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Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

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1. Syrien

Syrische und israelische Politiker lieferten sich Anfang Februar einen mehrere Tage währenden Schlagabtausch, der die Debatte um eine erneute Eskalation zwischen den beiden Nachbarstaaten in den israelischen Medien anfachte.

Verteidigungsminister Ehud Barak hatte in einer Rede vor hochrangigen Offizieren gesagt, es könne zu Krieg kommen, wenn kein Arrangement mit Syrien gefunden werde. Während dies in Israel als Aufruf verstanden wurde, Verhandlungen mit Syrien zu beginnen, interpretierten syrische Stellen die Aussage als Kriegstreiberei.

Syriens Präsident Bashar Assad erwiderte daraufhin in einem Gespräch mit dem spanischen Außenminister, Israel führe die Region an den Rand eines Krieges. Der israelische Außenminister Avigdor Lieberman fachte die Flammen weiter an: Den nächsten Krieg werde das Regime Assad nicht überleben. Premierminister Netanyahu bemühte sich inzwischen, die Wogen zu glätten und erklärte, Israel sei jederzeit zu Verhandlungen mit Syrien ohne Vorbedingungen bereit.

We need a statesman

“Syria holds an asset that Israel does not recognize. Peace at this time means the possibility that Israel's strategic position in the Middle East and the world will change. Syria is a key country along a new axis being formed in the Middle East, which includes Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Iraq. [...] So a very important arena of interests is forming, not only for Israel. [...]”

The expression ‘we want peace,’ which is void of substance, cannot even begin to express the folly and shortsightedness of Israel, which is shrugging its shoulders at a chance to reach peace with Syria, if for no other reason than to prevent a damaging blow from this new axis. To this end, we need a statesman [...] who can make Israelis understand

that peace with Syria does not mean eating humus in Damascus but is an existential interest, no less important than blocking Iran's nuclear ambitions.”
Zvi Bar'el, HAA 07.02.10

Tensions in the Middle East

“The repeated Israeli messages in recent weeks meant to lower the level of tension vis-à-vis Syria are falling on deaf ears. The Syrians don't believe us. [...]”

This is very reminiscent of the period ahead of the Six-Day-War, when the Russians made sure to fan the flames and feed the Syrians with horror stories.

A hint regarding the identity of the war-monger at this time may be found in the words of US National Security Advisor Jim Jones last week. The American general spoke about the planned US sanctions against Iran. In response to the sanctions, he said, there is a possibility that Tehran will encourage its satellites in the region – Syria, Hizbollah, and Hamas– to attack Israel and set the whole region on fire. [...]”

What about the Syrians and the Lebanese? They are merely pawns on the Iranian chessboard.”
Alex Fishman, JED 04.02.10

Frustration in Damascus

“Bashar Assad understands the price he and the ruling Alawite minority would have to pay, in a country that is 74 percent Sunni, for a genuine peace with Israel. [...]”

He'd have to expel Hamas leaders from Syria, a step the [Muslim] Brotherhood would find insufferable. A bad divorce with Teheran would ensue. Hizbullah would reorient Lebanon's policies accordingly. [...]”

Naturally, if Assad got the Golan Heights on his terms, the legitimacy of his regime would be bolstered. But no Israeli government [...] can come down from the Golan in return for a sham peace. Assad will not risk a real peace that would force

Syria to rethink its ideological identity in the absence of the Zionist bogeyman. How could he justify continued authoritarian rule? [...]

So a strong argument can be made that the last thing Assad really wants is peace with Israel.”

JPO 05.02.10

Syria now

“There will be no dramatic breakthrough on the Palestinian track in the near future, so a breakthrough on the Syrian track must be initiated. The problem is basically political. Peace with Syria has no party and no leader. [...]

Oddly, the remnants of the Israeli left relate to peace with Syria like some kind of stepchild. Their passion is for the Palestinians, not the Syrians. The ardent courting is all aimed at the disinterested Palestinians. Even today, Israel is expending most of its peace-seeking energy on a useless effort to cajole the wrong neighbor.

The time has come to reset the system and change course. To forestall the evil rising in the east, every effort must be made to enter a dialogue with Syrian President Bashar Assad.”

Ari Shavit, HAA 04.02.10

Will you shut up already?

“Ehud Barak tells senior officers that diplomatic impasse will prompt war with Syria. Benjamin Netanyahu [...] slams Damascus. Finally, Avigdor Lieberman warns Assad that Israel will be toppling his regime.

Within the space of one week, this government of chatterboxes, who do too little and talk too much, managed to bring the Mideast to the boiling point. We've never seen anything like that before; this is reckless abandon, pure and simple. [...]

