



**Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 24/15
Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen**

16.-31. Dezember

Die Themen dieser Ausgabe

1. Nationalreligiöse Extremisten feiern Mord an palästinensischem Baby.....	1
2. Linke und Menschenrechtsorganisationen unter Beschuss.....	3
3. Urteil im Revisionsverfahren Ehud Olmerts	6
4. Medienquerschnitt.....	7

1. Nationalreligiöse Extremisten feiern Mord an palästinensischem Baby

Ein während einer Hochzeitsfeier aufgenommenes Amateur-Video, das tanzende Gäste mit Messern zeigt, darunter ein Mann, der auf das Foto des ermordeten palästinensischen Babys Ali Dawabsheh einsticht, sorgte landesweit für Abscheu und Empörung. Das frisch vermählte Ehepaar gilt als in der rechtsradikalen Siedlerszene bekannt. Ali Dawabsheh starb Ende Juli bei dem Brandanschlag auf das Haus seiner Familie in Duma. Auch seine Eltern erlagen später ihren Brandwunden. Der israelische Geheimdienst Shin Beth soll bei der Untersuchung des Anschlags eine Reihe jüdischer Extremisten in Haft gefoltert haben. Freunde und Verwandte von Verdächtigen, die im Zusammenhang mit dem Brandanschlag in Duma verhaftet wurden, waren unter den Gästen der Hochzeitsfeier. Acht Gäste wurden inzwischen verhaftet.

The dance of death

The sight is nauseating, unthinkable. (...) a frenzied celebration of death: the killings of the Dawabsha family (...) the scenes from this wedding this month in Jerusalem tell an awful, unmistakable story. (...) It is not too late for the State of Israel to reassert its insistence on upholding the core Jewish values that these young people have lost — and chiefly, of course, the fundamental respect for the divine gift of human life. (...) it is not too late for education where the dozens who participated in that inhumane wed-

ding dance of death are concerned. It is not too late for political leaders and rabbis and parents and siblings and friends to pull these deranged youths back from the brink. (...) Otherwise, these dancing youths, derangedly and delightedly celebrating the death of innocents, will bring down ruin upon us all. David Horovitz, TOI, 24.12.15

The Shin Bet protects us all

(...) My advice to the suspects and their supporters is to show restraint, and even more importantly, tamp down their rhetoric. If it turns out that the interrogators overstepped their legal authority, Israel has the necessary means to prosecute them. (...) What the Duma attackers did was no youthful transgression or juvenile prank, but very serious violence that motivates Palestinian terrorists to attack Jews. (...) I have no doubt that the Shin Bet follows the letter of the law. The interrogation techniques have been written into law and sanctioned by multiple court decisions. (...) Unfortunately, media heavyweights have joined forces with the detainees and their representatives, turning their defense attorneys into media darlings. This warm embrace has become stronger every time those lawyers utter worn-out cliches normally relegated to the subversive activity of Breaking the Silence (a group that highlights alleged misconduct of Israeli soldiers). It is hard to understand why the Right, even as it fights Breaking the Silence, adopts the group's very arguments just so it can de-legitimize the Shin Bet. Israeli citizens are grateful for the Shin Bet; our lives depend on it.

Given the current circumstances, let's hope the investigation is completed soon. It is essential that we get answers to what happened in Duma.
Dr. Haim Shine, IHY, 23.12.15

Killing a Palestinian baby twice

(...) there is method to the madness and this voodoo worship. (...) And you kill a Palestinian baby twice, as in the Dahlia Ravikovitch song. (...) What would the Talmud sages say about these new Jews, the neo-fanatics for whom firebombs and rifles are their faith? (...) They would decree upon them, and upon all of us, destruction because of unjustified hatred. We have brought the destruction upon ourselves. (...) I am reminded of (...) a good example of the humanity of Nasser Dawabsheh, the uncle of the baby Ali, in a lamentation he delivered at the solidarity rally held in Rabin Square a few days after the terrifying murder and of the audience that listened to him in silence, respect and powerlessness. (...) The main characteristic of the extreme right is unrestrained violence. The more extreme they are, the more violence is legitimate and extreme. Only the extreme right murders innocent civilians because of their ethnicity, their positions or sexual tendencies. Only the far right dances on blood. An extreme leftist is characterized by growing preparedness to give up, to compromise, to take responsibility for the conflict. (...)

