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Streit um Amona

Die Abgeordneten der Knesset haben in erster Lesung mehrheitlich für einen Gesetzentwurf zur Legalisierung der Außenbezirke von Siedlungen im Westjordanland gestimmt. Die Neuregelung sieht vor, dass die ohne offizielle Genehmigung errichteten Siedlungen, die sich zum Teil oder komplett auf privaten palästinensischen Grundstücken befinden, rechtlich nicht mehr angreifbar sein sollen. An den Plänen gab es international Kritik. US-Außenminister Kerry bezeichnete den Gesetzentwurf als besorgniserregend. In der überarbeiteten Version des Gesetzentwurfs ist der Paragraph Nummer sieben gestrichen. Das bedeutet, dass Amona bis zum 25. Dezember geräumt werden muss, wie es der Oberste Gerichtshof entschied. Israels Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu hatte zuvor erneut um eine 30-tägige Verlängerung der Frist gebeten. Radikale Siedler kündigten an, Widerstand gegen eine Räumung zu leisten.

Of Ahab, Amona, and exile

In an era of place-based idol worship, Judaism introduced a novel idea: that God could be worshipped at any place, at any time, by any one. (...) the temple was a means — not an ends. However, being rooted in our own land, with centralized worship, proved too much of a temptation: (...) We thought that as long as we brought the right sacrifices at the right place, in the right time, it didn't matter if we were immoral or worshipped idols outside of the temple's walls. (...) This worship of place is

symbolized by Ahab, who, in Kings 1: 21, becomes so obsessed with the vineyard of a man called Navot, that his wife Jezebel concocts charges against Navot so she can appropriate his land and give it to her husband. (...) What was so terrible about this one act? (...) This type of act proves that Ahab's society was one with no sense of justice, where the most basic laws of property had been violated. The government, instead of protecting people from arbitrary theft and violence, was instead enacting arbitrary theft and violence. The desire to permit immorality, was, in traditional rabbinic thought, a major factor behind the decision to worship idols. Thus, Ahab's act not only symbolized the thinking embedded in idolatry, but also the complete lack of morality that resulted from it. Perhaps a modern day analogy to Ahab's sin would be seizing private land in the name of the (secular) ideal of nationalism, or, becoming so obsessed with one plot of land that one refuses to move even 100 meters in order to avoid confiscating private property. (...) May we, as individuals and as a nation, be saved from the sins of place-obsession and of placelessness, and merit to build a just, Godly society in our time. Shayna Abramson, TOI, 06.12.16

No policy

(...) Originally presented as a solution for Amona (...), the bill left Amona hung out to dry. (...) why did Netanyahu and Bennett vote for the bill to begin with (...). The answer is simple – politics. Bennett wants to outflank Netanyahu and show that he is the true

leader of the right-wing camp in Israel. Netanyahu can't vote against the bill – even though he opposes it – since he would then be perceived as being to Bennett's left, a move that could be costly in the next election. (...) Bennett is wrong when declaring that the bill will lead to annexation. Annexing the West Bank would be a dramatic move, the kind that Netanyahu and his government have stayed away from for the preceding eight years of his premiership. This bill is meant to manage an isolated crisis – settler homes built on private Palestinian land. Annexation would require a policy decision. Making a real decision is far more difficult than just managing a crisis. The problem is that the government prefers to avoid making decisions and to stick just to managing crises. (...) Next June, Israel will celebrate 50 years to the reunification of Jerusalem, as well as the conquering of the West Bank. After five decades, it is time for Israel to set a policy on how it views its future. Enough managing crises. It's time to make decisions.

Editorial, JPO, 06.12.16

Legitimize settlement by law

Fifty years after the liberation of Judea and Samaria, the time has come to legally legitimize our return to those parts of our historic homeland. (...) We didn't take over someone else's land; we returned to the land of our forefathers that had been conquered illegally (...). We aren't Crusaders in our homeland. (...) It doesn't matter if at the end of the process the settlements are codified through the regulation bill or in any other way that is acceptable to the attorney general and the Supreme Court. The end result is what matters. (...) Land is never stolen. There is no legal, moral or ideological justification for building on privately owned land. (...) The settlers of Amona, beloved pioneers, are being forced to pay a heavy price. But thanks to their determination, a solution will be found for many others. They aren't leaving the hilltop -- they're moving nearby, and we'll see what happens. The (...) distress of the move is small compared to legitimization and regulation. I suggested that they refrain from violent demonstrations. (...) A country in which court rulings are not implemented is like a ship being tossed about on open water, without a compass, rudder or anchor. Rulings may be criticized, but we have no authority not to enact them. (...) The battle for Israel didn't end with the outpost regulation bill. The nations of the world find it difficult to accept the Jews' return to their homeland. (...)

