

Middle East Notes
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
December 19, 2013



Blessings of the Christmas Season to all! The next issue of Middle East Notes will be available on January 9, 2014. May the New Year see ever-increasing peace and justice throughout the Middle East and all the world!

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 presents articles concerning Israeli security issues, the future of Israel, drone fears in Gaza, continuing boycott moves, violations of Palestinian rights not only in the occupied territories but Israel itself, reflections on Mandela, apartheid and Israel's leaders, and other issues.

- The Dec. 9 CMEP Bulletin highlights continuing peace negotiations, security plans, and various readings pertaining to the Israel/Palestine conflict. Also featured is a report from Warren Clark, CMEP Executive Director, with reflections from his recent visit to Israel/Palestine.
- Uri Avnery in Gush Shalom notes that on the occasion of his 90th birthday, a panel discussion took place on the question: "Will Israel exist in another 90 years?"
- The PLO-Negotiations Affairs Department has circulated the November 15, 1988 Declaration of Independence of the State of Palestine, 25 years after its first publication.
- Jonathan Cook in Al Jazeera notes that there are many things to fear in Gaza but for most Palestinians there the anxiety-inducing soundtrack to their lives is the constant buzz of the remotely piloted aircraft – better known as "drones" – that hover in the skies above.
- Ron Kampeas reports that during the recent annual meeting of the American Studies Association, Israel was named the colonizer, the settler state, and the perpetrator of apartheid. The participants who favored boycotting Israeli universities far outnumbered those opposed.
- Gideon Levy writes that the settlements are an all-Israeli project and the boycott can't be limited to them. It appears that international sanctions work and that a boycott is a tool like no other.
- Michael Sfar notes that the military regime in the West Bank, in which Israelis and Palestinians are subject to different laws and regulations, creates a methodical and systemic violation of the Palestinians' rights to equality and dignity.
- Joseph Massa in Al Jazeera writes that the tragedy of the Palestinians is that their oppressors are the victims of Europe, which led him to call the Palestinians "the victims of the victims."
- Muhammad Shtayyeh in Ha'aretz notes that Israel is being asked to decide whether it wants the two-state solution on the 1967 borders. At the same time, the world must realize that bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians are not the answer.
- Gideon Levy states in Ha'aretz that neither Peres nor Netanyahu have any right to eulogize Mandela as both are responsible for undermining his legacy and establishing the (non-identical) twin of the regime he battled.
- Amira Hass also in Ha'aretz states that the meticulous sub-division of people in Israel is guided by a principle of inequality that benefits the ruling class. He believes that apartheid exists across the entire country of Israel, from the sea to the Jordan River.
- Harriet Sherwood writes in the Guardian that the death of Nelson Mandela has given fresh impetus to Palestinian efforts to portray the Israeli occupation as a form of apartheid that should be confronted with a similar international campaign that took on South Africa's white regime.

1) CMEP Bulletin for December 9, 2013

Security arrangements impeding talks: United States Secretary of State John Kerry was back in the region this week to talk to Israeli and Palestinian leaders. This time, much of the focus was placed on security arrangements. U.S. Gen. John Allen briefed the parties on the “perception of the U.S.” regarding security arrangements in a two-state solution.

Allen is the former commander of the NATO forces in Afghanistan tasked with coming up with a solution to Israel’s security concerns in the Jordan Valley and across the Jordan River. Geoffery Aronson writes that this task is noteworthy because the U.S. “has traditionally bowed to Israel’s own expansive assessments on this issue, so the very fact that U.S. policymakers are instructing their own generals and colonels to think critically about defining and addressing Israel’s security needs is a topic of concern to many Israeli officials and politicians, who will not easily surrender their absolute control of both the negotiating agenda or its practical elements.”

The elements of General Allen’s findings are unknown. Secretary Kerry, the only official authorized to speak on the status of the negotiations only told reporters that ideas were presented because General Allen had substantial things to present “that could help both the Palestinians and the Israelis to make judgments about some of the choices that are important to arriving at an agreement.”

Americans for Peace Now lauded the involvement of General Allen saying his plan “is an important development that signals the Obama administration’s willingness to play an active role in advancing the negotiations...”

The fertile Jordan Valley issue is one of the many sticking points in the negotiations. According to Israeli human rights group B’Tselem, the Jordan Valley and northern Dead Sea area makes up 28.8 percent of the West Bank. An estimated 80,000 Palestinians live in the area and 9,400 Israeli settlers reside in the 37 settlements.

Israel wants to maintain military control over the border between the West Bank and Jordan. Palestinians find a military presence in a future state of Palestine to be unacceptable. ...

