



Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 18/08

Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

4. – 25. Oktober 2008

1. Unruhen in Akko

Während Israel am 8. Oktober den Beginn des höchsten jüdischen Feiertages Jom Kippur feierte, entbrannten in der Küstenstadt Akko Straßenschlachten zwischen jüdischen und arabischen Bewohnern der Stadt. Zu Jom Kippur kommt der Autoverkehr in größten Teilen des Landes traditionell zum Stillstand. In Akko, einer Stadt mit 46.000 Einwohnern, von denen etwa zwei Drittel Juden und ein Drittel Araber sind, war am Abend ein arabischer Autofahrer in ein hauptsächlich von Juden besiedeltes Viertel gefahren. Umstrittenen Berichten zufolge war er mit lauter Musik und zu schnell gefahren, um seine Tochter abzuholen. Jüdische Einwohner bewarfen sein Auto daraufhin mit Steinen und griffen ihn an. Unter der arabischen Bevölkerung verbreitete sich schnell das Gerücht, der Angegriffene, Jamal Taufik, sei ermordet worden, woraufhin größere Gruppen in das jüdische Viertel eindrangen, um dort Geschäfte und Autos zu beschädigen bzw. zu zerstören. Auch in den folgenden drei Nächten lieferten sich Juden und Araber in der Stadt Straßenschlachten, bei denen mindestens 30 Menschen festgenommen wurden.

In Folge der Auseinandersetzungen wurde das kurz bevorstehende jährliche Theaterfestival in der Stadt abgesagt. Diese Entscheidung des Bürgermeisters wurde von arabischen Bewohnern Akkos, Künstlern und einigen Politikern heftig kritisiert, da sie ein weiterer Schlag gegen die Koexistenz sei und den arabischen Händlern in der Altstadt eine wichtige Einnahmequelle nehme.

Eine Woche nach den Ereignissen wurde Taufik, der bereits vor einem Knesset-Ausschuss gesprochen und sich entschuldigt hatte, von der Polizei festgenommen, weil er zu schnell gefahren sei und religiöse Gefühle verletzt habe. Taufik wurde zu einmonatigem

Führerscheinentzug und einer Woche Hausarrest verurteilt. Eine Reihe von Rechtsexperten bewertete diese Entscheidung als ein Nachgeben der Polizei gegenüber dem Druck der politischen Rechten.

Die Befürchtungen, dass sich diese Unruhen auf andere Städte ausweiten könnten, bewahrheiteten sich nicht. Dennoch zeigen diese Ereignisse, welches Konfliktpotential das Zusammenleben von Juden und Arabern in Israel birgt.

Acre riots

“Everyone recalls the October 2000 Arab riots which erupted simultaneously with the outbreak of the Aksa intifada. Jewish Israelis felt under siege then and the police reacted to the bloodshed as if it were a full-scale rebellion. [...]”

What is essential now is that the violence, which has continued to flare intermittently over the weekend, not spread to other areas where Jews and Arabs live in close proximity. Constructively, over Shabbat, moderate Arab leaders publicly criticized Jamal for his insensitivity. [...]

Sadly, the usual political arsonists played their predictable roles. MK Ahmed Tibi termed the Acre events a ‘Jewish pogrom,’ while MK Arie Elad also played the ‘pogrom’ card. Elad further fanned the flames: ‘One should not be surprised if Jews take up arms to defend themselves while the police does nothing to protect them.’

Tibi and Elad, predictably, got it wrong - as did local TV reports and several of the Friday Hebrew newspapers. Using the term ‘pogrom’ in connection with Acre is an insult to the memories of the many Jews murdered in state-sponsored pogroms such as those organized by the Russian government in the 1880s.

A correct Zionist response is to insist that Arab and Jewish citizens live by the same rules and obligations. Anyone who advocates vigilantism undermines the Jewish state and should be shunned.”

JPO 11.10.08

Eine Verhaftung, die von Dummheit zeugt

„Ich traute meinen Ohren kaum, als ich hörte, dass die israelische Polizei Taufik Jamal sechs Tage nach seiner Tat festgenommen hat. [...]

Jamal, den jüdische Unruhestifter lynchen wollten [...], musste um sein Leben fürchten [...]. Ein Teil derer, die ihn töten wollten, befindet sich auf freiem Fuß.