Dr. Haim Shine, IHY, 06.12.16

Amona residents, don't resist evacuation

(...) The Jewish people selects its representatives in a democratic manner – the only possible manner for sustaining the Jewish people's sovereignty in the Land of Israel, according to Torah of Israel. All other ways have been tried and have failed since the destruction of the Temple. (...) If the Israeli government moves settlers from one mountain to another mountain, even if the arguments for doing so are inappropriate, it changes nothing in each settler's observation of the mitzvah to settle the land. (...) All the acts of resisting the Israeli government—the state's institutions and the security forces—that have been carried out for 42 years, have completely and utterly failed and have brought no blessing to the Jewish people and to the Land of Israel. (...) All the bitter and painful failures the settlement enterprise has experienced came from the battles against the state and its institutions, and they only kept the values of the settlements and the mitzvot of the land away from the heart of the majority of the public. (...) Amona pioneers, if you wish to continue to play an important part in the general mitzvah of settling the Land of Israel, get reorganized and agree to do so in the places suggested by the State of Israel and its elected institutions, in the name of the people of Israel. (...) Every time we split and sink into a feud between brothers, we grow weaker. Let's together uphold the unity of the Jewish people in its land, because that is God's only desire, and that is the only thing that will save us.

Rabbi Yoel Bin-Nun, JED, 13.12.16

Those who take pleasure in pummeling Amona

(...) Left-wing rabble-rousers have peppered the debate over Amona with settler-hating epithets such as "land robbers," "lawbreakers," "violators" and "corrupt manipulators." (...) Anything related to settlers, settlements and the Netanyahu government draws out the ghastliest poisons. (...) I smelled the whiff of pogrom. (...) This is dreadful. Only those whose hearts are closed, and whose ideological hatreds have overwhelmed their judgment, can speak and think this way. (...) the issue for the ideological haters (...) is the uprooting of the settlement movement life's work; the destruction of the power of the ideological right-wing, especially the national-religious right-wing. Tearing down an icon of the settlement movement – that is what this is all about. (...) It's another opportunity to tar the entire settlement enterprise as criminal; another opportunity to brand all settlers as violent fanatics; another opportunity to show that settlements, writ large, can and

will be wiped off the face of the Palestinian homeland. (...) How disgusting. How tragic.
David M. Weinberg, JPO, 15.12.16

Sexueller Missbrauch in Uniform

Dem israelischen Brigadegeneral Ofek Buchris bleibt eine Gefängnisstrafe erspart. Buchris musste sich unter dem Verdacht der Vergewaltigung, Sodomie und weiterer sexueller Übergriffe gegen Untergebene vor einem Militärgericht verantworten. In einer mit der Klägerinnenseite erreichten Vereinbarung im Strafprozess gab Buchris zu, eine verbotene sexuelle Beziehung zu einer Untergebenen gehabt zu haben. Vergewaltigung indes wird nicht erwähnt. Frauenrechtlerinnen protestierten dagegen, dass mit der Einigung die Wahrheit unter den Teppich gekehrt und die Stellung der Frau in der Armee geschwächt werde. Generalstabschef Gadi Eizenkot positionierte sich im Anschluss an das Verfahren gegen sexuelle Übergriffe in der Armee. Er ließ zudem durchblicken, dass Buchris weder aktiven noch Reservedienst leisten dürfe.