In the Hebrew daily paper Maariv, senior diplomats said General Allen’s plan would include “guarantees, advanced technological equipment and unique weaponry” which would enable Israel to either “reduce or to replace its military presence along the Jordan River.”

We don’t know many specifics but both sides appear to be cool towards General Allen’s proposals. Deputy Minister of Defense Danny Danon told Israel’s army radio that, “The Americans are proposing joint control over the crossing points (into Jordan)...From the Israeli point of view, there will not be any Palestinian presence at the crossing points.” An anonymous Palestinian official said that “The Palestinian side rejected [the proposals] because they would only lead to prolonging and maintaining the occupation.”

While little apparent progress was made during this week’s trip, Secretary Kerry says he plans to be back in the region in a week or two. ...

[Read the entire Bulletin here.](#)

***From the Desk of Warren Clark
Churches for Middle East Peace Executive Director***

I recently returned from trips to the Holy Land with members of CMEP's Board, Leadership Council, CMEP Field Director Rev. Doris Warrell, and others. We were updating ourselves on the humanitarian situation and prospects for resolving this seemingly endless conflict, while looking for ways to advance CMEP's mission of education and political advocacy.

Close up, primordial fears and concerns have not changed much. An eloquent rabbi working for conflict reduction and reconciliation confides he is still terrified of a nuclear holocaust coming from Iran. The outlook for reconciliation seems little changed. Four months of negotiations brokered by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry have yielded few visible results. We were told that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas does not engage much in "retail politics." There is no sign the time is ripe for the kind of bold conciliatory gesture made by Sadat that led to the peace agreement between Egypt and Israel.

The injustice imposed by the occupation continues in its many manifestations as does sporadic violence. We met a Palestinian family who were evicted from their home of over 50 years in East Jerusalem as part of a proclaimed program to unilaterally change the character of their neighborhood from Palestinian to Jewish. We spoke with a Jerusalem resident whose husband from the West Bank could not live with her legally in Jerusalem. Residents of Gaza are routinely denied permits to visit family members in the West Bank for unspecified "security reasons." Demolitions and demolition orders continue for Palestinian homes, animal pens and schools in the West Bank for lack of building permits that are seldom granted, while the pace of building Israeli settlement housing steadily increases. Plans remain in force to build the security barrier across the Cremisan Valley near Bethlehem that would separate a Catholic convent and school from a monastery and would cut normal access of indigenous farmers, including Christians, from their fields. Forces in Gaza still plan violence against Israel and occasionally fire off rockets.

While the need to end occupation and resolve the conflict is self-evident, details can be complex. We visited the large settlement of Ariel. When negotiators speak of the need for a contiguous Palestinian state, they are referring to Ariel, located deep in the midst of the West Bank, extending 13 miles from the Green Line. We visited one of its several Israeli-owned industries; about half of its workforce is Palestinian. If Ariel remains part of Israel it could effectively block easy road access to much of the northern part of the Palestinian West Bank. If it becomes part of a Palestinian state, could it retain its Israeli residents and its Palestinian jobs?

The Middle East is now in the midst of tectonic political shifts that are changing the political landscape created by Britain and France after the First World War. I believe U.S. diplomacy over the past year has taken advantage of these shifts to lay the groundwork for progress in managing the conflict between Israel its neighbors. This change is due in part to the new government in Tehran that now may be willing to negotiate a deal that would satisfy western demands to convincingly forego nuclear weapons in return for a limited nuclear capacity and reduced sanctions. Israel's concern about the security threat from Iran has taken precedence over negotiations with Palestinians. If there is a security deal between the Great Powers (U.S., UK, France, Germany, Russia, and China) and Iran, it will now be harder for Israel to not to consider serious negotiations with the Palestinians. ...

[Read the entire report here.](#)

2) 90 years from now

Uri Avnery, Gush Shalom, November 2, 2013

On the occasion of my 90th birthday, a panel discussion of eminent historians took place in Tel Aviv's Tsavta hall on the question: "Will Israel exist in another 90 years?" There follows a slightly shortened version of my own remarks. [*The panel was also referenced in [this Bradley Burston column](#), cited in the November 14 Middle East Notes.*]

Will Israel exist in another 90 years? The very question is typical of Israel. No one would take it seriously in England or Germany, or even in other states born from immigration, like Australia or the USA. Yet here, people speak of "existential dangers" all the time. A Palestinian state is an existential danger. The Iranian bomb is an existential danger. Why? They will have their bomb, we have our bomb, there will be a "balance of terror." So what? There is something in our national character that fosters self-doubt, uncertainty. The Holocaust? Perhaps an unconscious sense of guilt? A result of eternal war, or even the reason for it?

