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1. Internationaler Strafgerichtshof erklärt Ermittlungen in den von Israel besetzten Gebieten für möglich

Unwirsch reagierte Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu auf die Entscheidung des Internationalen Strafgerichtshofs (IStGH), Ermittlungen gegen Israel wegen Kriegsverbrechen in den palästinensischen Gebieten zu ermöglichen. Netanyahu sprach von "purem Antisemitismus". Israel werde diese „Verdrehung des Rechts mit allen Mitteln bekämpfen“. Die Richter_innen des IStGH hatten ihre Zuständigkeit für die von Israel besetzten palästinensischen Gebiete, das Westjordanland, den Gazastreifen und Ostjerusalem, erklärt. Die Entscheidung betreffe ausdrücklich nicht die Frage der "Staatlichkeit" Palästinas oder etwaige Grenzstreitigkeiten – die Region solle aber dem "Recht des palästinensischen Volkes auf Selbstbestimmung" entsprechend behandelt werden. Israel selbst ist keine Vertragspartei des Gerichtshofs. Bereits vor zwei Jahren erklärte Chefanklägerin Fatou Bensouda, dass es eine Grundlage gebe, auf der eine Untersuchung wegen möglicher israelischer Kriegsverbrechen eröffnet werden könnte. Auf der Grundlage der jetzigen Entscheidung könnte der IStGH allerdings auch Ermittlungen gegen die Hamas oder andere palästinensische Terrorgruppen einleiten. In Ramallah stieß die Entscheidung des IStGH erwartungsgemäß auf Zustimmung. Jetzt zeige sich, dass der Weg nach Den Haag der richtige gewesen sei, verlautete aus palästinensischen Führungskreisen.

The ICC's decision is a red flag for Israel

The International Criminal Court's ruling that it has jurisdiction over the occupied territories and East Jerusalem has predictably sparked angry reactions in Israel. (...). The court didn't rule that Israel was guilty of war crimes; it merely responded to a request from prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, who asked the pretrial chamber of judges to rule on the fundamental question of the court's territorial jurisdiction. Nor is there any connection between the fact that Israel is a democracy and the commission of prima facie war crimes. Democracies have committed and still commit war crimes, and the fact that they are democracies doesn't grant them immunity from investigation or prosecution.

Israel's complaint that the ICC ignores real war crimes and is "persecuting" it for political reasons tells us more about Israel than it does about the court. Israel has failed to understand that its very status as a democratic, law-abiding country obligates it to uphold higher standards than those demanded of countries like Iran, Syria or Sudan. (...) The most important part of the decision is its recognition of Palestine as a state with the right to seek redress from the court. (...) Israel should view the judges' decision, which paves the way for an investigation into its conduct in the territories, as a red flag. Israel now has the status of a suspect state, and it must present its arguments and its interpretation of the incidents the court will investigate. Throwing mud at the ICC and refusing to cooperate with

the investigation won't acquit it if its guilt is in fact ultimately proved.

Editorial, HAA, 07.02.21

The ICC has put Palestinians on global agenda once again

The Palestinians began their moves against Israel at the International Criminal Court in January 2015. They lit the flame, clad themselves in endless patience - they call it legal steadfastness - and waited. And now that forbearance has paid off with the announcement of potential war crimes probes. (...) In less than a year, Israel has shifted from a situation of unprecedented American normalization of the settlements (...) and near-West Bank annexation to the possibility of those involved in the settlement enterprise being investigated as war criminals. (...) Israeli politics is moving more and more to the right, a reflection of the fear felt by many Israelis of a radical change in the status quo. (...) The next Israeli government (...) will have to define its outline for future relations with the Palestinians and stand by it. If the Israeli endgame does indeed include Palestinian statehood, it has to be said publicly and the conditions for its existence must be specified in a way that will not lead to a Hamastan - or worse, a Palestinian Syria - within a few years. And if this is not the case, Israel has to stand behind this decision too. It must state where Palestinian autonomy is headed and what it sees as the nature of its relations with Gaza. It would be a mistake to deal with The Hague solely as a legal issue. (...)