Sex crimes in the army: Let every Jewish mother and daughter be aware

Plea bargains in criminal trials (...) block a principled debate and hinder society in bringing a defendant to trial, something usually labeled as the carrying out of justice. At worst, plea bargains reflect the system's willingness to protect someone while still abiding by the law. Under his plea deal taking shape with military prosecutors, Brig. Gen. Ofek Buchris won't spend a day in jail, even though he was accused of one of the most serious crimes in the book. (...) Buchris resigned from the army before charges were filed, so he's assured of receiving his pension. That's it, it's over. What Buchris described as the struggle of his life to clear his name will end with a whimper. But this will be a loud blast regarding the army's approach to sex offenses under the shield of rank and within a rigid hierarchy against past and future victims. Most victims of sex crimes in the military are women (...), including brave ones in combat roles, serve in accordance with the law, with their civil rights restricted in that framework. They are restricted in their speech, movement, right to assemble and freedom to leave an office in revulsion when sex offenses have taken place. (...) the system is unwilling to defend women. (...) Instead, it chooses to make it easier for the accused, and in a manner that admits that he exploited his authority, status, rank and seniority, but stating that it was all

consensual. This shows that the army won't make an effort to fight for the accuser. (...) Let every Jewish mother and her daughter be aware.
Ariana Melamed, HAA, 02.12.16

Burying the truth with a plea deal

It's surprising how the ritual repeats itself. It begins with a complete denial (...). Then, a series of commanders and subordinates come to the aid of the different Buchrises, praising a glorious military service (...). And then comes the State Attorney's Office (...) and reaches a plea bargain over the complainants' head. A plea bargain which elegantly presents the complainant as responsible for the actions too. Consensual forbidden sexual relations. In other words, it's forbidden, but she wanted it too. (...) As outrageous is the statement that this plea deal serves everyone. (...) I find it difficult to understand what interest exactly is going to benefit from this deal. This affair should have reached the court, clear and simple. Without any leniency, without shortcuts, because there is no other way to find out where the truth lies. (...) Buchris' decision to accept the plea bargain shows that there is a fire and not just smoke. And if there is a fire, it must be treated. (...) this plea bargain is a four-way injustice, which once again shatters the public's trust not only in the system's ability to find out the truth but also in its insistence to do so. A truth which we will never know, if the plea bargain is approved, and which will unfairly and disproportionately harm the complainant in this case, as well as complainants in other cases. All the talk about the "favor" the system is doing us is nothing but nonsense (...).

Ariela Ringel-Hoffman, JED, 03.12.16

Crime and no punishment

(...) it is no secret that there is a growing sense that sexual assault is becoming endemic in Israel and is perpetrated most visibly by men in positions of power – whether in politics, the military or the rabbinate. (...) The most prominent example of the moment is the case of suspended IDF brigadier-general Ofek Buchris, who (...) admitted to the indictment, minus the more serious rape charge, as part of a plea bargain to avoid imprisonment. (...) The poor example set by the Buchris plea agreement is no bargain for women soldiers. (...) Sexual predators abound in our society, but the one place our daughters and sisters should feel secure is in service of the military that exists to protect us. They are not the enemy. The time has come to demand appropriate punish-

ment for every attacker, regardless of his status or authority.

Editorial, JPO, 03.12.16

The floodgates have been opened

Six years ago, Israeli President Moshe Katsav was convicted of serious sex crimes. The country was rocked, the press investigated and from that point, it seemed that floodgates that had been closed for far too long had been opened. The Katsav case was no less than the watershed moment for the legal and public activity concerning sex crimes in general, and elected officials in particular. (...) Last week was almost unbelievable. Reports of allegations against a well-known figure in Israeli nightlife who used to drug and take advantage of the women he met, reports of alleged sexual assaults by a prominent MK currently serving in the Knesset, allegations of sex crimes committed by a renowned attorney and allegations against a former senior official in the Prime Minister's Office. And if that weren't enough, there were two controversial plea deals pertaining to a judge and a top IDF officer – both accused of sex crimes. All of these cases (...) are just the tip of the iceberg. (...) The multiplicity of the cases is (...) a sign that many women are no longer willing to remain silent or accept a complex and cautious legal discourse that prides itself on checks and balances. (...) The high burden of proof in criminal proceedings and the sense that this is a threshold that cannot be met, together with society's conspiracy of silence, has left many cases in the dark. Many attackers continue to walk free. To see significant change (...) requires decisive and effective change in the various systems. Lenient plea deals are (...) likely to send the wrong message of lenient attitudes and harm the public's trust in the systems. This lack of faith could dissuade victims from filing complaints (...). Justice should also be seen. The public needs that now.

