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1. Dramatischer Anstieg von Corona-Neuinfektionen

Wegen massiv steigender Corona-Infektionszahlen gilt in Israel der sogenannte Grüne Pass für fast alle Bereiche des öffentlichen Lebens. In Sportstudios, Museen und Restaurants müssen schon Kinder ab 3 Jahren nachweisen, dass sie geimpft, genesen oder negativ getestet sind. Auch für den Handel wurden strenge Maßnahmen erlassen: Pro sieben Quadratmeter Fläche darf sich in Geschäften oder Einkaufszentren nur noch ein Mensch aufhalten. In Gebetshäusern gilt eine Ausnahme für bis zu 50 Personen. Israels Regierung versucht mit den Maßnahmen, einen weiteren Lockdown zu den jüdischen Feiertagen zu verhindern. Obschon über 59 Prozent der Bevölkerung vollständig geimpft sind und über 2,5 Million Menschen auch schon eine dritte Impfung erhalten haben, stieg die Zahl der Neuinfektionen im August erneut auf nahezu 10.000 täglich. Israel war eines der ersten Länder, dass die Pandemie zwischenzeitlich mit einer schnellen Impfkampagne weitgehend unter Kontrolle gebracht hatte. Mit der Ausbreitung der hochansteckenden Delta-Variante und der Schwächung der Wirkung der Impfung bei jenen Personen, die bereits vor mehr als sechs Monaten geimpft worden waren, legte die Zahl der Infektionen aber wieder deutlich zu. Große Bedenken gab es auch mit Blick auf das neue Schuljahr. Schüler_innen ab zwölf Jahren können sich mit Zustimmung ihrer Eltern während

der Unterrichtszeit in der Schule impfen lassen. Die hohe Anzahl an dreifach Geimpften zeigt inzwischen Wirkung. Die Anzahl der täglichen Neuinfektionen liegt nun wieder bei rund 5.000 pro Tag – Tendenz sinkend.

Israel should say yes to COVID-19 vaccinations in schools

Education Minister Yifat Shasha-Biton's opposition to vaccinating children against the coronavirus in schools impedes efforts to end the pandemic. (...) Vaccinating as many children as possible is in the common interest, and this is the right way to reach herd immunity and bring Israel out of its current wave of infection. In fact, children in Israel have always received a variety of vaccines in schools, at different ages (...) influenza, chicken pox and HPV, for example. The social argument for in-school vaccination is to reduce inequality, as not all parents have the ability or awareness to take their children to a clinic to be vaccinated. The education minister's claim that giving the vaccine in schools increases social pressure and is a crime implies that vaccinating children against the coronavirus is controversial. Her distinction between giving this vaccine and the vaccine for the seasonal flu or tetanus in schools implies that she doesn't trust the COVID-19 shot. (...) The argument that children must be protected from social pressure and should not be vaccinated in school is an odd one if you take into account

everything they've been through in the past year and a half (...) and consider what's at stake: a greater chance of them and their family members becoming infected and enduring prolonged and recurrent isolation or quarantine. In addition, Shasha-Biton's distinction between education and health is an artificial one. Is it proper education to disconnect children from the pandemic that's affecting their life and that of their family? (...) And what could be more educational than caring about the health of students and the entire public and making the vaccine more accessible to everyone? Instead of opposing vaccination in schools, Shasha-Biton should prepare her ministry for a school vaccination campaign and make information on the coronavirus vaccine more accessible so that as many children as possible will be immunized and Israel will take a giant step toward herd immunity.

Editorial, HAA, 01.08.21

Israel will pay gravely for vaccine hesitancy

There are some 1.8 million Israelis over the age of 12 who are eligible for a coronavirus vaccine but have refused to take it (...). We have had very little stability over the past year and a half of the pandemic, but this figure hasn't budged in the slightest despite rising vaccination rates and rousing speeches (...). Unless coronavirus hospitalizations miraculously come to a screeching halt over the coming two weeks thanks to the booster shot campaign, those 1.8 million people will send us straight into a fourth lockdown, and it'll be harsher and more devastating than the previous three. (...) the decision to not get immunized until now (...) will eventually hurt us all. The more people get vaccinated, the fewer people become infected, but most importantly — serious cases will rise at a much lower rate which especially troubles health officials right now. (...) one thing is abundantly clear: fiery speeches by politicians do not bring people to vaccination centers. Despite the rate of unvaccinated being highest among 12–16-year-olds and the Bedouin and Arab sectors, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Health Minister Nitzan Horowitz's genuine effort to raise inoculation rates stops the moment they leave the podium. They keep labeling the unvaccinated public enemies, but in reality do next to nothing else to persuade them to take the jab. (...)