Im Ramadan, dem heiligen Monat des Islams, laufen Juden auf den Straßen von Akko [...] umher und essen und trinken in aller Öffentlichkeit. Keiner versucht, sie zu lynchen, und vor allem fordert keiner, sie zu verhaften, weil sie die Gefühle der Muslime verletzen.

Die israelische Polizei legt wieder einmal diskriminierendes und unüberlegtes Verhalten an den Tag. Man kann sagen, dass die Polizei durch ihr Handeln beweist, dass Israel ein jüdischer und dummer, vielleicht sogar sehr dummer, und alles andere als demokratischer Staat ist.“

Ahmed Tibi, MAA 15.10.08

Separate and Unequal

“The country's highest unemployment rates are found mostly in Arab cities and villages, including Acre and other mixed cities. In Acre, as in Lod, 30 percent of the Arab population is forced to live in houses declared illegal by the authorities. Unlike common perception, this is not a simple matter of Arab citizens unwilling to uphold the law. Rather, it is a direct result of a policy that has created a severe housing crisis among Arabs of the mixed cities, a policy designed to control and limit the number of Arab residents in these cities. [...]

In some mixed cities, disenfranchisement takes the extreme form of separation barriers and walls, creating segregated Jewish and Arab communities, as in the case of the (Jewish) Ganei Dan and (Arab) Joarish neighborhoods in Ramle, which have an actual wall running between them. [...]

Under these circumstances, the recent events in Acre should not surprise anyone. They expose the instability of the authorities' control mechanisms in mixed cities. [...] The riots of the past week in Acre provide yet another warning sign for Israel about its policies of discrimination. [...]

Acre, Ramle and Lod are not disconnected from our daily lives; in many respects, they are a microcosm of Jewish-Arab relations in Israel as a whole.”

Haim Yacobi, HAA 17.10.08

Enmity and Weakness in Akko

“Despite their severity, the events in Akko are mostly a symptom: This includes Taufik's ‘quiet’ and ‘slow’ drive [...] the ‘butcher the Jews’ chants (on Yom Kippur, in the Jewish State,) the Jews fleeing in the face of an incited ‘handful’ of Arabs, and finally, the demand that ‘Arab Palestinians in Israel’ receive international protection before they are hit, heaven forbid, by a Jewish pogrom.

Part of this symptom is an Arab minority that includes those who have recognized the weakness and helplessness of Israel's government arms. [...] This is a minority that mostly refuses to reconcile itself to the existence of Israel as a Jewish State [...]. The second part of this symptom is a hollow, scared, and reckless Israeli leadership that clings to an ‘advanced’ legal system and a ‘balanced and unbiased’ media, which seek [...] to enforce their views and ‘enlightened values’ on us. These values show contempt to ethnic distinction, especially if it comes from within our home, yet at the same time show far-reaching understanding to the distinct demands of the ‘other’ living within us, or next to us. [...]

Those characterized as part of the moderate camp within the Arab minority in Israel demand that we make all sorts of modifications [...]: Annuling the law of return; allowing all refugees back to their homes and granting them full Israeli citizenship; granting citizenship to other Arab refugees; changing the definition of Israel from a Jewish State to a multicultural state; revoking laws that contradict the Palestinian constitution – and all of this, of course, comes on top of the need to return to the Palestinians the land we ‘robbed’ from them in 1967.”

Shaul Rosenfeld, JED 13.10.08

Festival of hatred

“The main damage of the riots in Acre has already been identified: ‘The Fringe Theater Festival.’ What a disgrace: Several thousand discerning consumers of culture have been deprived of their pleasure. [...] What do they care what is happening in this wretched city?

The mayor knows the souls of his voters very well: They are hostile toward the Ashkenazis from north Tel Aviv and their ilk, who come for one day and

enrich the merchants of the Old City. Canceling the festival will ruin the Arabs' earnings, and in any case Jewish voters are calling for a boycott of them. The elections are a month away and Lankri's decision will bring him votes, which proves that this has never been Acre's festival but rather an event planted artificially in a hardscrabble, conflicted town that is used for one week and then discarded. But not only the mayor is engaging in politics. Everyone is exploiting the events for their own needs: The Islamic Movement people are inciting in the mosques, Knesset members from the right are inciting in the Knesset, Jewish and Arab thugs are competing in vandalism, and all of them are attacking the usual suspects - the police. The Acre festival of violence and hatred is underway."

