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Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

13. - 24. Februar 2013

1. Kontroverse um Geheimgefangenen "Prisoner X"

Der australische Fernsehsender ABC machte einen Fall öffentlich, der seit Wochen für Aufmerksamkeit in den israelischen Medien sorgt: 2010 erhängte sich in einem israelischen Gefängnis Ben Zygier, ein Mossad-Agent mit australischer und israelischer Staatsbürgerschaft. Über den Grund seiner Inhaftierung gibt es nur Mutmaßungen, allerdings scheint wahrscheinlich, dass er seine Tätigkeiten nicht ausreichend geheim gehalten hatte. Er wurde auch in Verbindung mit einer Krise in den Beziehungen beider Länder gebracht, nachdem israelische Agenten sich offenbar australische Pässe verschafft hatten. Aufmerksamkeit erhielt der Fall nun, weil die Isolationshaft Zygiers – bis dahin "Prisoner X" genannt – in Israel strengster Geheimhaltung unterlag. Auch nach der Veröffentlichung in Australien war die israelische Presse zunächst an eine Nachrichtensperre gebunden, die in Israel kontrovers diskutiert wird, jedoch bei Themen mit Sicherheitsbezug nicht selten ist.

Dial 1-800-4Mossad

"From the legal standpoint, it seems the Mossad conducted itself impeccably [...], whereas its PR in the case was, to say the least, unsettling. [...]"

Prisoner X received legal counsel from at least four different attorneys; his case was presented in front of a court of law, eventually in front of the Supreme Court; his family received word of his incarceration and Jerusalem updated Canberra at the outset of the affair. [...] These facts pulled the rug out from under all the detractors [but] [...] it happened too late. [...]

I am far from saying that the Mossad ought to divulge its undercover operations. [...] Hiring a spokesperson does not imply that news stations will be flooded with press releases. What it means is

that when the Mossad needs media consultation, it can receive the best in this field."

Aharon Lapidot, IHY 18.02.13

Some secrets are meant to be kept

"The State of Israel still has plenty of secrets that should be kept. [...] And no, this doesn't make Israel a dark regime or a dictatorship. [...]"

The only thing that is more important to me than the public's right to know, freedom of information and democracy, is the very existence of our country. [...] Therefore, [...] I agree that when the publication of a specific item would constitute a real danger to national security, to people's lives or to the country's vital foreign relations, it is preferable that the item not be published."

Ben Caspit, JPO 14.02.13

Time to break the censorship rules

"Israeli censorship laws are well outdated and just plain wrong.

First, from an effectiveness standpoint, the overzealous censorship measures are outdated and even counter-effective. [...] It seems that the gag order had in fact the reverse effect. It generated even more attention towards the case [...].

Transparency in such a case would be strength, not weakness. Here again, the cover-up just makes it all much worse and gives the impression that the State is trying to hide a mistake. [...]"

Brave Israeli MKs should challenge the censorship system and break it, and not fear being tagged as 'harming Israeli security' or treasonous. National security is not just an issue of physical defense. Our values upon which we would like to mold Israel are also of the utmost importance to our security."

Mati Gil, TOI 13.02.13

Things more sacred than public proceedings

"Is democracy severely compromised when a man is held in prison under a fictitious name? Not if doing

so protects the lives of other agents. [...] The publicity of proceedings principle is not more sacred than the lives of Mossad agents, and a prisoner can be held under a false name if his family is notified of his arrest and he receives due legal representation, even if his trial takes place behind closed doors." Aryeh Eldad, IHY 17.02.13

Prisoner X

"MKs Ahmed Tibi (United Arab List-Ta'al), Zehava Gal-On (Meretz) and Dov Henin (Hadash), who used their parliamentary immunity to bypass the gag order and broke the news about Prisoner X in the Knesset might have been genuinely interested in investigating the ethical questions surrounding the incident.

None of us should accept with equanimity that in Israel of 2013 a man can be arrested, imprisoned, die in prison and simply disappear without the wider public knowing anything about it. But as members of the opposition, it seemed that the three were no less interested in exploiting the imbroglio to attack the government and further their own political agendas." JPO 14.02.13 Editorial

When immunity is used for evil

"One thing is certain: The gag order on the Zygier case was imposed legally, fully authorized by the law, via court judges. [...] In principle, I strongly believe that the decision-makers in the security establishment and the political and legal system are human beings and, as such, are not infallible. [...]