Adir Yanko, YED, 05.08.21

It's time to mandate the COVID vaccine

Sometimes you just run out of patience. It happens mainly when confronted with a major overload of

stupidity, cowardice and selfishness. Or, in two words – vaccine refusers. (...) although there isn't the slightest chance that refuting their nonsense will change their position, it's still worth a try (...). Let it be said immediately that the vaccine refusers have the full and absolute right to suffocate. But they do not have the right to choke others. None of the basic human right gives them this right. Not the right to "freedom of occupation," not "freedom of movement," not "freedom of conscience," not "freedom of religion," not the "privacy," not "equality." Not even the "right to free speech," which they use to spread their rubbish. Because the right of free speech (like all fundamental rights) is not absolute. It has limits. (...) The collective has rights, too, and as it happens, the group's rights sometimes outweigh those of the individual. Particularly when the individual insists, while brandishing his rights, on endangering the collective and its health. So says the law, common sense and human decency. The only way to deal with these vaccine refusers is by coercion. By laws. By fines. By restrictions on movement. And in stubborn cases, also by strictly enforced quarantine. Against their will? Yes, against their will. (...)

B. Michael, HAA, 17.08.21

COVID-19: Who is to blame for another lockdown?

The prospect of being locked up in their houses for another period of weeks or months to combat the COVID pandemic has sent many reasonable people into a frenzy, even though it appears unlikely. (...) "closure" has become a symbol for all our COVID woes and worries. (...) If it happens, this would be the third closure in two years, and despite the government's reassurances and appeals for cooperation, angry Israelis are eager to find someone to blame. (...) Cabinet ministers are at odds. The Education Ministry wants school to start on time. The Transportation Ministry wants to keep the airport open. The Health Ministry wants effective measures to stop the spread of the virus. These interests conflict with each other, and hashing it all out in semi-public (...) is unpleasant at best and ugly at worst. And all the while, the goalposts keep moving. Infections skyrocket before the government can do anything. Decisions are made, then scrapped, then reinstated, then reinforced. (...) Israel's government is in an impossible situation. It can't make long-lasting decisions in an orderly fashion, because the reality keeps changing. It has to balance the conflicting interests of the sectors its ministers represent. But one thing is clear. The former government made

populist decisions while looking over its separate shoulders at its pet constituencies. The new government doesn't look over its shoulders – the ministers argue for the sectors of government they represent. That's what they're supposed to do. (...)

Mark Lavie, JPO, 18.08.21

Israel must stop stalling and go into lockdown

It seems like the term "lockdown" has become taboo in Israel — a synonym for disaster — even though it is one of the most effective tools in a state's arsenal to battle a surging pandemic, but only if it is being employed wisely. A two-week lockdown could significantly bring down morbidity (...). Israel's first lockdown in March 2020 and its third in December later that year were extremely effective in reigning in the spread of the disease. (...) the three previous lockdowns have cost the state around NIS 50 billion in GDP loss and a similar sum in government aid to those who felt a financial crunch as a result. Granted, this number is substantial, but it is marginal when compared with the massive economic burden of the excess morbidity and deaths the lockdown prevented. (...) In order to mitigate the lockdown's noxious effects on Israeli society and the economy, it would be prudent to come up with sound and practical aid mechanisms (...) the government must prepare quick and feasible solutions to alleviate some of its potential harm to the economy and workers. Assuring public statements are not a substitute for practical solutions.

Sever Plocker, YED, 18.08.21

Coronavirus cabinet putting our health at risk

(...) Ever since the outbreak of the third wave of the pandemic, senior Health Ministry officials have repeatedly called for a national plan to encourage inoculation among the unvaccinated. Yet (...) neither the ministry nor any of Israel's four healthcare providers made the kind of effort one would expect to see in the middle of a national health crisis. (...) there were reports of heated discussions in the so-called "coronavirus cabinet," which nevertheless resulted in a decision to allow Israeli children to return to school on Sept. 1, subject to testing, coronavirus restrictions, and special guidelines. (...) the government sought to signal their successful handling of the fourth wave was such that the schoolyear would commence as usual. We must hope this goes ahead as planned. (...) in contrast to the sense this government and the man at its head would like you to have, the fourth wave is hitting Israel particularly hard. The country is tragically

recording a record number of seriously ill patients and deaths. You wouldn't know this, though, from any of the ministers' statements. Every day, dozens of families receive word of the death of a loved one from COVID-19, yet the prevailing atmosphere in the coronavirus cabinet and the government borders one of indifference toward the victims. The prime minister has exaggerated the economic costs of lockdowns but made no effort to emphasize the terrible cost of 7,000 lost lives. (...) we have a coronavirus cabinet that behaves as if Israel is not contending with a deadly fourth wave that continues to take ever more victims to thank.

Ran Reznick, IHY, 24.08.21

COVID has made Big Brother that much bigger

(...) the erosion of privacy didn't start with the coronavirus. There has been an ongoing, persistent legislative effort to help the state cope with the challenges of the internet and smartphones, while at the same time exploiting their capabilities. Only last month the Public Security Ministry proposed a bill that would allow police to use cameras to identify faces in public and establish a database to store this information. Every time a bill like this is proposed, it is vehemently criticized, with warnings about the risks inherent in undermining privacy, but the state (...) keep promising, "It'll be fine." But the more that details emerge about the use of these intrusive technologies, the more it becomes clear that there is no basis for believing "it'll be fine." (...) law enforcement authorities cannot be trusted to make proportionate, rational use of the powerful tools at their disposal; that the oversight entities – whether the Knesset, the responsible minister or judges – are not standing guard and are in fact cooperating with this aggression; and that the High Court of Justice facilitates these dangerous practices.

