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Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

21. September – 12. Oktober 2010

1. Ein demokratischer und jüdischer Staat

Am 10. Oktober stimmte die israelische Regierung einem Gesetzesvorschlag zu, demzufolge nicht-jüdische Einwanderer bzw. neue Staatsbürger bei Erhalt der israelischen Staatsbürgerschaft ihre Loyalität zu einem „jüdischen und demokratischen Staat“ schwören sollen. Der Vorschlag ist bereits im Vorfeld auf Kritik gestoßen. Zum einen gibt es keine Definition dessen, was einen „jüdischen Staat“ ausmacht. Zum anderen ist der Zusatz gerade für arabische Israelis problematisch, die damit ihren Status als zweit-klassige Minderheit festgeschrieben sehen. Kommentatoren befürchteten außerdem, die jüdische Komponente des Staats werde auf Kosten der Demokratie betont.

Die Charakterisierung Israels als „jüdischer Staat“ spielt auch in den stockenden Friedensgesprächen eine Rolle. Premierminister Benjamin Netanyahu hatte schon in der Vergangenheit die Anerkennung von Israels jüdischem Wesen von den Palästinensern verlangt. Nun bot er unter dieser Voraussetzung eine Fortführung des Siedlungsbaustopps an. Von palästinensischer Seite wurde dies jedoch abgelehnt: Man habe den Staat Israel bereits anerkannt, alles Weitere sei eine innere israelische Angelegenheit.

A legitimate pledge

“Like other peoples, including the Palestinians [...], Jews have the right to self-determination in their own sovereign state that protects its unique national attributes. [...] The role of democracy, meanwhile, is to ensure that while the Jewish people’s political sovereignty is actualized, non-Jewish or non-Zionist minorities’ rights, such as freedom of speech and press, freedom of religion and even the right to political representation [...] are carefully protected. [...]

Demanding from naturalizing citizens a loyalty oath to a ‘Jewish and democratic state’ is a modest step that is part of a larger campaign to secure recognition for Israel as the national homeland of the Jewish people. It is not so much for the prospective citizen – sincerity cannot be coerced – as it is a declaration of purpose by Jews who have returned to their historic homeland.”

JPO 08.10.10 Editorial

The Jewish Republic of Israel

“From now on, we will be living in a new, officially approved, ethnocratic, theocratic, nationalistic and racist country. [...] The dam will overflow today, threatening to drown the remnants of democracy until we are left perhaps with a Jewish state of a character that no one really understands, but it certainly won’t be a democracy. [...] True, for the time being, it’s a matter of an empty, ridiculous slogan. There aren’t three Jews who could agree what a Jewish state looks like, but history has taught us that empty slogans, too, can pave the path to hell. In the meantime, the new proposed legislation will only increase Israeli Arabs’ alienation and ultimately result in the alienation of much wider segments of the public.”

Gideon Levy, HAA 10.10.10

The Jewish democratic state

“By hiding behind the term ‘Jewish democratic state’ Israel continues to shirk its responsibility in dealing with a very complex and difficult issue. If Israel is a true democracy of ‘one man-one vote’ then the Arab minority could hypothetically take over the country via the election process and change the nature of the state. [...] This is a scenario that most of the Jews in the country would never agree to and even fear. [...]

At the end of the day, Israel must choose. Either it is a Jewish state with some democratic aspects or it is democratic state with a Jewish flavor. It cannot be

both. [...] For the survival of the country, the term 'Jewish democratic state' must be discarded and in its place the real 'Jewish state' must rise."
Yoel Meltzer, JED 22.09.10

Constitutional, but unnecessary

"Israel's credo as a Jewish and democratic state was first voiced in the Declaration of Independence. [...] But the Declaration of Independence also cites the principle of equality, prohibits discrimination and calls for full integration of the state's Arab citizens in its governing institutions. [...]"

If the amendment is passed, the best wording would be: 'I will be a loyal citizen of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state that grants equal rights to all its citizens.' Such a declaration [...] stresses the state's obligation to equality for all."

Ze'ev Segal, HAA 08.10.10

It's enough to recognize Israel's legitimacy

"We [...] favor[...] a declaration about accepting the legitimacy of the state of Israel. [...] After all, this legitimacy is what Israel's enemies, especially in the Arab world, reject. [...]"

In the international arena, it is difficult to imagine that anyone would object to a demand of this kind. Even Arab human rights organizations, which oppose a pledge of allegiance to a Jewish and democratic state, would have difficulty opposing recognition of Israel's legitimacy. For if they did, they would confirm what some people already think anyway: That they do indeed oppose the State of Israel's legitimacy, and its very existence."