Meron Benvenisti, HAA 15.10.08

2. Koalitionsverhandlungen

Die von der Kadima-Vorsitzenden Zippi Livni geführten Verhandlungen zur Bildung einer neuen Regierung sind gescheitert. Livni hätte zwar noch bis zum 3.11. Zeit gehabt, aber sie hatte ihren Verhandlungspartnern ein Ultimatum gestellt, sich bis zum 26.10. für oder gegen eine Regierungsbeteiligung unter ihrer Führung zu entscheiden.

Die drittstärkste israelische Partei, die ultraorthodoxe Shas, gab daraufhin bekannt, sich an der Regierung nicht beteiligen zu wollen. Livni reagierte mit einem Abbruch der Koalitionsverhandlungen, da die Forderungen der Shas-Partei – eine Erhöhung des Kindergelds und die Zusicherung, dass Jerusalem nicht Gegenstand der Friedensverhandlungen wird – für sie nicht akzeptabel waren.

Einzig mit der Arbeitspartei hatte sie einen Koalitionsvertrag ausgehandelt. In diesem wurde dem Parteivorsitzenden Barak der Titel des ersten stellvertretenden Ministerpräsidenten und höchstrangigen Ministers eingeräumt. Kadima und Arbeitspartei hätten auch mit der linken Meretz und der Rentnerpartei eine Regierung bilden können. Auch diese Option zerschlug sich, da die Rentnerpartei Livni ebenfalls eine Absage erteilte.

State before sector

"The talks that Livni is holding with all the candidates to join her coalition look like an attempt to push an unbridled and rapacious series of demands. [...]"

It is hard to find even a smidgen of responsibility for the economy and society, or of concern for good government, on the shopping lists that Livni has received. A month ago, Shas was already threatening that it would not sit in a government that conducted negotiations over the future of the territories, and especially not over Jerusalem. [...] But this threat is nothing compared to its uncompromising demand for an increase in child allowances. [...]"

And all this is on top of the embarrassing list that Labor Party Chairman Ehud Barak presented, which was mainly concerned with himself and his titles. [...] At this stage, it seems as if there are many difficulties in Livni's path to establishing a government [...]. It seems that sectoral appetites for power are doing everything possible to hobble her. Yet it would be better if all the potential coalition partners finally put the good of the state ahead of the good of their sectors."

HAA 17.10.08

The new Shimon Peres

"One does not need a political science degree in order to analyze and understand the Labor party's old-new coalition agreement with Kadima. It would be enough to listen to Ophir Pines' words [...] in order to understand precisely what this deal is worth, and what sort of 'achievements' Labor gained through it.

As usual with Barak, it again started with a bang and ended with a whimper: a predictable agreement that could have been secured two weeks ago – unless we take into account the immense effort undertaken in order to turn the Labor chairman (or rather, the senior deputy prime minister for you) into the new Shimon Peres – as we may recall, the post of vice premier was invented especially for Peres in the past. [...]"

Barak is turning into [...] a person in search of respect and title. [...]"

The Labor chairman is a senior deputy PM, whatever that is, and has been given the right, in writing, to turn into a sort of pest who can call the Prime Minister's Office as many times as he wants. Livni, on her part, will have to ask him for permission to breathe. Barak's people threaten that should she violate this rule, a crisis will ensue."

Attila Somfalvi, JED 15.10.08

Die Scheidung ist schon eingereicht

"So viel Lärm. Und was kam am Ende dabei heraus? Barak tritt einer Livni-Regierung bei, in der

nicht nur sie die Hosen anhat, sondern auch er. Sehr schön. Und die Menschen in Israel wundern sich: Im Hintergrund stehen eine Finanzkrise, ein tiefer Bruch in den Beziehungen zwischen Juden und Arabern, Gaza, Iran, Hamas – und Barak diskutiert darüber, welchen Titel er erhält und was er in den Regierungssitzungen zu sagen hat. [...]

