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Die Themen dieser Ausgabe

1. Hotovely gegen die Diaspora.....	1
2. Keine Anklage gegen Sprecher von Breaking the Silence.....	3
3. Honeymoon zwischen Riad und Jerusalem.....	5
4. Medienquerschnitt.....	7

1. Hotovely gegen die Diaspora

Für Unmut sorgte Israels stellvertretende Außenministerin Tzipi Hotovely, als sie im Verlauf eines Fernsehinterviews unterstellte, dass die Juden in Nordamerika „die Komplexität der Region“ Israels „nicht verstehen“. Amerikas Juden, die „ihre Kinder niemals in die Armee schicken mussten, damit sie ihr Land verteidigen“, und die ein recht angenehmes Leben führten, könnten „nicht nachempfinden, wie es ist, wenn man mit Raketen angegriffen wird“. Hotovely versuchte damit, die wachsende Entfremdung des US-Judentums von Israel zu erklären und schüttete geradewegs Öl ins Feuer. Ungewöhnlich scharf tadelte anschließend Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu, der gleichzeitig die Funktion des Außenministers innehat, seine Stellvertreterin im Amt und erwog sogar, sie zu entlassen. Hotovely lenkte schließlich ein und entschuldigte sich. Der Chef der Oppositionspartei Zionistische Union, Avi Gabbay, kündigte an, „zu reparieren, was diese Regierung zu zerstören entschied, inklusive das wichtige Bündnis mit dem US-Judentum“, sobald seine Liste „an die Macht zurückkehrt“.

Tzipi Hotovely should be fired

(...) if sending one's children to fight for their country is a pre-requisite for understanding Israel, how does she justify sitting in a government where over 20 percent of its members are Haredim, most of whom, as a matter of principle, choose not to send their children to serve in Israel's armed forces or even undertake

some other form of national service? Hotovely's insulting remarks will only help to reinforce the view of many American Jews that Israel doesn't respect them and isn't interested in their opinions. (...) Hotovely is too young to remember that Reform rabbi Abba Hillel Silver was a key figure in mobilizing American support for the founding of the State of Israel. Without people like him, there would be no Jewish state and her family would still be in Georgia. (...) For me, as a Reform rabbi, who made aliyah from England and whose son fell while on active service in Lebanon, her remarks are insulting. People like her have no place in our government and certainly not in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Michael Boyden, TOI, 23.11.17

Hotovely Syndrome: the Israelis who are estranging American Jewry

(...) A bull loose in a china shop would likely cause less damage than Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely has in her wretched comments about American Jewry. (...) why should she pay heed to the millions of Jews who for decades have been, and still are, a pillar of support of the Israeli national security. (...) in 2017 the state of Israel has become a sort of burden to American Jews. (...) the relationship between Israeli and American Jews is at a breaking point and the results can be seen on the ground: fewer donations, less support for Israel among Jewish students on college campuses, fewer visits to Israel and less desire to identify as a Zionist. (...) the

Israeli leadership is demonstrating weakness. (...) when it comes to real leadership decisions Netanyahu is mainly concerned with holding on to his seat, whether the issue is the Kotel or the conversion law. Netanyahu, who claims to know America and claims that he understands the American character, has abandoned the second largest Jewish community in the world. He has sacrificed its relationship with Israel on the altar of his political survival and his alliance with the Ultra Orthodox parties. (...) one of the biggest crises in the history of the Jewish people is taking place—but there is no leadership to deal with it. And Hotovely has added another bulldozer to the destruction.

