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1. Countdown zur Parlamentswahl

Die Spannung steigt mit dem Näherrücken der vierten israelischen Parlamentswahlen innerhalb von nur zwei Jahren. Schon spekulieren Analyst_innen über eine fünfte Wahl, die notwendig sein wird, sollten keine klaren Regierungsmehrheiten zu erreichen sein. Darauf deuten die aktuellen Umfragen, die zwar dem amtierenden Regierungschef mit Abstand das beste Ergebnis versprechen. Doch für eine Koalition mit mindestens 61 der insgesamt 120 Knesset-Sitze steht es für ihn so mau, wie für seinen derzeit stärksten Gegner, Oppositionschef Yair Lapid. Benjamin Netanyahu versucht in erster Linie, mit der weltweit wegen ihres beeindruckenden Tempos gerühmten Impfkampagne zu punkten. Knapp 30 Sitze geben die Meinungsforschungsinstitute seinem konservativen Likud, auf knapp 20 könnte Lapid mit der Mitte-Partei Yesh Atid (Es gibt eine Zukunft) kommen. Für beide Politiker ist die Auswahl an potentiellen Regierungspartner_innen begrenzt, was mit daran liegt, dass diese sich streckenweise gegenseitig ausschließen. Die legendäre Avoda unter der neuen Chefin Merav Michaeli, einer konsequenten Verfechterin der Zwei-Staaten-Lösung, liegt in den Umfragen stabil bei sechs Mandaten. Die linkszionistische Meretz-Partei könnte dagegen zum ersten Mal in der Geschichte des Staates an der Sperrklausel scheitern.

The world won't wait

(...) There is a tendency to emphasize the importance of the election for domestic reasons: Yes Bibi no Bibi; are the haredim part of the Israeli community or simply freeloaders; when will the damned virus finally leave us; how will we get all the unemployed back to work, is the High Court overreaching itself and should it be cut down to size, etc., etc. All of these matters are important, beyond doubt, not least the first of them. But international matters must not get lost in the shuffle. This is a crucial time for Israel (...). There is a new administration in Washington, and although it is very unlikely to be openly anti-Israel, as was the Obama administration, it will certainly be far more critical of Israeli policies and actions than was the Trump administration. (...) The Abraham Accords need to be followed up vigorously and additional members added where possible. Biden's people will not be particularly helpful here (...). Last, but definitely not least, the situation viz-a-viz Iran is reaching a point of no return. Soon the government of Israel may be faced with the necessity of attacking the nuclear processing sites by itself since the US can no longer be counted upon to "have our back". Unforeseen events may intervene, such as the collapse of the Lebanese government and a subsequent total takeover of that country by Hezbollah, or a threatened takeover of the Iraqi government by pro-Iranian forces, or further egregious violations of Syrian and Iraqi territory by an aggressive Turkey, to name a just a few possibilities.

Dealing effectively with any of these issues requires a stable, well-functioning government, something we have not had for far too long. (...)
Dr. Norman Bailey, GLO, 04.03.21

Israeli elections: live armadillos in the middle of the road

The upcoming election is easier than usual. It's clear to each person whom not to vote for. Secular people won't vote for the ultra-Orthodox parties, and vice versa. Now the Arabs also have someone to not vote for: Mansour Abbas won't vote for the Joint List, and Joint List supporters won't vote for him. Now that we've gotten past that hurdle, the polls are saying that most leftists won't vote for Meretz (...) and yes, there's also bounce-back clown Benny Gantz, who will vote for himself, or maybe not. The bloc that opposes Benjamin Netanyahu won't put a ballot for Likud in the envelope, while Netanyahu's "base" won't vote for Gideon Sa'ar, and even Naftali Bennett isn't sweeping "Zionist Judaism" off its feet. A small part of that group, which takes shelter under the prayer shawl of the "young settlements" that go wild on the hilltops, has other leaders. In short, the ineligible have become the majority. The fastidiousness of the Israeli voter throws him onto a futile path leading to "the center," which promises him a political death by anesthetic. "There's nothing in the middle of the road but yellow stripes and dead armadillos," said the American activist and journalist Jim Hightower. But in Israeli politics, armadillos actually come back to life right in the middle of the road. Yair Lapid, Sa'ar, Bennett, and Merav Michaeli are now our center. They are carefully walking along the dividing line in the middle of the road, as if that was the safest place to be. (...) In the past it was possible and even necessary to criticize choosing the center. It's a fearful, herdlike, conciliatory choice, one that cannot bring change, rebuild the ruins, conduct a decisive policy and restore a worthy hierarchy of values. (...) But we now find ourselves in a bad place, in which getting rid of Netanyahu is a value in and of itself, and not only that – it's a supreme value. (...) This is a time when a vote for the center is a frightfully bitter pill, but it's necessary to cure the body of the plague.

