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Die Themen dieser Ausgabe

1.	Vorgezogene Neuwahlen.....	1
2.	Schlagabtausch zwischen Israel und Hisbollah	3
3.	Netanyahus Rede vor dem US-Kongress.....	4
4.	Medienquerschnitt.....	6

1. Vorgezogene Neuwahlen

Knapp zwei Monate vor den Parlamentswahlen liefern sich Premierminister Benjamin Netanyahu Likud und das Bündnis von Arbeitspartei und HaTnua mit Itzhak Herzog und Ex-Justizministerin Zipi Livni an der Spitze ein Kopf-an-Kopf-Rennen. Die gemeinsame Liste von Herzog und Livni, die unter dem Namen „Das zionistische Lager“ antritt, überraschte mit vielen starken Frauen auf vorderen Listenplätzen. Der Likud hat hingegen lediglich eine Frau unter den ersten zehn Listenplätzen aufzuweisen. Die Affäre um Sarah Netanyahu, die das Pfand für zigtausende mit öffentlichen Geldern bezahlte Getränkeflaschen in die eigene Tasche gesteckt haben soll, schlägt sich in den Umfragen zunächst nicht nieder.

This is not a Bibi-Buji popularity contest

The Labor Party list, selected in the party primary earlier this week, did not present new candidates or deal-breakers. Will the undecided voters cast their ballot for Labor because Stav Shaffir and Itzik Shmuly are in the top five? Not necessarily (...). Public opinion is still apparently focused on party leaders Benjamin "Bibi" Netanyahu and Isaac "Buji" Herzog. (...) Herzog clearly leads on economic and social issues, but he and his leadership have difficulty making inroads on the two others. Terrorist attacks and the killing of Jews in France give Netan-

yahu a boost in support, as do the paranoia over Iran and Hamas that he is consistently feeding to the Israeli public. Netanyahu won the 2013 elections because of the security agenda, which focused on the nuclear threat of then-Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The Likud campaign machine is now asking, "Who do you want to fight Islamic terrorism – Buji and Tzipi or Bibi?" This is a political battlefield for which the once-ruling party has no answer. (...) If Netanyahu succeeds in making security the hot-button issue by March, he will win. If the major topic reverts to socio-economic woes, the Labor Party will be able to set up a bloc, with Yair Lapid, Avigdor Lieberman and Moshe Kahlon, facilitating the establishment of a different government. Herzog's battle is not against Netanyahu. (...)

Baruch Leshem, JED, 18.01.15

Media prefers gossip over significant issues

The next elections are going to be one of the most important events in Israel's history, as they will be held against the backdrop of the Iranian nuclear threat and the deployment of terror organizations along Israel's borders. (...) In this election "war," where the media, for the most part, has been fueling the hatred against of the Right and Netanyahu, many have begun feeling the pressure. The Israeli public will soon be asked to decide between a right-

ist government committed to security, the Zionist dream of immigrant absorption, and fostering the public's link to its Jewish and Zionist legacy; and the "Zionist Camp's" leftist vision of returning to the 1967 borders, establishing a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital, and capitulating to Obama and the European Union. (...) It is quite amazing to see the amount of energy the media had given to recent reports alleging improprieties in the recycling of bottles by the Prime Minister's Residence. After realizing that they are also having a hard time dealing with Netanyahu, whom most of the public favors because of his discretion and responsible risk management, the media has decided to shift its focus to his wife, Sara Netanyahu. (...)

