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1. Netanyahu beantragt Immunität

Benjamin Netanyahus Antrag auf Immunität gegen Strafverfolgung könnte noch vor der Wahl am 2. März vom Parlament zurückgewiesen werden. Sollte die Knesset den Antrag ablehnen, müsste sich der israelische Regierungschef einem Prozess stellen. Netanyahu betonte, es handele sich um eine zeitlich begrenzte Immunität, und er werde vor Gericht seine Unschuld beweisen. "Ich will Israel noch viele Jahre regieren, um historische Erfolge zu erzielen." Ohne den Antrag an das Parlament hätte die Anklageschrift nach Ablauf einer Frist am 2. Januar beim zuständigen Gericht in Jerusalem eingereicht werden können. Mit dem Immunitätsantrag liegt das Verfahren nun jedoch vorerst auf Eis. Netanyahu hatte nach Medienberichten versucht, die Entscheidung über die Immunität bis nach der Wahl zu verschieben, weil er gegenwärtig keine Mehrheit hat und mit einer Niederlage rechnen muss. Der Rechtsberater des Parlaments Eyal Yinon erklärte hingegen, dass ein zuständiger Parlamentsausschuss noch in der laufenden Legislaturperiode und damit vor den Wahlen eingerichtet werden könne. Daraufhin stellte die Mitte-Partei Blau-Weiß den Antrag zur Bildung eines solchen Ausschusses. Netanyahus Likud-Partei stellte einen Antrag beim Obersten Gericht, um Yinon zu stoppen. Die Partei begründete den Antrag mit dem Vorwurf, Yinon befände sich in einem "schweren Interessenkonflikt", weil seine Ehefrau Teil des juristischen Teams der

Anklage gegen Netanyahu war. In Israel regiert seit rund einem Jahr ein Übergangskabinett. Das Parlament ist nur eingeschränkt handlungsfähig. Nach zwei Parlamentswahlen gelang 2019 wegen einer Pattsituation keine neue Regierungsbildung.

Netanyahu is exercising his legal right by seeking immunity

(...) This is not the end of democracy and the Knesset has not become a safe haven for criminals. We can all relax. The immunity law was in place before Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and will stay on the books after he leaves. (...) the prime minister announced (...) was simply making use of the law available to him - and that is his legitimate right. It seemed that the longest-serving prime minister in Israel's history is a magician of sorts. Even his proponents - some of whom were convinced his political career was nearing its end because of the criminal charges against him - were surprised. (...) opinion polls conducted in the days leading up to his decision to request immunity show he may just win the March 2 election and form the next government. It is hard to argue that the request for immunity is a display of high moral values, but such is the nature of politics and the prime minister is operating within the boundaries of the accepted rules of the game. (...) Netanyahu (...) uses all tools at his disposal to their maximum potential, and as if by magic, his political standing remains as strong as ever. The

decision to request immunity has a positive outcome as well. Power is now returned to the voters. (...) All we can now hope for is that if the prime minister's bid to be granted immunity is turned down, he will respect the decision and accept it.

Amichai Etieli, YED, 02.01.20

Netanyahu's immunity travesty

(...) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, displaying no shame at all, stood up and lied to the public. (...) What the prime minister said in his televised speech in which he announced he would be seeking immunity from prosecution, was a bald-faced lie. Fabricated accusations, unfounded allegations, badgering witnesses, targeted leaks - these are just some of the charges Netanyahu directed at law enforcement, the judicial system, his political opposition, and the media. If that is not bad enough, Netanyahu also perverted the meaning of the immunity law that he said was legislated to protect the public from trumped-up charges against elected officials, thereby presenting himself not as attempting to avoid justice, but as a champion of the people out to protect them. If there is any truth to what the prime minister said in his speech, this is not a country any of us should want to live in, unless we aspire to a totalitarian regime. If Netanyahu is in fact lying, he must not be allowed to continue in his job one more day. During the speech, Netanyahu (...) seemed afraid, bothered and tired. A bit like a man on the run. Who would have believed we would witness the prime minister trying to flee from justice in such a crude manner? The only substantial response to this travesty has come from Yisrael Beiteinu leader Avigdor Liberman who announced soon after Netanyahu's speech that his party would work to bar the PM from receiving immunity. (...)