Liat Klein. IHY, 05.12.16

The destruction of relations between men and women

(...) When it comes to the ongoing war between the sexes, a lot of people today are afraid to say that recent battles have exceeded all bounds and that it is no longer a defensive war. (...) anyone who expresses against mainstream wisdom is subject to public stoning, contempt and ostracism, and perhaps even risks losing his job. (...) In the discussions about the linguistic mutation "prohibited sexual intercourse by consent" (...) it was misunderstood

as if it was another way of describing "rape". The expression was made to appear ridiculous because it was seen as a misuse of language that violates the inherent contradiction (...) between rape and consent. But what the plea bargain says is exactly that: there was no rape, just prohibited relations by consent between a man and a woman (...) In other words, the baseless contradiction that served as the grounds for the ridicule doesn't exist. (...) there isn't always a contradiction between prohibition and consent. Not everything that is prohibited constitutes a sin. (...) We should also be cautious in our attacks on relationships of authority. Relationships of authority develop naturally in contact between people. One can be "captivated" by the charm of someone's intelligence, beauty, courage, talent or greatness. (...) Authority is not a synonym for exploitation. (...) The army, educational institutions and places of employment create hierarchies by using ranks and positions, between teacher and student, commander and soldier, manager and employee. (...) If the ban on relations were always enforced, without regard for consent, and with regard to all those involved, it would ultimately be recognized as prohibited conduct. (...) But, from the outset, enforcement of that provision is selective because too many people – the silent majority – know that the price will be the total destruction of the magnetic field that creates natural relationships between men and women. (...)

Carolina Landsmann, HAA, 09.12.16

A sex offender should find no refuge in his kippah

The kippah on his head jumps out at me, every time I read an update on the case. Whether in uniform, or just shirtsleeves, the photo of Ofek Buchris (...) always shows him wearing a kippah. Religion has a great deal of interest in sex. Sexual morality is preached, and family purity practiced. Nevertheless, anyone who has been awake in the 21st century knows that religion doesn't prevent sex crimes. In fact, religious institutions can be particularly comfortable places for a sexual predator. (...) Religious practice involves a great deal of self-discipline and setting of boundaries. Impulse-control and restraint are religious values. So shouldn't we expect religious people to behave better when it comes to sexual offenses? Is no one immune? The answer is no, no one is immune, because sexual offenses are not about sex. They are about power. Religious sex offenders are driven by the same motivation that drives most sex crimes. Power. And entitlement. (...) The predator perceives the victim as vulnerable, and

therefore easily intimidated or coerced. A powerful part of the sex offender dynamic is his confidence that he won't suffer consequences. (...) Every time a powerful person is publicly tried and sent to jail for a sex offense, a victim is empowered. Every religious sexual predator removed from our midst is a blessing. A sex offender should find no refuge in his kippah.

Renee Garfinkel, JED, 08.12.16

In post-truth age, equalizing victims and aggressors makes media immoral

In the post-truth age, no discussion can take place without two sides confronting one another as equals. Defenders, associates and columnists will immediately leap to the aid of any rapist or harasser and present their side. (...) Up until a few years ago, a man who assaulted women would either be in jail (...) or roaming around free (...), but today he's a legitimate party in any debate. The days when TV studios only hosted the lawyers of the victims in order to tell their stories are long gone. Now the lawyers of the attacker, as well as his PR people, are invited to the studio (...). Then there are the men and women who lament what has become of men's rights, as we saw on Channel 10 recently. There in the studio was a female lawyer representing one of victims of former Brig. Gen. Ofek Buchris, (...) and another female lawyer confronting the victim. The hidden message was quite clear: There is an obvious victim here, but what about the other "hidden" victims? – the senior army officer in this case, or the politician or media personality in other cases. They're victims too. (...) It's become trendy to call this "post-truth," but that's just a new name for the same old, all-holy balance for which the media must remain apolitical and neutral, or – in a word, immoral.