Dr. Haim Shine, IHY, 30.01.15

There's a scent of change in Israeli politics

If our nostrils do not deceive us, a scent of change seems to be rising from the political system. (...) In Labor (...), worthy women won the first slots on the ticket, unlike what happened in Likud. Shelly Yacimovich will be a senior minister and is undoubtedly an important figure beside Herzog and Livni. A sort of Mapai's Golda Meir. (...) Shas is without Rav Ovadia, Deri is emerging as the nation's leader in the role of wheeler-dealer while Eli Yishai may disappear from the political stage with his unholy nastiness. In Yisrael Beiteinu, Lieberman is shedding his colleagues, some because they've had enough of him, others because he's had enough of them, but most because they're too involved in police investigations. (...) Kahlon, posing as the always-smiling leader, is making it clear he's not returning to Likud. He promises to be moderate with a pinch of extremism. (...) Most voters don't want to see personal bickering or extreme figures in their party's ranks. (...) Habayit Hayehudi hasn't yet realized that renewal is about moving to the center. Habayit Hayehudi has remained the same – a homophobic party turning toward the past. (...) But ultimately, it's about Zionist Camp. (...) It's of crucial importance that the intelligent voter see the grim picture of our economic, social and strategic situation. (...) Change is in the air. Seize it before disaster strikes.

Yoel Marcus, HAA, 16.01.15

Unity among Israeli Arab parties helps everybody

At the last minute, the reputation of the liberal, Zionist, secular and democracy-promoting camp was saved: The Arab parties agreed to run on a joint

slate, ensuring that there will be Arabs in the Knesset. We can breathe a sigh of relief. The ethnic pluralism that made Israel the "sole democracy in the Middle East" can raise its head proudly once again. (...) Israel's liberal camp now merely has to persuade the Arabs to go out and vote for their one slate so these liberals can wash their hands clean. What could be easier? But the Arab community and its leaders didn't need liberal Israeli guidance to form a joint list, just as they won't be waiting with bated breath for a directive to vote and bolster Israeli democracy. What choice did they have after being trapped by an electoral threshold that reflects the Jewish perception that "the Arabs are the same Arabs"? (...) Despite this, the joint slate is good for the Arabs — without question. For the first time there will be a link between the Arab community and its representatives on a national and ethnic basis, rather than on a divisive political basis. (...) Those who argue that a large Arab bloc in the Knesset could prevent racist legislation or improve the standing of Israeli Arabs will have to clarify just how the addition of three or four Arab MKs could block the nation-state bill, ensure the preservation of Arabic as an official language and block settlement construction. They'll also have to reconcile the contradiction between Zionist Camp's fear of inviting the Arabs into a coalition and the expectation that the Arab bloc will change anything. (...) Sending Benjamin Netanyahu and his racists in the government packing is a vital goal. But anyone waving the banner of eradicating racism and nationalism can't treat the Arabs and their ticket like something stuck on his sole. The way the Arabs decide to run in the election is their business. Their inclusion in the country's healing is everyone's business.

Zvi Bar'el, HAA, 28.01.15

Why You MUST vote Green Leaf this March!

(...) This time I'm voting The Green Leaf Party. And here are ten solid reasons why you should too. Not should. MUST. 1. Bi-Partisan support. I dare you to find one issue that both "left" and "right" pols agree on. Well? I'll just wait here. None. Nada. Zip. Well, none except for marijuana legalization. (...) 2. Creativity. What this country needs is creative, out-of-the-box thinking as demonstrated in Green Leaf's fundraising campaign. (...) 3. They are not career politicians. (...) 4. You wouldn't be throwing your vote away. (...) Even if Herzog and the Zionist Camp get the most votes (...) they'll have to include Lapid, Cahalon, Lieberman and Shas to form a coalition

and Meretz will most likely be in the opposition. (...) 5. Bibi is probably going to be prime minister again. And since that's the case and our country is going to hell in a hand basket, at least let me get stoned legally while the ship fucking sinks. 6. Who doesn't love an underdog? (...) 7. Security. Internally and externally. (...) 9. Integrity. Every single member of the Green leaf party is a criminal and has smoked Marijuana. The only difference is they are honest and upfront about it as opposed to every other politician in the Knesset. (...)