Shimrit Meir, YED, 07.02.21

ICC's ruling on Israel is baseless but dangerous

The decision of the International Criminal Court in The Hague (...) is baseless but still dangerous and must be thwarted. (...) only sovereign states can file complaints to the court, and Palestine is not a sovereign state. Moreover, the ICC can investigate only countries that have signed the Rome Statute, which established the court. Israel, along with the United States and 70 other countries, did not join the ICC precisely because they suspected it would be another highly biased and politicized United Nations body. That is exactly what it turned out to be. Furthermore, the ICC was founded in 2002 to investigate serious crimes against humanity and war crimes, such as genocide, committed by countries not able to credibly carry out such investigations themselves. Israel is a vibrant democracy with an independent judiciary that investigates violations of the laws of war. The Israeli-Palestinian case does

not meet any of these conditions, and thus the decision to allow the investigation and potential prosecution of Israelis is thus a flagrant violation of the ICC's own rules and procedures. (...) The ICC's decision is dangerous for Israel because the court is authorized to investigate only individuals, not countries. (...) ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda can summon Israeli prime ministers, defense ministers, senior military officers and officials for questioning. If they refuse to appear, as they are likely to do, she can issue warrants for their arrest. Theoretically, all 122 ICC member states would then be obliged to arrest and extradite these individuals. (...) Washington and Jerusalem should (...) conduct a worldwide public diplomacy campaign to delegitimize and deter the ICC.

Eytan Gilboa, IHY, 10.02.21

The Legal Flaws of ICC's Jurisdiction Ruling

(...) it is apparent that the Majority Opinion is tragically flawed and entirely inconsistent with proper jurisprudence. (...) the Prosecutor's request for a ruling (...) demonstrates both her bias and that of the Chamber. Referring to it as "Palestinian territory occupied by Israel during the Six-Day War in June 1967," and consistently referring throughout the Majority Opinion to "Occupied Palestinian Territory," pre-judges the issue. (...) nothing in the Rome Statute nor the Majority Opinion gives Palestine the right to accede to jurisdiction over Israel or Israelis. Yet the Majority Opinion simply ignores this discrepancy, and assumes that because Palestine joined the Rome Statute, it allows ICC jurisdiction (...) for acts by anyone in Palestine's self-declared borders. (...) It was the Oslo Accords that created the Palestinian Authority (...), so one would think that the terms of that agreement would govern the scope of State of Palestine's authority to delegate jurisdiction to the ICC for acts allegedly occurring within that the borders of that "State." Neither Palestine nor the ICC should be able to cherry-pick among the portions of the Oslo Accords for those that allow actions, but disregard those that prohibit actions. (...) The very instrument that creates the entity that "accedes" to ICC jurisdiction expressly says that no such jurisdiction exists. It is a common legal principle: one cannot transfer authority that one does not have. (...)

David H. Levitt, TOI, 08.02.21

On the international battlefield

The decision by International Criminal Court judges that the Palestinian Authority is a state and therefore the ICC can launch an investigation against Israel

into alleged "war crimes" in the PA adds to the sense that law is part of politics and bolsters Israel's feeling that it is under siege. (...) The concern is that after the investigations, secret arrest warrants will be issued for former military commanders or political leaders. (...) For now, no concrete action is expected until the summer, when ICC Chief Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda is slated to step down. (...) One tactic that could be effective is a new diplomatic process in which Jordan and Egypt would be involved, or the nations that have signed the Abraham Accords, who could exert their economic influence. Amnon Lord, IHY, 12.02.21

