



Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 11/08

Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

19. Mai – 01. Juni 2008

1. Verhandlungen mit Syrien

Am 20. Mai verkündigten Repräsentanten von Syrien und Israel, dass die beiden Länder seit Monaten mit Hilfe von türkischen Vermittlern indirekte Geheimgespräche geführt hatten und zu der Übereinstimmung gekommen seien, mit Verhandlungen über ein Friedensabkommen zu beginnen. Syrien dem Einfluss aus dem Iran zu entziehen und es zur Aufgabe der Unterstützung der Hisbollah zu bewegen, gelten als wichtigste Ziele solcher Verhandlungen. Dies ist allerdings nicht das erste Mal, dass die Nachbarländer mit Friedensverhandlungen begonnen haben. Bisher scheiterten die Gespräche an unterschiedlichen Ansichten über das Ausmaß eines israelischen Rückzuges aus den Golanhöhen und Syriens Beziehungen zu Organisationen, die Israel als terroristisch einstuft. Einen Rückzug aus dem Golan durchzusetzen wäre allerdings weiterhin problematisch: Umfragen zufolge lehnt ein Drittel der Israelis eine Aufgabe des Gebietes, das Israel 1967 besetzte und 1981 annektierte, ab.

Benjamin Netanjahu, Parteichef des Likuds, bezichtigte Premierminister Olmert indes, er führe die Friedensgespräche nur, um von der Korruptionsaffäre abzulenken, in die er verwickelt ist. Dieser Vorwurf wurde auch in den Medien aufgenommen - den Verhandlungen wurde überwiegend mit Skepsis begegnet.

The day after a deal

„Let's assume, just for the sake of making a point, that Syria will get the Golan Heights, which is sovereign Israeli territory in every way. [...] What will Bashar Assad do in such case?

About a million Syrian residents will be settled in the Golan immediately. [...] You want proof? [...] A presidential decree has already been issued announcing that any Syrian resident who moves to the Golan will receive a government allowance.

This is what the Syrians did in Lebanon in order to take it over. [...]

This will enable Bashar Assad to realize his dream with no interruptions – establishing a 'resistance' against Israel in the Golan Heights. Officially, he will argue that he has no connection to the terror attacks that would be directed at the Galilee region and northern Israel from the Golan. [...] From a strategic asset to Israel, the Golan would turn into a burden on top of the other regional efforts to eliminate Israel. Our future generations won't forgive anyone who would do that."

Guy Bechor, JED 23.05.08

There are no dangers in diplomacy

"There are those (and they have been quite vocal lately) who say that engaging in negotiations is a gift to the other side and that negotiating is a form of surrender. What hogwash! [...]

It is not diplomacy that rewards aggressors and would be aggressors. It is the absence of diplomacy or inept diplomacy.

Not everybody understands that. Charles Krauthammer writes that one must never negotiate with rogue states or organizations without preconditions. [...]. Krauthammer favors setting preconditions that will deter negotiations in contrast to achieving goals in the context of negotiations. [...] [But] Ehud Olmert understands that. He is negotiating with the Syrians to achieve a verifiable agreement that will compel Syria to get out of Lebanon, end its support for Hizbullah and its role as Iranian proxy on Israel's border. The strategic value of the Golan would be replaced by early warning systems, demilitarized zones, and international monitors. [...]

Will he succeed in reaching an agreement? I am not optimistic. The Syrians seem to want the Golan but not at the price of full recognition of Israel. [...] Nonetheless, I hope the two sides keep talking. One never knows what kind of breakthrough can occur

when the parties to a conflict are negotiating, even indirectly. But everyone knows no breakthroughs will come if leaders refuse to negotiate.”
MJ Rosenberg, JPO 26.05.08

Golan safe for now

“Golan residents can relax. The Golan Heights will apparently not be handed over to the Syrians in the coming years, if at all. Syria has no interest in peace with Israel, just like Israel has no interest in handing the Golan over to the Syrians. Syria cannot deliver the minimal goods required of it; that is, severing its ties with terror organizations and the Iranian influence in favor of normalization with Israel. Meanwhile, Israel has no desire to provide the Syrians with military positions on the Golan, which would again threaten Israeli communities, or to allow the Syrians access to the Sea of Galilee.

On the other hand, both sides have an interest in maintaining a sort of pre-dialogue process; that is, an interest in being perceived as though they are aspiring for peace while the other side is presented as the rejectionist.