Editorial, HAA, 30.08.21

With school approaching amid COVID, did we learn our lesson

The first day of school brings up different memories for everyone. For parents, it means sending kids off to a new framework after a summer of vacations, arrangements for day care, juggling work and home and less structure. For children and teens, it's the anticipation of new classes, the excitement of seeing old friends, buying new clothes and book bags and entering the great unknown of another school year beginning. However, for the last two years under the ominous shadow of the coronavirus pandemic, the opening of the school year has been anything but

positive. On the contrary, it's filled both parents and pupils with anxiety and dread. With some 2.5 million students and another 220,000 teachers making their way to classrooms on Wednesday amid a record number of nearly 11,000 new COVID-19 cases on the books, there exists a recipe for a perfect storm. However, the decision to open the school year on time despite the whole month of September being full of holidays was the correct one, but it must be done right. (...) Some 35,000 of the currently active corona cases are schoolchildren; in addition to some 55,000 who are currently in isolation because they were exposed to verified cases. They will, therefore, not be able to be in school. Further, another 60,000 or so students for grades 7-12 in cities labeled as red – classes where the vaccination rate does not reach 70% (...) – will study remotely. (...) it will require discipline and responsibility among parents and pupils to make the school year succeed without descending into a return to full-time Zoom classes. (...) Unless everyone does their part to be smart and adapt their behavior to lessen the chances of infection, we're going to see another truncated school year. That will mean we'd have collectively earned a failing grade for this very important lesson.
Editorial, JPO, 31.08.21

2. Eklat zwischen Jerusalem und Warschau

Die diplomatischen Beziehungen zwischen Israel und Polen sind erneuten Prüfungen ausgesetzt. Auslöser für die aktuelle Krise ist ein polnisches Gesetz mit dem verhindert werden soll, dass Verwaltungsentscheidungen nach einer Verjährungsfrist von 30 Jahren gerichtlich angefochten werden können. Israel befürchtet damit ein Ende der Entschädigungen für Enteignungen während des Zweiten Weltkriegs. Betroffen sind von dem Gesetz zwar theoretisch jüdische und nichtjüdische Menschen. In der Praxis zielt es auf Holocaust-Überlebende, weil sie nun nicht mehr die Rückgabe von nach dem Krieg konfisziertem Eigentum einklagen können, das ihnen während des Naziregimes genommen wurde. Nach dem Krieg wurde der Grundbesitz in der Regel von der kommunistischen Regierung verstaatlicht. Der rechtskonservative polnische Präsident Andrzej Duda verteidigte seine Unterzeichnung des Gesetzes, mit dem eine „Ära des rechtlichen Chaos“ enden soll. Polnische Wohnungs- und Grundstückseigentümer_innen könnten sich fortan in Sicherheit wähnen. Israels Außenminister Yair Lapid bezeichnete das Gesetz als unmoralisch. Bereits

2018 hatte Polens umstrittenes Holocaust-Gesetz das Verhältnis zu Israel schwer belastet. Dabei ging es um das Verbot, das polnische Volk oder den Staat für die während des Dritten Reichs begangenen Nazi-Verbrechen mitverantwortlich zu machen.

Amid opposition to Polish law, Israel must recognize theft of Palestinian property

Israel's harsh diplomatic protest against the approval of a Polish law preventing Jews from receiving restitution for property that was stolen from them during the Holocaust and the Communist era in Poland, is logical and necessary. The law is another step in a series of attempts by the Polish authorities in recent years to reshape the historical narrative. (...) In addition to protecting the property rights of Holocaust survivors and their descendants living in Israel today, Israel plays an important symbolic role in the struggle over the memory of the Holocaust. Under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, historic principles were frequently set aside in favor of forging alliances with anti-liberal governments in European Union member states such as Poland and Hungary. (...) Netanyahu chose not to confront the Poles (...) in order to recruit another European vote against the Palestinians. Lapid's decision to change this policy is correct in principle. Israel cannot agree to the theft of Jewish property in Poland. Nonetheless, Lapid and the rest of the cabinet members would do well to recognize that Poland is not alone in opposing restitution. Israel also stole property from many innocent Palestinians who were forced to flee in 1948, and since then their homes and land have been expropriated without compensation through the Absentee Property Law. The events (...) are of course not identical, but the result – innocent victims losing all their property, which was given to other people without any compensation – exists here too. (...) Failure to do so at the same time that it – justifiably – rebukes the Poles, is sheer hypocrisy.