ICC decision clarifies: Israel needs a robust legal strategy

(...) The ICC's Pre-trial Chamber's judges' majority decision on the question of what constitutes the territory of Palestine is indeed significant. It opens the door to potential indictments and uncomfortable situations for Israeli leaders and military commanders traveling abroad. However, there are two caveats. First, the Pre-Trial Chamber's decision embraces the earlier findings of Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda, who is leaving office in June. (...) Her successor, who has yet to be announced, will be the one to actively shape the investigation by deciding which specific acts to investigate, how many indictments to issue and against whom. Second, Judge Péter Kovács, who presided over this panel of three ICC judges, dissented on important aspects of the decision. In his view, the court has jurisdiction only over parts of Gaza, the West Bank, and east Jerusalem subject to the Oslo Accords, which, unlike the majority opinion, he analyzes in great detail. For Israel, this dissent carries great weight: it weakens the majority opinion, which pales in legal rigor compared to Kovács's dissent; it conveys the existence of significant disagreement within the bench; and it might make it more difficult for the court to investigate acts that occurred in these two areas. Ultimately, however, this cannot prevent the opening of an investigation. (...) The ICC's mandate is based on the principle of complementarity – it has jurisdiction to investigate and prosecute alleged crimes only when states have either been unable or unwilling to do so themselves in a fair manner. The ICC complements states in administering justice; it does not replace them. (...) Israel should seek serious independent advice from leading legal experts. The Palestinians have been doing this for over a decade and have crafted a very smart, creative and impressive legal strategy when it comes to the ICC and

other international bodies. The court's recent decision demonstrates that such a smart and consistent legal strategy pays off. (...) Daphné Richemond-Barak, JPO, 14.02.21

Israel must fight back against the ICC

(...) the ICC did not serve as a factor in halting some of the most serious alleged abuses of human rights in recent years. It has not ordered an investigation of the assault on the Uighur minority in China, including their forcible mass transfer. It might be argued that China is a superpower, but that has not held the ICC back from moving against the United States over its military's actions in Afghanistan. ICC prosecutions fell apart in several high-profile legal actions over the last decade in Kenya, the Central African Republic and the Ivory Coast. Despite its flaws and past performance, the ICC has demonstrated striking determination to pursue legal actions against the State of Israel. But in these cases the ICC runs into a wall it fails to consider. For any legal process to proceed, the establishment of its jurisdiction is a prerequisite. But if there is no Palestinian state that can delegate to the ICC its criminal jurisdiction, then the jurisdiction of the ICC is a real problem. (...) An ICC indictment might have the aura of international law, but Israel must not allow these moves at the ICC – which are essentially political – to undercut its own self-assurance about the fundamental justice underpinning its cause. Dore Gold, IHY, 15.02.21

Surprised by the ICC decision? You shouldn't be

(...) anyone with even a cursory knowledge of the issues at hand could have hardly been taken by surprise. This decision has been in the making for quite some time. Israel has done very little, if anything, to deflect it or to avoid its ramifications. What, then, can explain the almost wall-to-wall consensus around the Netanyahu-led barrage against the ICC and the personal attacks on its outgoing prosecutor-general, Fatou Bensouda? (...) For far too long, Israel has adopted a strategy of lashing out rather than looking inward. (...) Israel was among the leading countries advocating for the creation of an international tribunal that would adjudicate war criminals and monitor the implementation of universal humanitarian conventions in situations of armed conflict. When the drafting of the Rome Treaty was finally concluded in 2000, it was one of its first signatories. But it never ratified the treaty because it has consistently opposed the clause defining settlement by occupiers in areas acquired by force as war crimes.

Israel, therefore, is not a member of the ICC and cannot initiate proceedings within its framework. For years, successive governments saw no reason to cooperate with the Court. The legal basis for this position, grounded in the working guidelines of the ICC, has always been that outside intervention is unwarranted as Israel — like many other countries — has its own judicial mechanisms to oversee any violations of international humanitarian law and conventions. With few exceptions, however, this supervision has been limited to bringing a small number of individual soldiers to justice, rather than to constantly reassessing policies, directives and the manner of their implementation. (...) the best way for Israel to safeguard itself from constant external calumny is to desist from policies that contravene basic humanitarian values. This applies not only to specific actions in times of violent confrontation, but also, significantly, to ending the occupation (...). Naomi Chazan, TOI, 15.02.21