Shlomo Avineri, HAA 08.10.10

What a ridiculous move

"The State of Israel has never defined itself by law as a 'Jewish state'; Israel's Jewishness is a factual, practical situation that persists in line with the desire of most of the country's citizens. [...] Yet when a new citizen is required to recognize Israel as a 'Jewish state,' what exactly is expected of him? [...] To admit to the existence of a Jewish majority in Israel? [...] Or is he expected to actively work towards preserving the Jewish majority? And how so? Should he convert? [...]"

This demand lacks any practical meaning and constitutes the improper utilization of an administrative procedure for an extraneous purpose."

Dov Weissglas, JED 11.10.10

Israeli democracy in 2010

"The 'declaration of loyalty' bill, voted through in the cabinet on Sunday, is just one unfortunate expression of an unprecedented, current tide of antidemocratic legislation, attacking democracy at its very heart. [...] It is one thing to require adherence to the law; it is another altogether to demand that free individuals in a democracy sign on to a specific ideology or identity – and specifically one with particular religious content. [...] Symbolically, the new declaration of loyalty sends a clear message to all non-Jews in Israel, whether they were born citizens or have naturalized: [...] You are less a citizen than your Jewish neighbor, you have less ownership of your country, less stake in its future than other citizens."

Hagai El-Ad, JPO 11.10.10

To build or not to build – why is it the question?

"Abbas has said [...] that he will never recognize Israel as a Jewish state. The fact that the Palestinian Charter declares that Palestine will be a Muslim state doesn't bother him. For Abbas is motivated not by shame, but by strategy.

Deny Israel the right to call itself a Jewish state, and there's no justification for the Law of Return. Deny the Jewishness of this country, and there's no morally justifiable basis for not admitting tens of thousands [...] Palestinian refugees from Lebanon, ultimately making Jews a minority here."

Daniel Gordis, JPO 08.10.10

Haggler or leader?

"Ever since he declared in the Bar-Ilan speech 'two states for two peoples,' Bibi has been making strange moves. The strangest one was demanding the Palestinians recognize Israel as a Jewish state. What do we need such 'recognition' for? Israel is recognized by the UN as a Jewish state. The Palestinian state is the one that is not recognized. The UN's Partition Plan [...] established the terms 'Jewish state' and 'Arab state.' The Palestinians are the ones who need recognition."

Yoel Marcus, HAA 05.10.10

The ethnic cleansing plan

"The prime minister [...] decided to export this debate to the international community and demand that the PLO recognize Israel as the Jewish people's nation-state as a condition for signing an agreement. [...] Such recognition would amount to admitting that the Palestinian narrative was a false sham, and that the Zionist narrative is true. That is, this demand

asks the victim of Zionism – that is, us the Arabs – to admit that the Nakba did not happen in fact and that our Nakba narrative is baseless. No Palestinian leader would do that.“

Ahmad Tibi, JED 12.11.10

2. UN- Rede von Außenminister Avigdor Lieberman

In einer Rede vor der UN-Vollversammlung präsentierte der israelische Außenminister Avigdor Lieberman seinen Lösungsvorschlag für den Nahostkonflikt: Ein Landtausch, bei dem von Juden besiedelte Gebiete in der Westbank gegen Gebiete in Israel ausgetauscht würden, in den hauptsächlich Araber leben. Damit unterbreitete er jedoch kein Projekt seiner Regierung, sondern die Wahlkampfparolen seiner Partei Yisrael Beiteinu. Lieberman sagte außerdem, ein Friedensabkommen könne erst in einigen Jahrzehnten erwartet werden. Obwohl sein Außenminister sich damit klar gegen die offizielle Regierungspolitik stellte, verurteilte Premierminister Netanyahu Lieberman nicht. Er gab lediglich an, dass ihm die Rede nicht vorgelegt worden und sie nicht realistisch sei. Regierungsstellen deuteten jedoch an, dass Netanyahu Liebermans Perspektive für legitim halte und ihn deswegen nicht gemäßregelt habe.

A weakling as PM

“A speech by the foreign minister of a country that is given before the United Nations is supposed to reflect the official policy of the government, not just the private views of the chairman of the Yisrael Beiteinu party. [...] Lieberman was asking to be fired, and what did Netanyahu do? He issued a statement to the press saying he hadn't been shown the speech in advance but failing to criticize its content or style. As such, Netanyahu has suggested that ministers can say whatever they want. [...] The foreign minister made it clear Tuesday that his political partnership with Netanyahu is coming to an end.”

Aluf Benn, HAA 29.09.10

Lieberman's damage

“Lieberman's flawed behavior, which repeats itself, raises suspicion that the leader of Yisrael Beiteinu has transformed the foreign service of Israel into a springboard for advancing his lot in the right wing. [...] The decision to appoint Lieberman as foreign

minister is repeatedly proven to be one of Netanyahu's most damaging mistakes.”