What can be said, however, is that the MK's from the radical Left — Ahmad Tibi, Dov Khenin and Zehava Gal-On — displayed contempt for the law and willfully violated the court's decisions when they spoke on live Knesset television [...] with details about the Zygier case. Later they explained that in such cases, they enjoy complete immunity, despite violating a gag order. [...]

It seems only appropriate that we adopt a political system that respects the law, in which MKs set a personal example by respecting the law as well."

Uri Heitner, IHY 17.02.13

Assault on Australian Jewry

"Zygier isn't alleged to have worked to undermine Australian interests abroad. [...] The [...] reaction from certain elements in the Australian media would drive anyone to believe Zygier had stolen nuclear codes and defected to North Korea. Clearly the Mossad has no monopoly on the use of foreign passports for espionage, but it seems clear that

because it's the Mossad and not the CIA, and because Zygier was a Jew, that the affair has been referred to in terms of a 'betrayal' or 'double dealing.' The sheer vindictiveness of these accusations brings us to the broader charge of 'dual loyalty' against Jewish Australians and other Diaspora Jews. [...]

Zygier is one man, and whatever he did or did not do should not be used to impugn the loyalty of all Jews. [...] The dual loyalty canard always contains elements of anti-Semitism."

Gabriel Sassoon, HAA 22.02.13

ASIO 'burned' Zygier

"Most infuriating is the fact that people who worked for the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) purposely got the Mossad operative in hot water and indirectly contributed to his decision to commit suicide. [...]

Seemingly, there was no reason for Australia to act against Zygier because he did not commit any acts of espionage on its soil or collect any information on the country. [...]

The question is why ASIO leaked the story to the press. By doing so, the agency knew it was 'burning' an Australian citizen and putting at risk the life of a colleague from a friendly intelligence service that assisted Australia, directly and indirectly. Did the ASIO receive authorization to leak the story, or was it a vengeful anti-Israeli act initiated by one or several people in the agency who acted independently?"

Ron Ben-Yishai, JED 17.02.13

Fatal isolation

"In the heat of the public debate over the fate of Ben Zygier, one fatal detail has been as good as forgotten: He was held, needlessly and scandalously, in solitary confinement for months on end. Keeping a human being in isolation for a prolonged period is unbearable torture that causes irreversible emotional and physical injury has been nearly forgotten. [...] If Zygier did kill himself, it can be assumed that his suicide was directly related to his isolation. [...]

Treason or spying, rape or murder, whatever the crime, this inhuman punishment cannot be allowed to go on in a state that considers itself enlightened." Gideon Levy, HAA 17.02.13

2. Stand der Koalitionsverhandlungen

Mehr als ein Monat ist vergangen, seit Premier Netanyahu mit dem Bündnis Likud-Yisrael Beiteinu als stärkste Kraft aus den Wahlen hervorgegangen ist, doch die Bildung einer Regierungskoalition ist ihm noch nicht gelungen. Bisher hat er mit nur einer Partei einen Koalitionsvertrag unterzeichnet – mit Tzipi Livni's HaTnuah. Die Ex-Außenministerin, die mit ihrer neuen Partei nur sechs Mandate gewonnen hat, hatte zuvor zu Netanyahus schärfsten Kritikerinnen gezählt. Als erster Koalitionspartner hat sie sich nun das Amt der Justizministerin gesichert. Außerdem wird sie Chefunterhändlerin in den Verhandlungen mit den Palästinensern.

Ein Koalitionsbeitritt der zweitstärksten Partei Yesh Atid unter der Führung Yair Lapid scheiterte bisher an hauptsächlich einem Thema: Der Armeedienst für Ultra-Orthodoxe. Bisher waren religiöse Männer und Frauen vom Armeedienst freigestellt. Netanyahu unterstützt eine Gesetzesinitiative, der zufolge 60% der ultra-orthodoxen Männer eingezogen werden sollen – allerdings mit nur geringen Sanktionen für diejenigen, die weiterhin ein Religionsstudium vorziehen. Lapid verlangt hingegen einen weitaus drastischeren Plan, um religiöse Männer in die Armee und den Arbeitsmarkt zu integrieren. Dieser Forderung haben sich auch HaBayit HaYehudi (12 Mandate) und Kadima (2 Mandate) angeschlossen. Der HaBayit HaYehudi Vorsitzende Naftali Bennett kritisierte zudem Livni's Rolle in den Friedensverhandlungen, da seine Partei einen palästinensischen Staat ablehnt und kündigte – wie Lapid – an, dass auch ein Verbleiben in der Opposition für ihn denkbar sei.