2. Endspurt vor den Parlamentswahlen

Wenige Wochen vor den vorgezogenen israelischen Parlamentswahlen Ende März fordern vor allem zwei Politiker den amtierenden Regierungschefs Benjamin Netanyahu heraus. Umfragen zufolge könnte der frühere Likud-Politiker Gideon Saar mit seiner frisch gegründeten Partei „Tikva Hadasha“ („Neue Hoffnung“) aus dem Stand auf 16 der insgesamt 120 Knesset-Mandate kommen und damit möglicherweise zur zweitstärksten Kraft im Parlament werden. Saar wird politisch rechts vom Likud angesiedelt. Ähnliche Prognosen gibt es für den derzeitigen Oppositionsführer Yair Lapid von der liberalen Partei „Yesh Atid“ („Es gibt eine Zukunft“). Mit deutlichem Abstand bleibt Netanyahu mit seinem konservativen Likud jedoch weiter an erster Stelle und könnte Meinungsforscher_innen zufolge auf 28 bis 30 Sitze in der Knesset kommen. Neuer Star im linken Lager ist die sozialdemokratische Politikerin Merav Michaeli, die mit ihrer Wahl zur Vorsitzenden ihre Arbeitspartei auf Schwung brachte. Michaeli ist konsequente Gegnerin jeglicher Kooperation mit Netanyahu. Sie gilt als radikale Feministin, als Verfechterin sozialer Gerechtigkeit und Friedenspolitik.

So now Yair Lapid is the Israeli left's pet candidate?

So that's it? Now Yair Lapid will be the pet candidate that "we" will be promoting? (...) This will be just like the previous election campaigns, when "we" sup-

ported Benny Gantz. We ignored the lack of an agenda and his Teflon characteristics; we closed our eyes and ears (...) to his festive declaration about the number of Palestinian deaths he was responsible for – 1,364 killed, he said proudly – and we tried to dismiss it as a slip of the tongue. (...) We repeatedly read, here in "our" paper, how Gantz was a gift to our country. Now begins the campaign on behalf of Yair Lapid. If so, let's just erase his awful remark about the "Zoabis." Let's ignore his condemnations of left-wing organizations; let's forget that we're talking about a man who repeatedly said he would not sit in a government with Arabs. Twenty percent of the country's citizens are worthless in his eyes, just because of their origins. After all, he's still Yair Lapid, the son of a Holocaust survivor, second generation, our historic brother. A man who grew up in the lap of the terrible disaster that took place solely because of racism. Come on, let's crown him the leader of the center-left (...), and ignore his gestures toward the religious public, from the challah-separating rituals that his wife initiated just as he was forced to ingratiate himself with the religious parties. (...) let us crown a new king, anoint us a new prophet. (...) Let's underrate the value of Labor's Merav Michaeli. It's easy – she's a woman and will always be considered a curiosity, even among us, the bleeding-heart leftists and liberals. We will applaud gracefully as mother taught us to do at a concert, but we'll vote for a man. We'll ignore the only woman to head a party for the first time in several election campaigns; we'll belittle her achievements and her electoral potential. We'll declare it a passing media fad and continue to cheer on "our" candidate. And if anyone asks us about the Zoabis, we'll just say it was a slip of the tongue.

Tchia Dov, HAA, 01.02.21

Trying to oust Netanyahu, the Israeli left shoots itself in the foot

(...) It's a giant chicken-and-egg loop. Israelis are ostensibly becoming more right-wing, and in consequence, the "left" must attract votes from the center-right in order to break the tie between the left and the right. For the past few years all of the center-left candidates have focused on, um, how not to seem too far left, heaven forbid. Lapid specialized in this long before the rest (...). We should have learned this lesson from the story of Benny Gantz. A person for whom center-leftists voted for the sole purpose of replacing Netanyahu, even though in terms of policy there are no fundamental differences between them. The only thing separating them are three specific

things, or the lack thereof: three criminal counts. That, and a bit of talk about “unity.” (...) Leftists who care about the guiding principles of the party they are voting for currently have three options: the Labor Party, Meretz and the Joint List. It is obvious that none of their leaders has any chance of becoming prime minister. But (...) a vote for the left is a vote for the left. (...)

Noa Landau, HAA, 02.02.21

Elections: Israel needs a strong Left to save it from itself

(...) We are living in times in which people are clinging onto beliefs despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary, and despite the increasing absurdity of their claims. We are living in times of incitement (...). What is extremely distressing (...) is the abyss that Israel's left-wing parties have fallen into. Ruling Israel for the first 29 years after its founding, the political Left has now become utterly irrelevant, with polls handing left-wing Meretz a mere five seats. Labor, Israel's once all-powerful ruling party, is barely expected to pass the minimum 3.25% threshold to enter parliament. Israel will be headed down a dangerous path if March's elections hand the political Right another four years of power, albeit this time total.(...) Should the Left disappear for good, Israel will not only be faced with a right-wing movement competing against itself, but a political movement whose assumptions will remain unchallenged and whose iconoclasts will be silenced. That can never bode well for democracy.