Emilie Moatti, HAA, 15.12.16

Trump und Israel

Das Rätselraten darüber, welchen außenpolitischen Kurs der designierte US-Präsident Donald Trump einschlagen wird, geht weiter. Wird Trump sein Versprechen umsetzen und den Sitz der Botschaft nach Jerusalem verlegen? Die israelische Führung hofft zudem auf eine zumindest teilweise Abkehr vom Iranabkommen und eine weniger kritische Haltung des Weißen Hauses zum Siedlungsbau im Westjordanland. Die Analysten beobachten Trumps Wahl von Ministern und zentralen Amtsträgern.

Trump's election is excellent for Israel

The post-election period in the US has been every bit as weird as the election itself (...). The weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth on the part of the Democrats and "progressives" in general has proven to be quite mistaken. (...) the outlines of a Trump administration policy mix towards the Middle East is taking shape. (...) countries and organizations manifesting concrete (...) hostility to the US (...) will be met with unrelenting reciprocal hostility by the administration (...) Ideological attitudes adopted by the Obama administration such as favoring the Muslim Brotherhood and hostility to al-Sisi of Egypt will be abandoned. (...) Generally the region will be downgraded in terms of US attention due to the general chaotic disarray and the decreasing role and importance of oil in the world economy. (...) The Trump administration will be EXTREMELY pro-Israel and thus the bias towards the Palestinian Authority shown by the Obama government will be reversed. This fact, along with hostility towards Iran, is likely to result in more of the Arab countries "hitching their wagons" to a greater or lesser extent, to Israel, in order to participate directly or indirectly, in the Israeli-US alliance and thus render the effort on the part of Iran to exercise hegemony over the Middle East unlikely of success. (...) Israel can look forward not just to continued defense and intelligence cooperation with the US but with enthusiastic political and economic cooperation as well.

Norman Bailey, GLO, 01.12.16

America is irrelevant to Israel's settlement policies

(...) Defense Minister Avigdor Lieberman (...) proposed postponing a vote on the bill to legalize illegal outposts until after Donald Trump enters the White House. That is not a new position. (...) Lieberman believes that Trump will be his partner in crime, or will at least forget to show interest in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict since, after all, an American blind eye infers support. (...) The future of construction in the settlements cannot be dependent on a whim or on agreements between the Israeli government and an American president who is not well-versed in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. A halt to Jewish construction in the territories is first and foremost an Israeli interest that must be fought for, even if the American president decides to support it. Expanding the settlements is a guarantee of eternal conflict and the continuation of the occupation regime with no chance of ending it. No less important is the need to oppose the bill that legalizes the outposts, which

touches not just on construction in the territories but on the survival of the rule of law in the State of Israel. (...) Israel needs to have a clear policy that seeks peace and recognizes the incredible obstacles posed by the settlements, not one that waits for the guard to change at the White House so it can commit more crimes.

Editorial, HAA, 05.12.16

Campaign promises become cabinet picks

With the expected announcement that Exxon Mobil CEO Rex Tillerson, a friend of President Vladimir Putin, will be named the next secretary of state, President-elect Donald Trump has all but completed the task of assembling his national security, foreign policy and economic teams. Trump's senior appointees will reinforce the message he ran on as a candidate. They believe the U.S. should adopt a more hawkish policy toward Iran. (...) Trump's cabinet picks (...) share Trump's views on the economic and security pacts the U.S. has forged with other countries. They believe that such partnerships should be based on reciprocity rather than on philanthropy. This is why they would like America to scale down its financial commitments and put an end to the automatic support it provides to its strategic allies and coalition partners, including NATO member states that have for too long relied on America's help without contributing their fair share. (...) His picks for defense secretary, James Mattis, national security adviser, Michael Flynn, and homeland security secretary, John Kelly, are all retired generals. Such a uniform lineup is designed to project determination, strength and toughness, and to remind Iran, Islamic State and their ilk that Trump's new national security team knows how it feels to fight the enemy on the battlefield. Those three former generals are supposed to underscore Trump's willingness to take on any threat on U.S. national security interests head on, even though he would like to scale back America's military involvement overseas. (...)