Jason Fredric Gilbert, TOI, 28.01.15

Open a criminal investigation against Sara Netanyahu

(...) The behavior of the prime minister's wife, Sara Netanyahu, with regard to redeeming deposits on recycled bottles (...) should not be dismissed as a trifle. (...) The behavior of senior officials in the Prime Minister's Office, who apparently worked to obscure and conceal the bottle deposit affair, should be examined as well. These officials also contributed to getting the case settled without the involvement of law enforcement agencies, in a manner inappropriate to a democratic country governed by the rule of law. These officials owe their loyalty to the state, the law and the public, not to an incumbent politician or his family. Attorney General Yehuda Weinstein has served throughout his term as the bottleneck preventing investigations into problematic aspects of Netanyahu's conduct. He must cease this behavior and be loyal to the public that he is supposed to serve, not to the interests of the prime minister who appointed him.

Editorial, HAA, 30.01.15

2. Schlagabtausch zwischen Israel und Hisbollah

Bei einem Raketenangriff der libanesischen Hisbollah auf den Norden Israels sind zwei israelische Soldaten getötet worden. Beim israelischen Gegenschlag starb ein spanischer Angehöriger der UN-Friedenstruppen im Südlibanon. Die schiitischen Extremisten wollten mit dem Raketenangriff gegen Israel den Tod eines ihrer führenden Kommandanten rächen, der gut eine Woche zuvor bei einem gezielten israelischen Luftangriff auf den syrischen Golanhöhen ums Leben kam. Dabei starben fünf weitere libanesisch Hisbollah-Milizen und ein General der iranischen Revolutionsgarde.

An active northern terror front

It is highly unlikely that Tuesday's rocket fire in the Golan Heights was Hezbollah's response to the strike that killed six of its operatives last week. At most, this was the opening act, some sort of declaration of intent, as well as a clear message to Israel -- the northern sector, and especially the Golan Heights, is an active theater and fair game for terrorist attacks.(...) The Shiite terrorist organization may be wary of provoking a full-fledged conflict with Israel that its Iranian patrons may see as ill-timed; it may be because Hezbollah is neck-deep in the civil war raging in Syria; or it could be because Hezbollah is wary of the criticism levelled at it in Lebanon. (...) Tuesday's rocket fire on the northern border was likely meant to remind Israel that despite Mughniyeh's death, the Golan Heights may soon become the scene of terrorist attacks, especially retaliatory ones, should Israel strike any weapons convoys. Hezbollah is better served if it retaliates from the Syrian border. (...) Israel must prepare for worse incidents than essentially harmless rocket fire. An agitated front that could disrupt life in the border-adjacent communities is one problematic scenario, as is a serious terrorist attack emanating from Syria. (...)

Yoav Limor, IHY, 29.01.15

Israelis are paying the price of a showcase operation

(...) No Israeli should avoid asking whether the operation attributed to Israel was necessary and contributed to the security of its population; whether it justified the loss of the soldiers who were killed in the retaliatory attack and whether it justifies the new account opened with Hezbollah and Iran in its wake as well as the risk of regional escalation.

Obviously it cannot be determined whether there was a direct link between last week's operation in southern Syria and the election campaign of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is declining in the polls. (...) When Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, whose party is being investigated for alleged corruption, hastens to declare that Israel should respond in a "forceful and disproportionate manner" to the events, it's hard not to wonder whether his calls to war stem from an interest in diverting the public's attention from his party. Such calls must not be allowed to affect military or political decision and lead Israel into disaster. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 29.01.15

An operational hitch or a flaw in decision making?

(...) In order to remove any doubts, I didn't shed a single tear over the death of the Iranian general and the five Hezbollah men. (...) When an aircraft struck the Hezbollah convoy on Sunday, it was travelling on Syrian territory, about 500 meters (1,640 feet) from the Israeli border. The convoy's passengers were not considered a ticking bomb: They were patrolling the area, not preparing for battle. Were they destined to end their lives like Imad Mughniyeh, Hezbollah's head of security, and other senior members who were killed in similar circumstances? I doubt it. The killed Iranian general will be replaced by another general. Iran is not short of generals. The 25-year-old Jihad Mughniyeh will be replaced by another Hezbollah man, who will likely be more experienced and more dangerous, just like Nasrallah turned out to be more dangerous than Musawi. Israel has allegedly brought upon itself the next string of terror attacks, in the Golan or in the heart of Israel or in Jewish centers in the world, without gaining a thing. (...) On the eve of the elections, the prime minister is seeking to appropriate the security and the maturity. I'm not sure that the residents of the Galilee, who anxiously watched their roads being closed and IDF forces being stationed in the area on Tuesday, were convinced that he is right.
Nahum Barnea, JED, 22.01.15