Let me state right from the beginning: Yes, I believe Israel will exist in 90 years. The question is: what kind of Israel? Will it be a country your great-great-great-grandsons and daughters will be proud of? A state they will want to live in?

On the day the state was founded, I was 24 years old. My comrades and I ... didn't think the event was very important. We were preparing ourselves for the battle that was to take place that night, and the speeches of politicians in Tel Aviv did not really interest us. We knew that if we won the war there would be a state, and if not, there would be neither a state nor us. I am not a nostalgic person. I have no nostalgia for Israel before (the war of) 1967, as some of my colleagues here have expressed. A lot was wrong then, too. Huge amounts of Arab property were expropriated. But let's not look back. Let's look at Israel as it is now, and ask ourselves: where do we go from here?

If Israel continues on its present course, there will be disaster. The first stage will be apartheid. It already exists in the occupied territories, and it will spread to Israel proper. The descent into the abyss will not be dramatic or precipitous, it will be gradual, almost imperceptible.

Slowly pressure on Israel will grow. Demographics will do their work. Sometime before the 90 years are up, Israel will be compelled to grant civil rights to the Palestinians. There will be an Arab majority. Israel will be an Arab-majority state. Some people may welcome that. But it will be the end of the Zionist dream. Zionism will become a historic episode. This state will be just another country where Jews live as a minority – those who remain here.

There are those who say: "There just is no solution." If so, we should all obtain foreign passports. Some dream of the so-called "one-state solution". Well, during the last half-century, many states in which diverse nations lived together have broken apart. A partial list: the Soviet Union, Cyprus, Yugoslavia, then Serbia, Czechoslovakia, Sudan. There has not been a single instance of two nations freely uniting in one state. Not one.

I am not afraid of any military threat. There is no real danger. In our time, no country possessing nuclear arms can be destroyed by force. We are quite able to defend ourselves. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

3) November 15, 1988: The Declaration of Independence of the State of Palestine **Palestine News Network, November 15, 2013**

On November 15, 1988, the Palestinian National Council, then led by late President Yasser Arafat, declared the independence of the State of Palestine on the 1967 border. This was the historic Palestinian compromise: we accepted that our state would exist on only 22 percent of our historic homeland. Israel responded by colonizing more of our land and entrenching its control over our country. The possibility of a two-state solution is quickly fading away. The international community must act decisively in order to salvage the prospects of a just and lasting peace.

The Declaration contains an overt acceptance that "the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 181, of 1947, which partitioned Palestine into two states [...] provides the legal basis for the right of the Palestinian Arab people to national sovereignty and independence." Our recognition of the authority of Resolution 181, combined with our acknowledgment (in the same session of the PNC) of UN Security Council Resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as the basis for settling the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, signaled our formal acceptance of the two-state solution.

In the twenty-five years since the Declaration was made, we have campaigned vigorously for an end to Israeli occupation and the attainment of a two-state solution on the 1967 border, including the UN recognition of the State of Palestine as a "nonmember state" on November 29th, 2012. In 1991, three years after our Declaration of Independence, we entered negotiations with Israelis in Madrid. Beginning with the Oslo Accords in September 1993, we signed numerous agreements with the State of Israel in hopes of ending decades of occupation, colonization, oppression and exile.

However, since the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, Israel has strengthened its control over the occupied State of Palestine. While we worked on building our independent state, Israel continued its colonization of our land. In 1989, there were 189,900 Israeli settlers living in the Palestine. Today, the population of Israeli settlers is over half a million. Meanwhile, the construction of settlement-related infrastructure, such as the network of settler bypass roads and tunnels, the Jerusalem Light Rail and the Annexation Wall that snakes in and out of the occupied West Bank, serve both to strengthen links between Israel and its illegal settlements in Palestine and to disrupt or destroy the ability of Palestinians to travel between their communities or to reach their schools, hospitals, families, work, places of worship and arable land.

The international community's recognition of the State of Palestine on all of the territory occupied by Israel in 1967 is an important first step. Beyond recognizing, States have responsibilities when confronted with serious breaches of international law, even if they are not directly party to it. Specifically, all states are obliged not to recognize as lawful a situation arising from a breach to international law, not to render aid or assistance in maintaining the illegal situation, as well as a duty to respect and promote the right to self-determination. By allowing trade with settlements or any other connection with the Israeli settlement enterprise, members of the international community are implicitly recognizing a situation arising from Israel's violations of international law, effectively rendering aid or assistance in maintaining an illegal situation, and in the process contributing to the denial of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination.