Attila Somfalvi, YED, 24.11.17

Israel's leaders unjustly abandoned Hotovely for spurious political ends

(...) Hotovely merely stated a fact. (...) Many Jews in the diaspora cast negative judgements on IDF soldiers—boys and girls—who courageously and selflessly defend that precious country about which they so readily opine. Those same Jews have absolutely no idea what the experience of being a soldier means, and the outrage that has ensued by uttering this simple fact can perhaps be attributed to collective guilt, rather than serious objection regarding its accuracy. (...) Most of the Jews to whom she was referring (...) cannot possibly know how it feels to lie in the freezing or almost unbearably hot field for days on end, to have a tank become your home, to face a Palestinian terrorist coming to kill you, your comrades and your fellow civilians (...). Frankly, the fact that the Hotovely has been forced to grovel to save her political career after making these overdue remarks, is a travesty. (...) Hotovely is simply the sacrificial lamb tossed onto the altar. Excessively castigating her, and possibly firing her (...) could regain the favor for Israel of liberal US Jews. (...) Hotovely should be proud of finally speaking the truth. (...)

Alexander J. Apfel, YED, 24.11.17

Second to None

(...) Hotovely was trying to articulate a point in a very inarticulate manner. (...) Hotovely also volunteered her understanding of the conflict over pluralistic prayer at the Western Wall, which she accused American Jews of fomenting for political reasons. (...) With statements like Hotovely's, Israel is not sending a message of equality to Diaspora Jews. If it wants to do that, condemning Hotovely will not be enough.

Editorial, JPO, 25.11.17

Netanyahu and his trusted deputy against the Jews

(...) With all its might, the government sponsors legislation that prioritizes the state's Jewish character over its democratic one. But at the same time, it alienates Reform and Conservative Jews in the United States by passing legislation against the non-Orthodox movements and freezing the agreement on prayer arrangements at the Western Wall (...) When Netanyahu and his government are uncomfortable with democracy, they justify it on the grounds that they're Jews first and foremost. But when they aren't comfortable with certain groups of Jews, they suddenly remember that they're democrats first and foremost. (...) Just like Netanyahu, who capitulated to pressure from the ultra-Orthodox parties and froze the Western Wall agreement, Hotovely undermined the freedom of religion of millions of Jews in the name of democracy. (...) Hotovely loyally represents the Netanyahu government. Her dismissal would be pure hypocrisy unless the prime minister resigned along with her.

Editorial, HAA, 26.11.17

Adding fuel to the fire

(...) ties between U.S. Jewry and the State of Israel are at a low point. (...) Nothing about this relationship is a given anymore. (...) this process of deterioration is bad for Israel. It distances Jews from Israel and it also distances our supporters. (...) It is difficult to understand what led Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely to say the things she did about American Jews. Had she been an MK, her comments would have still caused damage, but the argument could have been made that her inappropriate statements reflected no one's position but her own. But Hotovely holds an official role in the government, one that by definition concerns Israel's ties with the world and the Diaspora. (...) Hotovely's remarks displayed a combination of ignorance and lack of judgment. (...) Hotovely also did direct damage to Israel with her comments. (...) those who want the support, financial and otherwise, of American Jews should be willing to listen to their opinions on every subject. (...) In essence, Hotovely's comments indicate she is not fit for the role of deputy foreign minister. (...)

Yoav Limor, IHY, 26.11.17

Israel's relationship with U.S. Jewry ebbs and flows, but is this a turning point?

(...) When the state was established, in 1948, there were 600,000 Jews living in Israel and over five mil-

lion in the United States. Today there are over six million Jews in Israel and fewer than six million in the United States. Probably more than half of American Jews today are the products of intermarriage, and many of them feel less of an identification with Israel than their Jewish parents did. Nevertheless, American Jews' support for Israel, political and financial, is still very impressive. But American Jews who are affiliated with Reform or Conservative congregations feel slighted and insulted by decisions taken by Israel's government under pressure from the ultra-Orthodox political parties on matters of conversion, prayer at the Western Wall and other issues that seem to cast doubt on the degree to which they belong to the Jewish people. (...) Hotovely demonstrated a lack of understanding of the American Jewish community. It is good that (...) she subsequently apologized for them.