Josh Feldman, JPO, 03.02.21

Michaeli is the opposite of everything Netanyahu represents

(...) Since its founding, Israel has had a divided political system. (...) Meretz can run as an independent party, and if Ron Huldai agrees to run, he has a chance of garnering representation in the Knesset. (...) now Merav Michaeli has arrived on the scene. Herein lies the key to the change that could take place one day and becoming a turning point. Of everyone involved in Israel's political system, Merav Michaeli is the only woman to head one of Israel's political parties. Michaeli was not appointed or pushed forward by sponsors. She has made her way to the center stage of Israeli politics with courage, honesty and tireless adherence to principles and values, which she never tried to hide or obscure. (...) When other members of her party joined the government they had sworn never to join, Michaeli was left alone. No one promised her a thing,

and neither did she ask for anything. She remained alone, pushed to the margins of the party. (...) She is the only woman in the entire Israeli political world who has demonstrated courage, determination, and commitment to her mission. For this she is worthy of great admiration. (...) Of all the bodies running in this election, Merav Michaeli is the only truly significant opponent of the gang that is leading the State of Israel toward a crisis that could threaten our existence. On the one hand, there's Benjamin Netanyahu, his wife and son, and alongside them the gang that everyone knows all too well, so there's no point in repeating their names. They represent the moral decline of the State of Israel, the culture of lies and fake news, the willingness to sell out on the State of Israel's most essential interests to the highest bidder. (...) Merav Michaeli is the only candidate that represents all of the values we are sorely missing. She is the complete opposite of all the things Netanyahu represents and that we want to get rid of. (...)

Ehud Olmert, JPO, 04.02.21

The cracks in Yair Lapid's glass ceiling

(...) Lapid has proven he is more ready to be prime minister than previously imagined. (...) Whatever criticism can be levied against him, Lapid has built (...) a well-grounded party, with a highly functioning organization and an impressive network of activists. (...) Lapid's loyalty to Blue and White was exceptional in political terms. Alongside three assertive generals, Lapid put his ego aside and worked tirelessly to promote and foster the new brand. All that Lapid learned from building Yesh Atid, he implemented at Blue and White. (...) In a year where Lapid constantly got slapped, he also constantly turned the other cheek. While this was perceived by many in his surroundings as his greatest weakness, it now looks more like his greatest strength – and possible proof he is actually cut out for leadership: he never panicked, he showed patience and self-belief, he maintained his composure. Before our eyes, Lapid has matured into a worthy and honorable politician (...). More than any other candidate today, Lapid has become the antithesis of Netanyahu. (...) What Lapid needs is an achievement wholly credited to himself – clean, straightforward, impressive – even if it ends up being “just” 20 seats and not 25, and even if he won't be the next prime minister. In the long run, that's his only route to the highest office, his only way of shattering the glass ceiling once and for all. The cracks are already showing.

Biranit Goren, TOI, 08.02.21

Ra'am split is part of a decades-long goal to integrate

MK Mansour Abbas' announcement that he had indeed met with senior former Hamas strongman Khaled Mashaal to convey messages on behalf of Israeli officials has been the talk of the town the entire week. Abbas did not stop there, however. He added that he had also met with "terrorists" in Israeli prisons when referring to Palestinian security prisoners, which drew widespread criticism. (...) Abbas has lately been perceived as supporting Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud in exchange for political promises. (...) the Islamic Movement tried to integrate into Israeli politics and, in defiance of its own ideology, even registered the Ra'am party and took part in a Knesset election for the first time in history. As a result, in 1996, the Islamic movement split into the Northern Branch, which is considered more radical, boycotted the elections and was later even banned by the government; and the Southern Branch, which sent representatives to the Knesset and developed close ties with its officials to promote, among other things, negotiations between Jewish leadership and radical Islamic organizations like Hamas and Jihad. (...) The social and religious agenda of the Southern and Northern branches are almost the same. They share the same view on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the status of Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. But unlike the Northern Branch, the Southern one is open to participating in the political life of Israel, maintaining a dialogue with its leaders and society, and communicating with political and even security officials. (...) What remains to be seen is whether the tree that was planted back then will bear fruit in the 2021 election.