Sima Kadmon, YED, 02.01.20

Benjamin Netanyahu Is Not above the Law

The prime minister of Israel (...) appears to think he's above the law. (...) Having fallaciously compared the indictment to an "attempted coup," Netanyahu — the first sitting Israeli leader to be charged with crimes — now claims self-servingly that his request is merely a "temporary" measure valid for only one parliamentary term, and that immunity itself is a "foundation stone of democracy." (...) Netanyahu (...) was indicted for good reason. (...) Having been exposed as a corrupt politician who can be bought, he should have done the right thing and resigned. (...) Instead of manfully accepting his indictment with grace and dignity, and preparing to

defend himself in a court of law, Netanyahu, in true populist style, has launched a concerted attack on the media and the courts. (...) Netanyahu's desperate effort to evade justice and delay the criminal process is nothing less than disgraceful. (...) From the outset of his checkered career, his modus operandi has been political survival, even at the risk of widening divisions in an already fractured nation. Immunity, if granted, might well keep him out of prison and, perhaps, burnish his legacy. (...) By all accounts, the outcome of the next election will be no different than the previous two (...). Facing an array of serious external and internal challenges, Israel cannot afford such an extensive period of paralysis. Being an astute politician, Netanyahu should understand that he has no right to subject Israelis to this tortured political theater. For Israel's sake, he should draw the appropriate conclusions and withdraw his request for immunity and tender his resignation. He can then, in all good conscience, fight with all his might to clear his name.

Sheldon Kirshner, TOI, 03.01.20

A legal but disgraceful move by Netanyahu

(...) Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (...) has made the decision to place the question of immunity at the center of his election campaign. (...) Immunity is not a basic right – and even more so if the alleged crimes were not committed in the line of duty. Gifts worth hundreds of thousands of worth of gifts are not part of any job. Still, Netanyahu (...) has the right to request a committee of lawmakers grant him what he is entitled to by law. But public perception and moral values cannot be easily reconciled with the prime minister's request – in that respect, Netanyahu's request is a disgrace. (...) The prime minister is picking a fight – he needs one for his campaign to be effective. (...) According to the evidence already made public in the cases against Netanyahu, his actions, though undoubtedly corrupt, may not be criminal. Worst still, there have been questions regarding the behavior of investigators as they built the three cases against the prime minister. These questions include targeted leaks from interrogations, excess pressure on witnesses and even the overlooking of allegations of sexual misconduct by one of the police investigators involved in the early stages of the inquiry. The immunity request will certainly delay criminal proceedings, and without a functioning Knesset, there can be no deliberation of the prime minister's request. A new government will not be sworn in for many months and Netanyahu is taking a gamble that this third round of elections in

less than 12 months will produce better results than the first two in April and September of last year, after which had failed to form a coalition. As far as he is concerned, a fourth and fifth round of elections are an option as his personal interests must come before those of the country. (...)