Livni weiß ganz genau, dass Barak nicht der Regierung beitrifft, um die Position des Obersten Gerichts zu verbessern. Er will sie unpopulär machen. Denn wenn es Livni gelingen sollte, sich als erfolgreiche Premierministerin zu beweisen, würde dies das Ende Baraks bedeuten. Er ist der Regierung also beigetreten, um Probleme zu machen. Jede Regierungssitzung ist ein Schlachtfeld mit der Möglichkeit, Livni zu schaden. [...] Wird es ihm dabei helfen, der nächste Premierminister zu werden? Das ist fraglich. Bibi [Netanjahu] wird es hingegen ganz bestimmt helfen. Maya Bangel, MAA 13.10.08

Not without the justice portfolio

„In the end, Tzipi Livni may form a government of 60 MKs with outside support, at least initially. [...]

In order to form such a government Livni needs Meretz, but it is doubtful whether Meretz, which is maintaining its uniqueness even in the opposition, needs Livni. Livni has already said that when it comes to the peace process, she believes more in the process and less in an agreement. In this situation, it is better for Meretz to remain outside the government. [...]

Furthermore, a partnership with Livni is problematic for Meretz because it, and she, hold differing views about the democratic component of Israel's identity as a Jewish and democratic state. Meretz will also have to find justification for participating in a government that does not give some priority to evacuating illegal settlements. [...]

Only by insisting on the justice portfolio will Meretz offer its electorate a significant reason for joining the government. [...] The justice portfolio is the only one that would let Meretz chalk up significant practical and image-related achievements. It is almost the only portfolio where Meretz could offer a long-term contribution if the government serves out its full term or a significant portion of it.

HAA 23.10.08

Eine Warmhalteregierung

„Sollte Shas der Versuchung widerstehen, der Livni-Regierung beizutreten, wird Livni in die Ecke gedrängt. Sie muss dann zwischen einer kleinen,

linken Regierung, die sich maßgeblich auf die arabischen Parteien stützt, und Neuwahlen entscheiden. Ohne Shas, mit Meretz und der Unterstützung aller arabischer Parteien, könnte Livni eine Regierung gründen. Aber sie würde dann ihre wahre Identität enthüllen – dass sie eine linke Politikerin ist, die sich als Politikerin der Mitte ausgibt.

Hoffentlich wird Shas begreifen, dass Israel eine Regierung mit breiter öffentlicher Unterstützung braucht und deshalb der Livni-Regierung nicht beitreten. [...]

Vielleicht wird Livni auch einen Moment innehalten und sich überlegen, ob es nicht richtiger wäre, mit aller Offenheit zuzugeben, dass über den israelischen Premierminister in den Wahllokalen entschieden werden muss.“

HZO 15.10.08

3. Finanzkrise

Auch in Israel waren die Auswirkungen der internationalen Finanzkrise in den letzten Wochen zu spüren, wenn auch in abgeschwächter Form. Während der MSCI World Aktienindex seit Beginn des Jahres um 48% gesunken ist, fiel die Börse in Tel Aviv im selben Zeitraum um 37%. Daten des israelischen Statistikamtes zufolge hat sich das Wirtschaftswachstum in Israel 2008 um einen Prozentpunkt im Vergleich zu den vier Vorjahren verringert. Der Präsident der israelischen Zentralbank, Stanley Fischer, gab jedoch an, die Wirtschaft sei stabil und die Banken sicher. Gleichzeitig traf sich Finanzminister Roni Bar-On mit führenden Wirtschaftsvertretern, um Maßnahmen zur Ankurbelung der Wirtschaft und zur Vorbeugung einer Ausweitung der Krise in Israel zu treffen.

Der Vorsitzende der Arbeitspartei, Ehud Barak, hatte während der Koalitionsverhandlungen mit Livni indessen betont, dass die Finanzkrise die Priorität der Regierung sein müsse, und hatte darauf verzichtet, eine weitere Erhöhung des Staatshaushalts zu fordern..

Panic vs. self interest

“Israel is not immune to the economic tremors shaking the rest of the world. [...] The market [...] suffered its biggest drop since 1997. Though closing steeply down, it managed to stabilize during the day as sellers discovered - lo and behold! - that there were still buyers out there. [...]

Analysts agree our economy's exposure to mortgage-related debt and derivatives is minimal, and that the biggest dangers are psychological.

To that end, Finance Minister Ronni Bar-On reassured Israelis that his ministry and the Bank of Israel would intervene as necessary. They are reportedly indeed weighing plans to offer deposit insurance and, if necessary, inject capital into the banking system.

