



Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 14/11

Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

13. – 31. Juli 2011

1. Soziale Proteste

Am 30. Juli gingen in ganz Israel 150,000 Menschen auf die Straße, um gegen hohe Wohnungspreise und für soziale Gerechtigkeit zu demonstrieren. Die Proteste stellen den vorläufigen Höhepunkt einer Protestkampagne junger Aktivisten dar, die sich die Wohnungen in Tel Aviv nicht mehr leisten können. Die Kampagne, die vor zwei Wochen mit der Errichtung eines Zeltlagers in Tel Aviv begann, hat seitdem das ganze Land erfasst.

Es handelt sich um einen Protest der israelischen Mittelschicht, die finanziell überdurchschnittlich stark belastet ist. Obwohl Israels Wirtschaft wächst, profitiert sie nicht von diesem Wachstum – Lebensmittel- und Immobilienpreise steigen.

Als erste Reaktion auf die Proteste versprach Premierminister Benjamin Netanyahu eine Reform der „Israel Lands Administration“, die staatliches Land verwaltet, und eine Einschränkung der Benzinpreiserhöhungen. Die Protestierenden betonen, dass es ihnen explizit nur um soziale Aspekte gehe und wehren sich gegen die Vereinnahmung durch politische Kräfte. Umstrittene Punkte wie Sicherheits- und Siedlungspolitik werden bewusst außen vor gelassen. Dennoch hofft die israelische Linke, dass die Proteste ihr neuen Aufschwung geben werden und zu einem Wechsel im politischen System führen könnten.

A welcome awakening

"From the start the tent protest reflected discomfort on the part of the middle class. [...] For the past several years members of the middle class have grown increasingly frustrated, feeling - justifiably - that they are being passed over in the distribution of resources. While the prime minister and the finance minister boast of Israel's success [...], the economic fruits of this success are being picked by sectors of society with higher political priority. [...] Wealth is

increasingly concentrated in the hands of a very small group, with ever-expanding political influence. The tens of thousands of demonstrators [...] demanded a more just distribution of resources, a commitment by the state to the well-being of its citizens and even restoration of the welfare state. [...] This is a welcome awakening. It must not remain in the public square, and must receive expression also within the political system."

HAA 25.07.11

The politics of housing

"Netanyahu [...] presented an ambitious list of long-needed reforms that [...] are aimed at addressing the chronic market failures afflicting our housing sector.

Cutting red tape that creates [...] delays in the construction process, freeing up more land for housing construction, streamlining the regional planning councils and revamping the Israel Lands Authority [...] are all elements of what has been billed as the 'affordable housing program.' Yet, demonstrators [...] across the nation reacted with blind hostility to the reforms, failing to articulate pertinent criticism or practical alternatives. [...] Solving the housing crisis is an intricate matter with many obstacles to clear along the way. The easy way out, chosen by many previous governments, has been to ignore the conundrum altogether. This government [...] has taken significant steps to tackle the crisis. If the government's many detractors think they can do a better job, they should offer real alternatives instead of resorting to empty populist slogans articulating nothing more than inchoate discontent."

JPO 26.07.11 Editorial

Bibi has run out of rabbits

"The working middle class [...] finds itself in a situation where what it receives in return is not sufficient - neither in terms of salary nor housing. [...]"

This uprising has no magical solution. It cannot be ended by handing out candy and empty promises. It will not be placated by 100 million here and 100 million there. [...] Netanyahu quickly understood that this is a new type of uprising. [...]

[But] what was missing in his panicky press conference was a courageous commitment to a swift change in his priorities; for example, reducing social gaps as a primary government objective. [...] Or cutting the defense budget. [...] Or cutting spending on the settlements."

Yoal Marcus, HAA 29.07.11

There is a word for it – greed

"The one word that says it all is greed – the greed of companies looking to maximize their profits and the bonuses paid to their CEOs and shareholders while holding down the salaries of their workers, and the greed of property developers and contractors. [...]

Public housing as such barely exists anymore.

Instead, we have oligarchs who invest their capital in constructing grandiose high-rise apartments for [...] homeless millionaires, many of whom spend more time in one of their other residences abroad."

Yehudit Collins, JPO 20.07.11

This isn't Tahir Square

"Even if the housing protest grows into a mass movement [...], it would still be hard to be impressed. [...] We are not hearing from them wise proposals for improving the situation, but rather, only general fury and plenty of self-pity. [...]