Shoham Smith, HAA, 30.12.15

Duma, 'dirty dancing' & deeply disturbing detention

(...) ever since the fatal torching of the Dawabshas' dwelling at the end of July, I have felt a growing uneasiness at the handling of the public outcry. This relates to what can only be described as a knee-jerk response, not only to apportion blame for the act to Jewish "terrorists" (...), but to employ extra-judicial measures to contend with it, similar to those employed against Arab terrorist organizations. (...) For months the law enforcement agencies, with all the measures at their disposal (...) could not come up with any incriminating evidence. (...) the government invoked extra-judicial powers and arrested several suspects – including a number of minors – by administrative detention without bringing specific charges against them, and (...) without sufficient evidence to bring them to trial. (...) to try and draw any equivalence between Arab terrorism and Jewish "terror" is akin to claiming that a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier (...) and a four-foot rubber dinghy, are equivalent, because they can both be classed "sailing vessels" – and hence comprise similar naval

threats, to be dealt with by similar measures. (...) The public dissemination of the "dirty dancing" wedding video seems to have unnerved several relatively sensible politicians and pundits (...). They seem to have been panicked into believing that this marginal and marginalized group of a few dozen renegades actually comprises a tangible threat to the existence of the Zionist state.(...) the hysterical hyperbole, that is being bandied about entails many unintended consequences – such as loss of confidence in the justice system and the security services, in large and influential sectors of the population; and raises numerous troubling questions such as what is it that ignites such internecine loathing among Jews. (...)

Martin Sherman, JPO, 31.12.15

When legitimate criticism turns into pure hatred

(...) We wanted freedom of expression - we got freedom of incitement. (...) We have already gotten used to harsh statements, but these days we seem to be experiencing one of the most serious murky waves ever. (...) following the despicable acts of the right-wing fanatics, the left-wing zealots are becoming even more fanatical, but this radicalization dance must be stopped. (...) It seems that part of what used to be the Left has moved from criticism to hatred, and for that purpose it must portray Israel as a country endangering itself. It must radicalize the horror propaganda. It must move to a discourse of hatred. (...) It's scary. (...) They have to turn Israel into a Nazi state and the justice minister into Nazi scum. They have to sink deeper into demonization. In the past, (...) this was done to Jews. Today it is being done to Israel. From within Israel. (...)

Ben-Dror Yemini, JED, 29.12.15

The complex relationship between settlers and Jewish terror

The absolute majority of West Bank settlers looked forward to the day the Shin Bet security service solved the Duma murder. As far as they were concerned, solving the case would help eliminate Jewish terror organizations and reduce the exploitation of hate crimes to denigrate the settlement movement. But today, when it turns out the detainees – most of them minors – are being tortured with unbridled fury and burning hatred, compassion rises even among those who want to see the murderers brought to justice and their movement crushed. (...) The claim that the Jewish community in the settlements supports Jewish terror reflects, apart from slander, professional ignorance. For this alone the interrogator must go. (...)Although the Shin Bet's

acts have pushed the Jewish population in the West Bank into an almost impossible situation, the settlers should not go easy on themselves, nor should their many supporters in the general public go easy on them. (...) The rabbinical establishment, whose influence is far greater than that of elected public officials, uttered a feeble, sometimes sanctimonious denunciation. Those anarchists may not obey the rabbinical establishment either, but in the circles close to them, the rabbis still wield influence. Rabbis, when they care, know how to get what they want. But no rabbinical body put up a real fight against the ticking bomb whose inevitable end was the Duma explosion.