Jalal Bana, IHY, 10.02.21

Labor Party under Michaeli represents Israel's extreme Left

Many people claim that the election of Merav Michaeli as Labor leader has revolutionized the party. Well, they are right. This is not the same Labor Party that established the State of Israel. In the past, the Labor Party symbolized political pragmatism while maintaining the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. For all the leaders who headed Labor in the past (...) security was a cornerstone for the existence of the State of Israel. Since its establishment, the Labor Party had represented the mainstream of Israeli society, which strives for peace with security and for maintaining the important balance between Judaism and democracy. Yet today, after

the extreme Left has taken over Labor, it is nothing more than a marginal far-left party on the political spectrum somewhere between Meretz and the Joint Arab list. (...) Michaeli, who undoubtedly waged an important and just fight against Peretz, won a huge majority in the party primaries. Yet, although she won 77.5% of the vote, it was a Pyrrhic victory for Labor. In practice, not only did no serious candidate with political and public stature run against Michaeli, but most party members chose to vote with their feet. While in the previous elections for the party chairman, the turnout was around 65%, only 26% of party members voted in the primaries in which Michaeli was elected. That was a tremendous expression of distrust by Labor members, who apparently already understood that their party had no chance of resurrection. (...) With the exception of a few media people and a former children's channel presenter, not even one prominent figure in Israel wanted to be on the Labor list.

Ori Wertman, JPO, 10.02.21

3. Langsame Lockerungen der Corona-Beschränkungen

Parallel zu der erfolgreichen Impfkampagne, mit der Israel weltweit führend ist, lockerte die Regierung den Corona-Lockdown. Friseurläden konnten wieder öffnen und auch kleinere Einzelhandelsgeschäfte. Restaurants dürfen Speisen nur zum Mitnehmen verkaufen, die Hotels bleiben vorerst geschlossen, und auch der internationale Flugverkehr bleibt aus Sorge vor den Corona-Mutationen weiter stark eingeschränkt. Unterdessen wächst der Ärger über die Sonderbehandlung der ultraorthodoxen Bevölkerung, die eher den Regeln der Rabbiner Folge leistet als den behördlichen Anordnungen. Vor allem bei Beerdigungen kommt es häufig zu großen Menschenansammlungen. Israels Regierungschef hält sich mit Kritik zurück. Netanyahu ist auf die ultraorthodoxen Koalitionspartner angewiesen.

Shameless Netanyahu turns a blind eye to ultra-Orthodox anarchy

(...) There are about a million unemployed people and tens of thousands of closed businesses. Most of them are not victims of the coronavirus pandemic or of the measures needed to contain it, but of Netanyahu's weakness, as displayed when he refused to impose differential lockdowns and didn't enforce the coronavirus regulations equitably.

Thanks to his political weakness in the face of his ultra-Orthodox partners (...) Netanyahu "achieved"

for the general public was the worst of all possible worlds: Instead of differential lockdowns focused on “red” (mostly Haredi) cities, we got differential enforcement, which turns a blind eye to violations by his political protégés. So it is deemed for an electorate whose votes Netanyahu wants. (...) If the relationship between Netanyahu and the Haredi representatives in the cabinet were a healthy one and not one of “protection,” the Haredi leadership would not be acting as if it is above the law. (...) Netanyahu and his government are bankrupt. Let’s hope the public understands this, and makes them pay at the polls.

Editorial, HAA, 01.02.21

Coronavirus: Mass gatherings are dangerous, unconscionable

(...) It’s an outrage when haredim mourning venerated rabbis violate the regulations; it’s an outrage when Arabs mourning an innocent man killed by a stray bullet violate the regulations. It is not good for the goose, it’s not good for the gander, and it’s deadly for the entire gaggle, meaning for everyone who lives in the State of Israel. Mass gatherings, all the more so when there is no social distancing and many participants are not wearing masks, are at this time not only against the law, but unconscionable.