Editorial, HAA, 16.08.21

Lapid is wrecking ties with an important European ally

The European Union (...) holds an inherently hostile attitude toward Israel. (...) But in the past decade, the "new Europeans" under conservative, right-wing governments became aware and self-confident, which allowed them to change the rules of the game. (...) Poland (...) played a key role in bringing about this change, along with the Czech Republic,

Hungary, Slovakia, Austria, the Baltic states, and even Romania and Bulgaria (...). Poland as the fifth-largest population in the EU, one of the fastest-growing economies in the EU and is a very important US ally. Israel stood to benefit from the close relationship that developed between Washington and Warsaw and also benefitted from various and sundry cooperative ventures. (...) Poland was one step away from relocating its embassy in Israel to Jerusalem. But then Foreign Minister Yair Lapid launched a populist war against Poland. Three years ago, while still in the Opposition, he fired the opening shot with his unchecked attacks against Poland's "Holocaust Law." Now the Foreign Ministry under his leadership is waging a full-front assault over a new law that will restrict the restitution of stolen property. (...) Lapid turned one of Israel's closest friends in the EU into a potential enemy. (...) The restitution law (...) was passed in the most democratic manner possible and did not spark impassioned political debates, despite the Polish government's shaky standing. (...) But Lapid knows that the capitals of western Europe do not like the Polish "law and order" government, just like they don't like the right-wing governments in Hungary and Slovenia. To curry favor with the "liberal" governments of western Europe, he has adopted a simplistic narrative that the government of Poland is "anti-democratic" and "anti-liberal." In one fell swoop, Lapid is wrecking Israel's relations with one of its most important allies, all to appeal to the "liberal" axis in the EU, the one that is hostile to Israel. Lapid's populist "anti-Polism" will bolster the antisemitic fringes that exist in Polish society and encourage anti-Israeli attitudes in a country where it barely exists.

Eldad Beck, IHY, 17.08.21

Poland's Holocaust restitution law is an injustice

(...) Polish President Andrzej Duda brought shame on his country and stirred painful memories among the descendants of the Jews who perished in Poland when he decided to sign a controversial bill into law that places a 30-year statute of limitations on restitution claims for property that had been seized by the Nazis and then retained by Poland's Communist regime. (...) the law makes it virtually impossible for all former Polish property owners to secure redress for property illegally seized during the Communist era – including all the Jewish property owners who were stripped of their possessions by the Nazis. (...) Instead of trying to smooth things over and keep feathers unruffled, Israel's response, led by Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, has correctly

been forceful and adamant. (...) Poland's refusal to accept responsibility for its role in the Holocaust is its Achilles' heel. While most post-Communist countries have sought to right historical wrongs and address the issue of stolen Holocaust-era Jewish property, Poland has lagged behind, claiming it was the Germans, not the Poles, who were responsible for the atrocities against Jews in the Holocaust. (...) Poland's bald attempt to heap another injustice on the millions killed in the Holocaust on its soil is nothing short of outrageous. (...)

Editorial, JPO, 18.08.21

Poland is too precious of an ally to give up

(...) Throughout history, there have even been cases of antisemitism in countries that had absolutely no Jews. It is because Jew-hatred has very little to do with what Jews actually do. Rather, it is a disease that plagues the nations of the world. Israel, being a Jewish state, adopted battling antisemitism as one of its primary goals. And while it can, and should, stand up to antisemitism, it must remember that it cannot change the world and demand it act without prejudice. (...) Israel should help Jewish communities abroad when in need of help, but when it comes to foreign policy, it should first and foremost focus on state interests, and put them above any other considerations. There is no reason for the Israeli government not to work with world leaders who do not support the Jewish people. (...) When it comes to the current crisis with Poland, the Israeli government adopted an approach that is far from pragmatic. Downgrading diplomatic relations with Poland is unnecessary and detrimental to Israel's foreign relations, even if the United States also criticized Warsaw for the law. Foreign Minister Yair Lapid's remarks about Jerusalem not being afraid to stand up to antisemitism and "immoral behavior" by Warsaw is incredibly jarring. Factually, it is incorrect, and politically, it is harmful. Israel does not have many friends in the European Union, and Poland (...) is an asset it cannot afford to give up, especially since Warsaw has proved more than once that it is a trustworthy ally.

Efraim Inbar, IHY, 23.08.21

Israel and Poland have so much more to do together

(...) The sad political events of the last few weeks between Poland and Israel have spun out of control. (...) in an unprecedented move, ambassadors have even been recalled. (...) it completely disregards the strong relations that have been built over recent

years between Poland and Israel. These ties were once robust, and very much in both countries' self-interest. From national defense to high tech and culture, the Polish-Israeli relationship touched citizens in both countries in nearly all fields of life. Each day, thousands of Polish people and Israeli tourists, businessmen, and educational groups filled up airplanes, going both ways. We learned from each other. We learned about each other. It was a relationship based on regular interaction. It was a relationship with education at its very core. (...) You can disagree. You can argue. But the underlying unity, spirit of mutual responsibility, and shared interests – must be above all. (...) Over the years, the relationship between our countries has been both fruitful and open. For those who look to rein in our achievements together, we must speak out. An understanding and openness towards our difficult pasts, has served as a foundational value to keep driving our relationship forward. (...) Israel and Poland can do so much good together. (...)

Marek Siwiec, TOI, 31.08.21

3. Kriminalität im arabischen Sektor steigt

Die Kriminalität in arabischen Ortschaften nimmt dramatisch zu. Über die Hälfte aller in Israel begangenen Morde spielen sich innerhalb der arabischen Minderheit ab, obschon sie nur rund ein Fünftel der israelischen Gesamtbevölkerung ausmacht. Im vergangenen Jahr waren es 113 Mordopfer – zu meist junge Männer. Immer öfter aber werden auch Unbeteiligte in die Gewaltkriminalität verwickelt, die häufig auf Familienfehden zurückgeht oder von organisierten Banden verantwortet wird. Die Kritik der Bevölkerung richtet sich in erster Linie gegen die Polizei, die zu wenig für die Aufklärung und Vermeidung der Kriminalität unternimmt. Zeitungsberichten zufolge habe die Polizei in diesem Jahr nur 22 Prozent der Morde in der arabischen Bevölkerung aufgeklärt, verglichen mit 71 Prozent der innerhalb der jüdischen Bevölkerung begangenen Morde. Eine 45-Mann-starke polizeiliche Undercover-Einheit soll an Brennpunkten der Kriminalität in den arabischen Ortschaften Abhilfe schaffen.