They deal with the most sensitive issues of life and death, war and peace, yet show no sense of responsibility or sound judgment.”

Uri Misgav, JED 05.02.10

2. Israelische Reaktion auf den Goldstone-Bericht

Einmal mehr wird in Israel die Etablierung einer unabhängigen Untersuchungskommission zum Gaza-Krieg des Vorjahres diskutiert. Aktueller Anlass ist der offizielle Bericht, den Israel auf Anfrage der UN als Antwort auf den Goldstone-Report veröffentlicht hat. In dem Bericht, der sich auf Untersuchungen der israelischen Armee stützt, wird der Großteil der Vorwürfe der UN-Kommission

als unbegründet zurückgewiesen. Zugleich wurde erst jetzt bekannt, dass zwei hochrangige Offiziere, die an den Kämpfen beteiligt waren, schon vor sechs Monaten einem Disziplinarverfahren unterzogen worden waren. Zunächst hieß es in Medienberichten, dass es dabei um den unrechtmäßigen Einsatz von weißem Phosphor gegangen sei. Dies wurde jedoch von der israelischen Armee dementiert.

Israel is being evasive again

“Israel submitted on Friday [...], a response to the UN secretary general following the Goldstone report. [...] The minute details the document presents of 150 inquiries by the Israel Defense Forces, including 36 criminal probes, are not persuasive that enough has been done to reach the truth. It may be assumed that the UN will not make do with Israel's response, and the danger has only grown that the debate will be taken to the International Criminal Court. [...]

Suspensions will continue to haunt Israel and trouble any of its citizens who want to know what happened in Gaza. Therefore, a moment before it is too late, we call for the immediate establishment of a commission of inquiry for the sake of the truth and our international standing.”

HAA 31.01.10

It's all about politics

“Operation Cast Lead can be examined according to military-professional criteria, moral criteria, or diplomatic criteria. It must not be examined in line with international law criteria, as Goldstone wants, for the simple reason that it's irrelevant. International law that pertains to wars is premised on three assumptions: The war pits states against each other, both sides deploy soldiers in uniform, and both sides are committed to the same codes. None of the above conditions was present in Gaza. [...] Neither justice nor law are the tools of the trade here, but rather, pure politics. The establishment of a commission of inquiry in Israel will not mitigate the pressure against us, but rather, merely serve to encourage hostile elements to continue to press Israel.”

Giora Eiland, JED 03.02.10

The 'Goldstoning' of Israel

“Jerusalem presented UN Secretary-General Ban Kimoon with its initial rebuttal of Judge Richard

Goldstone's bill of particulars on the way Israel fought in Gaza . [...] A more comprehensive, point-by-point refutation is in the works. [...]

We do not assert that our army made no tragic mistakes; what we do emphatically reiterate – based on Israel's initial submission to the UN – is that no army engaged on multiple fronts against irregular forces, embedded among a supportive enemy population, is *more* ethical or takes *greater* care to avoid harming innocents than the IDF.

The Goldstone Report was born in bias and matured into a full-fledged miscarriage of justice. [...] Israelis further resent the report's dammed-if-you-do-dammed-if-you-don't stipulation for an Israeli commission to examine IDF behavior during the Gaza war: If Israel refuses, Goldstone threatens further 'law fare' at the International Court of Justice in The Hague; if Israel does establish an inquiry commission it might imply Goldstone's complaints have validity.

One option being weighed is to impanel a judicial review board that would examine how well the army has done in policing itself. [...] Our preference is that the Foreign Ministry's forthcoming comprehensive rebuttal serve as Israel's official – 'case closed' – response to the Goldstone Report."

JPO 02.02.10

Are we hiding something?

"The Israeli objection to establishing a commission of inquiry into Operation Cast Lead [...] comes with several explanations, all of which start with 'we have nothing to hide, but...' [...] In light of the defense establishment's oh-so-vigorous resistance to an external examination – even though we have nothing to hide – we must not reject out of hand the seemingly radical and baseless possibility that we may have something to hide after all. [...] Only last week, for example, after months of denials and concealment efforts, the IDF admitted that it made use of white prosperous bombs in the war, and even revealed the fact that two officers were punished for it [...]. Yet besides that, we've done nothing wrong; until further notice at least."

Assaf Geffen, JED 08.02.10

Die nächste Militäraktion naht

„Man muss begreifen, dass der Schaden, den der Goldstone-Bericht angerichtet hat, schon geschehen ist – und Geschehenes kann man nicht ungeschehen machen. Was auf dem Spiel steht ist vielmehr die nächste Militäraktion. [...]