Moshe Arens, HAA, 27.11.17

We will keep believing

(...) the State of Israel has never been more closely connected to the Jewish people at large than today. (...) There are 14.5 million Jews in the world, only half of whom live in Israel. For the first time in modern history, Jews in Israel feel responsible for the fate of Jews in the Diaspora. Until a few years ago, the situation was reversed. (...) Today, the Israeli government maintains closer ties with the Diaspora than any other government that preceded it. Israel invests some 200 million shekels annually in the Diaspora Affairs Ministry, which serves as a type of policy office for the Jewish people. (...) The sum of investment in world Jewry runs to around half a billion shekels every year. These are unprecedented numbers – more than twice the amount of a decade ago – and they are consistently growing. (...) When abroad, being Jewish is an active decision. In Israel it is the default. The minimum requirement for being Jewish here is breathing. Across the ocean, however, being Jewish is a daily choice, which must be marketed and sold like any other consumer product. But Israel is something that we no longer have to market. (...)

Emily Amrousi, IHY, 28.11.17

Two Entirely Different Bets on the Jewish Future

(...) Hotovely refused to abjectly apologize (...) because she does not really think she was wrong. On the facts, she is indeed correct. (...) the accuracy of Hotovely's comments was never the issue. Had she understood American Jews better, she would have known that American Jews do not like being told that they are rich or pampered and they do not appreciate

being informed that they do not understand Israel. (...) What Hotovely should have said was that American Jewish life and Israel are two entirely different bets on the Jewish future. (...) In America, Judaism has become essentially a matter of religion. (...) Not so in Israel. (...) the religious elements of Judaism have not disappeared (...), but the very essence of the project's Jewishness is different. In America, the majority of the Jewish community is instinctively liberal, while in Israel, especially as the majority of Israeli Jews are now of Mizrahi descent, the pervasive instinct is one of social and religious conservatism. American Jews live as a small minority, and thus benefit from a public square and from public discourse that are denuded of religious content. In Israel, infusing public discourse with Jewish content was the very purpose of the project. American Jews were right to be insulted. For it's not that American Jews don't understand Israel. It's that American Jews and Israelis no longer understand each other. (...)

Daniel Gordis, JPO, 29.11.17

2. Keine Anklage gegen Sprecher von Breaking the Silence

Nicht zum ersten Mal müssen sich die Reservesoldaten der friedenspolitischen Bewegung „Breaking the Silence“ dem Vorwurf stellen, falsche Zeugenaussagen zu veröffentlichen. Die Affäre um Dean Issacharoff, den Sprecher der Gruppe, der sich selbst bezichtigte, einen Palästinenser blutig geschlagen zu haben, gefährdet ihre Glaubwürdigkeit zusätzlich. Issacharoff legte sein Geständnis vor jungen Israelis ab, die unmittelbar vor ihrer Rekrutierung zum Militärdienst stehen, um zu zeigen, dass auch moralische Soldaten unter Stress zu ungerechter Gewalt greifen können. Aus dem rechten politischen Lager kam daraufhin der Ruf nach einem Verfahren gegen Issacharoff. Ermittlungen ergaben indes, dass das angebliche palästinensische Opfer nicht von Issacharoff sondern von einem Grenzpolizisten geschlagen worden sei. Issacharoff selbst beharrte auf die Richtigkeit seiner Version. Die Ermittler hätten den falschen Mann befragt.

To whitewash occupation, Netanyahu crew casts Breaking the Silence whistle-blower as bogeyman

(...) Issacharoff – who seeks to protest the occupation by relaying his experiences as an occupier (...) is being turned into a scapegoat (...). One person is stained, but the entire community is absolved. (...)

Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked was the first to recognize the potential in Issacharoff's testimony. (...) Either Issacharoff will be prosecuted, showing the world that Israel deals harshly with "deviant" behavior such as his, or he won't be prosecuted, in which case Breaking the Silence will be cast as a bunch of liars. (...) Netanyahu and his cohorts on the right are building up Breaking the Silence as a terrifying bogeyman (...). They and their lies, not us and our deeds, are responsible for international condemnation of the occupation. (...) Contrary to historical experience around the world, simple logic and thousands of witnesses who have served in the territories, the Israeli occupation – if you believe Issacharoff's detractors – is apparently a model of good manners and genteel supervision devoid of violence and coercion. (...) much of Israeli public opinion is only too happy to play along with the big lie. (...) the current catchphrase in government circles is "Smite Issacharoff and save the occupation."