Israel Harel, HAA, 27.12.15

Meet Judeo-ISIS: The inevitable result of Israel's presence in the West Bank

(...) In the early 1980s, the Israeli philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz coined the highly controversial term "Judeo-Nazis" to describe Israel's conduct during the First Lebanon war and Israel's mounting militarization. But that was then. The footage of extremists now celebrating the cold-blooded murder of an innocent toddler begs a more up-to-date term for this sort of bloodlust, motivated by religious fanaticism – Judeo-ISIS, perhaps. (...) The malignant tumor that is Judeo-ISIS did not grow in a vacuum. It was fermented by right-wing MKs (...); it was abetted by politicians (...), who incited against "Arab voters going to the polls in droves" in order to get reelected, like Netanyahu. The images of this horror wedding are reprehensible, but it's important to put our disgust into context. The images did not reveal anything we didn't know. (...) Such "celebrations", featuring the same sort of racist chants and bloodlust, have been taking place for two decades at least. (...) Israeli society is behaving like a man who accuses the doctor telling him he has cancer of lying - then expresses shock when he finds that the tumor he refused to acknowledge has metastasized. Despite the platitudes of right-wing politicians, it seems Israel is far from ready to acknowledge its sickness. (...) if the only lesson Israel learns from this is that the solution to right-wing radicalization is to strengthen the mechanisms of occupation, the same mechanisms that allowed it to exist in the first place, then Jewish extremists can go on celebrating for a long, long time.

Asher Schechter, HAA, 24.12.15

2. Linke und Menschenrechtsorganisationen unter Beschuss

Die ultrarechte Organisation „Im Tirzu“ („Wenn Ihr wollt“) setzte mit einem im Internet veröffentlichten Video eine aufgeregte öffentliche Debatte in Gang. Der Kurzfilm nennt namentlich vier Vertreter linker und Menschenrechtsorganisationen in Israel und schimpft sie als „Agenten“ ausländischer Regierungen. Im Fokus der Debatte steht die Nichtregierungsorganisation (NGO) ehemaliger israelischer Soldaten, die mit Aussagen über Fehlverhalten von Kampfgenossen und militärischen Vorgesetzten „Das Schweigen brechen“, so auch der Name der Gruppe. Nahezu zeitgleich unterbreitete Justizministerin Ayelet Shaked dem Parlament einen Gesetzesentwurf, der NGOs, die mehr als die Hälfte ihres Budgets von staatlichen ausländischen Einrichtungen beziehen, dazu verpflichten würde, bei offiziellen Terminen in der Knesset eine Erkennungs-marke zu tragen und auf allen Publikationen die Finanzierung durch staatliche ausländische Einrichtungen zu vermerken. Der Gesetzesentwurf wurde inzwischen im Ministerausschuss für Gesetzgebung bestätigt.

Labels and libel

The Left is wrong to fight against the proposed law under which lobbyists for NGOs funded by foreign governments would be "labeled" when in the Knesset. The legislation making representatives of non-governmental organizations wear labels would be more democratic if it required that every single lobbyist to wear a tag. (...) It would also make sense to require tags for representatives of publicly funded bodies, who regularly float around the Knesset pushing their agendas. (...) Once they use our tax dollars, they too should be tagged. And how about lobbyists for the oil, food, finance and other cartels... oops... industries? Shouldn't they be tagged as well? I agree with Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked that there must be transparency. For all. Okay start with the NGOs. I do not want foreign governments pulling our strings. But keep going, Mme. Minister. Cover the field so we can recognize all representatives of special interests. (...) Now let's look at the sanctimonious defenders of democracy and of human rights, the Ben-Gvirs and their ilk, lawyers who rush to the defense of anyone accused of committing a Kahane-influenced act of violence against the body or property of Palestinians. (...) By the way, who is paying their fees? Some transparency please. (...)

Avraham Avi-Hai, JPO, 31.12.15

Breaking the Silence amplifies Israeli democracy's weaknesses

(...) Breaking the Silence (...) illustrates democracy's weakness. Democracies whose armies are involved in wars do not settle for formal oversight arrangements over the military. More often, these are augmented by various types of internal oversight provided by ordinary soldiers. The soldiers report to the senior command, to politicians, and even to the public (...) about improper behavior in their units (...). Breaking the Silence (...) has been coping with Israeli democracy's weakness with regard to everything related to oversight of the military (...). Often, though, the group doesn't merely function as a complement to the politicians and military commanders who are responsible for the army's conduct, but actually replaces them. (...) However, the organization does not reveal just exceptions, but the policy that generates them. Formulating policy and then monitoring it is meant to be part of the Knesset's job. But that work has been paralyzed by parliament's limitations. It's hard to imagine, for example, (...) the Knesset committee properly investigating policy in the territories, as is expected in a democracy. If that were the case, part of Breaking the Silence's work would become superfluous. (...) of the thousand or so soldiers who agreed to testify to the organization, almost none did anything in real time about the situations they described. They didn't report the violations, nor did they try to restrain their comrades. The testimonies reveal a deep sense of loneliness, translated into helplessness; all that remained was to testify after the fact. (...) Breaking the Silence is indeed important for democracy, but also testifies to its weaknesses.