Ben Dror Yemini, YED, 05.01.20

Netanyahu is an unbridled liar, but his supporters don't mind

Benjamin Netanyahu's lying performances could cause anyone with minimal sensitivity to the value of truth to grow dizzy. (...) Now there's a new slogan, aimed at softening the rigid language for his mouth-pieces and courtiers: "Immunity is always temporary." What more will this land ask of us? Netanyahu (...) has reached a stunning level of perfection. (...) there's something shattering and frightening about the complete erasure of reality that results from Netanyahu's permanent lies. (...) Netanyahu fans know very well what they're getting. They know Netanyahu is an unbridled liar. They don't support him despite this but, to some extent, because of it. (...) His supporters see his "going all the way" to defend himself as demonstrating a willingness and ability to do the same for them, and for what they view as Israel's vital interests. (...) The tendency to admire criminality and aggression, which includes subordinating the truth to necessity and stripping it of all value, flourishes in places where people feel themselves powerless against a demonic elite with unlimited resources. (...) the settlers and the ultra-Orthodox are convinced that the left still controls their lives high-handedly, and they must therefore adhere to the code of a guerrilla or a family, because the establishment is still a dangerous, alien mafioso that can't be trusted. This is the source of all the deep-state nonsense. (...) Netanyahu – ironically a rich, well-educated Ashkenazi, and, even more importantly, prime minister for more than a decade now – never ceased to cultivate his image as an underdog, a kind of Robin Hood who speaks fluent English and has come to rob the leftists of Rehavia and Ramat Aviv of their treasure and generously distribute it to his supporters, even at the cost of sacrificing himself, as proven by the fabricated cases against him. (...)

Ravit Hecht, HAA, 05.01.20

Unbearable hypocrisy

(...) it seems like politics keep plunging the electorate deeper into despair, as we watch the people meant to represent us deal in ugly cynicism and

insult voters' intelligence. (...) The latest chapter in this seemingly never-ending election saga is the dispute over whether the Knesset should be able to hold a vote on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's request for immunity from prosecution on the corruption charges for which Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit seeks to indict him. The Knesset does not have regularly-functioning committees during an election recess. (...) With Blue and White pushing for an unprecedented immunity vote ahead of an election, the spotlight is on Knesset Legal Adviser Eyal Yinon, who had to determine whether or not the House Committee can be formed and whether Knesset Speaker Yuli Edelstein has veto power over the decision. Once Yinon said there is nothing stopping the House Committee from being formed, Justice Minister Amir Ohana and other Likud MKs suddenly remembered that he is married to one of the prosecutors on Netanyahu's case. (...) Yinon's defenders say that he is weighing procedural matters (...). This might be true, but it is also a slightly naive take on the situation. If there is a House Committee between now and the March 2 election, it will deny Netanyahu immunity. Yinon should have recused himself from this decision to ensure that it is not marred in any way. But this doesn't excuse the ugly personal attacks coming from Likud. Yinon is not a newlywed, yet no one thought to raise the matter of his wife until he made a decision viewed as harmful to Netanyahu. (...) It is the Right, including many in Likud, that has long called for a clear separation of powers and protested the Supreme Court's intervention in the Knesset's affairs. They were right to do so; an independent legislative branch is essential to a functioning democracy. Now, the Likud shows that they are willing to sacrifice their ideals on the altar of Netanyahu's immunity. No one is behaving well here. MKs on all sides would do well to walk a straighter path before the public's distrust in them continues to rise to more dangerous levels.

Editorial, JPO, 12.01.20

2. Israel begrüßt die Tötung des iranischen Generals Qassem Soleimani

Weltweit waren die Reaktionen auf die Tötung des iranischen Generals Qassem Soleimani nirgends so positiv wie in Israel. Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu brach seine Griechenlandreise vorzeitig ab. Israel stehe im "gerechten Kampf für Frieden, Sicherheit und Selbstverteidigung zu den USA", versicherte er und drohte mit einem vernichtenden Schlag gegen jeden, der „versucht, uns anzugrei-