Chemi Shalev, HAA, 21.11.17

Probe the investigators

(...) there's something rotten about the way the legal system has been dealing with the group's spokesman, Dean Issacharoff, who says he beat a Palestinian prisoner during his military service in Hebron. (...) Out of a strong desire to please their masters, the state prosecutors forgot that haste is from the devil. (...) the weak, neglectful investigation didn't deter the prosecution from formulating a summary statement that didn't use the customary wording – that Issacharoff wouldn't be prosecuted for lack of guilt – but also stated as fact that Issacharoff had made up his testimony. Thus the prosecution provided the platform for an orchestrated campaign by the government and the right wing against Issacharoff and Breaking the Silence. Under these circumstances, it's inconceivable that the same failed prosecution should reopen the investigation when a strong whiff of vengefulness and political bias emanates from it. It's not Issacharoff who needs to be investigated, but his investigators. (...) For its part, the prosecution has damaged itself and its image, and undermined the public's trust and the reputation of the Israeli legal system both domestically and abroad. The damage (...) is immeasurably greater than the scope of the damage the government attributes to Breaking the Silence. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 23.11.17

Exonerated, to his chagrin

Such a surrealistic phenomenon is seldom seen in these parts. Police investigators, looking into allegations of serious misconduct on the part of a soldier, discover that the incident in question never happened. The prosecution decides to close the case due to lack of guilt, but instead of the defendant celebrating, he and his friends lament the exoneration. (...) The Azaria trial should have taught Breaking the Silence that when a crime against a Palestinian is exposed (...) the authorities investigate it thoroughly without waiting for a formal complaint. (...) Breaking the Silence, however, underestimated the investigative acumen of the police. (...) Issacharoff's subordinates and commanders released a video in which they denied his allegations and called him a liar. Issacharoff will sue them for defamation of character and let the court discuss the matter "openly and publicly," and determine if he indeed transgressed. Perhaps Issacharoff should also sue the Palestinian he allegedly abused for essentially calling him a liar as well.

Professor Asher Maoz. IHY, 19.11.17

The political campaign to break Breaking the Silence

The organization members, who love Israel with all their hearts, seek to convey a message to future soldiers who will serve in the West Bank, that their mission will be to oppress a foreign people and protect the settlements (...), and that the price they will pay is moral corruption. (...) it is a known fact that a person cannot incriminate himself. It's the justification for a defendant's admission, and a conviction requires "something in addition." Once the investigation was launched, all that was needed in light of Issacharoff's admission was further evidence, which was found in the testimony of another soldier who had been present during the incident. But (...) that soldier wasn't even questioned. The person who was questioned was his commander, who reportedly denied the incident. (...) The beaten Palestinian denied the allegations too, but it should be noted that Palestinians are usually afraid to testify against soldiers, and it is known that few Palestinians complain and that these cases are often closed. Moreover, the organization claims that the Palestinian who was questioned by the police isn't the same Palestinian who was beaten. (...) determining credibility is mainly the court's job, and the case didn't reach the court. (...) before an IDF officer is publicly condemned as a known liar, we should raise a warning sign, lest we harm a person who will be brought to an unnecessary

criminal investigation out of a political desire to break the organization. (...)

Talia Sasson, YED, 22.11.17

Time for Breaking the Silence to be quiet abroad

(...) Anyone who served in the territories knows that friction with the civilian population, certainly during tense periods, involves the use of force, sometimes excessive and cruel, sometimes as policy dictated (...). That is the nature of control over another people and that is the nature of service under constant fear of attack. Breaking the Silence wanted to spark discussion that would advance an end to the occupation. But it ended up sparking a debate about the reliability of its testimony, the legitimacy of defaming the IDF and its soldiers and raising money to fund its activities in foreign countries and organizations. (...) Breaking the Silence made a mistake in choosing to galvanize international pressure on the IDF, its soldiers and commanders by embarrassing them abroad. It is an ineffective means that most Israelis, even those who support an end to the occupation, are not prepared to accept. Before turning world opinion against the soldiers of the IDF, who did not choose to be in the territories, internal investigations should be fully exhausted by law enforcement bodies in Israel. (...) That is the organization's worst mistake, worse than any unreliable testimony that makes the IDF look bad. (...) A return to activities in Israel will probably not manage to restore the Israeli public's confidence in the organization. But it's (...) the only way that Breaking the Silence can regain faith in the purity of its intentions and its methods of operation.