Yagil Levy, HAA, 21.12.15

Why the Left should be ashamed of itself

(...) A Palestinian laborer building a home in a settlement is expected to be ashamed of himself, but he isn't: He is proud of his work. A politician caught red-handed is expected to express regret, but he doesn't: He rushes to blame others. A model who forgot to pay the required taxes is expected to take a break, but she doesn't: She still stars on the billboards. (...) The Israeli Left has a good reason to be ashamed of itself, a huge reason. (...) Where are they, where are all the good Israelis who are convinced that the ongoing occupation will destroy the State? Where is their money, where is their head, where are their feet? (...) After all, there are very rich people and wealthy people among them, very available people and smart people. Why do they expect Sweden's government to fight their battle

against the Right? (...) The future belongs to those who fight for their outlook, not to those who sit complacently in their good homes and expect others to do their job for them. (...)

Nahum Barnea, JED, 29.12.15

Who is the ugliest of them all?

(...) It would have been better if the clip had never been made, but now that it's out in the world, we should probe it and the public discussion it has awoken. (...) The leaders of Im Tirtzu are being admonished that they will be responsible for any harm that, heaven forbid, might befall the figures featured in the clip. (...) But what about the harm to the IDF and the citizens of the state? Are we relieving the leftist groups of any responsibility here? (...) The leftist organizations' long-standing claim is that they are holding a mirror up to Israeli society that shows its "ugliness." And here, now that a group has shown up to smear their faces in the same manner, the glaziers are all of a sudden calling to break that mirror. (...) This bad clip pales in comparison to the millions of testimonies, lectures, articles, videos, and lawsuits that dozens of left-wing groups and NGOs have put out against Israel, the people who live there, and the IDF. (...) Any attack on an innocent person is horrible, and unnecessary. But the nations of Europe, Asia, Africa, and even the U.S. (...) have committed crimes a thousand times worse against civilian populations. And yet, not one of them is facing a worldwide propaganda campaign of delegitimization comparable to what we face -- a campaign that, at its core, seeks to delegitimize the existence of the State of Israel as a Jewish state. (...) So watch the Im Tirtzu clip -- that's how we've been looking to the world for years, thanks to you.

Dror Eydar, IHY, 17.12.15

Breaking the Silence: Our courageous gatekeepers

(...) You don't really know what it's like to serve in the territories. (...) The military service chapter is one of the broadest common denominators defined for us by new Zionism. Nonetheless, Israeli democracy is robbing the right of hundreds of soldiers and officer to openly speak about their service experience. (...) The destructive narrative, which sees the soldier as the sum of the government's desires - long after he has been discharged from military service - is a clear danger to the future of Israeli society. The soldier has many faces: He comes in a variety of shades and beliefs and in a wide range of lifestyles and values, and there is no point in denying the fact that just like his faces are different, so

are his opinions. (...) In the past few weeks, members of the Breaking the Silence organization - IDF soldiers - have been turned into the punching bag of an impassioned crowd, vigorously encouraged by public representatives and journalists aiming for a patriotic democracy and marking the treacherous leftist. How is it possible that the defense minister, a former chief of staff, a former member of the Labor Movement, has come out to fulfill the mission of pushing Breaking the Silence outside the camp? (...) The courageous soldiers from Breaking the Silence have every right to point to the grave outcomes of the occupation, and it is the Israeli public's duty to be grateful for their service as gatekeepers. Merav Betito, JED, 16.12.15

State or chaos?