fen“. Auch Benny Gantz, Chef der Mitte-Partei Blau-Weiß, begrüßte die Entscheidung von US-Präsident Donald Trump, die er als „angemessene Reaktion auf jeden, der für den Mord an zahllosen Unschuldigen verantwortlich ist“, bezeichnete. Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu berief das Sicherheitskabinett zu einer Beratung über die möglichen Auswirkungen der Tötung von Soleimani ein. Medienberichten zufolge ging es auch um die Vorbereitung auf mögliche Racheangriffe des Irans auf israelische Ziele. Seit dem US-Angriff auf den Konvoi von General Soleimani auf dem Flughafen von Bagdad ist Israel in erhöhter Alarmbereitschaft. Netanyahu warnt immer wieder vor einer iranischen Expansionspolitik im Nahen Osten und wirft Teheran seit Jahren vor, trotz des Atomabkommens von 2015 heimlich am Bau von Nuklearwaffen zu arbeiten. Israels Luftwaffe hat in den vergangenen Jahren wiederholt iranische Ziele in der Region angegriffen. Ziel dabei sind vor allem die iranischen Luftwaffenstützpunkte in Syrien. Israel will eine langfristige Stationierung des Iran im nördlichen Nachbarland unterbinden. Generalstabschef Aviv Kochavi warnte im Dezember vor einer möglichen „begrenzten Konfrontation mit dem Iran“. Er warf dem Westen vor, einer aggressiven Expansionspolitik Teherans in der Region nichts entgegenzusetzen. Der Iran treibe sein Nuklearprogramm weiter voran und werde bald in der Lage sein, eine Atombombe zu bauen.

Inside Hezbollah's American sleeper cells: Waiting for Iran's signal to strike U.S. and Israeli targets

(...) Iran has reportedly begun providing Iraqi Shia militia groups precision missiles capable of hitting targets anywhere in Israel (...). Hezbollah is clear that if it comes to an American war with Iran, it wants in on the fight. (...) In the unlikely event of a truly full-scale war with Iran, Hezbollah would surely target Israel with salvos of artillery, missile and rocket bombardments. Nasrallah recently bragged that this arsenal has "doubled or tripled" since the 2006 war and that it includes weapons capable of hitting anything from the northern border to Eilat. (...) But for all his rhetoric, Nasrallah does not want war with Israel at the present time - especially now that Israel exposed and destroyed Hezbollah attack tunnels burrowing into Israel, and given Israel's continued offensive against Hezbollah's budding military and intelligence buildup on the Syrian side of the Golan Heights. Moreover, in the context of any conflict short of all-out war, Tehran is unlikely to want to put at risk the most tangible achievement of its proxy

strategy, namely the strong military, political and social position of Hezbollah in Lebanon. Iran may still want Hezbollah to act under such circumstances, and Nasrallah was clear that Hezbollah would not sit back and watch. Which is where Hezbollah's external operations apparatus, the Islamic Jihad Organization or Unit 910, comes into play. Over the past several years, Hezbollah IJO activities have been on the rise. (...) In the event of war with Iran, Qods Force allies around the region could fire rockets or carry out other attacks targeting Israel. Iran appears to have brokered an agreement with Hamas whereby the group would carry out attacks targeting Israel from Gaza in the event that hostilities break out along Israel's northern borders. Iraqi militants could fire rockets at Israel from Western Iraq, or help Iran transport missiles to Lebanon for Hezbollah's use there. Hezbollah operatives could target Israel from the Syrian side of the Golan Heights, or across the Lebanese border. But any of these scenarios invite fierce Israeli retaliation, while terrorist attacks by covert cells often present no easy targets for retaliation. (...)

Dr. Matthew Levitt, HAA, 03.01.20

Don't mourn Soleimani

The decision by US President Donald Trump to kill Qasem Soleimani, leader of Iran's Quds Force, should not be considered a controversial move but rather a welcome one that rid the world of an arch terrorist, responsible for the deaths of thousands of people across the globe. (...) Wherever Iran has power, it uses it for terrorism. The targets range from the horrific attack on the AMIA Jewish community building in Buenos Aires (...) to the ongoing rocket attacks from Yemen on Saudi Arabia and the attacks on oil tankers in the Persian Gulf; the occasional firing of Katyushas onto the Israeli side of the Golan Heights; and the storming of the US Embassy in Baghdad and attacks on US military bases in Iraq. (...) It was a bold decision by the US president – and it was the right one. Soleimani had crossed American redlines, openly and boastfully. Had Trump ignored this – as president Barack Obama turned the other way when Syria's Bashar Assad crossed redlines – not only would American deterrence have been completely lost, but in all likelihood the attacks would have continued and worsened. The targeted killing sent out a clear message to Iran and the terrorist organizations and murderous regimes it supports: No more. (...) Trump's decision to kill Soleimani is in keeping with his principles of putting pressure on Iran and follows his withdrawal