Sami Peretz, HAA, 25.11.17

Yes, Breaking the Silence - tell the world!

There's no need to inform the Israelis about the sins of the occupation. They already know. And it's pointless to force them to know what they know. It only annoys them. But there's a very good reason for bringing our abominations to the knowledge of the nations of the world. (...) For in them, in those nations, lies the only (faint) hope of extracting Israel from its own claws. Our deliverance will come from somewhere else – only from a world that finally grips Israel by the hair and pulls it out of the quicksand it is sinking in. To awaken the world from its indifference to the Jews' fate, it's very important that it knows exactly and in detail what is happening here in its absence. That's why it's precisely the international community that Breaking the Silence should address. (...) And perhaps a few more breakers of silence will join them from the State Prosecutor's Office and Israel Police,

a few who will dare to break the "Maintaining the Silence" law that the vandals and scoundrels in power here brought down on their heads this week.

B. Michael, HAA, 30.11.17

Breaking the Silence must be Silenced

(...) the lies that are told by the organization have been exposed a number of times. (...) Anyone who understands the true nature of the extreme left-wing organizations operating in Israel is probably not surprised. (...) The organization's promotional materials have been translated into a number of languages, and its representatives spend most of their time defaming Israel within government bodies and academic institutions across the sea, which is enough to raise suspicion about the organization's true intentions. (...) if Breaking the Silence really intended to carry out the mission it said it was working for, then it would be focusing its activities instead within Israel and engaging with the Israeli authorities. (...) The ironic part is that the Israel Defense Forces is probably the most moral military in the world. (...) Israel may be a strong nation with an orderly system of law, but it is standing helpless against people and organizations that are working to undermine it from within. Israel has not found a legal solution to put an end to all these lies and incitement. Current laws are too weak to offer protection against anti-Israel anarchists who are operating inside Israel. What's worse, there are senior IDF commanders who are backing Breaking the Silence with corrupted political interests in mind. (...) our only course of action is to enact legislation that would limit organizations from carrying out such activity within Israel, and possibly even close them down. (...) the sooner the better.

Lior Akerman, JPO, 30.11.17

3. Honeymoon zwischen Riad und Jerusalem

Die Regierungen in Riad und Jerusalem nehmen Kurs auf Annäherung. Israel sei bereit, mit Saudi-Arabien sogar nachrichtendienstliches Material zu teilen, erklärte der israelische Generalstabschef Gadi Eizenkot gegenüber saudi-arabischen Reportern, denn beide Staaten verfolgten gemeinsame Interessen, wenn es darum geht, Teheran die Stirn zu bieten. Der Iran gilt als Israels Staatsfeind Nummer eins und steht gleichzeitig im Wettstreit mit Saudi-Arabien um die regionale Vormacht im Nahen Osten. Die größte Sorge in Riad dürfte einer nuklearen Aufrüstung Teherans gelten. Die sich verschiebenden Fronten im Nahen Osten könnten sich diesmal auch für die Palästinenser positiv auswirken. Ein Bündnis zwischen

Riad und Jerusalem wird auf lange Sicht nur funktionieren, wenn sich auch Israel und die Palästinenser einig werden. Nichts könnte die Allianz schneller im Keim ersticken, als neue Gewalt im Westjordanland oder im Gazastreifen.