(...) Some may argue that if people want to endanger themselves and their communities through reckless behavior, let them – they will be the first to suffer. But that misses the point, which is that no one lives in a bubble; we all share the same space and bear mutual responsibility. If the disease spreads among the Arabs and haredim at those funerals, and among their families, they will need medical care and may well need to be hospitalized. Space in hospitals is not infinite, and a spike in corona cases will place a burden on the medical system that could affect everyone, everywhere. (...) Mass gatherings (...) need to end. (...)

Editorial, JPO, 03.02.21

End of third lockdown in Israel: Where do we go from here?

(...) despite having had a month in which to prepare an exit plan, once again the government left it to the last minute (...). Unless ordinary people are informed of what the exact regulations are – and can follow the reasoning behind them – there will be a problem of non-compliance. In some cases it will come down to a lack of faith in the system; in others, it will be for not knowing what the rules are. (...) Above all, without the school system returning to a

full school day, particularly for the younger grades who cannot be left alone at home, parents will not be able to return to their jobs. Education is a priority and the safe opening of the education system is essential.

Policymakers have had a lot of time to prepare for the lifting of the lockdown – they should have been readying for this since the start of the closure, not at the end. Indeed, the need for a clear exit strategy and how to implement it has been obvious since the first closure almost a year ago. (...) We have seen how quickly matters can spiral out of control. Fortunately, this time, exiting from the lockdown is accompanied by the impressive vaccination campaign. While the success rate among the older, more at-risk population has been truly remarkable, there appears to be a slowdown in the numbers of people taking advantage of the vaccinations. (...) Even with the vaccination program, corona will remain part of our lives for a while. The government needs to provide the country with a clear course of action.

Editorial, JPO, 07.02.21

No lessons learned

Israel’s children are now paying the price for a prime minister who’s too busy with his trial (...). The intention was to reopen the preschools, grades 1 to 4, and grades 11 and 12 in communities with relatively low rates of infection (...). And nobody’s even talking about fifth through 10th graders; they will continue to (not) study remotely in all towns and cities, irrespective of the local infection rate. These age groups will continue to pay the harshest price for the government’s failures. Of all countries that have closed schools during the pandemic, Israel’s schools have been closed the longest. This faithfully reflects the distorted priorities dictated by the prime minister and education minister, who are abandoning the schools to the mistaken methods of the past (...). To the despair of pupils and their parents, we must add that of the teachers and principals, who have lost confidence in this detached government. The faulty handling of the coronavirus crisis has cost Israel’s children almost an entire year of studies, but now there is no one to turn to, since the government is preparing for yet another election campaign, which will also treat education as a non-priority.

Editorial, HAA, 09.02.21

Coronavirus: Why can’t Israeli innovation reopen schools?

(...) education is so much more than just imparting information, as important as that may be. Education

is not only grammar, history or geometry. It is also providing a social framework where children, from kindergarten through high school, can interact with their peers, their teachers and their surroundings – and learn and grow from that.

Most children in this country have not had an opportunity to do much of that now for nearly a year, especially those from grades five to 10, which is detrimental. Millions of them will have been robbed of two school years by the time the summer rolls around. Obviously, the government is not to blame for the pandemic (...). But the government needs to find creative solutions that enable students some kind of educational framework (...). In this sunshine-drenched land, holding classes outside is one way to get the students safely back into an educational framework. If the lockdown is over and people can gather in groups of up to 10 outside, why can't nine students and a teacher meet under an oak tree and study science? (...) Zoom has turned into a lazy solution that prevents creative thinking to find better ways to meet the social and educational needs of students.