Crime rate in Arab sector is nothing short of terrorism

The spike in the crime rate and violence in Arab society has prompted the government and law enforcement to ponder new ways of dealing with the problem, such as the establishment of a crime prevention department for the Arab sector. There is

absolutely no need to set up an entirely new department when the responsibility to prevent crimes (...) rests on the police. (...) It seems that the Israel Police lacks the most basic understanding of Arab society. (...) it greatly failed in terms of intelligence and perception. Not only did it fail to prevent crimes and illegal weapon trade, but it also completely lost its ability to deter. Therefore, the government is right in considering entrusting Shin Bet – Israel's internal security agency – with the task of dismantling criminal organizations in the Galilee, the Triangle region and the Negev. Such a move would require legislation, because the job of Shin Bet is to thwart terrorism, but perhaps, it's time to view the crime rate in Arab society precisely this way: as terrorism and a threat to national security. Shin Bet (...) still has deterrence in the Arab Israeli sector. (...) the situation has spiraled so out of control, that time has come to shuffle the cards. (...) Blurring the lines between "crime" and "terrorism" and between "citizens" and "enemies" sounds risky, but there are ways to monitor and control the situation. (...)

Jalal Bana, IHY, 25.08.21

The violence raging in Israel's Arab community is a national crisis

The list of victims of the violence that is running rampant in Israel's Arab community grows longer. (...) innocent people are also paying the price of the violence. (...) The bloody roster of victims of violence is proof of the failure of the Israel Police. (...) normally law-abiding citizens in these communities have obtained guns for self-defense. That is clear evidence of the police's failure to provide the most basic thing: personal safety for citizens. In fact, the police have lost control of the situation. (...) detectives go from one murder scene to the next. Cases from the not very distant past are neglected and the murder clearance rate is low. Criminals know that they are unlikely to be arrested and charged, and that the system is incapable of preventing them from using guns that are freely available. The low crime-solving rate also leads to a loss of public trust in the police, which in turn leads to a lack of cooperation with law enforcement. Many in the Arab community choose to protect themselves by taking the law into their own hands. That's a sign of total chaos – no police, no law and no order. (...) the government has a duty to wage a tough, uncompromising battle for the security of the country's Arab citizens. That includes seeing to the economic future of young members of the Arab community, about 40 percent of whom are unemployed according to police data. It

is a short path from joblessness and poverty to the world of crime. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 29.08.21

The bloodbath in the Arab community in Israel must end

It seems that the ongoing scourge of violence in Arab society reached a new level (...) The longtime policy of the police to refrain from confronting Arab mafia groups is now exploding in its face and is likely to affect the general Israeli public in the near future unless a radical change is made in attitude. (...) The public, and especially the Arab sector, is fed up with empty words and broken promises. (...) 77 Arabs were killed in violent incidents since the beginning of 2021. In comparison, 96 Arabs were killed throughout the entire year of 2020. It is time for a radical, institutional change. No more press conferences; no more pompous declarations; no more cutting of ribbons and celebratory ceremonies. (...) A comprehensive plan should be brought to the table of the government, which should include not only more policing of Arab towns, but also investment in infrastructure, transportation, development, and above all — education. Only when Israel's Arab citizens start receiving the same resources as the rest of the public will there be change. (...)

Editorial, JPO, 29.08.21

Israel remains impotent as crime ravages Arab sector

Israel's police (...) has completely lost control over the rampant crime wave ravaging the Arab sector. (...) Despite all the promises by Israeli officials, criminals in the Arab sector continue to act unabated. (...) It was just earlier this month that police officials celebrated the launching of a new crime-fighting campaign, which now proves to be nothing more than a PR stunt. For years the Israel Police has promised Israeli Arabs it will help them. A new station here, a few more officers there, but everything only gets worse day by day. This charade will probably keep going (...) with flashy photos of SWAT teams descending on the Arab cities to make arrests and confiscate some weapons. The public has lost all faith in those sworn to protect it and seems now that even those in police's high ranks do not believe themselves either.

Eli Senyor, YED, 30.08.21

4. Bennett trifft Biden

US-Präsident Joe Biden versicherte im Verlauf der ersten Reise von Israels Regierungschef Naftali Bennett in die Vereinigten Staaten seine Unterstützung. "Die USA werden immer für Israel da sein", sagte er beim Empfang des israelischen Ministerpräsidenten im Weißen Haus. "Es ist eine unerschütterliche Partnerschaft zwischen unseren beiden Nationen." Bennett zeigte sich umgekehrt anerkennend. „Israel weiß, dass wir keine besseren und verlässlicheren Verbündeten in der Welt haben als die Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika." Bei den Gesprächen der beiden noch nicht allzu lange amtierenden Regierungschefs ging es in erster Linie um das iranische Atomforschungsprogramm. Beide Staatsmänner zeigten sich einig, dass die Entwicklung atomarer Waffen im Iran verhindert werden müsse. Das Treffen war infolge des schweren Anschlags islamischer Terroristen in Kabul, bei dem auch 13 US-Soldaten ums Leben gekommen waren, kurzfristig verschoben worden. Bennett sprach den USA sein Beileid aus.