An unofficial alliance

(...) Bolstering the unofficial alliance between Jerusalem and Riyadh is the direct result of the growing threat Iran poses to both countries. Missiles that Iran is sending Hezbollah to use to attack Israel are, in the meantime, being fired at the Riyadh airport from Yemen. Iran establishing bases in Syria and Lebanon threatens not only Israel, but also the interests of Saudi Arabia and Sunni Muslims in both countries. (...) The secret Saudi-Israeli alliance is being taken to a new level, but for now it stops short of official acknowledgment. The Saudis flatly deny rumors that the crown prince visited Jerusalem, and they will not be tempted to normalize relations before any real progress is made to solve the Israeli-Palestinian issue. Oded Granot, IHY, 17.11.17

The strategic interests behind Eisenkot's Saudi interview

(...) Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman is (...) subject to criticism within the Saudi royal family and among Saudi clerics. (...) when the Israeli chief of staff, who is considered a professional rather than a politician, specifies each of Iran's intentions and the steps it is taking to gain regional hegemony, it's a move that provides valuable support for Saudi Arabia's claims. (...) Crown Prince bin Salman basically owes Israel and the IDF chief for their swift help in confirming his claims against Iran and Hezbollah, and for the indirect aid they are offering him in his relations with US President Trump and with the Europeans concerning the Middle East. But even more important is apparently the diplomatic benefit (...). President Trump is planning to present his plan or outline for an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians in about a month. This agreement will essentially be an American-Saudi initiative, largely based on the Saudi peace plan (...), which (...) Israel needs the Saudis to soften (...) regarding the Palestinians that they are presenting to the Americans. (...) Netanyahu hopes that a gesture towards the bin Salman (...) will be answered with a gesture from the 32-year-old crown prince concerning an agreement with the Palestinians. Netanyahu doesn't know what Trump's initiative will include, but he does know that Saudi Arabia will play a significant part in it. (...) Ron Ben-Yishai, YED, 19.11.17

A Saudi house of cards

(...) Israel is attempting to revive late President Shimon Peres' "new Middle East" vision, this time under the leadership of Saudi Arabia and Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who has been busy implementing dramatic policy changes there. But this enthusiasm is shortsighted and dangerous in light of the significant weaknesses of the Saudi regime. (...) the Saudis have failed in their attempts to thwart Iran in Syria and Iraq, and their weak standing in Lebanon was exposed when their longtime ally Saad Hariri resigned as prime minister. Despite having the world's most expensive military and some of the most advanced weapons systems, they have been unable to defeat the Shiite rebels in Yemen, who are armed mostly with outdated light weapons. But the Saudis' greatest weakness lies in the inescapable fact that all of their reforms are nothing more than one man single-handedly trying to create change in a failed state. Reforms in the Saudi regime ultimately serve to undermine the triangular basis for its very existence: tribal loyalty, religious zealotry and the widespread corruption that oils the wheels. This is a process that is destined for failure because the more the reforms bring about modernization and systemic change in Saudi Arabia, the more the legitimacy of the monarchy is undermined. The biggest problem with the Saudi house of cards we are helping to create is that we will very soon be required to pay a high price for residing within it. There will be those who suggest "painful concessions," whether to the Palestinians or regarding the Golan Heights within the framework of a permanent settlement in Syria, in order to build trust with the Arab world. (...) Ofir Haivry, IHY, 23.11.17

Israeli-Saudi ties signal paradigm shift in world power dynamics

(...) The increasingly close alliance between Israel and Saudi Arabia is the most significant development at the current time. (...) Under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel is becoming better integrated than many previous Israeli governments into the Middle East, where Saudi Arabia is the dominant power, even if it is a region in which natural resources, destructive technologies and alliances between oppressive regimes set the tone. It is in fact the Israeli right wing, which had always ridiculed the idea of a New Middle East, that is now integrating into this new Middle East in which we live. (...) over the past several decades in Israel, the political discussion was approached as a campaign between political camps.

One deemed "the right" espoused a militarist, nationalist, anti-Arab ideology. The other camp, deemed "the left," advocated for a civil, globalist and compromising line vis-à-vis the Arab world, although clearly the divisions were never really so simple. The parties on the left were headed by former army men who never aspired to Israel's integration into the region. They wanted to separate from it. The political argument centered roughly around where to draw the dividing lines and that defined the political identity of every Israeli. But in November 2017, does that still apply? Not really. (...)