The housing protest should have been directed mostly against contractors and homeowners. Yet there is a small problem here: The contractors and homeowners are no longer a detached top echelon [...] – they are the whole nation of Israel. The greed that prompted housing prices to skyrocket swept most of us. [...]

Or in other words: A large part of the young people who moved into the photogenic tents at the square this past week have parents who rent out a small apartment for 5,000 shekels a month or at least an uncle who is a contractor. Instead of blaming them, it's easier to spill a glass of water on Likud Knesset Member Miri Regev."

Hagai Segal, JED 22.07.11

Affordable housing? Yes, but only for rentals

"The solution to the housing crisis is clear and known: the moment supply overtakes demand, prices will stabilize, will go down, and stay that way. [...]

The problem is that [...] it would still take years for supply to become aligned with demand. [...]

The current, correct and necessary solution will come about only if rental projects at affordable prices are established in high demand areas. [...] We need proper tenders from the Israel Land Administration which have separate conditions for rental and owned apartments, some of which go for market prices, and some of them for affordable prices. [...]

The lucky ones who will live in this affordable housing, and again, this refers exclusively to limited-time rentals, will be those who fulfill criteria set by the state, the government and the cities. And everything, but everything, will be with transparency and full public disclosure."

Stella Korin-Lieber, GLO 18.07.11

Battle of the middle class

"In recent years, the wellbeing of [the middle class] has dangerously eroded. Salaries froze, yet the prices of basic commodities such as food and housing rose wildly. The gap between the middle class and the economic elite grew to scary proportions. [...] From a society that sanctifies solidarity we turned into a piggish, greedy and shameless society. Israel runs its economy in line with free market principles, and that's a good thing. The problem is that the political establishment, both nationally and municipally, neglected its roles as regulator and entrepreneur. [...] Powerful lobby groups empty its coffers. It forgot where it came from and who elected it."

Nahum Barnea, JED 17.07.11

If only Rothschild were a settlement

"An examination of the data during the period between 1994 and 2009 throws light on some of the reasons that have led to the current crisis in housing prices. Almost half - 48.4 percent! - of construction work in the settlements [...] was the result of government initiatives. The average government construction for the entire country [...] was only one fifth - 20.7 percent - of all building work in those years. [...]

Six governments preferred to encourage Israelis to go and live on settlements rather than in the periphery of the country. This fact had a critical effect on the level of supply in various regions, and therefore on the prices of real estate in these regions."

Dror Etkes, HAA 24.07.11

The real root of the housing shortage

"The protests on Rothschild Boulevard [...] are also the protests of the young people of [the Jewish West Bank settlements] Efrat, Karnei Shomron and Ariel. The government's irresponsibility has led to the building freeze in Judea and Samaria. [...]"

The outcome is clear. Young couples who have considered purchasing new apartments in Judea and Samaria have given up on the idea and joined the apartment-hunters in the country's center – which, of course, adds to the price increases. [...]"

Leftist organizations [...] are a hidden partner in the increase of apartment prices. Yes, pressure from extreme left-wing organizations [...] frightens the prime minister and his cabinet, and is stopping them from promoting building projects and authorizing tenders in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria."

Nahi Eyal, JPO 25.07.11

Bye bye, Bibi, bye bye

"Last night, Israel's 17th prime minister was handed his walking papers. When tens of thousands of Israelis across the country scream, 'Bibi go home,' Bibi will indeed go home. [...] It was the night that every Israeli can and should be proud of being Israeli. [...] Israeli democracy celebrated last night as it has not done in years. [...]"

The protest took flight last night. Forget the housing protest, it's no longer alone. Those who feared that the protest was too narrow, too spoiled, yesterday watched it expand. Its goals are already way beyond a small rented apartment."