(...) How can anyone possibly support former IDF soldiers traveling the world to talk about the wrongs of Israel's army, as is done by Breaking the Silence? And Im Tirtzu's advertisement graphically linking Israeli human rights activists with terrorists who are stabbing innocent people in the street and calling them planted agents of foreign governments has startled us all. Is this not clear incitement? (...) What is going on here? (...). Free speech is among the highest values of a civilized democracy, but there is a certain point at which free speech can destroy that democracy and its institutions. When that happens, the rule of law must kick in and override that basic right. If IDF soldiers have an issue with what they were ordered to do in the army, the IDF has a mechanism through which they can lodge their complaints. (...) If right-wing activists believe that left-wing activists are acting against the state, they can lodge complaints to the police or lobby for laws to outlaw the activity that they are protesting against. But producing graphic and scary incitement videos creates chaos instead of following the rule of law. (...) When freedom of speech allows elected legislators to say and do what is nothing short of traitorous - precisely what the Hadash party did through their Facebook post this week, and behavior that I saw repeatedly in the Knesset - then we are allowing chaos to reign, and not the rule of law. (...) We must support the state's institutions and do everything possible to prevent the rule of chaos, and to strengthen the very vehicles that both protect us and give us the right to define ourselves as a democratic and civilized state.

Dov Lipman, JPO, 24.12.15

No need to break the silence

(...) I never had to worry about Breaking the Silence (...), simply because I was never silent to begin with. (...) In this very complex neighborhood, we do not have the privilege of choosing between morality and safeguarding our home -- we must combine the two. (...) Witnesses to wrongdoings must do everything they can to stop these incidents in real time, while they can still be effectively investigated, punishments given and reoccurrences prevented. It's nice to publish booklets in foreign languages, to hold presentations in picturesque towns in Europe and the United States, to organize tours through alleys in West Bank cities and to tell stories of incidents and misdeeds that are, for the most part, baseless -- as Breaking the Silence does. But this lacks any real benefit -- unless the organization's stated goal is not their true objective, as they smear the IDF's reputation. A uniform does not absolve you of personal moral responsibility. The IDF does not order its soldiers to be cruel to a civilian populations for the sake of satisfying some sadistic urge. (...) Every combat scenario we must undertake forces the IDF to operate in populated areas. Those who claim that it is impossible to do so without becoming war criminals are essentially saying that the existence of the State of Israel forces us to become war criminals. And if that is the case, maybe we should fold up the flag and find somewhere else to go. I believe otherwise. Michael Maoz, IHY, 24.12.15

NGO transparency

(...) Heads of the left-wing NGOs and their allies were right that the law was pertinent only for them. But this was not because the law was discriminatory. It was because practically the only NGOs that receive money from foreign government bodies are the ones that advance left-wing political agendas with practically no political support within Israeli society. In fact, we were unable to find a single right-wing NGO that receives funding from a foreign government body. (...) The European Union, a highly undemocratic body run by unelected bureaucrats that is suffering from abysmally low levels of popularity, provided 17 percent of the donations between 2012 and 2014. (...) As was the case five years ago, left-wing NGO heads and people like the EU ambassador are once again engaging in a disingenuous campaign against the new NGO legislation. (...) Shaked's bill, which received its first stamp of approval this week when it was passed by the Ministerial Committee on Legislation, only seeks to increase transparency. (...) All NGOs that receive funding from foreign government entities would be

obliged to register as such. It just so happens that the only political advocacy NGOs that do receive so much foreign funding are left-wing. The Israeli public is rightly concerned about the activities of left-wing NGOs that seek to undermine the very legitimacy of the State of Israel. (...) If not for the interference of foreign governments in internal Israeli affairs, these NGOs would probably not exist at all. Israelis – and the world – have a right to know this.
Editorial, JPO, 28.12.15

Labeling Jews: Left-wing NGOs, wear a yellow star in the Knesset

(...) Make no mistake. Shaked sincerely believes she is protecting Israeli democracy. She does not advocate dismantling Israel's democratic institutions, but rather combatting anti-Israel interests. However, her and the cabinet's shortsightedness, limited by their worldview, blinds them from the long-term repercussions of their actions and prevents the left from appealing to reason among most coalition members to drop this bill. Therefore, the left must resort to more dramatic, symbolic measures, to catch the attention of coalition members who can still be swayed once they consider the full ramifications of passing this dangerous bill. (...) That label should be in the shape of a yellow Star of David badge. (...) Historically, human rights groups have turned to foreign funding because their local governments are not particularly fond of them sticking their nose in state business, and healthy democracies do not obstruct in such behavior. (...) Our last line of defense then must be an act that is shocking enough to mobilize more of us to oppose this degeneration of freedom of expression using the most potent symbol of our collective history.
Steven Klein, HAA, 30.12.15