from the 2015 nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which granted Iran a flush of money to prop up the regime and fund terrorism in return for a temporary delay in reaching its goals of achieving military nuclear capability. (...) The regime of the ayatollahs in Iran should now be extra cautious about how they respond to Soleimani's death. (...) Iran might want to turn Soleimani into a martyr, but he was no saint. He should not be mourned or missed by anybody with a sense of moral decency.
Editorial, JPO, 05.01.20

When a rogue president takes on a rogue state

(...) As strange as it sounds to an Israeli ear, the ayatollahs in Tehran are currently more grounded and more calculating than the president of the United States. They have to come up with revenge for Soleimani that is horrifying enough to deter Trump from further action, but not so horrifying as to drag him into war. It is a conundrum with no easy answer. (...) there is a valuable lesson here for everyone, including Israel's own politicians: It is better to think twice before tweeting. Soleimani was marked for death. His role in planning and perpetrating previous acts of terrorism against Israelis and Americans, and his potential for damage in the future made him a high value target. Israel could have killed him in February 2008 in Damascus, but the only target that night was Hezbollah's chief of operations Imad Mughniyeh. (...) Israel (...) is wary of assassinating other countries' generals, diplomats and political leaders. To Israel, there is a fundamental difference between a terrorist organization and a state, even if it is a terrorist state like Iran. America, on the other hand, allows itself to behave differently. While in 1976, following a series of embarrassing incidents, President Gerald Ford actually banned the assassination of foreign leaders, the Americans still tried to eliminate Libyan ruler Muammar Gaddafi in 1986, Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevich in 1999 and Saddam Hussein in 2003 (all three attempts failed). (...) President Obama and Vice President Joe Biden supported the establishment of the Soleimani-controlled militias. They believed that their establishment was essential to the war against Islamic State. They did not understand, or did not want to understand, that when the war was over, Iran would turn its militias on America's allies and American troops stationed in Iraq. The assassination was a shot across the bow in the confrontation between the two nations, which could well culminate in U.S.

forces leaving Iraq. Ironically, this was the endgame for both Trump and Soleimani. (...)
Nahum Barnea, YED, 05.01.20

Not just 'another' Iranian general

For many in the Middle East, Gen. Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds Force, the Islamic republic's elite extraterritorial black-ops arm, embodied Iran's desires, aspirations, and directives with respect to the country's operations worldwide, as well as the man who controlled the purse strings with respect to funding the weapons that so often ignited the region. (...) there is little wonder that Soleimani's regional allies across the Middle East (...) have been left feeling as if they were orphaned by the drone strike that killed him (...). Soleimani the driving force behind the Russian-Iranian move to prop up Assad's regime in Syria during the eight-year civil war that threatened to unseat him, as well as behind Tehran's decision to transform the Houtis, a mostly moderate Shiite faction into a powerful, radicalized Iranian proxy in Yemen that has the power to threaten both Saudi Arabia and Israel. Soleimani's assassination in Iraq came as he worked to complete the Iranian takeover of this country, in an attempt to push the United States out using terrorism and violence. But even before that, Soleimani was the mastermind that came up with the concept of placing an Iranian proxy in Lebanon. Once Hezbollah was formed, the head of the Quds Force was instrumental in making it into a formidable military force that now possesses an arsenal of more than 150,000 missiles. Every move, large and small, taken by Iran's proxies in the region needed Soleimani's approval, and he was also the creative mind behind many of them. His death is bound to have a paralyzing effect – if only a temporary one – on these proxies, whose leaders now look to the sky, fearing they might meet a similar end. (...) To say that his replacement, his deputy, Gen. Esmail Ghaani has big shoes to fill in a serious understatement. (...)