25 years after the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, our historic compromise, the international community must assume its responsibility in order to end Israel's culture of impunity by reaching a just and lasting peace, including the establishment of a free, sovereign and democratic State of Palestine on the 1967 border with East Jerusalem as its capital as well as reaching a solution to all final status issues based on international law.

Source: PLO-Negotiations Affairs Department

4) Gaza: Life and death under Israel's drones Jonathan Cook, Al-Jazeera, November 28, 2013

There are many things to fear in Gaza: Attacks from Israel's Apache helicopters and F-16 fighter jets, the coastal enclave's growing isolation, the regular blackouts from power shortages, increasingly polluted drinking water and rivers of sewage flooding the streets.

Meanwhile, for most Palestinians in Gaza the anxiety-inducing soundtrack to their lives is the constant buzz of the remotely piloted aircraft – better known as “drones” – that hover in the skies above.

Drones are increasingly being used for surveillance and extra-judicial execution in parts of the Middle East, especially by the US, but in nowhere more than Gaza has the drone become a permanent fixture of life. More than 1.7 million Palestinians, confined by Israel to a small territory in one of the most densely populated areas in the world, are subject to near continual surveillance and intermittent death raining down from the sky.

There is little hope of escaping the zenana – an Arabic word referring to a wife's relentless nagging that Gazans have adopted to describe the drone's oppressive noise and their feelings about it. According to statistics compiled by human rights groups in Gaza, civilians are the chief casualties of what Israel refers to as “surgical” strikes from drones.

“When you hear the drones, you feel naked and vulnerable,” said Hamdi Shaqura, deputy director of the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights, based in Gaza City. “The buzz is the sound of death. There is no escape, nowhere is private. It is a reminder that, whatever Israel and the international community assert, the occupation has not ended. We are still living completely under Israeli control. They control the borders and the sea and they decide our fates from their position in the sky,” said Shaqura. The Israeli military did not respond to Al Jazeera's requests for comment.

Suffer the children: The sense of permanent exposure, coupled with the fear of being mistakenly targeted, has inflicted deep psychological scars on civilians, especially children, according to experts.

“There is a great sense of insecurity. Nowhere feels safe for the children, and they feel no one can offer them protection, not even their parents,” said Ahmed Tawahina, a psychologist running clinics in Gaza as part of the Community Mental Health Programme. “That traumatises both the children and parents, who feel they are failing in their most basic responsibility.”

Shaqura observed: “From a political perspective, there is a deep paradox. Israel says it needs security, but it demands it at the cost of our constant insecurity.”

There are no statistics that detail the effect of the drones on Palestinians in Gaza. Doctors admit it is impossible to separate the psychological toll inflicted by drones from other sources of damage to mental health, such as air strikes by F-16s, severe restrictions on movement and the economic insecurity caused by Israel's blockade. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

5) At American Studies Association, boycotting Israel finds wide favor
Ron Kampeas, Jews for Justice for Palestinians (JJFP), November 26, 2013

For 90 minutes in a packed hotel conference room in the heart of Washington, Israel was the colonizer, the settler state, the perpetuator of apartheid.

As the annual meeting this weekend of the American Studies Association demonstrated, participants who favored boycotting Israeli universities far outnumbered those opposed.

Of 44 speakers, 37 supported the resolution, in which the association would endorse and “honor the call of Palestinian society for a boycott of Israeli academic institutions.” The preamble to the resolution accused Israeli universities of complicity in the occupation.

The session Saturday evening was not determinative, however; it was an open invitation to the body’s membership to influence the association’s 20-person national council. The council was supposed to take up the resolution on Sunday morning, but by Tuesday evening it had not announced a decision.

“The national council meeting to discuss a resolution calling for the association to endorse a boycott of academic institutions in Israel remains open and deliberations are ongoing,” Curtis Marez, the group’s president, told JTA in an email.

Pro-Israel groups active on campuses were watching the session closely. Until now, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement — known as BDS — has made few inroads into American academe. One exception is the Association for Asian American Studies, which in April passed a resolution in favor of boycotting Israeli academic institutions.

Geri Palast, managing director of the Israel Action Network, which organizes pro-Israel activism on campus, said the American Studies Association meeting, which attracted a crowd that almost filled a room that seats 745 people, was expected to be another victory for the BDS movement in part because the American studies field is dominated by left-leaning academics who tend toward tough critiques of what they see as U.S.-enabled imperialism.