3. Urteil im Revisionsverfahren Ehud Olmerts

Als Grund zum Aufatmen nahm Israels früherer Regierungschef Ehud Olmert den Urteilsspruch des Obersten Gerichtshofs in Jerusalem entgegen. Nur für eineinhalb Jahre anstelle von ursprünglich sechs, die ein Bezirksgericht zuvor gegen ihn verhängte, schickten ihn die Richter des Revisionsverfahrens hinter Gitter. Olmert zeigte sich erleichtert darüber, dass der Oberste Gerichtshof die Beweislage beim Hauptvorwurf gegen ihn, er habe als Bürgermeister von Jerusalem in Zusammenhang mit dem Bauprojekt „Holyland“ Geld angenommen, für nicht ausreichend hielt. Olmert ist Israels erster ehemaliger Ministerpräsident, gegen den eine Haftstrafe verhängt wurde und wird sich Mitte

Februar zum Antritt der Gefängniszeit einfinden müssen.

Olmert's fate

The statement Ehud Olmert made to the press Tuesday following the reduction of his bribery sentence from six years to 18 months (...) was notable for his stubborn reiteration of the claim he made throughout his legal ordeal that he never gave nor received bribes. (...) In his public statement, Olmert did not make an auspicious beginning in his new role as a convicted felon, expressing joy at the reduction of his sentence but no acknowledgment of or regret for his crime. His family even announced it would seek a pardon from President Reuven Rivlin. (...) Hopefully, when Olmert reports to prison on February 15 to begin his 18-month term, reality will begin to sink in and his rehabilitation can begin. Once he internalizes the verdict of the Supreme Court and expresses true remorse, he can begin to look toward the future. (...)
Editorial, JPO, 30.12.15

Israel must stop tolerating corruption

The most complex corruption case ever brought to an Israeli court is ending with the bitter taste that justice has not been done to the fullest with senior elected officials, even though they have been branded with the stigma of flagrant wrongdoing. (...) Granted, Olmert cannot celebrate a complete acquittal(...), his expected incarceration in about another six weeks, to serve an 18-month sentence, in and of itself constitutes a milestone in Israel's legal and political history. It says that even a prime minister isn't above the law, and even he can expect, under certain circumstances, to pay for his corrupt and illegal behavior. But this isn't enough. The ongoing battle against government corruption needs a tailwind, especially at a time when it seems as if the political system is gradually taking control of key positions in law enforcement. (...) The message that the public will receive from this case, known as the Holyland affair, (...) is likely to be that the court tends to be more skeptical about convicting elected officials charged with corruption when faced with a web of circumstantial evidence. It has thereby fallen into line with the prosecution, which closes cases against politicians due to insufficient evidence. The short prison sentence Olmert is expected to serve also regrettably leads to the conclusion that the price one pays for bribery isn't as high as it once seemed. (...) President Reuven Rivlin and the Justice Ministry must reject any effort to secure a pardon for Olmert. The principle of equality before the

law has already been dealt a harsh blow. There is no need to exacerbate it.

Editorial, HAA, 30.12.15

Not tricks, no treats

Former Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was found guilty of taking a bribe (...). But instead of silently walking out of the courtroom with his head lowered, instead of expressing remorse and tiptoeing his way out, he launched festivities, as if he has somehow emerged victorious. Only in Israel. (...) We must accept the decisions of both the lower court and Supreme Court with reverence and humility. (...) Olmert's defense team said they were trying to find ways to keep him out of prison. And there were indeed rumors of various legal maneuvers that are currently underway to achieve just that. But the Israel Prison Service will probably not play along and Olmert will arrive at the jailhouse on his surrender date. (...) In any event, the courts have already ruled that clemency requests must include an acceptance of guilt and remorse. I suspect Olmert will refuse to do so, even after he puts on his orange jumpsuit.