Prof. Eyal Zisser, IHY, 05.01.20

The living martyr

(...) Qassem Soleimani was the rare kind of leader who leaves the world a different place after they depart it. (...) Trump, who was never part of the national security circles, didn't even hear his name until recently (and once even mistook him for a Kurd). This turned out to be a blessing. The president was not limited by the apocalyptic scenarios of Iran's revenge when he ordered to pull the trigger on

the operations to take out Soleimani. (...) The fact that it took an American president to take out Soleimani is a disgrace. The man was directly responsible for the deaths of tens of thousands of Arabs and posed an enormous threat to Israel's national security. Yet for years Soleimani wandered freely around the region, from Iraq to Syria and Iran to Lebanon. Both Riyadh and Jerusalem have kept their responses to the assassination muted in an attempt to avoid unnecessary Iranian attention, but on the streets of Iraq and Syria people were dancing and handing out sweets and Arab social media was bursting with joy. (...) Soleimani, scarred by all the death he had seen in his lifetime, talked a lot about his desire to become a martyr, a shahid, and Iran's Supreme Leader generously bestowed upon him the title of "living martyr." There is an understandable tendency in the West to focus on his strategic, military or political actions, but Soleimani was first and foremost a man driven by profound belief. Shimrit Meir, YED, 05.01.20

Iran is still a threat

The killing of Qassem Soleimani (...) removed one of the region's most notorious architects of terror. Soleimani was responsible, directly or indirectly, for the killing of hundreds of thousands of civilians in Syria and hundreds of civilians in Iraq and was complicit in planning the 1994 terror attack of the Jewish Community Center in Buenos Aires. He was the face of the Iranian threat in the Middle East and beyond. (...) But despite his senior position in Iran's ruling hierarchy, Soleimani did not act like the head of a gang or a terror organization. He planned and executed the strategy and ideology that aspired to transform Iran into a regional power with international influence. That aspiration did not die with him. The organization he headed, the Revolutionary Guards' Quds force, with all of its military and economic capabilities, is only part of the Islamic Republic's political and military hierarchy. At its head is Iran's supreme leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who does not intend to give up his goals and will continue to fight for the survival and execution of his plans. Now added to these goals is Iran's declared intention to retaliate with "crushing revenge" for the killing of its spearhead. Although Israel is still a target for Iran and its proxies like Hezbollah in Lebanon and the pro-Iranian militias operating in Syria, it should distance itself from any affiliation with American actions. Hints of Israeli assistance are uncalled for, as are exaggerated shouts of victory. We should remember that the "back to normal" that the Israel

Defense Forces announced to residents of the north is also that same normalcy of threats that has accompanied Israel for decades. (...) Israel can be satisfied that the man who led the Iranian campaign in the Middle East is gone. But it must remember that its challenge was not Soleimani, whom Israel could have taken out a number of times in the past, and that the ring of threats against it has not loosened with his death.

