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1. Kontroverse Gesetzesinitiativen der Regierungskoalition

In den letzten Wochen haben Abgeordnete der Regierungskoalition eine Reihe von Gesetzesvorschlägen vorgelegt, die eine intensive öffentliche Debatte hervorgerufen haben und von Kritikern als "anti-demokratisch" bezeichnet werden. Im Wesentlichen betreffen sie drei Institutionen, die von der israelischen Rechten häufig als Bastionen der Linken charakterisiert werden: Den Obersten Gerichtshof, die Medien und Menschenrechtsorganisationen. Eine Initiative des Yisrael Beiteinu Abgeordneten Robert Ilatov zielt darauf ab, die Wahl der Richter des Obersten Gerichts zu reformieren. Gegner sehen darin den Versuch, Richter zu ernennen, die der Regierungskoalition genehm sind. Ein anderer Gesetzesvorschlag sieht vor, dass Richterkandidaten zunächst von einem Parlamentsausschuss überprüft werden müssen. Ein dritter Vorschlag wurde von zwei Abgeordneten des Likud eingereicht und soll verhindern, dass vor dem Obersten Gericht gegen die Regierung geklagt werden kann, ohne dass der jeweilige Kläger direkt geschädigt ist. Damit könnten israelische Organisationen keine allgemeinen Klagen gegen kontroverse Regierungsaktivitäten einreichen. Während die erste Initiative in der ersten von drei Lesungen in der Knesset verabschiedet wurde, sprach sich Premierminister Benjamin Netanyahu gegen die anderen beiden Vorschläge aus und erreichte damit ihre Zurücksetzung. Zwei weitere Gesetzesinitiativen, die die Finanzierung von "politischen Nichtregierungsorganisationen" betrafen, wurden aufgrund eines Vetos von Netanyahu nicht zur Abstimmung gebracht. Sie zielen darauf ab, die Finanzierung von Menschenrechtsorganisationen durch ausländische Regierungen stark einzuschränken. Verabschiedet hingegen wurde in der ersten Lesung ein neues Gesetz gegen Verleumdung, das Abfindungen für Opfer von 50,000 auf bis zu 500,000 NIS erhöht, ohne dass eine konkrete Schädigung nach-

gewiesen werden muss. Die Medien sehen sich durch diese Initiative in ihrer Berichterstattung eingeschränkt.

Etwa 2000 Menschen demonstrierten in Tel Aviv gegen die kontroversen Gesetzesvorschläge.

Laws that endanger democracy

"The latest moves in the Knesset, in which aggressive groups from the Right are taking control of the discourse by passing a slew of nationalistic and populist laws, presents an existential threat to democracy. Those same right-wing Knesset members do not understand that real democracy means not only majority rule, but protection of free expression, respect for the rights of minorities and a constant struggle to preserve the principle of separation of powers, as well.

Netanyahu [...] must take responsibility [...]. As a learned person who is familiar with history, he knows that liberal democratic regimes which fail to stand firm against fascist moves, even when they are installed by the voice of the masses, are doomed to fall."

Avishay Braverman, IHY 16.11.11

A nation betrayed?

"While it might be possible to argue that the existing legislative proposals lack a measure of polish and refinement, it cannot be disputed that they raise issues of significance and urgency which must be confronted [...].

Protection of the rights of minorities is one thing. Promotion of the ability of minorities to subvert the democratic process is quite another. There is nothing vaguely democratic about facilitating the imposition of minority views on the majority via extra-parliamentary action funded by foreign governments. There is nothing vaguely undemocratic in a sovereign state instituting measures to limit [...] attempts by alien sovereignties to empower fringe elements in the country, with negligible domestic

support for their ideas, to subvert the policy of the government elected by universal suffrage."

Martin Sherman, JPO 18.11.11

Speaking out against the threat

"Spurred on by right-wing NGO's, funded by private donations from residents of foreign countries, their supporters in the Knesset are attempting to impose their own values on society as a whole. [...]

The accumulation of this anti-democratic war of attrition and sentiment is pushing Israel to the brink of being excluded from the family of democratic nations. When that happens we will not be able to accuse the world of being anti-Semitic because we will have brought it on through our own actions."

David Newman, JPO 21.11.11

Leftist party is over

"Rather than seriously addressing the issues and arguing over substance, the supposed guardians of democracy simply rattle off sound bites that are designed to vilify and scare anyone who dares to see things differently. [...]