If anything makes people nervous, it is being told not to panic. And yet, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert is quite correct to tell the public just that.

If, rather than letting fear prevail, Israelis adhere to the 'buy low and sell high' mantra, chances are we will all emerge to trade again another day.

Authorities here are doing their utmost to stem panic by making it clear that if necessary, they stand ready to intervene in a timely fashion. The rest of us can help by not getting caught up in the hysteria swirling around us."

JPO 12.10.08

The October failure

"Without discussing things among themselves, experts are analyzing the global financial crisis and the Israeli economic breakdown in similar terminology and sometimes using the exact same words. Everyone agrees there is not a day to waste. It is one minute to midnight.

The virus is one of a lack of responsibility, of zealous and foolish faith in the market's mysterious hand. [...]

Stable, cautious and traditional banking was replaced by an adventurer system of hedonistic and greedy financial institutions. [...] Capital of mythic proportions, which was disconnected from real industrial capital and real economic values, was busy cloning and upgrading itself without restraint. Without the threat of socialism to rein them in and lacking the moderating presence of the state and regulation, global capitalism went into a tailspin. It lost its ability to right itself and became a bizarre and corrupt bubble that had to burst. [...]

There will be no choice. Just as the Bank of Israel intervened yesterday, so the government will intervene. [...]

Israel will bleed economically, but will overcome. And when we return from battling the immediate crisis there will be no choice but to do battle with the crisis in values. After we overcome the market failure we will have to heal the cultural failure of worshipping the market. [...] The state will have to redefine itself as a social-democratic society that

balances market forces with the basic values of partnership, fairness and responsibility."

Ari Shavit, HAA 08.10.08

The panic-mongers' one note chorus

"It is sheer greed!' our pundits keep screaming on TV and in press headlines - greed encouraged by capitalism's cutthroat competition they claim, benefiting the powerful at the expense of the weak. The free market caused this monstrous crisis, and they hope that this crisis will kill brutal capitalism and replace it with a more humane social democracy in which the government will protect us from the market economy's wild jungle. [...]

They recommend [...] that government immediately announce a bailout plan for saving institutions, that it increase its budget deficit to protect the economy from recession; and that Israel should return to be 'a social democracy.' [...] The assault on the free market is not confined to economics. Predictably, it is leveraged into a vigorous attack against the cruel 'Thatcherite' free market putatively instituted here and against 'total privatization.' The above have destroyed, these critics claim, the sense of communal responsibility and are undermining Israel's ability to survive. [...]

To call the monopoly-ridden, tightly government controlled Israeli economy a 'free market economy' is an insult to their readers' intelligence, let alone to the facts. To refer to the plunder of public and former Histadrut assets after they went bankrupt 'privatization' is a sad joke. These former government and Histadrut assets, that wastefully dominated the economy in its 'social democracy' phase, went bankrupt when Menachem Begin's government refused to continue massively subsidizing them.

Sixteen or so oligarch families now control most assets in the country, and their monopolies inflate the price of most consumer goods by 30 percent to 50% above average international prices. Israelis, who are underpaid because of the low productivity, Histadrut-dominated rigid labor market, have to pay an additional monopoly tax on their meager earnings, so that most can barely make ends meet. And this is supposed to be a free market economy?"

Daniel Doron, JPO 22.10.08

Forget about the stock market

"The free capitalistic stock market is by its very nature unstable, unpredictable, unrestrained, and therefore unsuitable for long-term savings. It becomes inflated every few years, and every few

years the bubble bursts. In between, smalltime investors can turn into millionaires, and back into smalltime investors.

Should the stock market's unstable state make us feel as though the end of the world is near? Not at all. [...]

Israel's national product has grown by 40% since the start of the decade. The average standard of living went up by even more than that. Exports skyrocketed. We have no net foreign debts, while foreigners owe us tens of billions of dollars. The reputation of Israel's technological know-how has taken over the globe. [...]

So come on, people; forget about the stock market. Go for other things: Go for technology. Go for information. Go for initiative. Go for creative spirit. Go for brainpower. This is our competitive advantage. Those are our greatest assets. Life and death do not hinge on stocks; stock markets rise and fall, but a healthy economy stays."

Sever Plocker, JED 07.10.08

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

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

Veröffentlicht am: 26. Oktober 2008

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