Resisting the temptation of targeted killings

(...) The moment they discover the location of the restaurant in Damascus where terror commanders are having lunch together, or locate a car travelling from Beirut to Tripoli with senior terrorists inside, the temptation to hit them is huge. (...) But the leadership's great challenge is not to jump at every such piece of intelligence. It must resist the temptation and consider the entire state of affairs: The dynamics of the international relations, the possibility of a retaliation act which will harm Israeli civilians, the economic ramifications and the possibility that the operation will deteriorate into a war. All these materials and assessments are usually raised for discussion by the prime minister with all the relevant sources. (...) the statement (...) that Israel, which allegedly carried out the attack, was unaware of the Iranian general's presence in the attacked convoy, may point to an attempt to apologize to the Iranians, hoping that they won't retaliate. If Israel is indeed responsible for the

operation, all that is left for it to do is to apologize and pray. All the rest is out of our hands.
Eitan Haber, JED, 22.01.15

Playing with fire on Israel's northern front

Someone threw a match into a powder keg and is now waiting to see whether it will explode or not. This is a dangerous exercise in practical chemistry conducted on the eve of the final exam: The elections in Israel. A helicopter and two missiles killed a group of Lebanese and Iranian terror activists in the Syrian Golan Heights – and now we're all in suspense: Will Hezbollah respond or hold back? (...) This operation may have succeeded, but the patient – the situation in the north – is only deteriorating. (...) The fighting methods in the north are also similar to the ones in Gaza: Targeted assassinations. (...) Yet there is a dramatic difference between Gaza and the Golan, which is concealed in the intensity of the conflict: The strength gained by Hezbollah makes all the difference. Whoever decided on Sunday's strike probably estimated that Hezbollah's interest – while its organs are stretched on all fronts – is to respond moderately. They may or may not be right. Intelligence is not an exact science.
Alex Fishman, JED, 20.01.15

Israel's pre-election aerial bombing

(...) Clearly it cannot be proven that this week's military action in Syria stemmed from electoral considerations rather than purely out of an effort to defend the country, but the circumstantial evidence of political influence is weighty. The time has therefore come for a new policy of an abundance of caution in the run-up to elections. Netanyahu and Ya'alon, who only months ago were boasting of their restraint, responsibility and good judgment in the face of calls to conquer Gaza and depose Hamas, need to also embrace those same principles when an election is in the offing and their opponents from the Zionist Camp are moving ahead of them in the polls.
Editorial, HAA, 20.01.15

3. Netanyahus Rede vor dem US-Kongress

Ministerpräsident Netanyahu wird sehr zum Unmut von US-Präsident Barack Obama Anfang März vor dem Kongress in Washington sprechen. Israels Regierungschef nahm die Einladung des Repräsentantenhauses an, ohne das Weiße Haus zuvor davon in Kenntnis zu setzen. In der Ansprache soll es um die Bedrohung durch das iranische Atomprogramm und den radikalen Islam gehen.

Obama will während Netanyahus Aufenthalt in den USA, genau zwei Wochen vor den israelischen Parlamentswahlen, nicht mit ihm zusammentreffen.

Netanyahu's dangerous deal with the Republicans

(...) The invitation Netanyahu received from United States House of Representative Speaker John Boehner, to address a joint session of the two houses of Congress, is a brilliant electoral trick. Netanyahu will deliver the speech on February 11, five weeks before Election Day. The room will be filled to the brim. The audience will interrupt the speech with rapturous applause 23 times, and diligent spokespersons will stress that this is a number which has not been seen since foreign leaders began addressing the Congress. Senators will praise and glorify the man and the speech, and will glance as they speak at the gallery of distinguished guests, to make sure that the billionaire writes the check. Will the Israelis who watch the show on television, live from Washington, be impressed? Of course they will. Netanyahu knows how to impress. (...)