Prof. Abraham Ben-Zvi, IHY, 12.12.16

The Owl: Not a question of ideology

(...) Trump (...) had voiced support for settlement construction, but also called for "US neutrality" in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and hoped to "close a deal" between the two sides. (...) Donald Trump is a post-modern politician, for whom ideological positions mean little. (...) Excluding his sympathy for Vladimir Putin and other dictators, Trump does not have solid views on foreign policy, and certainly not on the Israeli- Palestinian conflict. (...) As he said,

he will probably avoid costly, long and thankless projects of "nation building." Such projects, almost always accompanied by counterinsurgency, suck American blood and money, have no end in sight, and bring only disgrace to generals and presidents. In the same vein, Trump will probably avoid foreign policy moves demanding large investments with no apparent yields. (...) The DC foreign policy establishment, including moderate Republicans, will try to keep things more or less as they are. Trump and his closest advisers, however, are likely to be on the lookout for deals, dramatic headlines and opportunities for instant glory. (...) Actors who want to use this new reality to their advantage have to forge excellent personal relations with Trump and his advisers (and here Israel has a natural advantage). Most of all, they have to learn how to initiate controlled but dramatic crises in order to draw the White House's attention, giving Trump an opportunity to "save the situation." Small but noisy clashes that capture world media headlines, especially in Jerusalem, may do the trick. Dramatic peace initiatives allowing Trump to think that he can "close a deal" may also serve as game changers. (...)

Danny Orbach, JPO, 15.12.16

Can Netanyahu annul Iran nuclear deal with Trump?

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu senses an opportunity to work with US President-elect Donald Trump to cancel the Iranian nuclear deal, despite his refusal to explain publicly how such a cancellation could be implemented. (...)

a number of channels do exist to bring about its practical demise. (...) a number of officials have posited that there are several avenues through which the terms of the deal can be "improved", particularly from Israel's point of view.

For example, asking Congress to impose new sanctions. (...) Another option would be to use presidential decrees to make the deal's continuation conditional upon the limitation of Iran's missile program. Simultaneously, the US also possesses the power to freeze the billions of dollars slated to flow into Iran's coffers but which currently remain in American hands. (...) increasing the number of random inspections of military facilities and improving the collection of intelligence could serve to deter Iran from breaching the deal's stipulated terms. (...) Overall however, the comprehensive termination of the deal is unlikely for two main reasons. Firstly, Iran has already declared that it will not agree to changes. Secondly, the international community, which

has already reinstated Iran into its ranks, is unlikely to cooperate with all US actions against Tehran. Essentially therefore, even if Trump refuses to abide fully by the agreement, it will likely be a symbolic gesture if the international community fails to follow suit. (...)

Itamar Eichner und Benjamin Tobias, JED, 13.12.16

The complicity of Trump's Jewish appointees

(...) In America, Jews are metaphorically black, as this last election indelibly showed, and in Israel, they are metaphorically white. In the vision of global war for the future of civilization that Bannon articulated in his Vatican speech, Israel is a front-line state. Richard Spencer, the preppy face of white supremacy, has extolled Zionism as the kind of tribalism that can be a model for Euro-Americans. Figures like (...) Mnuchin and Cohn (...), represent a bizarre reversal of the traditional court Jew, the shtadlan. In the countries of pre-Enlightenment Europe or the Islamic empire, where Jews had few rights and little power, the court Jew played a vital role, advocating with the crown for fellow Jews who could not. (...) In the Trump administration, to the contrary, court Jews provide the fig leaf for the emotions of mass hatred and white restoration that energized his campaign. To appoint several Jews to leading roles in the U.S. Treasury Department and a presidential economic council, as Trump has done, can be interpreted not as proof of his tolerance but confirmation of anti-Semitism. (...)

Samuel G. Freedman, HAA, 15.12.16

Medienquerschnitt

Lektion der Besatzungsgegner

Yes, in our schools

Over the past two weeks the Education Ministry has tried twice – unsuccessfully – to prevent a school lecture by former soldiers in the group Breaking the Silence. (...) But after the ministry began considering banning the organization from schools, it turned out the ministry wasn't allowed to take such a broad step. (...) Bennett's statements are nothing but an attempt to scare principals. They're an attempt to create a chilling effect and deepen the delegitimization of the occupation's opponents. (...) The attempt to narrow the outlook of the students, the citizens who will determine the country's fate and endure the policies of the government that includes Bennett, is the mother of all sins in education. (...) the entire political spectrum can appear before the students,

who can form their opinions based on the information they receive. Bennett's fearful attempts at censorship betray a fear of and a lack of faith in the students' wisdom. (...) The struggle over education is far from won. It needs educators with stature who won't give in to Bennett's ideological attempts at censorship.