Zvi Bar'el, HAA, 10.03.21

Israel's next election is not just about Netanyahu

It has become customary to divide the parties (...) into the pro- and anti-Netanyahu camps, or more accurately, the probability of them joining a coalition headed by the incumbent prime minister (...) a rea-

sonable method of categorization, but not the only one. Going deeper and looking over the various parties' manifestos and ideologies, especially on the Palestinian conflict, creates new divisions not seen at a first glance. One bloc is the diplomatic center, a collection of parties that do not support (...) the idea of Greater Israel and have instead adopted the two-state solution, however the final borders may look. In this category sit centrist parties Yesh Atid led by Yair Lapid and Benny Gantz's Blue & White - and even the right-wing Likud. Yes, even the Likud has made a political shift on the matter, especially under the leadership of Netanyahu, who decided to forgo annexation of West Bank land in favor of normalization agreements with far-flung Arab states that have do not have a side in the Palestinian issue. In this group also sit the ultra-Orthodox parties Shas and United Torah Judaism, which have in the past already demonstrated their principled support for the idea of a Palestinian state.
Sever Plocker, YED, 12.03.21

The importance of being Meretz

Meretz's fluctuation around the electoral threshold is not unique to this election, but according to the most recent polls, it seems that the fear that the party will fail to cross it is greater this time around. This is because Labor's new slate apparently offers a more exciting alternative to some of Meretz's voters, as well as to voters focusing on replacing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu by voting for center-right parties. (...) As a result, Meretz (...) risks being wiped out of the Knesset. (...) Meretz has an important historic role in Israel's parliamentary structure (...). When there is no real chance for a left-wing government, there's a need for at least an opposition that represents the left's positions against the occupation in the Palestinian Territories and deals with its consequences. These are positions that Yesh Atid leader Yair Lapid and Labor leader Merav Michaeli are incapable of expressing. (...) Meretz has a major role in raising a clear and loud voice against the occupation and the settlements, precisely because it's still basically a Zionist party. (...) If Meretz isn't in the Knesset, only the Joint List will represent the debate on the occupation and protecting the organizations that fight against it. (...) Editorial, HAA, 12.03.21

Israel is headed for yet another rotation government

Israelis will go to the polls (...) with a heavy heart. Among other things, they fear that the election will

yield no decisive outcome this time, either and they will be called to vote for a fifth time within less than three years. (...) According to most of this week's poll results, Naftali Bennett's Yamina, not Gideon Sa'ar's New Hope, could emerge as the leading party on the right. (...) This development (...) brings Bennett closer to (...) a coalition with Netanyahu. A party of 13-15 Knesset seats would enable him to set up a bloc with Sa'ar, who is expected to receive 9 -11 seats. Such a bloc could dictate rotation to Netanyahu. The first to serve as prime minister would be the leader of the united bloc. This would also annul Sa'ar's vow not to take part in a government headed by Netanyahu. The main price the bloc would have to pay in return for the very reasonable dramatic upheaval would be to keep the "alternative prime minister" law. Because it is the results of the trial, not his temporary extraction from the Prime Minister's Office, that will ultimately determine the man's political future. (...)
Israel Harel, HAA, 13.03.21

Should We Resist "Election Fatigue"?