Wer sich klar macht, wo der Schwerpunkt der militärischen Konfrontationen im 21. Jahrhundert liegt, versteht, das bestimmte Teile der Genfer Konventionen für Kämpfe dieser Art nicht mehr zutreffend sind. Terrororganisation wie die Hamas, die Hisbollah oder Al-Qaida [...] erzeugen ein amorphes Schlachtfeld, für das Theorien der Kriegsführung erst entwickelt werden müssen. [...] Israel befindet sich an der Spitze, was die Entwicklung passender militärischer Fähigkeiten angeht. Deswegen bemühen sich Militärs aus aller Welt hierher, um von der israelischen Armee zu lernen, und nicht umsonst kommen die einzigen Stimmen der westlichen Welt, die sich gegen den Goldstone-Bericht aussprechen, von Generälen und Kommandanten. [...]

Anstatt sich [...] mit Kämpfen zur Schadensbegrenzung gegen einen Bericht abzugeben, der seine Wirkung schon erzielt und seinen Schaden schon angerichtet hat, ist es notwendig, den Rückhalt und die richtigen moralischen Spielregeln zu schaffen, die man im Vorfeld der nächsten Runde benötigt.“

Shlomo Sadeh, HZO 01.02.10

Why the delay?

"The news of the reprimand handed down to the commander of the Gaza Division was published in Haaretz yesterday, six months after the disciplinary action in the matter - and it only came to light as part of Israel's response to the Goldstone report. [...]

For months, journalists who asked whether additional disciplinary actions had been taken against senior officers as a result of Operation Cast Lead were told 'no.' Now it turns out that they were misled. [...]

So did someone intentionally keep the matter from the IDF spokesman, or was it just an innocent mistake? That is a question the IDF must answer. Not providing an answer will only damage the IDF: After all, it was the IDF that investigated and tried. Why not publicize on time and prove that Israel dealt with such matters promptly, as it claims?"

Amos Harel, HAA 02.02.10

Hamas' line of defense

"Hamas' government is also preparing to submit its official response before the grace period of six months set to the parties by the Goldstone committee is over.

In sharp contrast to the genuine fears expressed by Israel, Hamas does not seem to feel any threat in the legal arena. On the contrary, Hamas

demonstrates self-confidence based on the understanding that the Goldstone committee strived only to incriminate Israel and all other limited references to the other side were just for lip service without any legal significance.”

Jonathan Dahohah Halevi, JED 04.02.10

3. Kampagne gegen den New Israel Fund

Die Studentenorganisation Im Tirzu, die sich selbst als Bewegung der politischen Mitte bezeichnet, hat eine Kampagne gegen den New Israel Fund (NIF), eine der wichtigsten Stiftungen in Israel, gestartet. Der NIF finanziert u.a. mehrere Menschenrechtsorganisationen, die der UN-Kommission zur Untersuchung des Gaza-Krieges Informationen lieferten. Im Tirzu veröffentlichte nun einen Bericht, in dem der Beitrag dieser NRO's zum Goldstone-Report aufgelistet werde. Ohne die Mithilfe der israelischen Organisationen, hätte der UN-Bericht gar nicht zustande kommen können, so ein Sprecher von Im Tirzu. Dem NIF wird deswegen vorgeworfen, seine Gelder gegen die Interessen Israels einzusetzen. Neben der Veröffentlichung des Berichtes startete Im Tirzu eine Medienkampagne gegen den NIF, die scharfe persönliche Angriffe auf die Stiftungsvorsitzende und ehemalige Meretz- Knessetabgeordnete Naomi Chazan einschließt.

Our horns

„Cities were plastered with posters featuring a caricature of NIF president Naomi Chazan wearing a horn - that's the level that the 'movement' behind the campaign sinks to [...].

Maariv, the tabloid daily that never shrinks from McCarthyism, hastened to publish a ludicrous 'expose' that is nothing more than a copy of Im Tirtzu's report. The Knesset Constitution, Law and Justice Committee created a subcommittee to 'examine the sources of funding,' media personality Avri Gilad called for Chazan's dismissal and the Jerusalem Post has already fired her as columnist for the newspaper. It's exactly how McCarthyism operated. [...]

If you will it, Naomi Chazan with the horn on her forehead is the beautiful face of Israel, infinitely more beautiful than Im Tirtzu, which tries to put horns on us all, the horns of a fascist state under the cover of Zionism.”

Gideon Levy, HAA 07.02.10

Criticize, yes. Demonize, no

“Recently, one courageous group in Israel, the New Israel Fund, stood up and questioned the IDF's conduct during the Gaza war. [...]