Dan Margalit, IHY, 30.12.15

Shame and pride

(...) The fact that a former prime minister has been sentenced to serve time in jail sends a very important message to all public officials in Israel. The Supreme Court's ruling fills the people of Israel with shame and pride. Shame that a corrupt man was prime minister -- woe is a society that elects leaders like that. But (...) also (...) with pride that Israel takes care to ensure equality under the law. The wheels of justice may have been slow to turn, but the court had its say: in Israel, everyone is equal under the law, even the strongest and most aggressive citizens(...). With this ruling, the justice system has proven that Israel is a democratic nation of law, where even a president and a prime minister who commit crimes pay the price. (...) Olmert's prison sentence is a citation of merit for Israeli society, for justice and the rule of law.

Uri Heitner, IHY, 30.12.15

4. Medienquerschnitt

Samir Kuntar getötet

Bracing for Hezbollah's next move

(...) Kuntar's elimination was an impressive operation on all levels: the preliminary intelligence gathering, the real-time pinpointing of his location, and the surgical strike, which entailed minimal collateral

damage. (...) For over a year, Kuntar has been laying the foundations for a terrorist network designed to target Israel (...). Kuntar may have been a "ticking time bomb," but he was also a symbol. (...) Hezbollah tasked Kuntar with developing its infrastructure in Judea and Samaria, but those efforts proved futile, and Kuntar was given a new mission, more in line with Hezbollah's overall operations -- doing Iran's bidding. (...) While Hezbollah did not hold Kuntar in the same regard as Jihad Mughniyeh (...), the group has set a certain retaliatory bar for itself, one it cannot afford to fall under. (...) As Hezbollah may bide its time, the military must remain vigilant, recalibrate its potential target bank, and increase its efforts to thwart attacks, especially rocket fire. Past experience has shown that eventually Hezbollah will find a target, in which case Israel will be left to decide its next move. In January, it was decided to contain the situation and avoid an escalation on the northern border. This decision was based on the assumption that Hezbollah would also prefer to avoid a flare-up in the area. This dilemma may present itself again, perhaps sooner than Israel wanted.

Joav Limor, IHY, 21.12.15

The IDF's warning to Nasrallah

The IDF is taking Hassan Nasrallah's threats of revenge after the assassination of terrorist Samir Kuntar in Syria seriously. (...) Nasrallah is (...) underestimating Israel's intentions to respond harshly if any harm comes to its civilians, soldiers, or sovereignty. (...) Nasrallah (...) saw in Kuntar a symbol, perhaps because of his 29 years in prison in Israel (...). Additionally, Nasrallah hasn't forgotten that in fact, in order to free Kuntar, he sent his men to kidnap Goldwasser and Regev. When Kuntar was released, he gave him a reception at a Beirut stadium and intertwined his reputation with Kuntar's. (...) Israel is more prepared today -- from an intelligence, operations, defensive, and most of all offensive point of view -- for a conflict and/or war in Lebanon. (...) True, Hezbollah and its fighters have gained important combat experience in Syria, as well as a huge stockpile of rockets and missiles, but they've also left 1,300 of their dead on Syrian ground, and suffered thousands of wounded. (...) the Iranians are also sending Nasrallah messages these days that say a conflict with Israel right now could cause huge damage to the efforts of preserving Bashar Assad's government in Syria, and Hezbollah and Iran's influence in Lebanon. These facts tell us that there are forces pushing Nasrallah to act now, and

across from them are levers pressuring him in order to stop a complication with Israel. (...)

Ron Ben-Yishai, JED, 25.12.15

Silvan Shalom nach Sexskandal zurückgetreten

Police and Thieves: On accusing the accuser

(...) One of the strangest aspects of the Silvan Shalom case is that at least one of the alleged incidents took place since a sexual harassment allegation against him went public last summer, when he was still a possible candidate for the presidency. (...) Stubborn self-destructiveness is not rare. (...) But it is baffling nonetheless. Whether it reflects a lack of deterrence on the part of law enforcement or an old Israeli machismo culture that is dying a long, stubborn death is unclear, but it doesn't exactly engender faith in Israel's veteran male politicians. (...) WITH REGARD to the police, as an organization that has been hammered in recent years by repeated sexual misconduct investigations against its senior command, taking a more forceful and public stance amid such allegations could be a step in the right direction. (...) Every suspect accused of a crime must be given the benefit of the doubt and considered innocent until proven guilty, including in cases of sexual abuse, where it is usually a matter of one person's word against the other's. (...) Still, it would be a refreshing change of pace if the next time such an allegation is made against a public figure (...), the accuser isn't subjected to a campaign of shaming, isn't denigrated and abused, and isn't herself treated as a suspect.