Editorial, HAA, 05.01.20

Examining the Killing of Qasem Soleimani

(...) the Iranian general and commander, Qasem Soleimani (...) was an incredibly unique counter-military strategist, enormously effective commander and motivator, and social media all star. (...) In order to approach this event objectively, one needs to measure if the inevitable retaliation is worth the price of having a world free of Soleimani; this process could take some time because this event could have effects for many years to come. (...) Supporters of the killing (...) argue that he was an extremely dangerous and capable man who was responsible in spreading Iran's terror objectives across the region. (...) From the American perspective, eliminating such an influential figure is crucial to halting Iran's regional aspirations. The critics of this move seem to be more critical, albeit secretly more critical, because the Trump administration ordered the killing and not of the actual killing itself. These critics argue that the move will result in all-out war and that Trump campaigned on getting the US out of wars in the Middle East. Where was the outcry against the Obama administration when Osama Bin Laden was killed? That is not to argue that Soleimani was on the same scale as Bin Laden. However, it is important to not make this event so political. (...) It is completely reasonable to be critical of Trump's unpredictable foreign policy. One never truly knows what will occur next. As an American and supporter of Israel, I am hopeful and concerned about what the U.S strategy will be following this event. Nonetheless, the elimination of Qasem Soleimani has more benefits than it has consequences; at least at this point in time. Kudos to the Trump administration for making such a powerful move. Let's all hope it turns out to be biggest card played this round.

Josh Less, TOI, 06.01.20

3. Rafi Peretz versus LGBT

Israels Bildungsminister Rafi Peretz sorgte mit seinen homophoben Äußerungen wiederholt für hefti-

gen Widerstand. Der 64-jährige Rabbiner und Chef der nationalreligiösen Partei Habayit Hayehudi erklärte in einem Zeitungsinterview auf die Frage, was er davon halten würde, wenn eins seiner zwölf Kinder homosexuell wäre: „Gott sei Dank sind meine Kinder auf natürliche und gesunde Weise aufgewachsen. Sie bauen ihre Familien auf der Basis jüdischer Werte.“ Als normale Familie definierte er eine „mit Mann und Frau“. Tausende Schüler_innen und Lehrer_innen protestierten daraufhin gegen den homophoben Minister. „Liebe ist Liebe“ stand auf den Schildern der Demonstrant_innen auf dem Rabin-Platz in Tel Aviv. Erst im vergangenen Jahr, unmittelbar nach seiner Ernennung zum Bildungsminister, hatte Peretz erneut die Konversionstherapie zur „Heilung“ Homosexueller befürwortet und stieß damit auf heftige Kritik in den Medien.

We need to talk about Rafi Peretz

(...) We need to talk about how in January 2020 the Minister of Education in the State of Israel can go on record and call gay people unnatural. But most importantly we need to talk about the Israel forming right before our eyes, where this sort of statement is not only welcomed but encouraged. (...) Israel is supposed to be a Jewish country, neither secular nor religious, simply Jewish. (...) This means that for better or for worse, the same applies when it comes to politics. Secular politicians are allowed to stand up in Knesset and advocate for public transport on Shabbat, and religious politicians are allowed to advocate for all restaurants to be closed on Shabbat, that is just the way it is. A messy democracy, full of people all across the religious spectrum who will never quite see eye to eye. (...) that's fine. Until it becomes an infringement on people's rights and safety. And when the Minister of Education stands up and says that none of his children will ever be gay because they "grew up naturally and healthy" I think that things have gone too far. (...) Rafi Peretz has a responsibility to (...) get children and youth safely through 12 years of schooling whilst giving them as many opportunities for education as possible. And right now, he is failing them. Because by failing the LGBT+ children in Israel he is failing everyone. LGBT+ youth have higher suicide attempt rates than any other group. They are at risk for bullying both in school and at home, and now it seems, from the highest levels of government too. (...) I wonder what would happen if he ever put himself in our shoes for just a day. How would he, a straight white man, enjoy his very existence being laid out

and debated for all the country to see? (...) community needs allies. We cannot fight this alone forever. In order to drown out the poison of the voices shouting over us, we need those who are neither here nor there to start standing with us. If you disagree with Peretz, if you disagree with his dangerous and dehumanising views, it is time to start saying so. (...) Shira Silkoff, TOI, 11.01.20