It wasn't that the NIF criticized its government for moral lapses that angers its critics. That NIF criticized Israel at all is what has provoked the venom.

Calling Goldstone 'anti-Semitic' does not seem to bother right-wing fanatics who defend Israel by demonizing the NIF leadership with Nazi-like caricatures.

NIF calls the attacks despicable, as they are. One such assault screams loudly: 'Without the New Israel Fund, there would be no Goldstone Report, and Israel would not be facing international accusations of war crimes.'

The criticism is ridiculous, of course. War crimes are not based on accusations but on facts. [...] Facts mitigated by context and circumstance perhaps, but facts that must be unbearable to those who have embraced Israel's dreams through blindness rather than principle.”

Ray Hanania, JPO 03.02.10

Hey, NIF! Criticism is a democratic right

“Those who make a full-time pursuit of criticizing others probably should grow thicker skin. Yet the New Israel Fund (NIF) and its NGO grantees have launched a thin-skinned offensive against an Israeli student group that criticized them. [...]

In truth, [...] Goldstone's mission was the product of a political war conducted against Israel in the UN Human Rights Council. [...] Israeli NGOs played a central role in laying the foundation for Goldstone's untenable report. During the fighting in Gaza, these groups issued nonstop allegations of 'war crimes,' 'collective punishment' and intentional murder of civilians. [...]

Rather than admit their role, these organizations now seek to absolve themselves of responsibility. [...]he attempts by the NIF and its grantees to muzzle critics are far more pernicious. [...] But the right of expression always comes with the potential for disapproval. It is strange that groups claiming to be so well-versed in human rights seem so unfamiliar with the concept of free speech. [...] Perhaps if NIF would stop name-calling and threatening lawsuits, the path would be open for a constructive debate about the role several NIF-supported NGOs have played in the demonization of Israel, and their exploitation by reactionary and totalitarian forces at the UN. Instead of blocking

healthy discussion, NIF and its grantees should welcome this conversation – a conversation that would benefit NIF donors, the Israeli public and, ultimately, Israeli democracy.”

Anne Herzberg, JPO 03.02.10

When did the Israeli right become so McCarthyite?

“The bottom line according to Im Tirzu chairman Ron Shoval is that the NIF [...] is funding organizations ‘working hard, directly and in sophisticated ways against the IDF and its legitimacy and the legitimacy of the state of Israel.’

What is being said here? Im Tirzu is not claiming that any of the information supplied by these organizations was false. It is simply questioning the very legitimacy of free speech in Israel. As Im Tirzu sees it, the human rights organizations and the New Israel Fund, which is funding them, should be tarred and feathered for pointing out that not everything the IDF did in Gaza was so great. Instead of trying to delegitimize Israel, they are trying to point out how, in their view, Israel should be acting to improve its legitimacy. What could be more pro-Israel than that?”

Anshel Pfeffer, HAA 05.02.10

4. Medienquerschnitt

Die Vielfalt der in Israel relevanten Themen kann in einem Medienspiegel natürlich nicht umfassend wiedergegeben werden. Um den deutschen Leser/innen dennoch einen Einblick in das große Themenspektrum, das in den Medien behandelt wird, zu gewähren, veröffentlichen wir in dieser Schlaglichtausgabe wieder eine kleine Auswahl an weiteren Themen, die in den letzten Wochen die israelische Gesellschaft bewegten.

*Über die **Präsidentin des Obersten Gerichtshofes Dorit Beinisch**, die kürzlich mit einem Schuh attackiert wurde, und den **Status der Judikativen in Israel**:*

Is Israel turning into Iraq?

“Do you remember the most prominent case where a shoe was hurled at a senior political figure? That’s right, it happened in Iraq.

A journalist there hurled two shoes at former US President George W. Bush. Thankfully, the journalist missed. Yet the incident in Jerusalem Wednesday where a disturbed Israeli hurled shoes at Supreme Court Chief Justice Dorit Beinisch shows that we are becoming increasingly similar to Iraq. [...]

The State of Israel is sliding down a slippery slope, into chaos. This country has exceptional potential for growth and a good life, yet the self-destruction potential overwhelms everything else. Here too, it seems, people can do whatever they want and get away with it. [...] There is no fear of the law whatsoever. And what’s worse, the laws of the jungle already dominate part of our lives.”