Ben Hartman, JPO, 24.12.15

Better late than never

Had Silvan Shalom had a good political adviser, he would have been told to resign a year ago, when allegations of sexual misconduct first surfaced against him. (...) A good political adviser would have told Shalom that the attorney general and the police would believe the complainant, not him. Her allegations were substantiated by the evidence. Under these circumstances, the adviser would have told Shalom, you should try to clear your name, at least regarding that first complaint, as soon as possible. (...) Only one entity can clear your name: the Israel Police. A good adviser would have told Shalom to reach out to the police, ask for a polygraph test, and schedule a confrontation with the complainant. (...) But Shalom apparently had no such adviser, and he did not see fit to take these steps himself. He acted as if the entire sordid affair was behind him, as if the public was really buying the line he was selling, that

these were "recycled allegations, investigated and refuted." (...) Shalom's situation was aggravated by the behavioral bar set by Habayit Hayehudi MK Yinon Magal (...). It was exacerbated further by the belligerent tweets by Shalom's wife, Judy Shalom Nir-Mozes, who threatened to "settle the score" with her husband's accusers, making things much worse for him. (...) Nevertheless, to avoid dragging reputations through the mud, this case should be decided in the court of law, where it belongs, not in the court of social media.

Mordechai Gilat, IHY, 21.12.15

Türkisch-israelische Annäherung

Dancing with tyrants

(...) There is no doubt that Erdogan is in trouble. All of the countries and groups surrounding Turkey are now hostile, with the possible exception of Islamic State (IS), which Turkey assisted and fostered, creating its own Frankenstein monster. Now it seems that after years of denouncing Israel he wants to make friends again. (...) Israel doesn't need enemies, it needs friends. Besides, we can look forward to selling the Turks natural gas. (...) There would be, in fact, considerable downside (...). Lifting the blockade of Gaza should not even be thought of. Besides the security implications for Israel of such a move, it would infuriate the Egyptians, who are enforcing their own blockade of Gaza arguable even more effectively than is Israel. It would be seen by our allies the Kurds of Iraq and Syria as a betrayal, not to mention the Kurds of Turkey itself. (...) Finally it would anger the Russians, who are in a furious dispute with Turkey over the attack on a Russian plane by two Turkish aircraft. The bottom line is that dancing with tyrants can and often is risky and dangerous, but it can as often be advantageous. Israel is the only democracy in the entire region, as we are fond of pointing out. If that is the case, then the only informal or formal allies we can have, will not be democracies.

Norman Bailey, GLO, 24.12.15

Turkey's ill-deserved deal with Israel

(...) Erdogan exemplifies the complex and often contradictory alliances in the region. He is anti-Iran while supporting some of Tehran's terrorist proxies and opposing others. He is against Syrian President Bashar Assad's regime, but also claims to be anti-Islamic State -- though Islamic State is among the rebels in Syria trying to topple Assad. (...) He is also virulently anti-Israel, but perpetuates the myth (...) that the Jewish state is responsible for the rift he

himself caused five years ago, when he abetted attempts by pro-Hamas activists to break Israel's naval blockade on the Gaza Strip. (...) Though Netanyahu complied, Erdogan did not back down on any of his conditions for rapprochement. (...) Erdogan's demands of Netanyahu included multi-millions of dollars in "compensation" for the dead activists. Never mind that they were killed in self-defense. (...) now that Erdogan is on the outs with Putin for downing a Russian fighter jet in its airspace, he is in serious need of finding an alternative energy source. Turkey, you see, heavily depends on Russian gas. And guess what? One of the clauses of the new reconciliation agreement between Erdogan and Netanyahu involves a pipeline from Israel to Turkey. (...) You don't have to be an expert in global strategy (...) to understand that getting in bed with an Islamist is tantamount to the tale of the tortoise helping the scorpion across the river. The deadly sting to the former is inevitable, even if the latter commits suicide in the process.

Ruthie Blum, IHY, 18.12.15

HAA = Haaretz
JED = JediothAhronoth / Ynetnews
JPO = Jerusalem Post
IHY = Israel HaYom
TOI = Times of Israel
GLO = Globes

Veröffentlicht im: Januar 2016

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