A waste of a trip to Washington

(...) former Prime Minister Ehud Barak (...) had met with Bennett since the latter took office. (...) He spoke of several crucial points regarding the Iranian nuclear threat, for example: how and when will Iran be defined as a nuclear threshold state? How close is it to developing a bomb? What is the United States' course of action? The impression was that Barak had become Bennett's mentor and now instructs him on matters relating to the Islamic republic. Political journalists have noted that Bennett has been preparing for a month and a half for his trip, examining Iran's nuclear policy. (...) Bennett does not have a clear policy on crucial matters, especially those relating to Israel's security. The prime minister himself said that there are "many issues" on the agenda, including the Gaza Strip and Lebanon. (...) Bennett is eager to present himself to the American public as the leader of Israel and to show off to those back home that he is influential enough to walk the halls of the world's most powerful building. In short, nothing matters more to Bennett at the moment than his trip to Washington – not even quelling the coronavirus pandemic or ensuring Israel's safe future.

Amnon Lord, IHY, 23.08.21

Biden meeting signals real start of Bennett's premiership

(...) While Israel knows very well how to independently deal with Tehran's nuclear program and its regional aggression, it is doubtful whether it has the freedom to do so. (...) Bennett's visit to Washington, as brief as it may be, is just another part in the baptism of fire he has been going through over the past few weeks as part of his initiation into premiership. It is a far-cry from his celebratory and emotional winning speech. It's real life, much more challenging and complicated than what could be summarized in a short address to the nation. (...) it is safe to assume the premier had to listen more than speak. He most likely realized that Israel's burning issues – the nuclear deal with Iran, tensions with Hamas and Hezbollah and negotiations with the Palestinians – are not a top priority for the administration in Washington. But he will still have to provide answers to all those issues when he returns to Israel. Bennett left for Washington amid increased tensions on the Gaza border and now that he's coming back, we're waiting for solutions as to how he is going to deal with this burning matter. (...) he must do his part as prime minister and act. (...) if that is not enough, the Delta variant continues to run amok. (...) one million Israelis remain unvaccinated and the (...) reopening of schools (...) will not make matters easier. Since taking office, Bennett's term so far has been no walk in the park. No longer the spectator shouting from the gallery, now he must run straight into the burning building and rescue survivors. (...) This is Bennett's hour of judgment and all that unfolds from this point on will not only decide whether he will see his tenure through, but how Israeli history will remember him.

Ariela Ringel Hoffman, YED, 27.08.21

The Palestinian elephant in the Oval Office

(...) The US administration will not initiate a diplomatic move concerning the Palestinians at this point (...). Nor will it present its own diplomatic initiative at this stage. Yet alongside issues such as Iran, Iraq, the Gaza Strip, the replenishment of the Iron Dome missile defense system, and the US visa waiver program, the Palestinian issue was nevertheless present during the prime minister's meeting with the American leader (...). Biden asked Bennett to refrain from unilateral steps in the settlements. Bennett adhered to a policy based on natural growth. (...) The Americans disagree with the Israeli interpretation of "natural growth." They're barely willing to put up with construction within the Green Line, and

definitely not thousands of units each year. The question as to how many units will be built and where exactly they will be constructed will be laundered in US-Israeli talks behind the scenes at this point in time. That is the agreement that has been reached between the two sides. Bennett will try to gain approval for as much as possible, while the US will pressure Israel to do as little as possible. If understandings on the issue are not reached, the dispute, which both sides have for the time being declined to refer to as such, will come to light. (...) The issue of US plans to reopen a consulate to the Palestinians in east Jerusalem also came up in their meeting. Disagreements on the issue remain. Nevertheless, Bennett can be pleased that, for now, the US does not have a structured plan for the Palestinian issue and that the American leader is now largely focusing his attention on other foreign affairs as well as the coronavirus pandemic. The dispute with the Americans on the two-state solution may remain (...). For now, though, the two sides have agreed to disagree. (...)