“My concern about some of these smaller academic associations is that they get amplified out of proportion,” Palast said. Some opponents of the resolution said that however unrepresentative the session was of broader American society, it represents a growing trend on campuses toward endorsement of the BDS movement.

“They are organized and there are quite a few of them on campuses,” Simon Bonner, a professor of American studies at Penn State Harrisburg, said of academic activists who favor BDS.

Campus pro-Palestinian groups are energetic, Bonner said, and because of their single-issue focus they are likelier to get attention than Jewish student groups that are more diffuse in their activities, such as Hillel. In addition, he noted, Jewish groups tend more toward dialogue on the Israeli-Palestinian issue than toward activism.

“Despite the stereotypes of Jewish power, if there is a Jewish position, it is one of dialogue,” Bonner told JTA. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

6) The Iran case proves it: Sanctions will get Israel to end the occupation **Gideon Levy, Ha'aretz, November 30, 2013**

It appears that international sanctions work and that a boycott is a tool like no other. Even Israel's prime minister has admitted this; he has called on the world not to ease the sanctions and to even intensify them, and following his lead is the shrill U.S. Jewish lobby.

This being the case, the moral is clear: This is the way to act with recalcitrant states. This applies not only to Iran, where the theory is being proved before our eyes, but with another country that does not obey the decisions of the international community.

Israel has signed the Horizon 2020 agreement for scientific research with the EU barring funding from companies or institutions with ties to the settlements. This is irrefutable proof that a boycott threat works well with Israel, too.

The truth is hard to miss. By signing the agreement, Israel gave a hand to the first official international boycott of the settlements. There is no other way to portray this agreement, even including the special appendix that Israel added in protest. Israel, which passes indecent laws against calls for boycotts against it, surrendered and signed on to boycott terms when it began to be hit in the pocket.

Now we have a limited boycott and a harbinger of things to come. The negotiations over the agreement were conducted by Justice Minister Tzipi Livni, whose office is located in the heart of occupied East Jerusalem. For some reason, the EU didn't boycott her for this. Negotiations over funds trickling to the settlements are being conducted with a minister who, according to the entire world, has her office in a settlement on Jerusalem's Saladin Street.

This absurdity reveals the hypocrisy of boycotting just the settlements. Every Israeli organization, institution or authority is somehow involved with what's going on beyond the Green Line. Every bank, university, supermarket chain or medical institution has branches, employees or clients who are settlers. The settlements are an all-Israeli project and the boycott can't be limited to them, just as the boycott of apartheid-era South Africa couldn't be limited to the institutions of apartheid.

There everything was apartheid, and here everything is tainted by occupation. Israel funds, protects and nurtures the settlements, so all of Israel is responsible for their existence. It's unfair to boycott just the settlers. We're all guilty. On the other hand, boycotting all of Israel is likely to morph into the rejection of its very existence, something most of the world justly does not want. Therefore, we should rejoice over the limited boycott even if it is tainted by double standards. We should draw lessons from it.

The success achieved with Iran must become the world's road map in how to end the Israeli occupation and the denial of the Palestinians' rights. The outline is clear. We have had a failed diplomatic effort and decades of the "peace process," the longest in history. We have had endless peace plans buried in drawers, while Israel has continued to build without restraint in the settlements in contravention of the world's position. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

7) An unending settler pogrom

Michael Sfard, Ha'aretz, December 3, 2013

It is night time and the children are sleeping. The tranquility is broken by a group of masked men rampaging through the village, yelling obscenities. Stones are thrown, breaking windows. The children wake up in terror. A Molotov cocktail is thrown into the house, engulfing the curtains in flames.

South of Nablus, between the settlements of Yitzhar and Har Bracha, the village of Burin is groaning. How many of you have heard of Burin, or know that it's been assaulted 2-3 times a week in the last month, some of the attacks occurring at night? The perpetrators are groups of Israeli youths whose aim is to make the villagers leave.

Of course you haven't heard of Burin. Why would you?

Burin was once a magnificent village, with thousands of acres of tilled and productive land, with thousands of residents living peacefully as they made their living off the land. Since then Yitzhar and Har Bracha were established on these lands, as well as a string of illegal settlements, such as Har Bracha B and C, Mitzpe Yitzhar and probably others I've forgotten. In addition, the Hawara military base and checkpoint were erected on Burin's lands. Travel restrictions were imposed on the villagers, as is the fate of every Palestinian village that finds itself too close to the masters of the land.

Over the years, and especially under the cloak of the intifada, a significant part of its tilled lands underwent official Judaization. Residents estimate that a quarter of the inhabitants have left the village over the last decade. Some went in search of a livelihood while others fled in fear of assaults by Jewish settlers. Burin is a village under siege, at risk of being wiped out. It's not the only one.