Gideon Levy, HAA 31.07.11

2. Umstrittene Gesetzesinitiativen

Seit Beginn der Legislaturperiode, in der die israelische Knesset von Parteien des rechten Spektrums dominiert wird, ist eine Reihe von umstrittenen Gesetzen erlassen worden, die demokratische Prinzipien einschränken. Hierunter fällt das "Nakba"-Gesetz, das Institutionen, die an die palästinensische "Nakba" erinnern, staatliche Gelder entzieht. Ein weiteres Beispiel ist das kürzlich verabschiedete Anti-Boycott-Gesetz, welches die Möglichkeit eröffnet, Boykott-Aufrufe gegen jüdischen Siedlungen im Westjordanland mit einer Geldstrafe zu belegen. Hinzu kommen zahlreiche, bisher noch nicht verabschiedete Gesetzesvorschläge. Der letzte dieser Vorschläge sah die Gründung einer Untersuchungskommission vor, die die Finanzierung von Menschenrechtsorganisationen durch ausländische Regierungen und Organisationen überprüfen sollte –

obwohl solche Spendeninformationen bereits frei zugänglich sind.

Nachdem Premierminister Benjamin Netanyahu sich jedoch gegen den Vorschlag aussprach, der von Israel Beitenu Abgeordneten zur Abstimmung gebracht worden war, wurde er mit 57 zu 28 Stimmen abgelehnt.

In den Medien wird diskutiert, inwiefern diese Gesetze- und Gesetzesvorschläge die israelische Demokratie gefährden.

Undemocratic, immoral law

"This law wishes to silence people, stifle a different kind of thinking, and force people to do things that contradict their conscience, beliefs and democratic right. [...]"

The moment this law was passed by the Knesset, we can no longer slam anyone else for boycotting us. Because a boycott is a boycott is a boycott. Israel would no longer be able to claim that it is the region's only democracy. This law turned Israel into a dark place."

Nechama Duek, JED 14.07.11

Does the new anti-boycott law harm free speech?

"Like most European democracies, Israel's constitutional protection of speech has long been narrower than America's. [...]"

Most saliently, the far-Right party of Rabbi Meir Kahane was kicked out of the Knesset because its views were deemed racist. Such actions [are not] unconstitutional in Israel. Nor did these actions trigger alarm among the international community.

Israel's current practice is clearly well within the limits of an open democracy. Singling out Israel for laws that are identical to, or just as restrictive as, laws on the books in America and Europe manifests the very problem that exists with the boycotts themselves – the application of an entirely different set of standards to Israel than to the rest of the free world." Eugene Kontorovich, JPO 17.07.11

New law protects democracy

"The other day we thwarted an attempted legal putsch aimed at trampling the Knesset's sovereignty in favor of the political considerations of a national minority. The deceptive scaremongering campaign against the Boycott Law, undertaken while ignoring the legislation's clear instructions and justified aim, was met with the firm stand of Knesset members. We voted in favor of the law and safeguarded democracy. [...]"

The attempt to curb a democratic process and thwart the majority's decision via controversial legal opinions and threats to petition the High Court of Justice reflect the Israeli Left's inability to accept the path chosen by most of people here. This is a dangerous process where the minority attempts to force its views upon the majority by using the legal system."

Yariv Levin, JED 13.07.11

Democracy ruled by master lords

"Netanyahu, the political right argues, has a solid parliamentary majority, so not accepting such a majority's decisions is undemocratic. Right-wing advocates use this argument widely. [...] The key aspect of claims about democracy by right-wing spokesmen [...] is that it rests on a dubious form of democracy, perhaps the lowest imaginable. [...]

Not only is this 'democracy' tainted with racism, not only does it bestow upon its subjects in schools, the army and other dens of learning a completely distorted understanding of the concept of democracy, it also is the cause and explanation of a long list of anti-democratic laws.

Israeli democracy [...] is not based on the idea of the 'will of the people'. [...]

'The will of Israel' does not derive from civilian, minority-majority norms, nor is it based on a constitution that guarantees minority rights and defines when a minority has the option to rise up against the government. Instead, 'the will of Israel' derives from an ultra-nationalist version of the Jewish religion. That religion long ago turned into the unofficial constitution that rules our lives. According to this vision, Israeli sovereignty derives from the sacred text."

Yitzhak Laor, HAA 13.07.11

Will Knesset put rights groups, foreign governments in the dock?

"The current proposals were first raised in January 2010 [...]. In the stormy debates that took place at the time, opposition MKs pointed out that most of the information the initiators claimed to be seeking was freely available on the Internet, [...] including their sources of funding [...]. If there were a suspicion that they were in breach of the law, a complaint could be lodged with the appropriate authorities. It is the job of the police and the State Attorney's Office to investigate any suspicions of wrongdoing – not that of MKs, who are neither qualified nor equipped to carry out such investigations. [...]