The question which many Israelis must ask themselves is not how much peace we shall receive in exchange for the Golan, as if the Heights were a tradable commodity with a set price, but rather, does Assad really want peace? Would such peace serve his supreme goal, which is the safeguarding of his regime?

The answer to that is negative of course. The hatred for Israel, the external enemy, enables him to maintain absolute power in his country despite the economic and social repression suffered by the masses.”

Shai Bazak, JED 21.05.08

Utopian Peace Junkies

“Arguments against an Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights are so self-evident that they simply fly off your tongue. [...] Since the 1973 Yom Kippur War, the Golan Heights has been Israel's quietest, most stable border. This is largely the case because the Syrians know that from the Golan Heights, the road to Damascus is wide open.

An Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights would destabilize the border by removing Israel's offensive deterrent capacity against Syria. [...] An Israeli withdrawal would raise tensions dramatically. And those tensions would find the remainder of Israeli territory more vulnerable to an Iranian-Syrian attack than ever before. [...]

Everyone knows that Israel won't get a "real peace" from Assad. [...] To understand why Israel can expect to receive absolutely nothing from Syria in exchange for the Golan Heights, one needs to look no further than Syria's last big peace treaty with a neighbor. In 1989, Syria agreed to withdraw all its troops from Lebanon under the Taif Accord that ended Lebanon's civil war. Needless to say, Syrian troops continued their illegal occupation Lebanon for the next 15 years and still today continue to block Lebanese independence by arming Hizbullah.”
Caroline Glick, JPO 26.05.08

The black channel and the White House

“Peace with Syria, even at the price of returning the Golan Heights, would be good for Israel. [...] But the loud revelations of the indirect, low-level talks between the two countries under Turkish auspices were mostly a matter of making a mountain out of a molehill. [...]

As long as there are no Americans in the Israeli-Syrian story, there will never be any real progress in the negotiations between the two sides.”

Amir Oren, HAA 28.05.08

Golan is not for sale

“Today already the Golan is being presented for sale, like meat in the market – we are talking about sovereign Israeli territory, home to 20,000 residents, a national enterprise of dozens of communities, agriculture, wineries, a tourism industry, spas, and a history that dates back more than 3,000 years. The mere fact that public opinion even tolerates a discussion of this possibility is an indication that we are still far from being a people rooted deeply in the soil of its land. [...] Syria controlled the Golan for only 21 years, half the period it has been under Israeli rule. [...]

We should be saying all this even before we talk about strategy and security. [...] And just like depriving a person of his rights and freedoms is forbidden, ‘cleansing’ the Golan off Jews would not only be a national sin, but also a crime against humanity, which allows for the right to resist.”

Elyakim Haetzni, JED 30.05.08

We just went to round up the cattle

“A note on the Golan Heights: This is sovereign Syrian territory occupied by Israel during the Six-Day War to end Syrian shelling of the communities in the Hula Valley, not to be annexed to Israel. [...] But the settlers need no papers or Ottoman-era title deeds to settle. The artillery shelling was still

underway when they took over an abandoned Syrian military camp, using a fraudulent argument [...]: They only wanted to round up Syrian cowherds scattered in the area. The path from the rounding up of cattle to a settlement on the ruins of Quneitra is short, and since that time it is ours and 'The people are with the Golan' and the hell with peace."

Amiram Cohen, HAA 27.05.08

Turn over every stone

"The official announcement published yesterday in three capitals - Jerusalem, Damascus and Ankara - about the opening of indirect peace talks between Syria and Israel, under the aegis of Turkey, is a source of great hope but also suspicion. This is not the first time hope has been ignited. [...] Had one of the previous prime ministers dared to sign an agreement, Israel's position today would be immeasurably better, and one unnecessary war, the Second Lebanon War, could have been prevented. [...] Israel's northern border would be safer and Iran's presence in the region would be weaker under conditions of peace with its ally. [...] Whatever Olmert's motives, it is forbidden to miss historic opportunities. [...] It is worthwhile remembering that Olmert began the peace initiative a long while before the affair of the envelopes broke. [...] This is the moment to tell Olmert: Let the investigations continue as if there were no peace talks, and let the peace talks continue as if there were no investigations."

HAA 22.05.08

Olmert korrumpiert den Frieden

"Es entsteht der Eindruck, als handle es sich hier um eine persönliche Verzweiflungstat, die jedoch in einer nationalen Katastrophe enden könnte."