In January 2014, new guidelines set by the European Union take effect, designed to prevent the use of European funds for directly or indirectly supporting the settlement enterprise. Last week, we witnessed the opening round, with the negotiations over Israel joining the Horizon 2020 funding program for research and scientific collaboration. Public and diplomatic discussions of the EU guidelines dealt only with the political ramifications and the impact on peace negotiations. This discourse serves Israel well, since it makes the issue a political one, over which a compromise can be reached.

However, discussing the settlement enterprise in the occupied territories only in political terms is like discussing an ecological disaster only in financial terms, while ignoring the long-term damage to the environment, to animals and to people living nearby.

In addition to its being illegal according to international law, the Israeli settlement of the West Bank (sanctioned and non-sanctioned by successive governments) is an egregious violation of Palestinian's human rights. According to longstanding documentation compiled by Israeli human rights groups and peace activists, every settlement, even when its residents refrain from directly assaulting their neighbors, becomes a focal point, around which layers of human rights violations are created. This violation expands over the years, as the settlements grow. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

8) Jewish suffering, Palestinian suffering Joseph Massa, Al Jazeera, December 3, 2013

The late French scholar Pierre Bourdieu once said that the tragedy of the Palestinians is that their oppressors are the victims of Europe, which led him to call the Palestinians “the victims of the victims.”

For Bourdieu, as for many European and American intellectuals who may be inclined to support the Palestinian struggle against oppression, the “tragic question” is “how to choose between the victims of racist violence par excellence and the victims of these victims?” The answer, of course, should be simple, namely that one should always stand with Jews as victims of European anti-Semitic violence and stand with Palestinians as victims of Jewish racist violence. There is no choice to be made between the two: The first position must lead to the second. Alas, many find this point difficult to grasp.

Over the last century and a quarter, many European and Euro-American Jewish intellectuals have come to recognise the oppressiveness of Zionist and Israeli Jews towards the Palestinians and have taken public positions that criticise Zionist and Israeli conduct and defend the Palestinians. This Jewish dissent began with Zionism itself.

Zionist brutality: If Ahad Ha’Am recognised the brutality of European Jewish colonial settlers to the Palestinian peasants in the late 19th century, Judith Butler condemns this on-going brutality towards all Palestinians at present. In her recent book, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*, which discusses Jewish critiques and criticisms of state violence, and of Zionism and Israel, Butler speaks of the difficulty encountered by Italian holocaust survivor Primo Levi when he criticised Israel during its 1982 invasion of Lebanon, and when he demanded that Menachem Begin and Ariel Sharon resign from office. Levi had declared: “Today, the Palestinians are the Jews of the Israelis.”

While Israeli Jews were slaughtering Palestinians and the Lebanese, anti-Semitic Italians scribbled racist slogans on the walls of Levi’s town, which alarmed him as it did other Jewish critics of Israel. Butler writes that, “This was an untenable situation, and it produced a conflict: Could he continue to elaborate those principles derived from his experience of Auschwitz to condemn state violence without contributing to an anti-Semitic seizure of the event?”

The answer is straightforward of course, namely, that any condemnation of Israeli Jewish brutality in a European context should always contextualise it in the history of European political power, and contrast it with the situation when European Jews had no such power in Europe and were subject to European Christian brutality and genocide.

The way to counter the European anti-Semites is precisely to show that Zionist and Israeli Jewish brutality is not on account of the Jewishness of the perpetrators, but on account of their holding power to brutalise another population and act out their racist colonial violence against them. This is not unlike when European Christians oppressed Jews, as they did not do so because they were Christians but on account of the anti-Semites amongst them holding power to act out their genocidal anti-Semitism on Jews. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

9) Geneva-Iran, Geneva-Syria: Why not a Geneva conference for Palestine?

Muhammad Shtayyeh, Ha'aretz, December 5, 2013

The decision to accept the two-state solution was not easy for the people of Palestine. Our declaration of independence in 1988 - the acceptance of a State of Palestine on the 1967 border - was a huge and painful concession for the sake of achieving peace with Israel. To this day, we have not seen any such process of compromise on the Israeli side - quite the opposite, in fact. And unfortunately we have seen little in the way of international intervention.

The historic Palestinian compromise has never been matched by any Israeli government. Since 1967, Israel's policy has been guided by one aim: to take as much Palestinian land with the lowest number of Palestinians, while making life so unbearable for Palestinians that they are directly or indirectly forced to leave. This colonization process, a war crime under international law, is the biggest obstacle to achieving the two-state solution, a solution born out of international consensus. The Israeli government is fully committed to this illegal enterprise, de facto rejecting the two-state solution.