Shotgun wedding

"Livni is no less trustworthy or cynical than other politicians who broke their word [...] and galloped into the arms of the one they had described as the mother of all sin. She is no different from [...] Netanyahu (who personally pledged not to allow her near diplomatic missions in his government). [...] If we came to expect different norms from her, she is the first to say that those days of naivete and standing on principle [...] are gone forever. [...]"

Her choice was either to wither in the opposition and end up in an unmarked political grave or try to jumpstart some diplomatic process. Besides the justice portfolio and chairing the ministerial committee for legislation, where she'll be able to halt any

racist or anti-democratic bill [...], she also got a license to deal with [...] the Palestinians. [...]"

Where will this lead to? We can guess that as long as Netanyahu is prime minister, it will lead to nothing, nada. But Livni will be able at least to say she tried. [...] Netanyahu [...] will use her as whitewash." Yossi Verter, HAA 20.02.13

Tzipi Livni did the right thing

"What else was she supposed to do? [...] As a centrist party of only six seats [...] Hatnua out of government would have been wholly ineffectual. Livni could not model her party on Meretz, who also have six seats but whose *raison d'être* is a social democratic, ecologist, and egalitarian platform that is anathema to Likudniks. Zahava Gal-On's principal mandate, therefore, is to oppose Netanyahu. This is not the case for Livni's centrist movement – opposition would have been death to her party, and her political career [...]"

Thus it is to her credit that, even though she possessed few cards with which to deal, she returned from meetings with Netanyahu with much to show. [...]"

Livni will not be a fig leaf. [...] She wouldn't have joined with Netanyahu if she did not believe he was serious about making some progress on peace."

Liam Hoare, TOI 20.02.13

Through the back door

"Livni will [...] lead the Israeli peace negotiation team. [...]"

During the negotiations Netanyahu repeatedly mentioned that he understands the government's policy towards the peace process and the Palestinians in general must change. The US administration expects Israel to initiate moves and the Western European countries are threatening to boycott Israeli goods and institutions. Netanyahu was sincere, but even Livni and her people had a hard time believing these declarations will be implemented. She may very well head peace negotiations that will not take place."

Nahum Barnea, JED 20.02.13

The politics we deserve

"It's all good and well for Benjamin Netanyahu and Tzipi Livni to get past their personal issues. But what about their political views? Do they no longer matter? [...] Before the elections, Netanyahu announced that in the course of his next term, no settlements would be evacuated. Tzipi Livni [...] is an outspoken

proponent of evacuating settlements as part of a peace deal.

Now that she has been put in charge of conducting negotiations [...] will she fight on behalf of settlements? Perhaps it is Netanyahu who will change his mind [...]?

One way or another, signing Tzipi Livni to the coalition is a new height of political cynicism [...]. Bringing Livni into the government is a distortion of the will of voters from the nationalist camp. Why is it that we are not even surprised by it?

We have become used to a political culture where promises are negotiable, and political positions can be switched as easily as socks. And if we've become used to this culture, then maybe it's the one we deserve."

Nadav Shragai, IHY 21.02.13

Livni's back, for better or worse

"Tuesday night's announcement was awkward. Much bad blood has flown between Netanyahu and Livni over the past four years. This peaked during the election campaign, during which Livni tried to form a united bloc with Shelly Yachimovich and Yair Lapid [...]. Despite what Livni hurled toward Netanyahu during the campaign, her decision to join the government evoked a mere shrug.

Even more awkward is Amir Peretz's readiness to serve as a minister in a Netanyahu-led government. Peretz left Labor for Hatnuah because Yachimovich wouldn't pledge to stay out of a Netanyahu-led government (a commitment she later made). What happened to Peretz's integrity?

The move to bring Hatnuah into the government reinforces the sense young Israelis have that all politicians are irrevocably cynical. A thousand citizenship classes won't be able to correct this harsh impression. Hatnuah leaders deserve every word of criticism that they will hear from both their supporters and rivals, as well as the general public."

Dan Margalit, IHY 20.02.13

Listen to the people

"In a tactical move that is highly problematic from both a democratic and an ethical perspective, Bin-yamin Netanyahu [...] has chosen to shun the winners and court the losers. In the process, he runs the risk of creating a government coalition that does not give proper articulation to the will of the majority. [...]