(...) There is a saying in Israel that one who votes influences (...). Voter turnout in Israel is similar to that to other democratic countries, but this time, the fourth election in less than two years, many are saying they will pass on the chance to influence. People are fed up, disillusioned, and don't believe in the system anymore. (...) we should not succumb to it. Israel is unlike any other country. There are many issues to resolve here: poverty, inequality, high cost of living, lack of opportunities to the disadvantaged, social rifts around every corner, and countless other problems. However, we will not be able to resolve any of them if we don't have a country where we can work on them. (...) it is time for the people of Israel to start being what the people of Israel should be—to fulfill its obligation to the world, unite, and set an example of rising above all differences. The ingathering of the exiles has already happened on the physical level. Jews immigrated to the State of Israel from all over the world. Still, internally, we have remained apart. Now we must perform our spiritual task and turn the exiles into one nation, a symbol of union above division. This will be the realization of our vocation, our gift to the world, the best, and indeed only guarantee to our safety and prosperity.
Michael Laitman, TOI, 13.03.21

Israel Elections: Netanyahu is sounding the alarm once again

(...) Netanyahu has visited numerous Arab towns in this campaign, searching for votes in places that he warned not that long ago were the home of Israel's alleged fifth column. He now holds daily gatherings with activists in halls and on beach promenades (...). Every vote is important in the race to immunity, which will require at least 61 seats made up of Likud, the haredi parties and Naftali Bennett's Yamina. And to snatch every vote, Netanyahu needs to reach out to everyone no matter who they are, even if they are part of a sector of society – like the Arabs – who just three elections ago he warned with racist overtones were voting in high numbers. (...) Other parties have also adopted the tactic, especially if it can help them cross the electoral threshold that a number of parties – Blue and White, Meretz and Religious Zionist – are currently teetering along the edge. But there is a bigger question to ask ourselves that even a great gevalt cannot answer: why is there so little fresh blood in Israeli politics today? Why does the country keep recycling the same parties and the same party leaders? Of the current parties that polls show passing the threshold, there is only one female leader – Merav Michaeli – and she has been in the Knesset since 2013. The "freshest" face among party leaders today is Benny Gantz, leader of Blue and White since 2019 but whose past record as IDF chief has kept him in the public eye for most of the last 20 years. The situation is so dire that the big news last month ahead of the submission of the final party lists was that Tzipi Livni might be coming back. Not someone new, fresh, young and/or famous entering politics, but rather someone who had been in the Knesset for two decades and had failed. (...)

Yaakov Katz, JPO, 12.03.21

2. Oberster Gerichtshof für Anerkennung von Konversionen in Israel

Zu heftigen Reaktionen führte das Urteil des Obersten Gerichtshofs in der Frage zur Anerkennung von Konversionen innerhalb Israels. Aus rechten und orthodoxen Kreisen wurde scharfe Kritik laut. Von befürchteten Massenimmigrationen derer, die per vermeintlichem Schnellverfahren in liberalen Gemeinden zum Judentum konvertierten, war die Rede, was insofern überrascht, da Israel die im Ausland vorgenommenen nicht-orthodoxen Übertritte längst anerkennt. Das jüngste Urteil bezieht sich hingegen ausschließlich auf konservative und reformjüdische Konversionen innerhalb der israeli-

schen Landesgrenzen, die nach Schätzungen in den Medien nur einige Dutzend Mal jährlich vorgenommen werden. Für Übergetretene gilt das Rückkehrrecht und damit der Anspruch auf die israelische Staatsbürgerschaft. Für die aufgeregte Debatte entscheidend ist vielmehr die politische Dimension des Urteils, denn es betrifft das Verhältnis zwischen Staat und Religion sowie zwischen Israel und der Diaspora, allen voran zu den liberalen jüdischen Gemeinden in den USA.

Conversion cannot be taken lightly

(...) The dramatic ruling by the High Court of Justice (...) ordering the state to recognize non-Orthodox conversions, evoked natural outrage in the Haredi community, for how does the court dare weigh in on a religious tradition. But that is not the case: the court's ruling pertains to aspects of the Law of Return. Article 4B in the Law of Return clearly states that "for the purposes of this Law, 'Jew' means a person who was born of a Jewish mother or has become converted to Judaism and who is not a member of another religion." (...) for over 50 years the State of Israel recognizance Reform and Conservative conversions performed overseas, provided that they were performed within a recognized community, and those who chose this path are entitled to immigrate to Israel and become citizens. What the High Court of Justice did was declare that such conversions stand when performed in Israel as well, thus undermining the ultra-Orthodox Chief Rabbinate's exclusivity in the matter. The danger here is that Reform and Conservative conversions would be abused; that they would become a system of fast-tracking the naturalization of refugees and foreign laborers currently living in Israel. (...) Lawmakers and aspiring parliamentarians would be wise to replace their outcries with actions. The court has left the door open from legislative amendments, and if the state so desires it could find a way to counter the ruling. (...)

