestinian peoples.

UN resolution 194, adopted in 1948 near the end of the Arab-Israeli war, states that Palestinian refugees should be allowed to return to their homes and that compensation must be paid to those who choose not to return.

More than 500,000 Israeli settlers live in settlements across the West Bank and East Jerusalem, in contravention of international law. The internationally recognized Palestinian territories of which the West Bank and East Jerusalem form a part have been occupied by the Israeli military since 1967.

Source: <http://www.maannnews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=639386>

10) Netanyahu the fundamentalist

David Landau, Ha'aretz, October 22, 2013

Benjamin Netanyahu's critics (there are still a few of us around, despite his much matured and improved performance of late) point to his demand that the Palestinians recognize Israel "as the Jewish state" as proof of his disingenuousness regarding peace in Palestine.

What is this demand? The United Nations spoke of a Jewish state and an Arab state back in the 1940s. That was the accepted vocabulary ever since the principle of partition made its appearance in the 1930s. Mahmoud Abbas, president of the Palestinian Authority, uses the same vocabulary today.

Prime Minister Netanyahu, however, distinguishes between formal diplomatic usage and genuine political commitment. He asserts, with dire conviction, that there will never be genuine, long-term peace between the two nations unless the Palestinians genuinely recognize Israel's sovereign existence, here in the Holy Land, as rightful and permanent – as the legitimate, unchallengeable "Jewish State."

This position appeals to many Israeli Jews. His critics, on the other hand, say he's dredged it up cynically because he knows it is the one concession the Palestinian side can never make. Abbas can never extend recognition to Israel as "the Jewish state," because there are close to 20 percent of Palestinians among Israel's citizens and the recognition that Netanyahu demands of Israel as "the Jewish state" would be considered, in Palestinian opinion, a betrayal of them.

His critics also accuse Netanyahu of refusing to take yes for an answer. Abbas has said he'll have no more claims after an agreed re-partition of Palestine. He's said he'd visit Safed, his birthplace, as a tourist. But for Netanyahu, implicit diplomatic assurances are not good enough. He wants a historic and unequivocal pledge from the mouths (and pens) of the Palestinian leadership, a pledge that ordinary Palestinians will understand and that will bind them henceforward. A profound reversal, in other words, of the Palestinian national geist.

But, even sweeping aside (for the sake of the argument) the above-mentioned criticisms, and even accepting (ditto) the cogency of Netanyahu's position, it rests on a gaping lacuna: Is he prepared to extend the same far-reaching recognition to the proposed Palestinian state in the two-state solution? Is he ready to recognize it as "the Palestinian state," implying the same rightfulness, legitimacy and permanence that he demands from the Palestinians in their recognition of "the Jewish state"?

Much depends, of course, on the definition of "recognize." By Netanyahu's lights, this is not ultimately a philological question but rather an historical, religious, indeed almost metaphysical issue in which millions of people are required to define not only their neighbors but themselves.

His demand of the Palestinians obviously implies a parallel requirement of recognition by Israelis of the definition and destiny of the Palestinian state. Here's the catch. A great many Israelis, including many who desperately desire a two-state peace deal with the Palestinians ..., do not, cannot, extend their sincere recognition to "the Palestinian state" as a rightful and permanent, sovereign presence in the Holy Land (Eretz Yisrael.) ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

11) The State of Two States for the week of October 20, Israel Policy Forum, October 25, 2013

Secretary Kerry met with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Rome for a seven hour discussion on several pressing issues. He also announced that the Israeli and Palestinian negotiating teams were sitting down for their 13th round of talks. However, regarding the individual Israeli and Palestinian relationships with the European Union, there seem to be some discrepancies. In the last month, the Palestinian Authority sent letters to 50 European countries, urging them to clamp down on companies doing business with settlements in the West Bank. While Israel is trying to thwart these measures and bring about a softening of anti-settlement sanctions, President Abbas followed up on this campaign by consistently calling upon private European companies to boycott the settlements during his state visit to Europe this week.

Some recent quotes:

“The agreement will enable Israeli industries to take part in a market of tens of millions of dollars and for scientists to expand their knowledge by participating in large European projects. It will also serve as the basis for future cooperation projects with the European Commission.” – Space Agency director Menahem Kidron commenting on the Israel Space Agency and the European Union signing its first cooperation agreement in the field of satellite navigation, which represents Israeli efforts to forge a closer relationship with the EU (Monday, 10/21)

“I have said a number of times, President Obama has said a number of times, and I reiterate today, no deal is better than a bad deal. But if this can be solved satisfactorily, diplomatically, it is clearly better for everyone.” – Secretary Kerry speaking about the U.S. approach concerning Iran at a press conference with Prime Minister Netanyahu in Rome (Wednesday, 10/23)

“I think you’re right. I think no deal is better than a bad deal...The second thing we’re discussing all the time... is to advance the peace with the Palestinians. That peace is premised on mutual recognition of two states for two peoples – the Palestinian state for the Palestinian people mirrored by the Jewish state for the Jewish people.” – Prime Minister Netanyahu speaking at the same press conference (Wednesday, 10/23)

“Today, Netanyahu can fulfill the vision he outlined to me 25 years ago. He has an opportunity granted to few leaders: He can guarantee that Israel remain both a Jewish and a democratic state in perpetuity. And right now, he might well be the only man in Israel in a position to do that.” – S. Daniel Abraham arguing that it is the moment for Prime Minister Netanyahu to decide Israel’s fate as a Jewish and democratic nation (Wednesday, 10/23)