HAA 12.10.10 Editorial

Not in front of the kids

“Self-righteous editorials expressed shock over his words, as if the doubts expressed by [Lieberman] in respect to the outcome of talks with the Palestinians are the only obstacle to regional peace. [...] When speaking [...] amongst ourselves, we can reveal that peace is not quite our heart's desire. [...] The objective of negotiations is usually to avert global pressure [...], rather than to resolve the conflict. Yet this top secret is not meant for the ears of the 'world.' [...] Lieberman speaks in one voice domestically and abroad. I say this to his credit; he is not double-faced.”

Aviad Kleinberg, JED 11.10.10

Lieberman plan flawed

“Lieberman hints that the communities known as the 'Triangle area' in northern Israel will be handed over to a Palestinian state, yet he refuses to present his vague offer for scrutiny. [...] The obvious price is that Israel's narrow borders [...] would become even narrower. [...]

And what shall we get in return? About 250,000 Israelis will become citizens of Palestine [...]. Many of them own property west of the imaginary borderline. Almost all of them have relatives west of it. [...]

So will they lose their place of work at once? Can the labor market bear their absence?

Lieberman assumes that his audience would not be scrutinizing the details, but rather, be impressed by the magic solution inherent in his decisive initiative: Hocus pocus and there you have it – 250,000 Arab Israelis disappear.”

Yaron London, JED 04.10.10

Listen to Lieberman

“He says, let's turn the two states – the State of Israel and Palestine – into nation-states that are only home to the nationalities they were established for. Such solution is only possible if we see the tradeoff of populated areas. [...] All the Jews would be on one side of the border, and all the Arabs would be on the other side. [...] What could be bad about that? [...] Automatically disqualifying Avigdor Lieberman is a move that must not succeed.”

Haim Misgav, JED 30.09.10

3. Ende des Siedlungsbaustopps

Ende September endete der Baustopp in den jüdischen Siedlungen in der Westbank, der die Friedensgespräche ankurbeln sollte, obwohl die amerikanische Regierung Premierminister Netanyahu dazu aufforderte, die Einschränkungen fortzuführen. Im Gegenzug hatte Präsident Obama Israel verschiedene Konzessionen angeboten, darunter ein garantiertes Veto bei Abstimmungen des UN-Sicherheitsrates und Verteidigungszuschüsse.

Da die palästinensische Führung bereits im Vorfeld angedroht hatte, die Friedensgespräche auszusetzen, wurden die Verhandlungen nun pausiert. Auch die Arabische Liga sprach sich unter diesen Umständen gegen die Fortsetzung direkter Gespräche aus. Allerdings gewährte sie der amerikanischen Regierung einen Monat, um eine Lösung zu finden und Palästinenser und Israelis wieder an den Verhandlungstisch zu führen.

Back to square one

“Peace talks will, at best, continue without any real substance. [...] The West Bank residents will now ensure that construction resumes at an even faster pace than before.

Alternately, the Palestinian leadership will decide, given the non-renewal of the settlement freeze, to end the charade altogether, and will conveniently be blamed by the Israeli government [...] Our prime minister could have demonstrated true leadership and made the necessary decisions. But despite the fact that a renewal of the freeze would have greatly improved his international standing, Netanyahu chose to remain silent – a silence which can only be interpreted as an acquiescence to the demands of his right-wing coalition and the settler population.”

David Newman, JPO 27.09.10

Bush written, Obama approved

“Netanyahu undertook to renew construction this autumn and if he does not do so he will lose his credibility in Israel and beyond. [...] Freezing the construction would strengthen MK Avigdor Lieberman, alienate Shas and cut off Netanyahu from his power base in the right wing. [...] Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert all built in the West Bank in the course of the peace process. Demanding of Netanyahu to do otherwise - while the Palestinians are not required to do anything to advance the peace process - is blatantly unfair.”

Ari Shavit, HAA 07.10.10

Caught by a red herring

“The truth [...] is that it was Abbas who chose to fritter away the first nine months of Netanyahu’s unprecedented settlement freeze, declaring it inadequate or unsatisfactory, twisting this way and that in order to stay away from the negotiating table. This was hardly the behavior of a Palestinian leader desperate to reach an accommodation with the stable, widely supported Netanyahu government – a government more capable than most any in recent Israeli history of delivering on a peace deal.”

David Horovitz, JPO 01.10.10

Let Jews build homes

“Focusing on outposts and Jewish building in new neighborhoods of Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria diverts attention from the real issues: [...] the danger from Hamas and Hezbollah, and ongoing terrorism from PA-controlled areas – to name only a few.

Where Jews can or can’t live in the national homeland of the Jewish people hardly seems to be of such importance, unless, of course, the question is if they should have one at all.”