Nadav Shragai, IHY, 29.08.21

Israel's Bennett bashers just can't be pleased

It's hard to please the sourpusses. Even though they did all they could to oust Benjamin Netanyahu, the moment it actually happened they started to attack, insult and offend Prime Minister Naftali Bennett at full speed. (...) While it's not always pleasant to give credit, the truth is, dear sourpusses, that Bennett handled the audition in Washington very well. He created a basis for a warm personal relationship with the president, who told him during their private meeting that he could pick up the phone anytime and for any reason, and during the public meeting added: "We've become close friends." (...) On the Iranian issue it's impossible to demand the impossible. The United States will not go to war with Iran, but Biden's statement that Iran will never have nuclear weapons, and if diplomacy fails, the United States is "ready to turn to other options," should be welcomed. The reference here is to joint American-Israeli measures to halt Iran. (...) The sourpusses also ignore the special budget, \$1 billion, that we will receive to improve and restock the inventory for the Iron Dome missile-defense system. The advancing of visa waivers for Israeli tourists doesn't impress them either. They prefer to talk about the "serious" mistake Bennett made when he said Israel had given 3 million citizens the third coronavirus vaccine while the number was actually "only" 2 million. They also ignore that Bennett took a big risk when he

launched the third shot before final FDA approval of the Pfizer vaccine, and despite all the intimidation. We're the only country in the world administering a third dose, a move that will put a brake on the pandemic and allow us to live with the coronavirus without imposing a lockdown. If Netanyahu had launched the third shot, we would be seeing him on television every two days explaining in detail how he performed this miracle. (...) Netanyahu isn't the only Israeli politician who speaks fluent American English. Bennett does, too. And if there's one thing that turns you from yet another sweaty Middle Eastern politician into a recognized international leader, it's a command of English. Not that the sourpusses are particularly impressed.
Nehemia Shtrasler, HAA, 30.08.21

5. Medienquerschnitt

US-Truppenabzug aus Afghanistan

The Kabul moment of American decline

If one wanted to see what American surrender looks like, it was obvious for the world to see (...). The Taliban, the same group that the USA invaded Afghanistan to destroy 20 years ago after the 9/11 attacks, finished its sweep of the country and entered the presidential palace. The United States, the great United States that once defeated Hitler, won the Cold War with the Soviet Union, and spread its capitalistic, democratic ideology worldwide, seemed helpless as they raced for the exits. Defeated by the same terrorist army that they fought for 20 years, but were virtually bowing to, as Biden refuses to fight. (...) Afghanistan is the graveyard of world empires. Alexander the Great faced difficulties pacifying it, echoed in the failures of the British Empire of the 19th century, and the Soviet Union of the 1980s. Would the USA defeat the odds and change the country into a modern democracy free of Islamism? The answer is no. (...) the United States has forgotten that it is still a superpower. (...) The ramifications will come into play soon. Anyone who believes in American leadership in the world needs to take a hard look over what is materializing and question if one wants the backing of the United States. The Kurds already paid the price in Northern Syria and in Iraq under past administrations and we are witnessing the collapse of the Iranian nuclear deal largely with American indifference. From Israel's vantage point, I would look long and hard at my best friend. Will the USA come to our aid if another major con-

flict, say with Hezbollah, were to break out? If a nuke, G-d forbid, ends up striking Israel, will the United States help us strike back at our enemies? (...) The American state itself is not threatened with collapse; however, the world we have all grown up in, the Pax Americana, is no more.
Gil Lewinsky, TOI, 16.08.21

The failure of Pax Americana

The return of Taliban rule 20 years after the group was ousted by invading U.S. forces is proof of the failure of the Pax Americana strategy, which aimed to bring democracy and stability to the region, based on post-WWII policies that were applied successfully in the defeated Germany and Japan. But by invading Afghanistan and later Iraq, the U.S. opened a Pandora's Box, unleashing hatred, sectarianism and religious wars on the region. This failure of the U.S. is testimony to the difficulty of decision makers in Washington to comprehend foreign cultures and especially those in the Muslim world, and their feeble attempts to impose on Mideastern nations the same values that had evolved over centuries in the West. (...) The American withdrawal from Afghanistan is bad news for Israel as well as the Sunni Arab world. Although the U.S. maintains its influence over the region, it shows little motivation to play a role in its future and prefers a diplomatic approach to preserving American interests in the area. (...) Washington's policy could diminish its standing in the eyes of actors such as Russia, China and Iran, and embolden them to increase their belligerence. It could also motivate extremist groups such as al-Qaida to renew their attacks and deepen the concerns of long-time Middle Eastern allies over the loss of a vital strategic ally. This new American policy is playing out while the entire Middle East is more unstable than ever and when even the slightest spark could ignite the region and endanger current political structures. The nations of the Middle East will not move towards democracy and human rights through force, nor will they be motivated by social and economic means. Only a shift in the position of the religious establishments, the media and the education systems can bring about the coveted change.

Michael Milshtein, YED, 20.08.21

Soldat im Grenzgebiet zum Gazastreifen gefallen

Israeli military has never been in a more dangerously rotten state

(...) something very bad is happening to the Israel Defense Forces. (...) The riots on the Gaza border fence (...), which resulted in Border Police Staff Sergeant Barel Hadaria Shmueli being critically wounded by gunfire, show that field commanders are incapable of preparing their forces for operations. (...) all plans are approved by the chief of staff. (...) No other army in the world would allow such a violent riot to be staged so close to the border. (...) Shmueli was wounded after a Gaza militant fired point blank at his head through a hole in the perimeter fence. (...) While young people from rich families head off to serve in prestigious units like 8200 (IDF's Intelligence Corps) and come out of the army with five-figure salary job offers, those from low socioeconomic background are forced to take up combat roles. It is time for some justice to be done and have those serving in combat to be compensated fairly. It is completely preposterous that in order to survive a three-year service, a soldier needs financial aid from his family or goes into debt. This inequality later continues into civilian life when these soldiers find it hard to be accepted into university or get a steady job. (...) Public trust in the IDF is decreasing and if something is not done soon, the public faith and dwindling motivation to enlist will never rebound. (...)