The days where the powerful left-wing establishment manages to silence its critics every time it feels a threat to its well-entrenched hold on power are coming to an end."

Yoel Meltzer, JED 21.11.11

On the back of the tiger

"Netanyahu is a democrat. [...] Let's give him credit for that.

[But [he] can no longer stop it; this galloping tiger is already too hard to stop, and in the end, it will throw Netanyahu off, and with him Israel's democracy, crushed, bleeding and irreparable.

[The lawmakers] aren't monsters. Some of them are ignorant of the rules of democracy, which aren't particularly important to them. Others are motivated by cynical considerations - how well their moves will play in the party primaries. [...] There are also those among them - Avigdor Lieberman, for example - who are aiming to turn the Israeli government into a Putinist democracy. [...] Law after law, piece by piece, the hawks are tearing at live flesh, until one day we will wake up to a different state. [...] A state with a neutered court, fearful media and illiterate Knesset - and all this without much of a civil society to speak of - will never recover. Every scratch now will leave permanent scars."

Gideon Levy, HAA 17.11.11

The prime minister's responsibility

"The Ministerial Committee for Legislation will consider a bill Sunday that is aimed at drastically limiting the right to petition the High Court of Justice. The bill would actually bar nonprofit organizations working in a number of fields related to civil and human rights from petitioning the court. [...] This bill is part of a broad legislative move by an enthusiastic group of Knesset members led, to his shame, by Justice Minister Yaakov Neeman. [...] The High Court is perhaps also the most significant force for the preservation of Israel's reputation in the world. [...]

The fact that its existence has so angered a number of Knesset members, as well as the justice minister, need not absolve [...] Netanyahu of his primary responsibility for the move. The prime minister should make it clear that he has no intention to change the High Court's scope of activity, and should see to it that the bill is removed from the agenda."

HAA 27.11.11 Editorial

Bibi's conspiracy of silence

"This legislation aims to silence Israel's screaming and kicking media, which butcher sacred cows and turn Israel's democracy into a model for the entire enlightened world. [...]

The motive for the law is not to balance, but rather, to restrain. [...] How can Netanyahu explain his endorsement of the law without the personal motive, which seeks to scare off investigative journalists looking into his past, current and future actions? [...] The elected members of the 18th Knesset don't want to be afraid anymore. [...] They want the journalists to be afraid, and later they will seek to make sure that all of us, Israel's citizens, fear their power and judgment, which approves laws that have nothing to do whatsoever with freedom of thought or expression."

Attila Somfalvi, JED 23.11.11

Disqualified by their own distortions

"Dubbing it the 'silencing law' [...] is a distortion. This distortion, like other distortions the media are often [...] responsible for, is what generated the bill in the first place, just as it has generated the public's lack of faith in the media. [...]

The quality of coverage, accuracy and fairness determine the level of confidence. The media, therefore, are themselves responsible for the low regard in which they are held. [...] When some 85 percent of the public believes that the media are not ba-

lanced and 80 percent believes they aren't fair, journalists with a conscience should be looking inward. [...]

Meanwhile, precedent has shown that when the public loses its faith in the press and the legal system, democracy is at risk. This is the contribution of these two bodies, particularly over the last few weeks, to the fortification of Israeli democracy."
Israel Harel, HAA 24.11.11

The journalists' next assignment

"For years now, the Israeli media have been belittling the threatening process of suppressing opposing voices, restricting freedom of expression and silencing democracy.

Most media outlets failed to protest vehemently against the laws that discriminate against Arab [...], and did not cry out against the law imposing sanctions for boycotting products made in the settlements. [...]

Now it's the media's turn. There is a straight line connecting the laws that discriminate against Arabs to the recent steps taken against the press, including the harassment and dismissal of journalists who don't toe the government line, [...] and stricter libel laws. Members of the press who ignored the early stages of the campaign to destroy public criticism in Israel must now deal with the next stage, which threatens them directly."

Yael Sternhell, HAA 21.11.11

The right to a person's good name

"The real problem is trying to strike a balance between freedom of the press and individuals' basic rights. [...] One can't help but get a sense that the press' harsh reaction to this amendment can be attributed to self-preservation and not just the preservation of democracy.

