

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
December 10, 2015



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Christmas Blessings, Peace and Wonder in the New Year to all our readers!
After a brief Christmas break the next Middle East Notes will be available on December 31, 2015.

This week's featured articles and links focus on Secretary of State John Kerry's critical words at the Saban Forum in Washington DC that Israel moving towards a one State reality, the impression of other Obama administration officials that the Democratic Party and Israel are pulling further apart, calls that Israel be recognized as a de facto bi-national State since it is the only sovereign between the river and the sea, negative and positive responses to the present "knife intifada", and other articles of interest.

Commentary: *A new name, "the one-and-a-half state solution," is now being given to the policies of the current Israeli government: Israel controls most of the West Bank and the Palestinians have an autonomous zone comprised of several unconnected cantons. The Palestinians, the White House, the U.S. Department of State, many young U.S. Jews, and most of the nations of the world oppose such a solution. The Israeli government seems content to stay with the status quo, hoping for a more "understanding" U.S. President despite growing non-support from the U.S. Democratic party. The "knife intifada" is seen by many as a spontaneous hope-less response by young Palestinian to this "one-and-a-half state solution," with its continuing oppression and repression. The collapse of the Palestinian Authority, with concomitant demands on Israel to take full military, economic and social control of the West Bank, is becoming more of a possibility.*

- Barak Ravid in Haaretz reports that on December 5 in a speech harshly critical of Israel, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry warned that current trends in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are leading to a one-state reality. He also said that if the current situation continues, it's not clear how long Palestinian Authority can survive.
- In another Haaretz article, Barak Ravid suggests that the conclusion reached by Obama administration officials, as well as those who might hold key positions in the Clinton administration, is that the Democratic Party and the Israeli government are living on parallel universes that are drifting apart.
- Musa Hasdeya writes in Haaretz that there is no more time for stagnation. He calls for a binational-state as will be established between the Jordan River and the sea, encompassing the territories of Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. All the Arab and Jewish people living in it will have equal citizenship and equal rights under one combined entity.
- Noam Sheizaf writes in Haaretz that the Israeli regime administrates different sets of rights for different ethnic groups. In fact there is no State of Palestine. Israel is the only sovereign between the river and the sea.
- Eitan Haber asks in Ynetnews how can an army, no matter how big and strong it is, prevent a 13-year-old boy from stabbing an innocent citizen on the street?
- A.B. Yehoshua notes in Ynetnews that after all the condemnations and threats Prime Minister Netanyahu has issued since the start of the 'knife intifada,' it's time for him to turn to young Palestinians in a human, direct manner in a bid to stop the violence and offer hope for a better future for them and for us.

1) [Kerry at Saban Forum: Current Trends Are Leading to a One-state Reality](#), Barak Ravid, Haaretz, December 5, 2015

"In a speech harshly critical of Israel, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry warned on Saturday that current trends in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are leading to a one-state reality.

"Addressing the Saban Forum in Washington, D.C., Kerry also warned of the Palestinian Authority's collapse and called on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to prove that his support for the two-state solution isn't just a slogan but a part of Israeli policy." ...

"Kerry made clear in his speech that the U.S. remains committed to the two-state solution, but asserted that the two sides are the ones who must take decisions that affect their future.

"The secretary of state noted that despite Netanyahu's expression of support for the establishment of a Palestinian state, several Israeli cabinet ministers have declared their opposition to the move.

"Kerry said that if the current situation continues, it is unclear how long the Palestinian Authority can survive.

"If there is a risk the Palestinian Authority might collapse and Israel wants it to survive, shouldn't Israel do more to help sustain it?" Kerry said.

"Without the Palestinian Authority, Israel will be responsible for civil administration of the West Bank - it costs billions," Kerry said. "Without the Palestinian Authority's security forces, the IDF would be forced to deploy tens of thousands of soldiers to the West Bank indefinitely." ...

"The secretary of state said that the two-state solution for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict mustn't become a "slogan," but warned that "current trends are leading for a one-state reality."