“The U.S. vowed to take action starting from early January if there is no progress. Washington promised it would present viable suggestions for ways to end the thaw.” – Arab League spokesman Nasif Hata, expressing pessimism about the negotiations and the potential for deeper US involvement (Thursday, 10/24)

“I call on European companies and foreign companies doing business in the settlements to put an end to their activities... Such activities are a violation of international law.” – President Abbas speaking after a meeting with European Council president Herman van Rompuy in Brussels (Thursday, 10/24)

[Read the entire list here.](#)

12) Palestinians ask 50 countries to demand commercial sanctions on settlements

Barak Ravid, Ha'aretz, October 25, 2013

In a new campaign aimed at promoting international support for a settlement boycott, the Palestinian Authority last month sent letters to 50 countries, urging them to clamp down on companies doing business with Jewish settlements in the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

A senior Palestinian official told the Financial Times in a report published late Thursday that the Palestinian Foreign Ministry had requested that the governments addressed in the letters issue stringent guidelines to companies operating within their borders that conduct business with the settlements. The countries, it was stated, should instruct companies to either freeze their business dealings with the settlements or withdraw their investments altogether. Commercial activity in the settlements is illegal and constitutes a violation of international law, the letters said.

Examples of the companies targeted in the new Palestinian campaign are French environmental conglomerate Veolia Environment, which operates projects in East Jerusalem, and British-based global security giant G4S, which supplies equipment for Israeli roadblocks in the West Bank.

Dr. Muhammad Shtayyeh, a former Palestinian minister and a member of the negotiation team in the current peace talks with Israel, told the Times that the campaign was also aimed at achieving the suspension or termination of business dealings with Israeli companies and financial institutions, such as Bank Hapoalim and Bank Leumi, that both operate in the West Bank and have overseas branches.

It was the role of every country, Shtayyeh emphasized, to make it clear to the companies operating within its borders that investments in West Bank settlements were illegal.

The letters were sent to countries in Latin America and Europe, as well as to South Africa, Australia, Japan and South Korea. Shtayyeh noted that letters had also been dispatched to Arab investors in companies that have business dealings with West Bank settlements.

The Palestinian official stated that the PA has also asked the 50 countries to strongly advise settlers who hold their citizenship that they were breaking the law, by continuing to reside in a West Bank settlement.

In recent months, a number of European Union member states, including the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, have begun to warn the companies located within their boundaries against investing in the settlements. A few weeks ago, Dutch infrastructure giant Royal HaskoningDHV announced that it had decided to withdraw from a wastewater treatment plant project in East Jerusalem, because it would be built beyond the Green Line (Israel's pre-1967 border.) The planned plant would have been a partnership between the company and the Jerusalem municipality.

The new Palestinian campaign against the settlements comes in the wake of the EU's announcement several months ago regarding the imposition of sanctions on Jewish settlements in the West Bank. ...

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

13) What does it mean to be anti-Israel? Mira Sucharov, Ha'aretz, October 26, 2013

The debate over loyalty to Israel continues to rage, this time fueled by the Anti-Defamation League's issuing of a list of the "Top 10 most influential and active anti-Israel groups in the United States." Given the increasingly pressing debates over Israel's future as a Jewish and democratic state, what does it mean to be "anti-Israel?"

As Daniel Treiman reported in JTA, J Street and New Israel Fund expressed public displeasure over the very idea of the list, as well as the inclusion of certain groups, such as the Muslim Public Affairs Council. MPAC actually does support a two-state solution. Other groups, like JVP, in Treiman's description, "neither concurred with nor explicitly disputed the ADL's characterization of it [JVP] as an anti-Israel organization."

Leaving aside for the moment the ethical dubiousness of drawing up such lists when the breadth of policy discourse at this juncture is so essential for conflict resolution, it is indeed puzzling why some of these groups are included. For example, given that Jewish Voice for Peace does not explicitly support the two-state solution (neither does it explicitly support the one-state solution), should it be considered "anti-Israel"? Some would say yes. Yet despite not using buzz words like support for a "Jewish state," JVP's platform doesn't necessarily deny the Jewish right to statehood: "Israelis and Palestinians have the right to security, sovereignty, and self-determination within political entities of their own choosing," JVP's mission statement says.

In this era of apparent policy deadlock on the peace process, determining what it means to support Israel is becoming an increasingly murky task. Far-right voices are increasingly advocating West Bank annexation without granting the Palestinian residents citizenship, an arrangement resembling apartheid. And many voices on the left are deciding that a Jewish and democratic state simply cannot be squared. Not surprisingly, these critics are siding with democracy.

Some of these voices include committed Israelis, Israelis who are Jewish, had long embraced the Zionist dream, served their country in various public ways, and who are now questioning whether the two-state dream is still possible. Consider Avraham Burg, a former speaker of the Knesset, who told me in a 2011 interview that he "still believe[s] that a two-state solution is the best one. But if not, then what?" And that "we have to see how we can live together in a one-state solution." A year later, Burg outlined his vision in a New York Times op-ed: Israel would shift to becoming a "democracy based on a progressive, civil constitution; a democracy that enforces the distinction between ethnicity and citizenship, between synagogue and state; a democracy that upholds the values of freedom and equality...."

Or Diaspora Jews prominent in scholarly circles, those like Ian Lustick, a founder of the Israel Studies Association, who caused a stir when he recently wrote in the New York Times that he is ready to consider alternatives to what he now calls the two-state "illusion."

Or consider what Dahlia Scheindlin, an Israeli pollster and analyst wrote last year in +972 magazine. "I have been a "committed two-stater" ever since college, when I was old enough to think about it, long before I moved to Israel," Scheindlin wrote. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)