HZO 22.05.08

The Syrian talks aren't serious

"Let's consider why the two sides are 'negotiating,' including the fact that they aren't negotiating. There isn't going to be a deal. Both sides know it, yet have good reason to be seen talking, indirectly that is. Start with [...] factors that account for Israeli government policy:

1. Keep Prime Minister Ehud Olmert in power. It's not the only issue, but it's certainly there. Olmert wants to claim he's involved in such important negotiations that it's a sin to interfere. What's more important, he asks, envelopes filled with cash, or peace?"

Barry Rubin, JPO 25.05.08

The press as 'spinologists'

"Anyone who claims - and within an hour we heard this idea in the media - that all of this is merely "spin" and that the timing is nothing more than the prime minister's attempt to divert attention from the investigation against him, only shows that he does not trust the real arguments at hand and is being dragged into cheap demagoguery. [...] The negotiations with the Syrians began long before the Talansky affair came to light. [...] Does anyone truly believe that Ehud Olmert - with all his skills, which are numerous - is capable of persuading the prime minister of Turkey, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and his 'good buddy' Bashar Assad to cooperate with him all due to 'spin'? [...] Public discourse and debate should focus on the issues and take place in an educated and cultured manner. So, to assorted cynics and demagogues we say: Stop jabbering with your tales of spin."

Yehuda Ben Meir, HAA 26.05.08

2. Rücktrittsforderungen an Olmert

Wie in der letzten Ausgabe berichtet, läuft ein Ermittlungsverfahren gegen den israelischen Premierminister Olmert, dem vorgeworfen wird, Bestechungsgelder oder illegale Wahlkampfspenden des Amerikaners Morris Talansky angenommen zu haben. Nachdem Talansky vor dem Jerusalemer Bezirksgericht aussagte, wie er Olmert über 15 Jahre hinweg mit Tausenden von Dollar in Bargeld versorgt und ihm teure Hotelbesuche und Flüge bezahlt hatte, wurde der Regierungschef in allen Medien aufs Schärfste kritisiert und sein Rücktritt gefordert. Olmert besteht jedoch weiterhin auf seiner Unschuld und rief seine Parteifreunde dazu auf, Talanskys Kreuzverhör durch seine Anwälte abzuwarten. Ehud Barak, Verteidigungsminister und Vorsitzender der Arbeitspartei, forderte den Premierminister indes dazu auf, sein Amt an ein anderes Kadima-Mitglied abzugeben. Andernfalls werde er sich für vorgezogene Neuwahlen einsetzen. Auch innerhalb von Kadima sprachen sich hochrangige Parteimitglieder wie Außenministerin Livni und Transportminister Mofas für Vorwahlen aus, um einen neuen Parteivorsitzenden zu bestimmen. Nach einigem Widerstand erklärte Olmert schließlich, er werde Vorwahlen nicht blockieren, bat aber seine anstehende Reise in die USA und möglicherweise auch das Kreuzverhör durch seine Anwälte abzuwarten.

Deep sense of disgust

"In a word: Disgusting. And even that doesn't serve to fully express the sense of nausea that emerges from the testimony of donor and fundraiser Morris Talansky, who for 15 years, it appears, made sure to maintain the lavish lifestyle of an Israeli mayor and minister. [...]

It is possible that parts of the testimony we heard Tuesday are untrue. [...] Yet the behavior described by Talansky is embarrassing and revolting even if we weren't talking about a public figure: There is nothing sexy about people who live at the expense of others only to satisfy their desires and ostentatious lifestyle. [...] Attorney Eli Zohar asked that we exercise patience. Yet this request is too much: Talansky will be leaving to the United States today while leaving behind a prime minister who faces countless offences, even if only parts of the testimony are true.

And with all due respect, there is a limit to patience as well."

Sima Kadmon, JED 28.05.08

Further disqualification

"You know Ehud Olmert's political future is looking bleak when the only people appearing on radio and television to say a good word about him are those in his employ. The political consensus here is that the premier cannot possibly carry on. The reverberations from Morris Talansky's deposition in Jerusalem District Court on Tuesday are simply too overpowering. [...] Olmert said he would resign only if indicted. His immediate goal is probably to wait until July, when his lawyers will cross-examine the magnanimous Mr. Talansky. His spokesmen are reminding us that Ehud Olmert has not even been indicted, much less tried or convicted.