A clear majority of voters has made it perfectly clear that they want a coalition that includes Likud Beytenu, Yesh Atid and Bayit Yehudi – three parties

which agree on domestic issues that matter most to voters right now, particularly since talks with the Palestinians seem so hopeless.

By including Livni's party in the coalition [...] while allowing Yesh Atid and Bayit Yehudi to languish, Netanyahu is performing a disservice to the voters [...] They expressed their views at the ballot box, and their voices should be heard and heeded."

JPO 21.02.13 Editorial

Yair's choice

"The 33rd government of Israel must [...] consist of Likud Beiteinu, Yesh Atid, Shas, Hatnuah and Kadima. There is no room for the cynical alliance between Lapid and Habayit Hayehudi chairman Naftali Bennett. The sane center's longing for a change must not be subordinated to Gush Emunim's settlement lust. [...]

The coming days are crucial days. If Lapid reads [...] the map of the reality and distinguishes [...] between what is important and what is not, he could endow Israel with a government in which there is quite a lot of hope. But if Lapid sticks to his strange alliance with Habayit Hayehudi he will force that party on [...] Netanyahu, thereby [...] encouraging the swelling fanaticism."

Ari Shavit, HAA 21.02.13

Netanyahu's political cynicism will backfire

"To bring Yesh Atid into the government, all that was required was a formula ensuring that the ultra-orthodox 'share the burden' in terms of the draft or national service and become productively engaged in the workforce. [...]

Instead, [Netanyahu] suggested an essentially cosmetic arrangement which imposed no limit to the number of haredi exemptions – a proposal which Lapid refused to accept.

Simultaneously, Netanyahu humiliated his 'natural' partner Naftali Bennett, head of Bayit Yehudi, meeting with him only after having consulted with every other party and only after Bennett had made a public apology over an insensitive but harmless remark about Netanyahu's wife. [...]

In an effort to split the Bayit Yehudi-Yesh Atid nexus, Likud released a series of hostile remarks, [...] ironically accusing both parties of being selfish and disregarding the national interest. [...] Time is now running out and if he continues in this manner, Yesh Atid could end up in the opposition. Should that happen and should the [ultra-orthodox] imbroglio remain unresolved, Netanyahu's legacy will be shattered. Even more critical, our nation will lack an

effective government [...] and we would soon face another round of elections which may result in the creation of a center left government for which Netanyahu would be entirely responsible."

Isi Leibler, JPO 24.02.13

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 die jüngsten gewaltsamen Auseinandersetzungen zwischen Palästinensern und israelischen Sicherheitskräften im Westjordanland, hervorgerufen durch den Hungerstreik mehrerer palästinensischer Insassen in israelischen Gefängnissen und den Tod eines weiteren Gefangenen:

The writing on the stone

"Violent confrontations between Palestinians and Israel Defense Forces [...] are becoming a risky routine. [...]"

These are sparks that are liable to cause a conflagration if Israel continues to ignore the source of the anger and relies, as usual, on military solutions.

The formula for reducing the tension in the territories is no secret. It requires the launching of substantive talks with the Palestinians, conditioned on freezing construction in the settlements and a readiness to give up territory. In other words, 'two states for two peoples' needs to be translated immediately into action in the field. But when Israel has no government that can make decisions, the negotiations are conducted in the street, with stones, rubber bullets and gas canisters. [...]"

This is a stage in which extreme restraint [...] - and certainly not the re-arrests of those released in the Shalit exchange - can reduce the scope of the street clashes."

HAA 24.02.13 Editorial

Put out the fire now

"After a week of rising violence, within the framework of what the Palestinians call 'popular struggle,' this weekend saw even further escalation. [...]"

Soldiers should not be banned from opening fire. [...] Tying the hands of soldiers with restrictive orders and the reflection of this in the media would only encourage violent extremists in Palestinian society. 'Restraint,' 'moderation,' 'containment of violence' and 'low-intensity conflict' are not policies. 'Containment' in the past led to more violence. [...]"

Compared to what we have seen in the past from the Palestinians, this level of fire is still low, but this is how large fires are lit in our neighborhood. [...] We must end our containment policy and respond now, while the fire is still small."