Rabbi David Ben-Nissan, IHY, 02.03.21

Chipping away at the Orthodox monopoly over Judaism in Israel

As a Reform Rabbi I have far greater religious freedoms in the UK than if I were in Israel. (...) While the BBC are interrogating whether Jews are an ethnic minority, Israel continues to struggle with who is a Jew. (...) Although Israeli citizenship is open to all born of Jewish lineage or who converted in the Diaspora, until this week it has not included those who chose to embrace Judaism whilst already living in

Israel. Reform Judaism in the diaspora is often marginally more tolerated in Israel than on its own soil. (...) it is because of the money Reform communities around the world bring into the Israeli economy. In America alone, Reform Jews outnumber all the other Jewish denominations put together. This announcement is a huge achievement for, and the result of, a long and tedious battle by the Israel Movement for Reform and Progressive Judaism (...) and the Israel Religious Action Centre (...). Yet it feels a small battle, affecting a small number of converts, in a war for religious freedoms which needs so desperately to be addressed in its entirety. (...) This issue may affect only a small number of people and yet if it is a step towards legitimizing non-orthodox Judaism in Israel, it should be cause for great celebration (...)

Miriam Berger, TOI, 03.03.21

Convert the Orthodox rabbis!

(...) The celebration or revulsions about this decision are all based on nothing but scoring points for the constituents. (...) the non-Caucasian Jewish communities have all streams integrated. It is racist to think that Ashkenazic Jews are representative of all Jews. They are the only ones who split up between Ultra-Orthodox, Modern-Ultra-Orthodox, Orthodox, Modern-Orthodox, Flexidox, Religious, Traditional, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, and Secular, to name a couple. The only real but most pressing issue here is that an enormous number of Israelis are waiting or hoping for an acknowledgment as Jews. (...) Jewish Law doesn't say who is a Jew. It regulates who to acknowledge and count as a Jew. The Redeemer will rule who else is Jewish too. (...) Learning and observance are important because they can cause a change in or fortify certain character traits over time. Behavior is easily changed and not so crucial. Character traits have permanency about them. One cannot revoke one's Jewish status. Unless one can make it plausible that one lied at the moment of conversion. Also, when one stops being a Jew, that may have tremendous consequences for the person, family, and congregation. This is not something to toy or experiment with. Instead of citizenship, there is temporary citizenship. No reason why the Rabbis should not institute temporary convert status. If, after several years, you're still deeply connected to the Jewish People, you may get your permanent passport. (...)

Moshe-Mordechai van Zuiden, TOI, 05.03.21

Small step for the court, large step for converts

Despite the clear definition in the law, the ultra-Orthodox monopoly seeks to expand and intensify its control. The ultra-Orthodox monopoly in Israel regularly generates injustice in the lives of the country's citizens. One example among many is the harm it causes to the freedom of religion and the freedom of choice of Israelis who cannot marry in Israel or are forced to marry in a way that does not reflect their beliefs or their lifestyle. Attempts by ultra-Orthodox leaders to extend this monopoly to conversion affects a smaller number of Israelis but brings this injustice to an absurd height. (...) the Chief Rabbinate's rabbinical court for conversion uses the conversion process to try to impose an Orthodox lifestyle on converts, secular adoptive parents who convert their children are required to send their children to the Orthodox school system, converts are required to be Sabbath observant and other ridiculous demands that are contrary to democratic principles. Thus, in reality, many converts begin their Jewish lives with a lie to the rabbinical court with the hope, which often fails, that they can uphold the required Orthodox standard. In this way, as in many other ways, the monopoly distances Jews from Judaism. The Reform Movement believes that there is more than one way to be Jewish. (...) This victory, although symbolic, finally ends the court discussion on conversion in Israel and establishes the decision made decades ago that there is more than one way to convert. This decision can serve as the first step in healing the rift between Israel and Diaspora Jewry on conversion and is an additional step toward dismantling the corrupt and harmful ultra-Orthodox monopoly in Israel.