Employing empty rhetoric and diversionary tactics, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu offers negotiations without parameters and draws attention to Iran. These disingenuous statements continue while his cabinet is split between those promoting the expansion of settlements and those joining demonstrations against the release of Palestinian prisoners.

We are committed not to release details from the negotiating process, but I think my resignation betrays the lack of seriousness on the Israeli side. And it was not an easy decision. When I meet people I always remind them that no one stands to benefit more from peace than the Palestinians - we are the occupied people, after all.

My decision to leave the negotiating table would not have been necessary in the presence of a serious Israeli partner, one that was ready and able to make the decisions needed to prepare Israelis for a final-status agreement with Palestine. We challenge Netanyahu to hold a cabinet vote, with the parties he chose for his government, on ending the occupation that began in 1967 and accepting a sovereign Palestinian state. Netanyahu's inability to support the two-state solution rests not only on his ideological commitment to colonization but also the fact that, were his own cabinet to vote, it would show itself in favor of an apartheid regime against the Palestinian people.

Twenty years after the signing of the Oslo Accords, Israel's behavior has not changed. It's time to officially accept the reality: A nuclear occupying power like Israel is comfortable in the current setting of negotiations. The Israeli government is not pushed to move because of the huge disparity in power between Israel and Palestine and the Israeli lobby's strength with the majority of the U.S. Congress that fully backs the Israeli position.

The success of the Geneva talks over the Iran issue, and the possibility of success for the Syrian issue, makes us wonder why there is no talk about a Geneva-Palestine discussion. We would exchange the current bilateral situation for a multilateral forum where other powers, including Russia, China, the European Union, the Union of South American Nations and the BRICS countries can contribute to a just and lasting peace for Israel, Palestine and the rest of the region. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

10) Mandela's mission is not yet complete

Gideon Levy, Ha'aretz, December 8, 2013

South African President Nelson Mandela, in his address for International Solidarity Day with the Palestinian People on December 4, 1997, said: "We know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians." And Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said after Mandela's death: "Nelson Mandela was among the greatest figures of our time ... a man of vision and ... a moral leader of the highest order."

The sharp-eyed surely noticed the picture in the background when Netanyahu delivered his statement: an Israeli flag and the walls of Jerusalem's Old City. There he was, eulogizing the "moral leader" against the background of the occupied city, whose Palestinian residents are oppressed and dispossessed. It's a city where a separation regime prevails – an example of Israeli apartheid, even if it's not the worst example. The sharp-eared must have noticed how false his flowery words sounded.

President Shimon Peres also offered high praise for the "leader of immense stature," and his words were no less hypocritical. The man who was involved up to his neck in the disgraceful cooperation between Israel and apartheid South Africa, who was one of the ministers who hosted its prime ministers with pomp and circumstance while Mandela languished in prison, is suddenly admiring the man who symbolized the struggle with that regime.

Neither Peres nor Netanyahu have any right to eulogize Mandela; both are responsible, more than any other statesmen in the free world, for undermining his legacy and establishing the (nonidentical) twin of the regime he battled. They're eulogizing him? Mandela will turn in his grave and history will laugh bitterly.

Israeli public opinion tolerates everything, even intolerable, two-faced eulogies. But Israeli cooperation with the apartheid regime, and the continuation of its legacy in the occupied territories, cry out beyond the gloomy skies of a grieving South Africa.

The world's mourning should inspire some pointed questions here as well. Why was Israel virtually the only country that collaborated with that evil regime? Why are so many good people convinced that Israel is an apartheid state? While it may not pay to dwell on past shame – even Mandela forgave Israel – questions about the present should disturb us greatly.

In April I visited the new South Africa that Mandela had forged as a guest of its Foreign Ministry. The visit was etched deeply in my heart, as comparisons to the Israeli occupation regime cried out from every stone, and with them also hope for change.

For example, there was the Supreme Court in Johannesburg, built on the ruins of the prison where blacks were thrown when they dared enter forbidden areas to find work. And in Soweto I visited Mandela's home, where you can still see the bullet holes of a failed attempt at a "targeted killing."

The comparisons echoed, as did the lessons. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

11) What does “Israeli apartheid” mean, anyway?

Amira Hass, Ha’aretz, December 9, 2013

What do those who say “Israeli apartheid” mean?