Nadav Shragai, IHY 24.02.13

Über den von Nordkorea am 12. Februar durchgeführten Atomwaffentest:

The N. Korea, Iran, Syria axis

"North Korea detonated its third nuclear device [...]. The explosion this week points to slow but consistent progress in this field for the world's poorest and most outcast country. [...]"

How is all of this connected to us? [...] North Korea, Syria and Iran closely cooperate in the exchange of missile and nuclear technology. This cooperation, specifically in regards to commerce and the smuggling of strategic materials and vital machine parts in their efforts to arm themselves, projects onto each country's capabilities.

I'm of the impression that the international community's efforts to thwart this armament is currently being tested, and that the results will directly affect our adversaries.

If Iran arrives at the conclusion that the sanctions imposed against it are ineffective [...]. It won't hesitate to persist with its clear objective of developing a transportable nuclear weapon."

Uzi Even, IHY 13.02.13

North Korea and Iran

"The latest North Korean nuke test undoubtedly constituted a major morale-booster for Iran. It could not imagine a more uplifting object lesson.

The parallels between Tehran and Pyongyang are obvious – two rogue states that covet nuclear weaponry, defy the rest of the world, are fired by extremist and expansionist ideologies, conduct spurious negotiations and appear inured to international sanctions. [...]"

Pyongyang's pattern of suckering the West is clearly not lost on Tehran. [...]"

Nevertheless, another round of futile talks is due to begin. [...] Obama has decried the third North Kore-

an nuclear test as 'provocative,' while he insists on pursuing a diplomatic solution with Pyongyang's matching twin – Iran. [...]

It is as if the North Korean and the Iranian sagas were played out in separate, unconnected bubbles. [...] This is foolish. The Iranian plotline is closely modeled on the North Korean precedent, where America's failure was especially phenomenal. [...] The Korean genie can no longer be pushed back into the bottle, but the Iranian genie has not yet fully sprung out."

JPO 14.02.13 Editorial

*Über die **Abdankung von Papst Benedikt XVI:***

Benedict's papacy

"Benedict left the impression among many Israelis that more could have been said and done to assuage suspicions regarding his German background – including a period during World War II when he was obligated to join the Hitler Youth – his position on the Holocaust and his theological approach to the Jewish people. [...]

Benedict truly and sincerely wanted closer relations between the Church and Jews and worked to this end. But his style, that of a German professor more comfortable in the world of books and ideas than in the world of people and mass communications, ultimately hurt his efforts. Good intentions are not always enough."

JPO 12.02.13 Editorial

A pope with a message of peace and reconciliation

"One of Pope Benedict's enduring legacies is his call for peace and reconciliation among the peoples of the different nationalities and religions who live in Jerusalem and the Holy Land. We who remember his pilgrimage to Israel as another important milestone in the strengthening of ties between the Holy See, the Jewish People and the State of Israel, should continue to respond positively to the pope's message of peace and the imperative of dialogue between peoples and religions as a way to promote peaceful living in this land."

Ron Kronish, TOI 12.02.13

*Über die Ankündigung **Argentiniens**, mit **Iran** bei der **Untersuchung zweier Bombenattentate** auf israelische und jüdische Ziele zu kooperieren:*

Argentina's pact with the devil

"Argentinian President Cristina Kirchner has jettisoned whatever was left of her country's moral standing by consummating a devil's pact with Iran, whose leaders were responsible for the worst ever act of terrorism on her citizens.

In March 1992, the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires suffered a terrorist bombing attack which killed 29 people and wounded 242. [...] In July 1994, a second bombing attack targeted the Jewish community center (AMIA) killing 85 and injuring hundreds. [...] Two Argentinian prosecutors [...] formally accused the Iranian government of orchestrating the attacks. In 2007, the Argentinian government even issued arrest warrants for six Iranians accused of involvement. [...]

But now [...] Kirchner, in a shocking reversal, has brought Argentinian political decadence to a climax by consummating a pact with the Iranians to create a joint 'truth commission' to investigate the AMIA terrorist attack by the 'judicial authorities of Argentina and Iran [...] and issue a report with recommendations about how the case should proceed.' [...]

That the Argentinian leaders could collaborate with such a cynical whitewashing of the murder of their own citizens and create a 'truth commission' with a wretched despotic regime promoting Holocaust denial, should lead to the condemnation of the Argentinian government by the civilized world."

Isi Leibler, IHY 12.02.13

HAA = Haaretz

JED = Jedioth Ahronoth

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

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