Noa Sattath, TOI, 06.03.21

For Israel to maintain 'purity of religion,' it must offer civil paths to citizenship

(...) The Orthodox, and anyone who worries about converts using Reform or Conservative pathways to receive an Israeli equivalent of the Green Card, must offer an alternative path for acquiring citizenship, as exists in other Western countries. If Shas is worried that the Reform pathway will appeal to asylum seekers – a pathway closed for now to illegal immigrants – it must ensure that Israel affords them protection enshrined in law. You can't block all routes to Israeli citizenship that don't involve conversion and then cry about people trying to "infiltrate" into our religion. You want to maintain religious purity? Well, provide civil alternatives. But to do so, Israel must tackle the real issue, something it refus-

es to confront. Not who is a Jew, but who is an Israeli. But then it will find itself face to face with the real "other" that threatens its identity: the Arab citizens of this country and the Palestinians.

Carolina Landsmann, HAA, 06.03.21

Conversion challenge must be solved by Knesset

(...) Israel, as a democracy, cannot subject the religious courts of different religious streams to unequal treatment. Having recognized the validity of private Orthodox (...) conversions five years ago, the HCJ must now, in the same way, affirm the validity of private conversions conducted in the frameworks of other major and recognized religious streams. That is the reason why three religious justices, two of them among the most conservative on the bench, supported Chief Justice Hayut's main ruling. They openly express their ideological reservations regarding the outcome – they would prefer that conversion recognition be entrusted to Israel's Chief Rabbinate – but as professional judges they are obliged to reach the correct result in keeping with past precedents, even if it contradicts their own worldview. This is an honorable decision. (...) Israel, as the state of the Jewish people, has to recognize the validity of different interpretations of the Jewish religion, not just the Orthodox approach. Israel is not a country of one specific religious community, but rather of all Jews. (...) the judicial decision does not deal with the religious question of what constitutes a valid conversion, but rather with the civil-secular issue of which conversions will be recognized for purposes of conferring citizenship. The HCJ ruling does not, therefore, infringe upon Orthodox Judaism, nor is there any basis for allegations of court intrusion into the sphere of Halacha, Jewish law. (...) it took a full 16 years for the HCJ to reach this point. The (...) matter at hand is one of the relations between the people of Israel and the Diaspora, and between religion and state – issues on which the Knesset should decide (...). Only once it became clear that the Knesset was evading its duty due to political constraints was the court forced to rule in its stead. (...) In an atmosphere of greater tolerance, it would be possible to establish a tribunal composed of judges from all three streams of Judaism who would implement an agreed-upon halachic policy consistent with the more lenient rulings accepted by Orthodox Judaism. This would entail flexibility on all sides, but its benefit to Jewish unity would resound for generations to come.

Yedidia Z. Stern, JPO, 07.03.21

3. Internationaler Gerichtshof ermittelt gegen Israel

Der Internationale Strafgerichtshof (IStGH - ICC) hat offiziell Ermittlungen zu Kriegsverbrechen in den Palästinensergebieten aufgenommen. Alle Ermittlungen würden "unabhängig, unparteiisch und objektiv" ausgeführt, versicherte Chefanklägerin Fatou Bensouda. Im Vorfeld hielt das Gericht seine Zuständigkeit auch für Ost-Jerusalem, den Gazastreifen und das Westjordanland fest. Verfahren gegen israelische Militärs wären möglich. Die Anklage des Strafgerichtshofs erklärte, es gäbe den begründeten Verdacht für Verbrechen nicht nur von Seiten der israelischen Armee und israelischer Behörden, sondern auch der Hamas und palästinensischen bewaffneten Gruppen. Bei den Ermittlungen soll es vorrangig um Vorfälle vor und während des Gaza-Krieges 2014 gehen. Palästina ist seit 2015 Vertragsstaat des Internationale Strafgerichtshof. Israel erkennt die Zuständigkeit des Strafgerichtshofs nicht an.