Editorial, JPO, 09.02.21

The coronavirus is here to stay

Israel is emerging from its six-week coronavirus lockdown with no clear exit strategy in place. With an infection rate still showing many thousands of new cases a day, most countries would be imposing new restrictions (...). Yet we are having difficulty internalizing that life as we've known it is beyond our reach (...). We can continue to hope that our pre-pandemic routine will return but must still prepare for life alongside the virus for many years to come. (...) It is in a virus' nature to find vulnerabilities and transform into a more infectious - and perhaps more deadly - form. Even so, the actions we are taking to defeat the pandemic have remained unchanged, failing to meet the new challenges the coronavirus presents. Lifting restrictions now means we might face longer lockdowns in the future as hospitals struggle to provide care to their growing number of patients who are suffering from more severe symptoms. (...) The government should continue its vaccination efforts and increase its reach into sectors of the population that have thus far shown a reluctance to get inoculated. (...) There should be zero tolerance of violation of health directives with mass gatherings. There is an infectious and potentially deadly disease rampaging and there must be one law for everyone, with no exceptions. (...) The lead-

ers have to set aside political calculations and make the right call before it is too late.

Moshe Bar-Siman-Tov, YED, 13.02.21

Have you had your coronavirus vaccine yet?

It is too soon to celebrate the reductions in coronavirus morbidity. (...) the latest numbers are far from satisfactory and the reduction in infections can very easily take a turn for the worse. (...) The public understands that political considerations are behind many of the decisions made by the government. This lack of faith in their motives may be a contributing factor to the tempered response to the jabs. But the vaccine is the country's last line of defense and there has to be a public drive to motivate the public to get it. (...) It is time for the media to join the fight, for this is an important element of any public pressure campaign. The illegitimate views of vaccine opponents (...) should be banned - and not allowed to be part of the debate. There is no room for interpretation when it comes to the efficacy of vaccines and their role in ending the pandemic. There is only truth versus lies. (...) Public pressure means that any interview must begin with a direct question: Have you had your vaccines yet? This should be asked of the business owners, restaurateurs, traders, hoteliers, entertainers and actors before they can talk about trials and tribulations they have faced in the past year. (...) This is a battle for our lives and we all must step up and play our part in this national effort.

Sever Plocker, YED; 15.02.21

4. Medienquerschnitt

Netanyahu erklärt sich für unschuldig

Netanyahu plays a double-header in court

The snap of Netanyahu standing in the docket will be used by both his detractors, who will want to show him as a corrupt politician, and his supporters who will wish to portray him as a victim of a vindictive cabal. Netanyahu (...) was not guilty, he told the judges. (...) The prosecution appears negligent and even arrogant in matters of procedure, skipping the need for written permission to investigate certain matters, while defense teams closely watch the crossing of every T and dotting of every I. Thus far, there seems to be no evidence presented that would cause the case against Netanyahu to fall apart, but these matters may not easily be put aside. Such behavior on the part of the prosecution makes one

wonder what chance does a regular Joe, who cannot afford the high price lawyers defending Netanyahu, have when standing trial. (...) Netanyahu is a sophisticated defendant who knows every political and legal trick in the book. He often challenges the legitimacy of the legal system. He destroys public trust in the judges and their rulings and announces he will form a coalition that will pass a law that can bypass the courts and grant him the immunity he seeks. (...) the battle between those aspiring to a country of laws that views all citizens as equals and those who would actively work for a restricted judicial system and would provide Netanyahu an escape from justice is ongoing.

Tova Tzimuki, YED, 08.02.21

Innocent until the money runs out

(...) only money will rule in Bibi's trial. Not the law, not justice. (...) The fee for one day of work by a top lawyer could support a large family for a month. Only a very wealthy person could afford this. (...) as long as Netanyahu can afford to pay for unrestrained legal nitpickers, the proceedings won't budge. And as long as the justice system retains its overly polite manners and avoids putting the delayers in their place (...), the bullying will continue. And ultimately, money will purify the "mamzer." Another 20-30 years of legal pestering, one more postponement while the elderly defendant gets a replacement Filipina caregiver, and everything will finally be taken care of, and if the defendant has passed on by then, the defense will argue that sentencing arguments only be heard after the year of mourning, to spare the grieving family's feelings. And before our eyes, a revolting and sad legal norm takes firm shape: Someone who is rich enough enjoys total immunity from prosecution. Or, put another way: He is innocent until the money runs out. (...)

B. Michael, HAA, 09.02.21

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Verantwortlich:

Dr. Paul Pasch,

Leiter der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Israel

Redaktion:

Susanne Knaul

Judith Stelmach

Homepage: www.fes.org.il

Email: fes@fes.org.il

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