The proposals appeared to be part of a general campaign by Israel Beiteinu and a group of Likud

MKs to shut the mouths of the Left, and to curtail the activities of various human-rights organizations. [...] One might argue that the proposals [...] have [...] to do with [...] a competition between Israel Beiteinu and the Likud for the hearts of the right-wing public. Because of the make-up of the 18th Knesset, the success rate of these initiatives is relatively high."

Susan Hattis Roleff, JPO 20.07.11

HR groups no terrorists

"Human rights groups are not terror organizations, regardless of how outrageous their political involvement is. Leftist groups are not a luxury item of average liberals; rather, they are an existential must in a democratic state such as ours. [...] I want them to be under supervision [...] – yet I want this because they are vital, not because they are banned. [...]

The State of Israel's main mishap is that human rights have become a radical Left monopoly. If only the Right had been wise enough to develop a serious alternative, examine our combat morality based on a desire to help the IDF, and look into the attitude to the Palestinians – not because the world hypocritically criticizes us, but rather, because of our inner moral compass."

Yoaz Hendel, JED 19.07.11

On the way to Venezuela

"MK Ofir Akunis (Likud) [...] proposed a bill to 'prevent NGOs in Israel from receiving contributions from governments and international bodies like the United Nations and European Union.' [...]

Legislation that treats friendly states as if they were enemy states, and civil society groups as if they were terrorist groups, has no place in the democratic world. The state should be proud of the activities of groups like the Association for Civil Rights in Israel [...]. By their existence and their criticism of the government's actions, they contribute to Israel's legitimacy in the world as a democracy that respects human rights. Even those who believe that these groups' activities harm Israel are not entitled, in a democracy, to prevent these activities by blocking the groups' funding. [...]

Under the guise of 'defending democracy' MKS legislate bills that make Israeli democracy an empty vessel."

Mordechai Kremnitzer, HAA 24.07.11

Escaping the Israel ghetto

"Netanyahu's Israel is increasingly beholden to extremist religious and intolerant voices. As a result, Israel is looking more like its avowed enemy, Iran,

than an ally of the United States, with whom it claims to have shared values. [...]

However, Israel is now in control of its own fate; it has the tools and resources to defend itself, and the means to establish a nation-state with a bright future shaped by the vision of bold leaders, empowered by a diverse, vibrant democracy. [...] The problem is that the vision that characterized Israel when it was created in 1948 is rapidly disappearing. [...]

Rather than uphold democratic values in shaping a bright future for all its citizens, Israeli leaders are more apt to promote ideologically charged legislation like the recently passed anti-boycott law and pending legislation to investigate the funding of left-wing NGOs. Meanwhile, [...] Netanyahu has failed to advance a compelling peace initiative. He and his coalition partners remain obstinate, and alarmingly clueless."

Alon Ben-Meir, JPO 22.07.11

3. Medienquerschnitt

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

Über eine **Entschuldigung bei der Türkei** für den Tod von 8 türkischen Bürgern, die vor einem Jahr an der ersten Gaza-Flottille teilgenommen hatten:

An apology would be best

"Strictly speaking, Israel does not owe Turkey an apology. [...] If there is anyone who should apologize it is Turkey, for the provocation of a terror organization to which its government was a partner. But in the sphere of diplomacy and security [...] we have to be wise as well. [...]

The State of Israel has enough enemies, and has no need of another one. Turkey is a member of NATO and a key country in the region, and its influence and importance are likely to grow. Preventing a prolonged conflict and an undermining of Israel-Turkey relations is a vital interest of utmost importance for Israel. [...]

In exchange for the apology, Turkey is supposed to return its ambassador to Israel, and even to add a certain statement about Israel's right to self defense.

This is a deal that Israel can live with."

Yehuda Ben Meir, HAA 26.07.11

Apology to Turkey? Why?

"In the State of Israel, the term 'security need' is the most convincing explanation for acts that do not always seem logical. [...] This week it happened when the Israeli intention to apologize to Turkey was published. [...] This time around [...] the defense establishment was enlisted to the cause. [...]

So this is 'logic' with a security backdrop: We shall apologize, and Turkey shall in turn refrain from taking legal steps [against the Navy commandos that participated in the raid against the Mavi Marmara.]

This is a simple, yet highly problematic, solution. [...]