"We have to be honest about what a one-state solution looks like," Kerry said, warning that in such a case Israel couldn't maintain its character as Jewish and democratic, asking rhetorically what the international reaction would be to such a scenario, and saying that true peace with its neighbors will not be possible under such conditions.

"The one-state solution is no solution at all for a Jewish, democratic Israel living in peace," he warned.

2) [The U.S. Has Realized What Israel Really Wants Is a 1.5-state Solution](#), Barak Ravid, Haaretz, Dec 7, 2015

"One thing that stood out during the three days of discussions at the Saban Forum were the stunned glances that the American participants, the vast majority of whom came from the Democratic side of the U.S. political map, exchanged with each other as they heard what representatives of the Israeli right had to say." ...

"The lip service that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu continues to pay to the two-state solution no longer makes any impression on almost anyone in Washington." ...

"The conclusion reached by many senior members of the Obama administration, as well as those who might hold key positions in the Clinton administration, is that the Democratic Party in the U.S. and the Israeli government are two entities living in parallel universes that are drifting apart and are unlikely to converge. A similar feeling is harbored by numerous senior officials in Jerusalem and the Israeli right. The American side can't

understand why Israel isn't obsessively searching for a solution to the conflict with the Palestinians, while the Israeli side can't understand why the entire world is so obsessed with the Palestinian issue.

"This is especially disconcerting in light of the fact that this attitude is held by a party that represents at least half of Americans. It is even more worrying that most U.S. Jews, who identify with the Democratic Party, who voted for Obama and will vote for Clinton, also feel this way." ...

3) [Who's afraid of a binational state?](#), Musa Hasdeya, Haaretz, December 3, 2015

"For many years Israeli politics has been struggling, zig-zagging and fluctuating between two ideas to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. One is to establish a single binational state and the other is to establish two states for two peoples. Each idea has enthusiastic supporters and opponents, as well as those who recoil from both in alarm. But in practice, neither idea is being advanced.

"Until recently I, too, believed in the two-states-for-two-nations solution. But when I look around me, I see no chance of transition from the idea stage to the implementation stage. So I want to call for the binational-state solution, which I think is the most appropriate for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"Instead of separating the land into two states, one state will be established between the Jordan River and the sea, encompassing the territories of Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. All the Arab and Jewish people living in it will have equal citizenship and equal rights under one combined entity. Some 6 million Jews and 5.5 million Palestinians live between the river and the sea and I think they've all understood by now that you cannot really divide the state. Not even Jerusalem/Al-Quds. All the more so because Benjamin Netanyahu doesn't really want to give the Palestinians a state. So if this is the way things are, why not go all the way?" ...

"I'm not deluding myself – even if it works, and even if all the problems on the way to the binational state are solved, other issues and controversies will pop up. Israel was never short of divisions and ruptures. But the important thing is that the state be social democratic, not just nationalist. Does this sound like a pipe dream? Maybe. But I believe it's possible. An independent Palestinian state doesn't really have an economic raison d'être and there's no need for one, either. Already most of the construction and industrial workers in Israel are Palestinian. So let's take it one step forward and make a dream come true." ...

4) [The 'Conflict' Is Not a Diplomatic Problem - It's an Israeli Problem](#), Noam Sheizaf, Haaretz, November 24, 2015

"Listening to foreign news about the conflict, one might think that there exists a sovereign Palestine, which has some sort of territorial dispute with the State of Israel. Every once in a while, one of these parties gets violent; at other times they talk to each other, but with little success. Well-intentioned mediators come and go, looking for a formula that will end the hostilities. The average news reader is left wondering how come they didn't solve this problem yet.

"The answer is this: The story has very little to do with the reality on the ground. There is no Palestine. Israel is the only sovereign between the river and the sea. Israel controls all borders; the currency is the New Israeli Shekel and the central bank is Israel's. Israel controls the registration of the population, the ports and the airspace. Even the Palestinian police exist to protect Israel, not Palestinians.