Netanyahu should have informed the State Department and the White House about it, and perhaps even listen to their opinion about the timing. That wasn't done. This isn't just about good manners. (...) Netanyahu's decision to hide the invitation he received is perceived in Washington not just as impertinence by a guest, but also as ingratitude of the ugliest kind. (...)

Nahum Barnea, JED, 23.01.15

Best Foes Forever: What really divides Obama and Netanyahu

(...) Despite the constant head-butting, Obama and Netanyahu – who have divergent worldviews and less than flattering views of one another – aren't really that different. In fact, they have a great deal in common. Obama and Netanyahu are both calculating politicians. Neither has quite mastered the art of personal chemistry. Obama's standoffishness is unfavorable compared to Bill Clinton's charisma and Netanyahu is often reminded he doesn't have Ariel Sharon or Ehud Olmert's ability to connect to people. Both men have been accused of creating an impenetrable inner circle and harboring suspicions of anyone outside it, and sometimes even inside it. (...) Both men are big believers in the power of the spoken word. Indeed, their opponents would say they believe more in words than in action. (...) Yet what divides them is ideology. Their worldviews are contradictory at every turn, two parallel lines that

never meet. (...) The White House – caught completely off guard by Netanyahu's invitation to address Congress – is livid, but its on-the-record reaction remains mild and diplomatic. The administration knows that anything it says now can and will be used against it in the so-called court of Israeli politics. (...) There can always be a lower point. For the fate of these two leaders, it seems, is to be Best Foes Forever.

Yonit Levi and Udi Segal, HAA, 28.01.15

About that Netanyahu address to Congress

(...) Obama administration officials who are trying to argue that Netanyahu's invitation from House Speaker John Boehner is outrageous and political (...), will lose the argument. Iran's nuclear program is one of the most significant national security issues Americans face and an even larger issue for Israel, and Israel is one of this country's closest allies. The bad blood between Obama and Netanyahu, which has included personal attacks on Netanyahu by the White House staff, should not be allowed to color what the speaker does. I think it's fine that Obama will not see Netanyahu so close to the Israeli elections; that's a good practice in general and avoids the inference of U.S. intervention in a foreign electoral contest. (...) Moreover, it avoids the painful spectacle of Obama and Netanyahu making believe they like each other and have enjoyed seeing each other again. But the White House's whining about Boehner's invitation is amateurish (...). Given the situation in the Middle East and the state of nuclear negotiations with Iran (...), it's no wonder Obama would like to silence Netanyahu -- and no wonder that Netanyahu wants to speak about Iran and that the speaker wants to hear him.

Elliott Abrams, IHY, 27.01.15

Israel could pay a price for Netanyahu's Congress speech

(...) The Republicans invited Netanyahu in order to pressure Obama, but there isn't much use in this pressure. In order to overcome a presidential veto, there is a need for a repeated vote of two-thirds of the Congress members. The Republicans don't have a majority of 67 senators which can overcome an Obama veto on Iran. So the talks about the Congress' ability to force the president to change his policy are baseless. On the other hand, factional moves could cause the Democrats who do support the Israeli stance to withdraw and express their solidarity with Obama. Israel always enjoyed both US parties' support. This changed during the Obama

years. (...) The important consensus between the two parties has been broken. Israel should have made a special effort to restore the Democrats' support to the high level of the past and bring it closer to the Republican support. The Congress invitation and Obama's refusal to meet with Netanyahu are operating in the opposite direction and could intensify the polarity between the two parties towards Israel even more. (...)