Yossi Yehoshua, YED, 23.08.21

A tactical event with strategic implications

For decades, every IDF command course teaches cadets about the "strategic corporal event" – a seemingly tactical and marginal incident that drags the IDF and Israel into what is essentially a strategic mess. This is exactly what happened on Sunday during a demonstration on the Gaza Strip border. A pre-determined local event that was supposed to end without any incident but got out of hand and dragged Israel in an unwanted clash. The IDF was unable to provide satisfactory explanations thus far as to why Hamas members were allowed to enter what was supposed to be a buffer of about 300 meters (yards) from the security fence that should remain sterile, thus allowing their snipers better positions, which resulted in the critical injury of an Israeli officer. (...) The Gaza Bridge will have to answer for the fact that it essentially failed to deal with a border riot (...). Hamas is been bolstered and is sure to mount future riots in hopes to exact a price

from the IDF. The military will most likely make the necessary tactical adjustments and will also be more aggressive in its response, which will probably lead to Palestinian casualties and a response from the Palestinians. This is a familiar ritual. (...) As always, Gaza requires handling with care so as to prevent it from erupting again.

Yoav Linur, IHY, 23.08.21

Verteidigungsminister Gantz trifft Palästinenserpräsident Abbas

Bennett's cowardly response to Gantz-Abbas meeting

After 12 years with Benjamin Netanyahu at the helm, Israel is still afflicted with the malady he bequeathed it: doing one thing while (...) saying the exact opposite in public. Just like Netanyahu could hold coalition talks with the United Arab List while feeding the public the lie that these are "supporters of terror" who are ruled out as partners, so is the contact with the Palestinian Authority a fact on the one hand and a political taboo on the other. (...) The open meeting of Defense Minister Benny Gantz with the Palestinian president in Ramallah (...) was intended to weaken the deception that has taken root among Israelis – that there isn't, and mustn't be, any conversation with the PA. The truth is obviously the opposite: Relations, imbalanced as they may be, are tighter than ever, both between the governments and on the ground. After all, it's impossible to live in this region without cooperating at some level in security, economics, civilian affairs – in all walks of life. (...) the current government is (...) taking these relations out of the closet. (...) Instead of emulating Netanyahu's hypocrisy in these matters, Bennett should tell the public the truth: We have no way of ignoring the PA, nor should we; it lives among us and alongside us, which will always be the case. (...)

Noa Landau, HAA, 30.08.21

Tagelange Waldbrände bei Jerusalem

Israel must get better at fighting fires

This week's devastating wildfires in the Jerusalem hills highlight the need for the government to consider a new approach and measures that would help Israel cope more effectively with such crises in the future. What's needed now is a comprehensive plan to boost the firefighting budget, beef up the country's

fire services, and enable the acquisition of sufficient firefighting trucks and planes to allow Israel to fight fires by itself, without seeking international help. (...) The Israel Fire and Rescue Authority (...) said 75 crews and 10 planes had battled the blaze. (...) Since the Mount Carmel fire, firefighting services have improved their capabilities and received more resources, but not nearly enough. (...) The most sobering statement on the subject came from Environmental Protection Minister Tamar Zandberg, who warned that extreme weather conditions and wildfires will become more frequent and more powerful in coming years, due to global warming. (...) in order to excel in this new era, Israel needs to change its mindset about dealing with climate disasters such as flooding in the winter and wildfires in the summer. Fighting fires is a job not just for firefighters. Editorial, JPO, 17.08.21

Raketenangriff aus Libanon

Israel must stop Lebanon becoming new Gaza

The IDF airstrike on Lebanon (...) signifies not only an uptick in the Israeli military response to rockets fired from across the Lebanese border, but also a better understanding of the threats posed by Palestinian factions in that area. Unlike the previous incidents of rocket fire in recent months, that were launched from improvised launchers (...) positioned on a truck to allow maximum mobility. (...) The IAF strike was the first carried out by Israel in southern Lebanon in eight years and sends a clear message to Hezbollah and the Lebanese government and its military that Israel will not hesitate to strike infrastructure in Lebanon if its sovereignty is violated. (...) despite the economic crisis in Lebanon and the growing number of desertions, the Lebanese army is still capable of entering Palestinian refugee camps in the south and locating the mobile rocket launcher used in the attack that caught Israel, UN peacekeepers in southern Lebanon and the Lebanese government by surprise. Aside from its demands for the Lebanese army and Hezbollah to act against the armed Palestinian factions, Israel must also improve its own intelligence-gathering capabilities that have thus far concentrated on Hezbollah and the weapons being amassed in the Palestinian camps. This intelligence gap must be closed quickly because the Palestinian factions have been allowed to increase their military strength and pose a real threat to the Israeli forces along the border. (...)

Ron Ben-Yishai, YED, 05.08.21

HAA = Haaretz
YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews
JPO = Jerusalem Post
IHY = Israel HaYom
TOI = Times of Israel
GLO = Globes

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