Ofri Ilany, HAA, 16.11.17

Remember those who were wronged

The defeat of the Arab armies in the 1948 War of Independence brought about severe riots and persecution against the Jews in Arab countries, who subsequently immigrated en masse to Israel. (...) Israel officially refrained from taking direct action on behalf of the Jews in Arab countries, naturally, as otherwise these local Jews would likely have been accused of collaborating with Israel. (...) the Arab countries are not the only ones unwilling to pay compensation to Jews that once lived under their rule. Likewise, they are also unwilling to recognize the injustice they inflicted on their Jewish population. The time has come for these countries and their leaders to apologize for these injustices and compensate those whose property was confiscated and appropriated. At a time when there are talks of warming relations with Persian Gulf states, Israel can help fix the historical injustice to Jews of Arab countries by unequivocally stating that as long as the issue of Jewish refugees from Arab countries and their stolen property – estimated today to be over \$400 billion – remains unsettled, it will not sign a peace treaty to end the conflict with either the Palestinians or the Arab states, including the Persian Gulf states. (...) Israel has the highest moral obligation and the right, stipulated in international law, to sue Arab states to compensate their Jews for the property and lands they stole illegally and with no justification whatsoever. (...)

Edy Cohen, IHY, 30.11.17

4. Medienquerschnitt

70. Jahrestag für den UN-Teilungsplan für Palästina

Palestinians' Biggest Missed Opportunity

The United Nations Partition Plan, which marked its 70th anniversary on Wednesday, was rejected by the

Arabs and the Palestinians. Everyone knows that. What is less well known is that not all the Arabs and Palestinians objected to the Partition Plan. At least two Arab groups can be found that had an interest in the establishment of a Jewish state: Abdullah I, the king of Jordan, who reached a secret agreement with representatives of the Zionist movement about the division of the land of Mandatory Palestine between Jordan and the Jews; and the Maronite Christians in Lebanon who, as a Christian minority in Muslim surroundings, saw a shared fate with the Jews, which led to the signing of a secret agreement between the Maronite Patriarch and representatives of the Zionist movement in 1946. Among the Palestinians who did not object to the partition were members of the Nashashibi family and its supporters, who were the rivals of the al-Husseini family that headed the most important Palestinian institutions. But at the moment of truth, all of these secret supporters on the Palestinian-Arab side disappeared, or more accurately, went silent. (...) The Partition Plan decision was a historic opportunity to solve the conflict, for a number of reasons: (...) For the Zionist movement the plan was especially attractive because it offered it most of the territory, even though the Palestinian population was twice as large and they owned most of the land. As far as the Palestinians were concerned, the plan may have been less attractive but it was the first time that an international institution proposed an independent state for them that was not tied to Jordan. The Palestinian-Arab refusal to accept the Partition Plan was a mistake and also a missed opportunity because it was possible to implement the plan. (...) The president of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, took a major step when he admitted in an interview in 2011 that the Palestinians made a mistake when they rejected the Partition Plan. He added that nevertheless they should not be punished for this mistake. The Palestinian recognition of the historic mistake of rejecting the UN Partition Plan is the first step on the road to accepting a reduced size partition plan, based on the May 1967 borders. Not all the Palestinians are willing to do so. (...) The 70th anniversary of the UN Partition Plan is an opportunity to remember that even if the borders of the partition have changed, the concept of partition is still valid.

Elie Podeh, HAA, 30.11.17

Ultraorthodoxe gegen jüdische Arbeit am Sabbat

Shabbat in Zion

(...) Litzman's demand for a literalist interpretation of Jewish law as practiced for centuries in exile, when

the Jewish people was a minority living in a country run and ruled by non-Jews, seems hopelessly out of touch with the 21st century reality of the Zionist state. (...) a complete stop to railway work by Jews on Shabbat – is simply unreasonable and incompatible with the running of a modern Jewish state. (...) Haredi lawmakers like Litzman cannot expect the entire Israeli population to make similar sacrifices. The haredi (...) leaders (...) have not completely reconciled themselves to the realities of running a modern Jewish state. They shun military service, deprive their children of an education that would allow them to become doctors, engineers and scientists and have no political aspirations to run a haredi candidate for prime minister. If it had depended on haredim, the State of Israel would never have come into being. (...) Editorial, JPO, 23.11.17