Israel cannot repeat past mistakes with ICC

It is (...) the Jewish nation that is being persecuted. (...) the purpose remains clear: to shame and delegitimize Israel in the eyes of the world. (...) Israel's courts and prosecutors are harsher on soldiers than the U.K., so even if a conclusion is reached that war crimes were committed, it does not mean that indictments will be filed. Let us not forget that Hamas' attacks on Israel's civilians will also be included in the investigation, and Hamas, as we all know, happily encourages its fighters to harm the innocent. (...) Israel's settlements in the Palestinian territories (...) is the one for which Israel's defense might falter somewhat. While Israel has a battery of international legal experts who can prove nothing illegal was done in this regard, the verdicts of the High Court of Justice in Jerusalem might not be enough to placate the tribunal at The Hague. There are also several elements within Israel that may prove to be a nuisance during the investigation. These include (...) the "Breaking the Silence" organization. This organization was the subject of a lawsuit filed by several soldiers who took part in the 2014 war and who accuse it of spreading false testimonies that they took part in the unlawful shooting and subsequent live burial of an innocent Palestinian man. And while this claim has been debunked by the soldiers' body cams, such "testimonies" from Israeli organizations may hamper the state's ability to defend itself. Still, it seems that Israel would have no problem rebutting any allegations of war crimes. If it presents its evi-

dence that is, for Israel does not recognize ICC jurisdiction and is not a signatory to the Rome Statute. This led to Israel's response being ignored when in 2009 the United Nations initiated the Goldstone investigation into alleged war crimes during the 2008-2009 Gaza war. One can only hope Israel does not make the same mistake again. Ben-Dror Yemini, YED, 04.03.21

Israel and the International Criminal Court: From victims to criminals

(...) Few people are aware of it, but on the final day of 2000, Israel signed the Rome Statute that established the International Criminal Court. (...) Israel later announced that it wouldn't ratify the treaty and so wouldn't become a party to it. It had taken the international community 50 years to establish a permanent tribunal to try anyone suspected of war crimes, crimes against humanity, crimes of aggression and the so-called crime of crimes – genocide. From 1948, when the idea of such a court was first raised in a UN General Assembly resolution, to 1998, when the Rome Statute was adopted, Israel aspired to take a leading role among countries pressing to establish the court. With the pathos of those speaking on behalf of the ultimate victims, Israeli delegates ostensibly represented the conscience and morality that only victims of discrimination and persecution of pogroms and extermination like us could and were entitled to represent. That was then, but it's no longer the case. In recent years, Israel has crossed the lines and heavily armed itself for an unconventional battle against the organization whose establishment it once supported. (...) For an Israeli audience, it may be difficult to hear this, but Israel is known around the world as a serial perpetrator of crimes: the establishment of settlements in the territories, disproportionate attacks on the Gaza Strip every few years in which thousands of people are killed, and the patently apartheid regime it has created. A different decision would risk a wave of countries that might leave the ICC, endangering its very existence. On the other hand, the launching of investigations against Israelis leads the court straight into an abyss. Israel is one of the politically strongest countries in the world and is not ashamed to declare war on international law. And it doesn't take prisoners. (...) At this very moment the Israeli government is activating its war rooms at the Prime Minister's Office, the Foreign Ministry and probably the Mossad. I am ready to give them a free advice. Borrowing on a remark attributed to the late lawyer Amnon Goldenberg, who

in response to a client's question on what he should say in his testimony, said that sometimes the truth is also an option, I would suggest that sometimes not committing war crimes is also an option.