Eytan Gilboa, JED, 25.01.15

4. Medienquerschnitt

Messerattantat in Tel Aviv

An attack against coexistence

(...) More than other bus lines, it's a line of coexistence. It passes in Jaffa as well. Jews and Arabs get on this bus on their way to central and northern Tel Aviv. Foreign workers, Arab women with or without a hijab, asylum seekers and veteran Israelis, including haredim, are the regular mix on this bus in these morning hours. A microcosm of Israel. One could hold a referendum there and get real results. How did the terrorist from Tul Karm know who was Jewish and who wasn't Jewish? He didn't really care. (...) Why by sitting on a Zionist bus and going to work in the morning, Arab women – perhaps the two from the video, perhaps others – are cooperating with the heretics, and deserve to die. (...) This wasn't a terror attack against the occupation. This wasn't a national attack. There may have been such terror attacks in the past. No more. The terror attacks of the past few years are not attacks aimed at protesting a certain injustice. (...) Nearly all the attacks of the past few years are aimed at imposing Islam on central Tel Aviv, just like they are aimed at imposing Islam on central Paris. The terrorist targeted bus No. 40 precisely because it represents Israeli normalcy. The normalcy of Israelis who go out to work every morning. The normalcy in which Arabs and Jews can live together despite everything. (...)

Ben-Dror Yemini, JED, 22.01.15

Israel can no longer isolate itself from the perils of the Arab world

The stabbing attack in Tel Aviv on Wednesday and the tension in the north once again draw attention to

the fact that 2015 is a high-risk year. Hezbollah has terrifying power that can wound Israel seriously. Hamas has renewed capabilities that can disrupt life not only in the communities along the Gaza Strip border but in the center of the country as well. The quiet in the West Bank is fragile and Islamic extremism is bringing insane forces close to the border in the north and south. While in the past Israel was surrounded by hostile but organized nations, today it is surrounded by the evasive, unstable nitroglycerine of the Arab chaos. (...) The disorder is beginning to draw into it the non-Arab states, which until now stood like the Rock of Gibraltar in the regional storm. The fact that the Arab world has become a Wild East with no law or order leads the regional powers to compete with each other and rub against each other in a dangerous way. (...) The period of grace in which Israel could be isolated from the goings on in the Arab world is coming to an end. (...) the new historic situation requires a new strategy. (...) In the absence of a leadership and a strategy worthy of the name, the black swans of uncertainty are increasing every day.

Ari Shavit, HAA, 21.01.15

Sex- und Korruptionsskandale bei der Polizei

Israel must cleanse its police force, not tear it to shreds

The police are experiencing the worst leadership crisis in their history under the baton of Commissioner Yohanan Danino. No less than five major generals have been forced to retire after being suspected or accused of sexual and moral offenses or for consorting with a suspect; a sixth major general gave up a possible promotion "so as not to get dirty." (...) The unavoidable impression is that women cops are victims of an atmosphere of sexual harassment and assault. There is also an impression of close connections among police officers, rabbis and their followers, and dubious "associates" like attorney Ronel Fisher, a suspect in a bribery investigation. (...) The police are essential to ensure Israel's quality of life, to root out all types of crime and to bolster democracy. Their success depends on the public's faith, which can be acquired not through PR but by strictly protecting human dignity and civil rights. (...) The police need to be shaken up, but they must not slacken their efforts to root out the rot in the public service and the people who make their living from it. Editorial, HAA, 28.01.15

Zum Tod des argentinischen Staatsanwalts

Would the world rather dodge news of Alberto Nisman's death?

The death of Alberto Nisman the night before he was supposed to testify before Argentina's congress on the 1994 bombing of the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires is an incredible development in one of the seminal stories of the past generation. How is the world going to dodge news that the Argentine federal prosecutor in the AMIA bombing case should fetch up dead just before he was due to testify on his accusation that President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner covered up Iran's link to the bombing that took 85 lives? (...) the AMIA bombing is a marker for the West's failure in the war on Islamist terror over an entire generation. (...) It is just an incredible thing that in the more than 20 years – a full generation – since then, the effort to bring the perpetrators to book ends up with the prosecutor dead in the bathroom of his home, where, media reports say, a gun and a cartridge shell were found next to his body. (...) The Interpol "red notices" are outstanding against the Iranian and Hezbollah suspects. Where was U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry when the long fight to bring Iran to book on AMIA was coming to a head? Where was the Obama Administration? Where are they now? They are pursuing their effort to make America a contract partner with the regime that Nisman accused of being the culprit in the AMIA bombing. What a sorry end to this story that would be.