Moshe Dann, JED 29.09.10

The desperate have nothing to lose

“The Palestinians are being told that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu does not have the political strength to continue the moratorium on construction in the settlements, and they have to be considerate. The occupier expects understanding from the occupied. [...] If Netanyahu cannot extend the freeze for three months, how will he be able to decide on borders and Jerusalem? [...]

And let’s say Abbas bows to the heavy pressure and does not immediately bolt the talks if the freeze is lifted. They will continue for appearance’s sake, but the Palestinian negotiator will sit on an even lower chair, weakened and humiliated. His rivals already are accusing him of surrender, and this will be the proof.”

Yossi Sarid, HAA 24.09.10

4. Obama und Israel

In seiner Rede vor der Generalversammlung der UN brachte US-Präsident Barack Obama seine Hoffnung zum Ausdruck, ein palästinensischer Staat könne innerhalb eines Jahres gegründet werden. In Israel wird seine Rolle im Friedensprozess jedoch oft mit Skepsis betrachtet. So wird ihm vorgeworfen, die Verhandlungen durch sein Bestehen auf einem Baustopp in den jüdischen Siedlungen in der Westbank erschwert zu haben. Außerdem wird ihm häufig eine pro-palästinensische Haltung vorgehalten.

Viele israelische Kommentatoren erwarten von den Kongresswahlen im November, dass die Demokraten ihre Mehrheit im Senat und Repräsentantenhaus verlieren werden und Obama durch so eine Niederlage geschwächt wird.

The gathering storm

“Based upon the barrage of bad news, I have many concerns. Chief among them is my fear for the future of both America and Israel. [...]

The war in Afghanistan is all but lost. [...] Both Somalia and Yemen are about to fall probably into the hands of pro al-Qaeda forces. Iran has crossed the nuclear Rubicon with implications for not just the region but the whole world. [...] And [...] the Obama Administration is expected to seek Congressional approval for the largest arms sale ever, \$60 billion to Saudi Arabia. It is just another example of this Administration's trending away from the special relationship between Israel and the US. [...] The storm is gathering and as things are unfolding we will be ill equipped to deal with it.”

Tom Neuman, JED 24.09.10

How non-American

“Obama [...] sets out to prove he is the world's number-one champion of the Palestinian cause. Generally, he does try to present a balanced policy in line with the historic US stance. He wants ‘two states, Israel and Palestine, living side by side in peace and security, as part of a comprehensive peace between Israel and all its neighbors.’ [...]

But [...] last year he promised direct, intensive talks within two months. It took him a year to get direct talks that convene every two weeks.

Then he calls on Israel to freeze building on settlements. Okay. But he doesn't balance that by asking the Palestinian side to do anything.

His impotence is also revealed in a small detail. He calls for countries that support the Palestinians to

give them more aid. Yet so far he has failed to get any Arab state to give even as much money as they did when George W. Bush was president.”

Barry Rubin, JPO 27.09.10

Time to rein in Obama

“For pro-Israel Jews and Christians, this election couldn't come at a more opportune moment. After more than a year-and-a-half of the administration's unprecedented bullying of Israel, those who cherish the relationship between America and the Jewish state will now have a chance to send a loud and clear message.

The president has lambasted Israel at the UN and pressured it to make concessions to the Palestinians, even as he has courted the Muslim world and virtually pleaded for engagement with the atomic ayatollahs in Iran. Obama and his crew have shown themselves to be tone-deaf to Israel and its concerns, and it's time they paid a political price.”

Michael Freud, JPO 06.10.10

A Jewish message to Obama

“Despite recent change in tone, rhetoric and conduct by President Obama toward Israel and its prime minister, most Israelis do not trust this new act and perceive Obama to be the most pro-Palestinian, Pro-Arab, and Pro-Muslim American president ever, lacking a basic commitment or even sympathy to the Jewish state.

It seems that Obama's sudden ‘change of heart’ toward Israel is not the result of rediscovered love, but rather, fear of losing the Jewish vote and financial backing in the upcoming elections. [...]

In the upcoming November elections, Jews must take a strong stand and not vote for any Democratic candidate, as a strong message to Obama and the Democratic party that Jews should never be taken for granted again, and that being pro-Israel is still an important factor for Jewish voters.”

Shoula Romano Horing, JED 26.09.10

Barak's hour

“Instead of prevailing alongside Obama, Netanyahu wants to prevail over Obama. The U.S. president needs the additional two months of the freeze to concentrate fully on the midterm elections coming up next month. But Netanyahu seeks to keep that same achievement from him for the same reason, hoping to find a weakened Obama after the midterms and a strengthened Republican Party in Congress, perhaps even in the majority. The result

will only be more hatred for Netanyahu and the country he represents.”
Amir Oren, HAA 03.10.10

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

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