The publication of anything that could tarnish someone's name requires a great deal of responsibility. The amendment would require the offender to print the complainant's full response, and that is entirely fair. The amendment also toughens the law against individuals who defame others maliciously, which is another welcome change."

Uriel Lynn, IHY 23.11.11

Jews must defend human rights, not attack them

"Lieberman has claimed that the law is necessary, because foreign governments try to meddle in Israel's sovereignty. This is either cynical or shows a total misunderstanding of the very idea of NGOs and other human rights organizations. Their express

purpose is to reign in the sovereignty of individual states and preclude the abuse of human rights. [...]

Of course states like Iran and Syria do not want the world to know what they do to their own citizens; that is why they try to shut down the Internet in their countries and don't allow access to human rights organizations.

[...] Unlike these tyrannical regimes, Israel should welcome public scrutiny of its actions. [...]

Lieberman claims that human rights organizations misrepresent the facts about Israel. If this is indeed the case, it must be proved using evidence. Trying to shut down these organizations will not get us closer to the truth. [...] Lieberman's actions indicate that he sees liberal democracy and its institutions as a nuisance rather than an asset."

Carlo Strenger, HAA 20.11.11

The laundered language of the left

"Those who bothered to actually read the law prohibiting the funding of NGOs by foreign governments found that it refers only to political organizations, those that seek to 'influence the political and security agenda of the country,' and that these same organizations will be able to continue on with any number of their destructive activities, yet will be forced to do so without the funding of foreign governments. [...]

Millions of Euros have been transferred from the hostile and commissioning nations of the EU to 'social and human rights organizations' like Yesh Din, Mossawa, Adalah, Ir Amim - City of Nations, Shovrim Shtika, Bimkom, B'Tselem, Public Committee Against House Demolitions, Public Committee Against Torture, and Physicians for Human Rights. [...] Their declared goal is political change. Their hidden goal is the destruction of Israel as the Jewish state."

Emily Amrousi, IHY 18.11.11

The push to regulate NGOs is consistent with democracy

"Israeli politicians such as Amir Peretz (Labor) and Tzipi Livni (Kadima) say it is 'antidemocratic,' 'fascist,' 'a blow to democracy' and evidence of 'a dark dictatorship' to exercise control over political NGOs by regulating their dealings with foreign bodies. If so, the same charges apply to the governments of the United States and Canada. Both North American democracies regulate foreign governments and foreign organizations that desire to influence public opinion. In fact, the governments of the US and Canada curb the political activities of their

NGOs to a far greater extent than does the government of Israel. [...]

The European Union, the European nations, and the European NGOs who fund Israeli NGOs have no basic investment in Israel's well-being, yet they profoundly influence Israel's political process. The citizens of the American democracy would not stand for such foreign interference. [...] The wonder is that the citizens of the Israeli democracy have permitted it for so long."

Lawrence Solomon, JPO 21.11.11

2. Unruhen und Parlamentswahlen in Ägypten

In Ägypten haben am 28. November erstmals freie Parlamentswahlen begonnen, die sich bis Januar hinziehen werden. Alle Kommentatoren gehen davon aus, dass die Freiheits- und Gerechtigkeitspartei der islamistischen Muslimbruderschaft dabei besonders gut abschneiden wird.

Vor Wahlbeginn hatte es tagelang Massenproteste auf dem Kairoer Tahrir-Platz gegeben. Die Demonstranten forderten den Militärrat auf, die Macht umgehend an eine Zivilregierung abzutreten, nachdem die Bemühungen des Militärs deutlich geworden waren, sich auch unter einer neuen Verfassung eine Vormachtstellung zu erhalten. Bei den Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Demonstranten und Sicherheitskräften kamen mehr als 30 Teilnehmer der Proteste ums Leben. Infolgedessen kündigten mehrere Parteien an, die Wahlen boykottieren zu wollen. Auch die amerikanische Regierung rief den Militärrat dazu auf, die Macht abzugeben.

Die Muslimbruderschaft sprach sich gegen die Proteste aus. Beobachter gehen davon aus, dass ein Aufschub der Wahlen und die Ernennung einer zivilen Übergangsregierung aus mehreren Parteien die Bruderschaft schwächen könnten. Deswegen ließ sie sich auf einen Kompromiss mit dem Militär rat ein, demzufolge der Rat bis Juni 2012 weiterregieren und den Entwurf einer Verfassung überwachen wird. Im Gegenzug sollen die Präsidentschaftswahlen von 2013 ins kommende Jahr vorgezogen werden.