Editorial, HAA, 06.12.16

Parteitag der Fatah

The word according to Abbas

(...) the Palestinians' fate is (...) not in their own hand (...) We can't forget Israel, under whose auspices the PA exists, and under whose watchful eyes the Ramallah conference took place. (...) Abbas was elected for another five-year term. (...) But Abbas has reached the end of his path, and that path doesn't appear to have rescued the Palestinians from the dead end they're stuck in. (...) Israel is worried about instability in the years to come, which will be characterized by a battle for the PA leadership (...). Hamas' situation isn't much better. In April, the movement is slated to elect a new leader, but it's doubtful that he will be able to improve Hamas' relations with Egypt, which has effectively imposed a siege on the Gaza Strip (...). It seems that the Palestinians are still refraining from the tough decisions their situation demands, and cannot unite around a legitimate, effective leadership and start out on a new path, which would be tough for the Palestinians to swallow, as any concession or compromise always is. (...) one interesting announcement did come out of the conference discussions when Abbas said that thanks to the Oslo Accords, which met with resistance among some Palestinian sectors, some 600,000 Palestinians had "returned" to Judea and Samaria. That declaration comes after candidate for the throne Dahlan said back in the days of the Second Intifada that thanks to the Oslo Accords and the founding of the PA, the number of Israelis wounded and killed had risen from a few in the First Intifada to over 1,000 in the Second Intifada. (...) Israel should take note of both statements.

Prof. Eyal Zisser, IHY, 04.12.16

Weltliche Bestattung

The government is burying Israelis' chances of getting a civil burial

(...) It's no coincidence that nonprofit groups promoting nonreligious civil burial must resort to the courts time after time. They hope that the courts will

rebutte the government – which has been putting obstacles in the path of implementation of the law – and make it mend its ways. This is an unreasonable situation in which the exercise of the basic right of civil burial depends mainly on the initiative of private organizations and nonprofit groups. Supposedly, the battles being waged by nonprofit groups around the country in support of civil burial are only a local issue. Most of these efforts face a common denominator: years of foot-dragging in allocating land, amid tiny funding that's dwindling even further. In the absence of a proper public solution, people seeking to arrange a civil burial for themselves must pay private civil cemeteries sums sometimes reaching the tens of thousands of shekels. (...) In the meantime, the adjacent Orthodox burial ground is filling up, in part as a result of direct and indirect government support. (...) the Religious Services Ministry has found another way to make it difficult for people seeking a secular burial. Responsibility for developing and operating some of the civil burial sites has been transferred to Orthodox entities such as local religious councils or kevera kadisha religious burial societies. (...) But a civil cemetery is different from a comparable Orthodox institution, from the physical planning for the site to the services provided to families. The transfer of responsibility for civil burial to Orthodox entities is yet another stage in the government's shirking of its obligation to implement the alternative civil burial law. (...) The government must fully respect the desire of people to be free of the services of the Orthodox establishment, both in life and in death.

Editorial, HAA, 04.12.15

Politische Kunst

Art of incitement

Israelis of all political persuasions should stop and reflect upon the state of our democracy. The occasion – a police interrogation under caution of an 18-year-old art student suspected of incitement. The hapless student's art project, a montage hung on a wall of a stairwell at Jerusalem's Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, depicts Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's head with a hangman's noose superimposed. (...) Instead of forming its opinion from the actual poster and not a small excerpt taken out of context, the public might be better off considering this case a juvenile effort at expressing a political view. The poster's hangman's noose can be interpreted as representing a warning to our society that what happened once could happen again. (...)

Because violence has occurred in the past – notably the Rabin assassination – as a society we are right to be sensitive and smart to cry foul. The often vulgar and violent rhetoric found on social media platforms is another warning sign that violence exists within our society and political discourse. Our education system needs to tackle these issues and educate youth to be tolerant to different opinions and cultures. But this doesn't seem like the right case to warrant a criminal investigation. Authorities need to be smart, and Israel's delicate balance between security and freedom of art and expression needs to be upheld.

Editorial, JPO, 14.12.16

HAA = Haaretz

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