Minister of ignorance

The remarks of Education Minister Rafi Peretz (...) are another sad reminder of the moral nadir of the person entrusted by Israel's government to oversee the country's education system. He displayed a rare combination of ignorance and religious chauvinism on myriad topics — from proposals to introduce apartheid after annexing the territories, the defense of the electoral alliance with the racist Kahanists and the utter rejection of the LGBT community, to opposition to women serving in combat. The distance between Peretz's Zionist-Haredi worldview and anyone who cares about public education and liberal, democratic values is so vast as to be unbridgeable. (...) Peretz's attitude toward LGBT individuals also betrays a hierarchical worldview: There are LGBT people, and there are people who grew up "in a natural and healthy manner" in a "normal family [of] a man and a woman, in accordance with Jewish tradition.... There's no need to be ashamed that we live in this natural way." Only in a world as separate and disconnected as that of Peretz are different lifestyles seen as a threat to the "natural" order. Presumably that is also why he is so critical of Israel's female combat soldiers. The war that Peretz seeks to declare against the Israeli-born children of migrants, whose only sin is not being Jewish, is another station for the education minister's hate train. The education system shapes the entire Israeli society. Peretz's narrow and benighted worldview disqualifies him from serving as education minister. Editorial, HAA, 11.01.20

Israel's education minister gets a lesson

Rabbi Rafi Peretz should spend more time working on Israel's academic record and school curricula, and less time poking around in the business of family choices. (...) In the wake of his "normal, natural, healthy" family assertions, the media explosion on Twitter and television was not only swift; it was personal. Indeed, video editorials reminiscent of public-service announcements began to be aired during commercial breaks on every main Israeli channel. These consist mainly of lesbian, gay and

transgender celebrities praising their "normal, natural and healthy" upbringing by loving and wonderful heterosexual parents whose Jewish values included respect for and kindness towards others. It has been a crash course for the minister in charge of all of Israel's pupils – not just those in religious schools – in a country filled with children born to and raised by same-sex couples, single or divorced parents, and women who produced them through in-vitro fertilization, either with their husbands' sperm or that of donors selected from a catalog. What Peretz has revealed in his ramblings is that he dwells in a bubble that bears little resemblance to the society around him. (...) Critics can take comfort in the fact that Peretz's term as education minister is temporary. Even his chances of remaining a Knesset member are growing slimmer by the day (...)
Ruthie Blum, IHY, 15.01.20

4. Medienquerschnitt

Tödliche Regenfälle

Rain should not kill Israelis

(...) Dean Shoshani and Stav Harari drowned in an elevator when some 80 millimeters (...) of rain fell in two hours in south Tel Aviv. The weekend storm also took the lives of Ali Agbariya of Arara and Eran Harnstadt of Binyamina. On Wednesday another man, a 38-year-old from Nahariya, also died after being swept away by flooding. It seems as if exceptional downpours are becoming the norm. (...) The planning of sewage systems is usually tailored to the rainfall averages that we've known to date. But rainstorms that people describe as happening "once in 50 years" have been happening with increasing frequency. The climate crisis, along with changes in urban density, are making heavy rains more difficult to cope with, as they cause casualties and serious damage to property and infrastructure. According to all forecasts and models, the situation is only going to get worse. Given this, we need a change of approach. Just as in the past it was thought that the solution to traffic jams was to build more roads while now we understand that the solution must also include functioning public transportation, we must realize that merely widening drainage pipes won't solve the problem. A new approach to planning cities and roads is needed. Along with the traditional drainage solutions, we must adopt solutions to block and disperse the water that collects on the surface and causes damage. (...) To deal with the flooding,

the water and sewage authorities, the local authorities, government ministries and especially the prime minister must recognize that there is a climate crisis and join the worldwide efforts to alleviate it. A leadership that doesn't deal with the ramifications of the climate crisis and take steps to accommodate the changes needed isn't doing its job. Draining surface water has to be part of urban planning (...). Cities in Europe, the United States and Canada are drawing up plans to deal with exceptional rainstorms. If Israel wants to stop counting its dead after every cloudburst, it has to wake to the new reality and adapt its infrastructures to the climate crisis era.
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