All this is true, but none of it really matters. A prime minister whose flaws were bitterly exposed by the stewardship of the Second Lebanon War ought to have stepped down in the wake of that war's failures. That he has subsequently become embroiled in an accumulation of corruption investigations only further depletes his ability to safeguard the nation in this most demanding of jobs. [...]

Barak is right that the country cannot afford a part-time premier diverted by the overarching aim of staying out of prison."

JPO 28.05.08

The beginning of the end

"Yes, the future looks bleak, dire even, but this is Ehud Olmert, the indomitable political fighter, who barely scraped into the last Knesset and somehow wound up as prime minister. [...] The man who would not be budged by a scathing report into a war he elected to fight [...] will not easily be shoved aside by a few hours of testimony from a minor New York Jewish financier. [...] Inside his bubble, Olmert is doubtless certain that he has done nothing wrong, broken no laws, and that those who think differently are, again, motivated by personal animus. As was the case a year ago, he is fighting for survival day by day. [...]

But the myth of his invincibility is being shattered, nonetheless. [...] His plea this week that there be no rush to judgment, that he be given the opportunity to refute Talansky's allegations, is eminently reasonable. It is his absolute right as a suspect. But it is belated for Olmert the politician, for a man with whom the public has gradually lost all patience. "

David Horowitz, JPO 29.05.08

After Olmert

"The practical question that must now be asked is: What will come after Olmert? The two major alternatives were discussed in the public discourse even before the general disgust over Olmert's behavior had reached such heights during the corruption investigation. [...]

The alternatives include setting up another government with the participation of Labor but with another Kadima representative at its head, or holding early elections. A third alternative, setting up a completely different government in the current Knesset, is not realistic because 61 Knesset members will not vote for it.

Barak is right to prefer the first alternative. Political and governmental stability benefit Israel more than premature elections."

HAA, 29.05.08

A whole generation wants cash

"Ehud Barak made a laughingstock of himself on Wednesday when he called for Ehud Olmert to step aside, but ignored the only winning argument: It is unacceptable for someone who behaves like Olmert to be prime minister. [...] It is no coincidence that Barak focused on the legal issue and ignored the moral shock caused by the avaricious parasitism that took place over years, the leeching off Diaspora Jewry. When Barak thinks about Olmert, he thinks about Barak. [...]

All the politicians are alike; all of them have large empty pockets and a hungry look; and it would be better even for those who live in stone houses not to throw glass. Olmert is not a criminal at all, but a victim, a product of the system. And if he goes, he will be replaced by someone just like him, who will in turn be investigated and crucified."

Amir Oren, HAA 30.05.08

"Obwohl der juristische Kampf in der neuen Omert-Affäre gerade erst beginnt, läuft er Erbkrieg in der Kadima-Partei bereits auf Hochtouren. [...] Aus der Sicht von Livni, Mofas, Shitrit und Dichter ist Olmert bereits ‚ein Mann von gestern‘. Und heute muss an morgen gedacht werden. [...]

Die wohl schärfste Rivalität zeichnet sich zwischen AM Livni, die alle Umfragen anführt, und Verkehrsminister Mofas ab, der den zweiten Platz einnimmt. Mofas ist der Überzeugung, Livni versuche, Vorwahlen in der Partei aus dem Weg zu gehen und das Amt ohne Kandidatur nach Olmerts Ausscheiden zu übernehmen. Livni bestreitet dies und betont immer wieder, sie sei eine große Befürworterin von Vorwahlen."

Shalom Jerushalmi, MAA 21.05.08

In Argentina it would not faze anyone

"One blessing might come out of Olmert: Just as the revelation of how former president Moshe Katsav behaved toward his female subordinates led to a decline in sexual harassment in the public service, so too, a peek at Olmert's behavior with regard to Talansky may well generate a real turning point in the pattern of relationships between the country's leaders and wealthy Jews from abroad. So far, this seems to be Olmert's only contribution during his term as prime minister."

Uzi Benziman, HAA 28.05.08

HAA = Haaretz
HZO = Ha Tzofe
JED = Jedioth Ahronoth
JPO = Jerusalem Post
MAA = Maariv
IHY = Israeli HaYom

Die Artikel aus HZO und MAA wurden dem Medienspiegel der Deutschen Botschaft entnommen.

Veröffentlicht am: 21. Juni 2008

Verantwortlich:

Hermann Bünz,
Leiter der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Israel

Redaktion:

Maike Ziesemer

Anita Haviv

Homepage: www.fes.org.il

Email: fes@fes.org.il