It is precisely an official apology that would paradoxically serve as evidence for those who claim that Israel misbehaved. In reality, regrettably, apologies offer no legal immunity, and also don't change strategic choices."

Yoaz Hendel, JED 29.07.11

*Über den **norwegischen Terroristen Anders Behring Breivik** und seine rechtsextremistische Ideologie:*

When populism kills

"Some people [claim] Anders Behring Breivik [...] is pro-Israel and even pro-Jewish. [...] This is true in some twisted sort of way. [...] Breivik takes advantage of victims of Islamist anti-Semitism in order to demonize Muslims. [...]

However, when Breivik discusses Hitler in his manifesto, he asks himself if the majority of European Jews were disloyal to the European nations at the time. [...] 'The Jewish community has traditionally and historically, since World War II, been known as supporters of the EU's Eurabia project/European multiculturalism,' he writes. He warns the Jews that if they as a collective do not very soon prove their loyalty, European nationalists will turn more ethnocentric and look upon Jews as traitors. [...]

Western Europe's populists, who like to portray themselves as defending Jews from 'Muslims,' easily drift back to anti-Semitism while claiming to be pro-Zionist. [...] But the 'Israel' that [...] populists idolize is the same monoethnic, monocultural, anti-Muslim fighting machine that Islamists demonize."

Anna Ekstrom, HAA 29.07.11

Norway's challenge

"Oslo is the namesake of one of the most ambitious – and misguided – attempts by Israel, under the

mediation of the Norwegians, to reach a peace accord with our Palestinian neighbors. Norway's capital is where the Nobel Peace Prize is presented annually. [...]

Now along with their dogged pursuit of peace, the Norwegians are also coming to grips with the reality of evil in their midst. It would be wrongheaded, however, to allow the fact that this terrible tragedy was perpetrated by a right-wing extremist to detract attention from the underlying problems faced not only by Norway, but by many Western European nations. Undoubtedly, there will be those – particularly on the Left – who will extrapolate out from Breivik's horrific act that the real danger facing contemporary Europe is rightwing extremism and that criticism of multiculturalism is nothing more than so much Islamophobia. [...]

Perhaps Breivik's inexcusable act of vicious terror should serve [...] also as an opportunity to seriously reevaluate policies for immigrant integration in Norway and elsewhere. While there is absolutely no justification for the sort of heinous act perpetrated this weekend in Norway, discontent with multiculturalism's failure must not be delegitimized or mistakenly portrayed as an opinion held by only the most extremist elements of the Right."

JPO 24.07.11 Editorial

*Über den bereits mehr als drei Monate andauernden **Ärztestreik** und die Krise des Gesundheitssystems:*

Heal the health system

"The doctors, at the beginning of their careers and still strapped with exceedingly long work hours – eight to 12 26-hour-on-call shifts a month in addition to a regular full-time schedule – at ridiculously low pay [...] broke ranks with the Israel Medical Association [...] after reports were leaked of the details of a labor agreement reportedly about to be signed. [...]

The outcome of long hours of negotiations was apparently so bad that hundreds of interns and residents simply could not control themselves and staged a nationwide walkout. [...] In short, the situation has reached crisis proportions. [...]

But while the current situation is untenable, there does not seem to be any easy solution. [...]

The major overhaul that our health system so desperately needs can only be implemented by the leader of the State of Israel [...]. It is now up to Netanyahu to use his ample skills of persuasion to garner the political support of his coalition partners and prepare public opinion for the painful but essen-

tial fiscal expenditures needed to implement the far-reaching health reforms long overdue."

JPO 21.07.11 Editorial

Betrayed by the unions

"The negotiations between physicians and the state broke down [...] over demands by residents. The trainee physicians [...] demonstrated against the contract in the making. [...] They demanded [...] higher wages and an increase in the number of job positions for residents, coupled with a reduction in their on-call burden. [...]

But during negotiations [...] senior physicians and specialists joined forces with hospital management in an effort to obtain an agreement that was good for them - and not for the residents, who are the future of public medicine. [...]

The residents [...] must be permitted fair representation in the negotiations. That is the only way to guarantee that the doctors who carry the burden of on-call hospital shifts receive appropriate compensation, and that additional residents are hired to share that burden. That is the only way to guarantee better medical care for the public."

HAA 22.07.11 Editorial

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