Eitan Haber, JED 28.01.10

Spitting at the rule of law

“A lone fool throws a shoe and dozens of public officials are turned into champions of the rule of law. At the offices of the Association for Civil Rights in Israel there is a blacklist of rulings by the High Court of Justice that have not been implemented. The list includes provision of protection for communities bordering the Gaza Strip [...]; the cessation of restrictions limiting foreign workers to a single employer; equalization of budgetary allocations to schools in the Arab sector; and an arrangement concerning the status of common-law spouses. [...]

After they have fired off their volley of press releases about the guy who hit the justice in the face, everyone will put their heads back in the sand. The ministers, the mayors and the government clerks will all continue to spit in the face of the judicial system. [...] The new attorney general, Yehuda Weinstein, should know that the burning issue today is not the thug who threw a shoe at the Supreme Court president’s face. The challenge facing him is to take control of those in authority who are routinely spitting in her face.”

Akiva Eldar, HAA 01.02.10

*Über den **palästinensischen Ministerpräsidenten Salam Fayyad**, der Anfang Februar an der Herzliya-Konferenz in Israel teilgenommen hatte:*

Fayyad no Ben-Gurion

“Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad has been crowned as ‘the Palestinian Ben-Gurion’ at the recent Herzliya Conference. However, there is a great gap between the achievements attributed to him and his abilities in practice. Fayyad is credited with changing the corrupt PA apparatus, but even in the financial realm where his expertise lies, his abilities are mostly manifested through the drafting of impressive documents as well as fundraising. [...] On the security front, Palestinian PM Salam Fayyad counts on the IDF and Shin Bet. Despite his claims that the IDF should not be operating ‘in the Palestinian state’s territory,’ he knows that he has

no control on the ground, neither in the Gaza Strip which he dreams of reuniting with the West Bank, nor in his own backyard in Judea and Samaria. [...] Ben-Gurion, who was a man of real work and pioneering spirit would be turning in his grave had he heard that Fayyad [...] has been crowned as his successor in the 21st Century.”

Avi Trengo, JED 07.02.10

Salam Fayyad cannot deliver

“Fayyad is the most moderate guy in the PA leadership. He was doing about the best he could. But that’s the point. He has no base of support, isn’t a Fatah member, and doesn’t really represent Palestinian thinking. He is in office only to keep Western donors happy. Thus, Fayyad couldn’t go any further because he knows his Fatah bosses, Palestinian constituents and Hamas enemies would throw him out if he offered the slightest concession and demanded any less than everything they want. [...]

[At the Herzliya Conference] Fayyad said: progress must be made in negotiations, in the context of a speech in which he asked for a long list of concessions and offered nothing in exchange. [...]

How can this be reconciled with Fayyad’s claim of Palestinians just wanting ‘to live alongside you in peace, harmony and security’? [...]

What Fayyad says is meant to shape Israeli and Western politics and public opinion. Fayyad believes what he said but, as a figurehead, also knows that he isn’t going to change the dominant Palestinian view or even try to do so. The audience applauded Fayyad because it does want peace and prefers him to all the worse alternatives, especially Hamas but also those in Fatah. Yet few have any illusions that peace is at hand or that Fayyad is going to deliver it.”

Barry Rubin, JPO 07.02.10

*Über den **Mordanschlag auf Hamas-Mann Mahmoud al-Mabhouh** in Dubai:*

The assassination trap

“There is no need for the government of Israel to answer the question of whether Mossad agents were responsible for assassinating Hamas operative Mahmoud al-Mabhouh in Dubai; the smiles on the ministers’ faces as they left the weekly cabinet meeting on Sunday said it all. [...]

Mabhouh was a very experienced operative who had in recent years served as Hamas’ liaison officer to Iran. [...]

Since the 1960s, Israel has liquidated hundreds of terrorists who were members of the Palestine Liberation Organization, Hamas, Islamic Jihad and Hezbollah. [...] For decades, Israeli intelligence has been entangled in a complex coil from which it is having trouble escaping. The role of intelligence agencies is to gather information about the enemy’s capabilities and intentions [...]. The Mossad is not Murder Inc., like the Mafia; its goal is not to take vengeance on its enemies. [...]

Over the years, on the basis of past precedents, the intelligence community tried to untangle the knot and develop a sort of ‘combat doctrine’ for this type of operation. This doctrine holds that only assassinating the leaders of a terrorist group can have a strategic impact, as this is thought to deal a severe blow to the organization. [...]

It sometimes seems as if Israel is caught in a trap it cannot escape. It cannot simply sit with its hands folded; it must take action against the terrorist groups [...]. Yet such operations, and especially assassinations, have no long-term impact on the balance of power. Getting rid of Mabhouh will have only a marginal impact on the battle between Hamas and Israel.”

Yossi Melman, HAA 03.02.10

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

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