Seth Lipsky, HAA, 19.0115

70 Jahre nach Befreiung von Auschwitz

The Holocaust survivors' untold story – what happened next

(...) Those who came out alive are so sacred to us that we forget they were normal men and women, with all the human failings and weaknesses, not super-heroes. But along with our admiration, we are also doing them an injustice by measuring them only by the chapter in their lives that ended with liberation in 1945 – as if in the subsequent 70 years they have achieved nothing else of note. (...) In countries where the education system has decided to include the Holocaust as part of the national history curriculum, the small handful of survivors still physically capable of traveling and lecturing to students are in intense demand. Some have even become minor celebrities, often appearing at the side of prime ministers and presidents at public events. What a

change from the first decades of freedom, when no one wanted to hear their stories, much less to see their experience as unique in any way. (...) It was only in 1961 at the Adolf Eichmann trial, when the survivors of the camps – not only those who had taken up arms against the Germans – took to the podium in the televised proceedings, that their stories began to be heard among the wide Israeli public. (...) While a lot is being done to educate a new generation on those years of genocide, we need to begin focusing more on the survivors' subsequent lives. (...) Survival did not end with liberation. Those who lived through the Holocaust continued to survive for the rest of their lives, and we must see that in them as well. (...) That should be the true way to respect them, their success as well as their failure, and to learn from their memory.

Anshel Pfeffer, HAA, 22.01.15

Kooperation oder Boykott des Internationalen Strafgerichtshofs

Put the ball in ICC's court

(...) One of the problems with Israeli public diplomacy is that it is predictably reactive and generally negative. Something happens, and the Israeli government reacts. Suppose, for once, Israel were to take a different tack, one based on the principles used by judo experts--namely, to use the opponent's own strengths and moves against him. In this case, Israel, instead of simply denouncing the ICC decision, could have said, "Okay, sure, let's have an investigation. We will cooperate fully with such an investigation and indeed welcome it. However, we will do so only under the following conditions: 1. A series of war crimes allegations by us against Hamas must also be investigated. After all, this is only fair and just, right? 2. The investigation must be identified clearly as examining reciprocal war crimes allegations between a state and a non-state organization. (...) Such a reaction would have many benefits. (...) It would be eminently reasonable, and based on fundamental principles of justice and fairness (...), it would place the ball firmly in the ICC's court. This is another basic principle of good public relations in general and public diplomacy in particular. Make sure the other side is in a position of having to defend itself and its decisions and actions, not you. (...)

Norman Bailey, GLO, 18.01.15

Bücherkette Steimatzky stoppt Verkauf von Charlie Hebdo

Steimatzky's sale

Booksellers are not warriors in the ordinary sense of the word, although printed texts were at given historical intervals the harbingers of liberty and change. But in a workaday environment retailers legitimately want to do business rather than fight. That was the rationale of Israel's Steimatzky chain when it backtracked from its plans to hold a special sale of the Charlie Hebdo post-massacre "survivors' issue." (...) Nobody forced Steimatzky to announce its event in the first place, but it looked like a good publicity- and income-generating stunt – an opportunity of the sort that entrepreneurs look for. (...) How can we, as a society, criticize the craven surrender of so many abroad to Muslim bullying, if we are no better than the cowards we take to task in Europe. It is necessary to put this episode in its proper context. This was not a run-of-the-mill business reassessment. This was capitulation made possible by an ostrich-like denial of reality that afflicts too many in this country. (...) The aim of the Charlie Hebdo cover was to tell the enemies of free expression that they will never win. (...) We in Israel bend over backwards to respect minorities, but manipulative politicians (who unconscionably incite these minorities) owe respect to the very democratic freedoms that they cynically invoke when it suits them.

Editorial, JPO, 28.01.15

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