Gradual democracy

"The multitudes who took to the streets were [...] demanding their right to democratic representation in free and open elections. [...] But is Egypt's headlong rush for democratic elections an 'historic opportunity?' Will it lead to more stability in the region? [...]"

Unfortunately, the choice is not between a military junta and a democracy that will champion human rights, protect minorities and women and uphold freedom of the press. [...] The Muslim Brotherhood is expected to win a major role in the country's parliament. [...]

Parliamentary elections are now unavoidable, regardless of whether they are advisable. But perhaps time still remains to help ensure that Egypt's transition from dictatorship to popular rule does not deteriorate into the creation of another tyrannical Islamist regime. Instead of opposing a delay in presidential elections, the Obama administration might support it. If the junta is allowed to hold on to executive powers until April 2013, the newly elected Egyptian parliament [...] could in the interim hammer out a constitution that includes elements that protect human rights and basic freedoms. [...] Bowing to the populist cry from Tahrir Square and rushing into 'democratic elections' is liable to make Egypt's first free and open vote its last."

JPO 20.11.11 Editorial

Beware Egyptian facism

"Thus far, the Egyptian revolution did not only fail to make the lives of the people better, it made them more miserable. Our southern neighbor lost tens of billions of dollars as result of the almost complete halt in tourism, the undermined gas exportation to Israel, the flight of foreign investors, the departure of international companies, the wave of strikes, and the spreading violence. [...]"

On the political front, the state of civil rights was somewhat improved compared to the Mubarak era, yet the media's freedom of expression is still limited and subjected to the interests of the ruling military council. The dark security apparatuses were not dismantled and recruited numerous new agents. [...] The mass demonstrations appear to be directed against the generals who rule the country, and these are the same generals who were in charge during Mubarak's days as well.

However, behind the scenes, the Islamist parties pull the strings [...]. Their aim is to avert free elections via bloody riots. Because one thing did change in the post-Mubarak Egypt: It embarked on the path leading to a parliamentary democracy. [...] The leaders of the radical religious-political movements fear the experiment known as democratic elections. They are interested in absolute control, without elections. They are the loyal fans and representatives of political Islamic facism."

Sever Plocker, JED 23.11.11

10 remarks on Egypt

"Ever since Mubarak was toppled, General Tantawi displayed decent leadership abilities. However, in the past few days he has been losing his stature while fearing the masses in the square, who view him as Mubarak's direct continuation. Should Tantawi be toppled in the coming days, Egyptians would have to pray for the wellbeing of their country. We should be joining that prayer. [...]

The Muslim Brotherhood's political strength ahead of the Egyptian elections is estimated at some 25%. This is great power; too great. They are also the most organized force in Egypt, and possess arms. However, they are cautious and tend to hide in the second row, behind the leaders. Should they succeed too much and make the foolish mistake of seeking the entire cake, Egypt can expect a civil war."

Eitan Haber, JED 23.11.11

Fighting for Egypt's future

"These demonstrations are an expression of the frustration felt on the Egyptian street that not much has changed almost a year after the revolution.

The demonstrations in Cairo should be seen as [...] the beginning of the struggle over the Egyptian state – a struggle between the Muslim Brotherhood and the army. [...] Indeed, the immediate cause of the riots was the military's attempt to establish a national security council as the country's supreme authority, whose power would supersede that of the parliament and the president, both of which are to be elected in the coming weeks. [...] The Muslim Brotherhood opposes such a council, which is why it urged its supporters to flex their muscles in the first demonstration of its kind in the streets of Cairo. [...] It seems that both the Muslim Brotherhood and the army are determined to fight to the bitter end."

Eyal Zisser, IHY 22.11.11

Egypt's choice

"It's too early and unnecessary to break out the horror scenarios. In Israel and elsewhere, anxiety has developed over the Muslim Brotherhood, but we must remember that Egyptian secular leftist movements also see Israel as a menace [...]. The attitude to Israel does not necessarily depend on a religious perception, but rather the understanding that Israel has caused injustice to the people it has occupied. [...]

Israel must recognize that the region's political and social reality is changing. It would do well to consid-

er how to adjust its policy to the change instead of lamenting the change itself."