Michael Sfar, HAA, 04.03.21

The ICC: Latest salvo in the war against Israel

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is moving forward with investigating Israel for "war crimes," and this is the latest salvo from the Palestinians in their century-long war with Israel. From Palestinian riots to revolts, from Palestinians engaging in a civil war against Jews to the Arab League nation-states waging an all-out war against Israel, from Palestinian organized terrorism to raging intifadas, from the Palestinians driving United Nations resolutions to International Criminal Court investigations of Israel, the Palestinians are waging an endless war against Israel, rejecting numerous offers of peace for their people's autonomy and self-determination. (...) In 2015, Palestinian Authority President, Mahmoud Abbas requested the International Criminal Court (ICC) to do a ludicrous investigation of Israel for "war crimes" (...). Israel has throughout its history striven for peace and reconciliation with its Palestinian and Arab neighbors. From the acceptance of the United Nation recommendation for the partition to the Oslo Accords and the Camp David Summit working toward Palestinian autonomy and self-determination, and even making painful concessions at the time for the possibility of a two-state solution that would also let Israel live in peace and security. (...) Unfortunately, the Jewish people will need to continue in their ultimate struggle for survival. After 2,000 years of Jewish exile, and suffering under incessant persecution, inquisitions, expulsions, pogroms, the Holocaust, even now with the State of Israel, the one Jewish homeland and our refuge, the attacks continue against us from Palestinians choosing to wage an endless, bitter war instead of looking to make a lasting, beautiful peace.

Andy Blumenthal, TOI, 05.03.21

Israel must be smart about the ICC probe

(...) The outgoing chief prosecutor at the International Criminal Court Fatou Bensouda has left her successor a most juicy parting gift – a probe into Israel's alleged war crimes. (...) Israel genuinely has nothing to fear for its own future or that of its leaders. As proud Jews who remember the infamous Dreyfus trial, we will prevail and emerge from this affair unscathed. But Bensouda's actions pose a far more serious danger, delivering a major blow to the

prestige of the ICC and that of international law as a whole. What will happen when member states who reject the court's jurisdiction over Israel's conduct vis-à-vis the Palestinians refuse to cooperate with its warrants? What kind of enforcement will the court - and criminal international law as a whole - have left? Israel's justice system, led by the Supreme Court in Jerusalem, is among the most respected and prestigious in the Western World. But a decision by members of the international community to put Israel under microscope is nothing new - be it out of political, practical or even anti-Semitic motives. (...) Instead of opting for a noble but more difficult path and launching probes into Syria and Iran, it was far easier for the ICC to direct its gaze on Jerusalem, which unlike Damascus and Tehran is not a signatory of the Rome Statute that created the court. With this in mind, Israel must formulate a complete, clear and coherent legal strategy to counter the ICC. Therefore, it is time for Israel to resume talks with the Palestinian leadership, not from a position of weakness, but from one of strength.

Dana Wolf, YED, 13.03.21

4. Medienquerschnitt

Umstrittene Corona-Politik

Reopening Israel's borders is stupid and irresponsible

The Israeli government has been incredibly stupid in deciding to allow thousands of people into the country every day. (...) All manner of coronavirus mutations will enter Israel and spread throughout the population, putting the entire vaccination effort in jeopardy. Those of us who are already concerned about the British and South African variants of coronavirus that have already infected Israelis will remember them fondly when new and far more potent strains appear. (...) Israel has only just begun to emerge from a third lockdown triggered by extremely high morbidity and the strain on hospitals' ability to treat COVID patients. Opening the country to new forms of the disease could land it right back in the same medical crisis. (...) Health officials fear that Israel will see worst-case scenarios when restrictions on businesses are removed (...) and children of all ages return to school. There will be thousands if not tens of thousands of victims infected by the rapidly spreading virus over a number of weeks, potentially leaving hospitals inundated with patients suffering from severe lung disease. (...)

Sarit Rosenblum, YED, 05.03.21

How Israel turned COVID-19 Vaccines into a political issue

(...) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu couldn't be more transparent (...) he wants us to talk about how he brought the vaccines into Israel. (...) truth must be said – Netanyahu did an outstanding job getting novel coronavirus vaccines to Israel. (...) However, there's one important question that none of his interviewers asked – yes, we are leading the charts, but what's the next phase? (...) The fact that the R rate is going up though illustrates how coronavirus will not be solved solely by vaccines. Another tool has been a lockdown, which government officials now say could be imposed before Passover. (...) the public has had it with the government and its restrictions. The trust in the state is at the lowest point it was in years. And this fact, Mr. Netanyahu, should worry you – and us – more than anything else. (...) Trust will be needed once again and one way to do that is to stop politicizing everything, including our vaccines.

Editorial, JPO, 08.03.21

HAA = Haaretz

YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

GLO = Globes

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