Israel's Shabbat wars are a symptom of a much deeper crisis among ultra-Orthodox Jews

Behind the scenes, even the most devout ultra-Orthodox politician will admit that in reality, it is impossible to enforce a Shabbat standstill on the economy. After all, Haredim make up only a minority of Israeli society. (...) Crucial infrastructure maintenance has been taking place on Saturdays for decades, without causing tension (...) This has all changed over the last couple of years. (...) The rabbis have been forced, against their will, to stake out more radical positions. It's not just the power of the Haredi websites to enforce the agenda, but the transparency they have created in the murky world of Haredi politics. Decisions can no longer be made quietly behind closed doors. (...) the rabbis' room for maneuvers and compromise (...) has been dramatically eroded. In public, they (...) are pushed instead into competition over who is more devoted to the sanctity of the Shabbat. (...) The ultra-Orthodox are stuck with an elderly, failing leadership, incapable of grasping the challenges their communities are facing, both in daily and political life. Neither are they capable of creating unity within the Haredi public. (...) a rift opened between the more moderate leadership based in Bnei Berak and the radical Jerusalem faction, which has been behind the recent violent demonstrations in the capital. (...) The failure of the rabbis to articulate a clear position on the Shabbat issue is just a symptom of the much deeper malaise. (...)

Anshel Pfeffer, HAA, 25.11.17

Gesetzentwurf zum Schutz Netanyahus

The takeover of Likud has been completed

(...) The word "shame" was dropped from our Knesset's lexicon long ago. It's a place that challenges the word "disgust" every single day. This time, it's about the way Knesset Member Benny Begin was replaced (...) from the Knesset's Internal Affairs Committee simply just because he opposed a certain section in the (...) recommendations bill (...) which (...) is clearly a personal bill aimed at rescuing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu from a possible media and political uproar following the release of the police's recommendations to the State Attorney's Office in the investigations against the prime minister. If the bill is adopted by the Knesset before the police submit their recommendations, Amsalem's law is supposed to save Netanyahu from his biggest fear: That the public will become aware of the acts that led the police to recommend an indictment. (...) This day can be marked as the day the Davids completed their takeover of Likud. (...) There is no longer an attempt to conceal the fact that this bill is a bill aimed at helping Netanyahu.

Sima Kadmon, YED, 25.11.17

Pity there aren't Israeli elections now

(...) If Kulanu had refrained from the disgrace of supporting the so-called recommendations law (...) and Netanyahu had acted on his threat, toppled the government and gone to elections, it would have held up a wonderful mirror to Israel's political reality, giving the public a substantial issue to decide on. (...) Elections over a law aimed at handcuffing the police who dare to investigate the prime minister would reflect the next question on the Israeli agenda: What kind of democracy, if any, exists here, and what is the law enforcement authorities' place in it? (...) The bill's symbolic significance exceeds, at this stage, the practical one (...) preventing the police from drafting an official paper with the juicy details of the suspicions against the prime minister. (...) The symbolic significance is setting in motion a change of fundamental principles in Israeli democracy, and transferring power officially and blatantly from the law enforcement agencies to the elected politicians. (...) the left is protecting the police, Shin Bet and IDF from the ruling party's attacks. This shows how far the Likud and the right wing's revolution against the rule of law, a revolution led by Netanyahu, has advanced. (...) When this revolution is ratcheted up, the public must make its voice heard. Does it ratify the revolution and grant its representatives carte blanche to turn the pyramid on its head, or does it want to stop this process? It's a pity there aren't elections now.

Ravit Hecht, HAA, 30.11.17

HAA = Haaretz
YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews
JPO = Jerusalem Post
IHY = Israel HaYom
TOI = Times of Israel
GLO = Globes

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