HAA 28.11.11 Editorial

The Middle East burns as Obama fiddles

"64% of Egyptians say that Shari'a must be the only source of legislation in their country. If that is to be the case, non-Muslims will be excluded from full participation in Arab societies. [...] With elections scheduled within days [...] that moment is fast approaching. Once elected, the Brotherhood can be expected to prevent parliament from passing laws that contradict the explicit commands of Allah. [...] When Westerners speak of democracy, they assume it means the same thing to all peoples everywhere. The assumption is that popular power goes hand-in-hand with freedom and tolerance for minorities. It is an assumption not founded on history or reason, but on wishful thinking. Democracy is no solution in countries where tolerance and freedom to dissent do not exist."

Mark Silverberg, AS 27.11.11

Egyptian uncertainties

"Ties between the Muslim Brotherhood and Hamas are strong. [...] If, as expected, the Muslim Brotherhood becomes a major political force in [...] Egypt, any conflict between Israel and Gaza could escalate into a regional one. [...]

Perhaps pragmatism will win out in the end. [...] Congress has hinted that if Cairo annuls the peace treaty, [...] aid might be curtailed. [...]

On the other hand, Egyptians might be willing to pay the economic price of cutting relations with Israel and the US to promote their Islamist agenda. It would not be the first time religious fervor trumps logic."

JPO 24.11.11 Editorial

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 gewährleisten, veröffentlichen wir in dieser Schlaglichtausgabe wieder eine kleine Auswahl an weiteren Themen, die in den vergangenen zwei Wochen die israelische Gesellschaft bewegten.

Über die Schwächung des Assad-Regimes in Syrien:

Syria on the brink

"The Arab League suspended Syria's membership. This was an important milestone. [...] [It] has now gone further than mere condemnation, meeting with members of the opposition Syrian National Council and imposing sanctions on Damascus. [...]

From Israel's point of view, Syria remains the last of the frontline states that is a credible, powerful enemy. Unlike Lebanon, which is a relatively weak country whose main menace to Israel comes via the Hezbollah militia it hosts, Syria represents a more traditional strategic threat. [...]

The Russian Foreign Ministry has warned that toppling the Assad regime could result in the rise of a radical Islamic one or create a vacuum in which terrorist groups would thrive. This statement could be interpreted as deliberate fear-mongering, because Syria is a long-time Russian ally. But the Russian view should be taken seriously, because it might be accurate. [...]

What should be clear, though, is that a chaotic, violent transition of power would not be in Syria's interest – or Israel's."

JPO 16.11.11 Editorial

The noose tightens on Assad

"Assad is losing his composure. We see this not so much in his continued killing of unarmed protesters [...] as in [the] assaults on the Saudi, Qatari, French and Turkish embassies and consulates. Those attacks, which absolutely no one will believe were spontaneous, reveal a regime that is fast losing its grip not only on Syria but on reality. Attacking those Arab and Turkish missions was of course against international law, but, more importantly, it was very stupid, as it is bound to offend even more the few governments that could possibly offer Assad a life-line. It will now persuade them that the sooner he goes the better, and they have various means to implement such a decision, including providing money and weapons to the Syrian opposition. [...]

The sooner he goes the better, for the Assad family has given Syria a vicious, indeed murderous, kleptocracy for decades. And one can hope that the setback his fall will be for Hezbollah and Iran will over time positively affect Lebanese and Iranian politics as well."

Elliot Abrams, IHY 15.11.11

*Über die Aufdeckung einer **terroristischen Neonazi-Gruppe in Deutschland**, die über Jahre hinweg türkischstämmig Bürger ermordete:*

German fantasy world

"At the beginning of this month, a neo-Nazi gang was uncovered in Germany. [...] For a long time now, many in Germany have wanted to absolve themselves from their country's history. Many Germans have in past years been greatly involved in whitewashing what took place under the Nazi regime. [...]

This German fantasy world has once again received a rude awakening. There is information about dozens of other radical neo-Nazi groups active in Germany today. The extreme Left is being monitored because of its murderous past [...]. Muslim radicalism is also being watched, yet the murderous aspects of German xenophobia have gotten far too little attention. [...] The much-publicized German neo-Nazi gang is not much more than a miniscule part of the whole picture."

Manfred Gerstenfeld, JED 22.11.11

HAA = Haaretz
JED = Jedioth Ahronoth
JPO = Jerusalem Post
IHY = Israel HaYom
AS = Arutz Sheva

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