They definitely don’t mean the official and popular biological racism that ruled South Africa. True, there is no lack of racist and arrogant attitudes here, with their attendant religious-biological undertones, but if one visits our hospitals one can find Arabs and Jews among doctors and patients. In that regard, our hospitals are the healthiest sector of society.

Those who say “Israeli apartheid” refer to the philosophy of “separate development” that was prevalent in the old South Africa. This was the euphemism used for the principle of inequality, the deliberate segregation of populations, a prohibition on “mixing” and the displacement of non-whites from lands and resources for their exploitation by the masters of the land. Even though here things are shrouded by “security concerns,” with references to Auschwitz and heaven-decreed real estate, our reality is governed by the same philosophy, backed by laws and force of arms.

What, for instance?

There are two legal systems in place on the West Bank, a civilian one for Jews and a military one for Palestinians. There are two separate infrastructures there as well, including roads, electricity and water. The superior and expanding one is for Jews while the inferior and shrinking one is for the Palestinians. There are local pockets, similar to the Bantustans in South Africa, in which the Palestinians have limited self-rule. There is a system of travel restrictions and permits in place since 1991, just when such a system was abolished in South Africa.

Does that mean that apartheid exists only on the West Bank?

Not at all, it exists across the entire country, from the sea to the Jordan River. It prevails in this one territory in which two peoples live, ruled by one government which is elected by one people, but which determines the future and fate of both. Palestinian towns and villages suffocate because of deliberately restrictive planning in Israel, just as they do in the West Bank.

But Palestinians who are Israeli citizens participate in electing the government, unlike in South Africa?

That’s true. The two situations are similar, not identical. Arab citizens vote here, but they are removed from the decision-making processes that deal with their fate. There is another difference. In South Africa, an essential component of the system was a tight overlap between race and class, with the exploitation of the black working class in the interests of white-owned capital. Israeli capitalism does not depend on Palestinian workers, although cheap Palestinian labor played a major role in the rapid enrichment of different sectors in Israeli society following the 1967 war. South Africa had four racial groups (whites, blacks, coloreds and Indians.) Each one occupied a specific rung on the ladder of inequality, in order to perpetuate the privileges of the white population. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)

12) Palestinians draw parallels with Mandela's anti-apartheid struggle **Harriet Sherwood, The Guardian, December 13, 2013**

The death of Nelson Mandela has given fresh impetus to Palestinian efforts to portray the Israeli occupation as a form of apartheid that should be confronted with a similar international campaign that took on South Africa's white regime.

Mandela's message of solidarity from a 1997 speech in which he said "our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians," has been repeatedly invoked across Palestine in the past week.

Demonstrators carried posters of Mandela who also strongly criticised Israel's close ties to the apartheid government, at regular weekly protests against Jewish settlements and the vast concrete and steel separation barrier in the West Bank on Friday. Israeli troops fired teargas, rubber-coated bullets and water cannon to disperse protesters, injuring dozens.

Congregations lit candles to honour Mandela's life at packed services and masses at churches across the West Bank on Sunday. At the Holy Family Church in Ramallah, Father Raed Abusahlia's sermon included many references to biblical figures, with unmistakable parallels to the man who led the struggle for justice in South Africa.

The Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas said Mandela's death was "a great loss to Palestine." He was, he added, "a symbol of liberation from colonialism and occupation for all peoples." ...

Marwan Barghouti, a Palestinian leader serving five life sentences in an Israeli jail who is sometimes described as a potential "Palestinian Mandela," wrote an open letter to the late South African leader: "From within my prison cell, I tell you that our freedom seems possible because you reached yours. Apartheid did not prevail in South Africa, and apartheid shall not prevail in Palestine.... The ties between our struggles are everlasting."

On Wednesday, 12 Palestinian human rights groups published a statement commemorating Mandela, saying "the success of the South African struggle against apartheid ... provides us with faith that we, the Palestinian people, will also succeed in our struggle against the Israeli occupation and its practices of apartheid and colonialism."

Israel is struggling to counter a widening global campaign likening its treatment of the Palestinians to apartheid – an assertion that for many years was regarded as a marginal view but which has gained currency because of the failure to establish a Palestinian state. Comparisons between the former regime in South Africa and the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories have become relatively commonplace – not just by Palestinians and their supporters, but also among Israelis and the international community.

When Jimmy Carter's book *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* appeared in 2006, [he] was accused of anti-semitism for saying Israel operated a "system of apartheid" in the Palestinian territories. The same year, a Guardian article* which made a detailed comparison between contemporary Israel with apartheid-era South Africa was greeted with outrage in some quarters. ...

[Read the entire piece here.](#)