"Under Israeli sovereignty, Jews have all the rights. Palestinians don't. Those of them born west of the Green Line have (almost) full rights, but they are heavily supervised and discriminated against. Some 300,000 Palestinians in East Jerusalem are "residents": They can't take part in general elections, they can't purchase state land and their status can be stripped from them, either as individuals or as a collective, as Israel is currently thinking of doing to some 100,000 of them. Finally, there are the Palestinians in the occupied territories, who

are under the control of the military regime, are not represented at all in the Israeli system and, for almost half a century, have been tried in military courts, under military law.

“The ‘conflict’ is actually an internal Israeli problem – a regime that administrates different sets of rights for different ethnic groups. Instead of racial segregation, the system works according to classes of citizenship, but the output is not that different. This is not a temporary situation. It’s the reality most Israelis and Palestinians have known all their lives.” ...

“It’s a horrible dynamic, for both Israeli Jews and Palestinians. If we would like to avoid more violence, we should end the “conflict resolution” and diplomacy narrative, and return to the reality on the ground. The simple truth is that we Israelis don’t have the right to deny Palestinians their freedom, even if we decided to do so “democratically.”

“It’s time for the international community to place a demand – backed with meaningful action – to respect the Palestinians’ rights.” ...

5) [The IDF cannot win this time](#), Eitan Haber, Ynetnews, November 28, 2015

“Israeli leaders, during every period and in every government, like to use big words: We'll eradicate, we'll destroy, we'll win, and similar words offered by the Hebrew dictionary. But beyond the public stand, in the Prime Minister's Office in Jerusalem or in the Defense Ministry in Tel Aviv, in front of the IDF chief of staff, the Shin Bet head or his representative and the relevant IDF generals, they wring their hands, raise their voices during the night discussions and ask those present: Well, what do we do now?” ...

“How can an army, no matter how big and strong it is, prevent a 13-year-old boy from stabbing an innocent civilian on the street?

“The IDF has Iron Dome batteries, which cost taxpayers hundreds of millions, laser cannons, the latest innovation in laser screens, advances cyber means - and what more can we ask for? And what do the Palestinians have? Knives, primitive guns and rockets and missiles which cost almost nothing, a few hundred dollars at the most. We, thank God, have missiles which cost millions of dollars.

“So why are missiles which cost us hundreds of thousands of dollars per unit incapable of defeating the primitive missiles which cost only hundreds of dollars, although they are much, much "smarter" than them? How is it possible that because of kitchen knives, tens of thousands of people are fearfully closing themselves up in their homes? Why are we categorizing every person with an Arabic accent as a suspected terrorist?

“The answer, for the moment, is that the Palestinian despair has recently met the Israeli despair. The knife cannot win, but it holds the Palestinian problem "in a picture" and is making the world believe that all its troubles are concealed in it. For the Palestinians, that's enough.

“The Palestinians feel they have nothing to lose, and are going out with knives to intimidate us. We are scared and show our panic. The Palestinians are encouraged and believe they will win. They still don’t know that both sides will have no other choice but to find a way to reach a diplomatic solution. It's very simple: Unlike them, we Israelis have nowhere else to go to.” ...

6) [Netanyahu must talk directly to the Palestinians](#), A. B. Yehoshua, Ynetnews, November 29, 2015

“Since the start of the ‘knife intifada,’ Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has faced the microphone many times: He has condemned, expressed anger, threatened to take retaliation steps and promised that Israel's security forces are capable of overcoming the attack.

“But there is one thing he has failed to do: He has failed to turn to the young Palestinians in a human, direct manner, offering them hope, in a bid to stop the acts of murder and outline a possibility for a better future for them and for us.” ...

“Once the Zionist presence in the Land of Israel began, it was clear to the Jews that they would not be able to defeat their enemies or make them disappear, and that even the most serious blows they would deal them would only be temporary and partial, and that sooner or later they would have to make great efforts in order to allow the Arabs and the Palestinians to recognize the legitimacy of the Israeli existence, next to them and not instead of them. And so, with great difficulties, they achieved a certain formal legitimacy from Egypt and Jordan after the peace treaties were signed, but the Palestinian issue remained the main obstacle.” ...

“Desperation and indiscriminate killing and a quick, desperate retaliation without a trial are the most lethal combination possible between individuals from the two people, which should - according to one scenario - live in a joint bi-national state or - according to a second scenario - in two neighboring states with a long, shared border.

“A leader which does not only have a short-term vision, but also thinks about the future, should realize that his words count. Beyond the battalions - and in the future perhaps the brigades too - which he sends and will send to every junction, beyond the demolition of houses, closures and additional roadblocks, he must also tell the young Palestinians that there is still hope for coexistence in peace and that they must therefore not lose it completely and only choose revenge and suicide.”

Other Articles of Interest:

A) [Global Message from Bethlehem: Bethlehem is a beacon for humanity, Vera Baboun, Mayor of Bethlehem, HCEF, December 2, 2015](#)

In Palestine, the land which yearns for peace and justice, I live the realities of my Palestinian nation; realities of hegemonic occupation, systematic land confiscation, brutal wars, and an Apartheid Wall.

B) [Peace in the Holy Land -- an elusive dream, Tony Magliano, NCR, Dec. 7, 2015](#)

As Christians around the world prepare during Advent to celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace, much of the world is at war and preparing for more war -- more bombs, more drones, more boots on the ground.

C) [CMEP Bulletin – New Peace Talks – November 25, 2015](#)

D) [CMEP Bulletin - No Christmas in Bethlehem, December 4, 2015](#)

E) [Abbas speaks at Climate Change Conference in Paris, Palestine News Network, December 1, 2015](#)

On December 1, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas blamed Israel for all the ecological problems in the occupied Palestinian territories and stated that its ongoing violations of international law regarding preserving Palestine’s environment are a major challenge.

F) [It’s time for an Israeli intifada, Zvi Bar’el, Haaretz, November 25, 2015](#)

Israel has become a state besieged by its own occupation, but who said that only Palestinians can wage an intifada?

G) [Palestinian groups present 'war crimes' evidence to the ICC, Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man, +972, November 23, 2015](#)

The International Criminal Court prosecutor is conducting a 'preliminary examination' into the 2014 Gaza war. But are Israeli officials at higher risk of prosecution for illegally building settlements in the West Bank?

- H) [**The Reign of Absurdiocy, Uri Avnery, Antiwar.com, November 29, 2015**](#)
There is no such thing as "international terrorism". To declare war on "international terrorism" is nonsense. Terrorism is a weapon. Like cannon. We would laugh at somebody who declares war on "international artillery".
- I) [**8 steps to peaceful two-state solution, Author Uri Savir, Al Monitor, November 29, 2015**](#)
With the current total diplomatic stalemate regarding Israel and Palestine, one can hear emanating calls from different sides of the Israeli and Palestinian political spectrums for unilateral action in order to break the status quo.
- J) [**Nobody is coming to end the occupation, Michael Schaeffer Omer-Man, +972, November 29, 2015**](#)
The Americans are disengaging from the conflict, the EU won't go beyond half-measures, and the Palestinian Authority is on the verge of implosion. So what happens next?
- K) [**The Stealth Campaign in Congress to Support Israeli Settlements, Lara Friedman, Peace Now, December 1, 2015**](#)
Since the beginning of this year, an unprecedented but little-noticed campaign has been waged in Congress—backed by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and others—in support of Israeli settlements. At the core of this campaign is an effort to legislate a change in U.S. policy, which since 1967 has remained firmly opposed to settlements, under both Republican and Democratic presidents.
- L) [**Changing the Conversation on Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, Lara Friedman, APN, November 20, 2015**](#)
Support for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) targeting Israel is growing, generating great angst and solution-searching amongst Israel supporters – including pro-peace progressives – in the United States and elsewhere in the world.
- M) [**Letter From An Israeli Activist, Matan Kaminer, IMEMC, November 30, 2015**](#)
Anti-colonial Israelis have allowed themselves to be cowed into silence. We have let ourselves be cowed into silence in recent times. I see this as the result of two closely interrelated processes: first, our growing isolation from the rest of the Jewish population through the precipitous decline of what is known as the "Zionist left;" and second, the climate of increasingly popular intolerance and mob violence towards Palestinians and "leftists."