



Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 22/08

Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

07. – 22. Dezember 2008

1. Likud-Primaries und die Feiglin-Kontroverse

In Vorbereitung auf die Knesset-Wahlen führte auch der Likud Primaries durch, um die Listenfolge der Kandidaten festzulegen.

Geprägt wurden die Primaries von der Kontroverse um den rechtsnationalen Kandidaten Moshe Feiglin. Feiglin, der sich für ein Festhalten an der gesamten West Bank, eine Rückeroberung des Gazastreifens und einen Austritt Israels aus den Vereinten Nationen ausgesprochen hat, führt eine radikale Fraktion innerhalb des Likud an. Schon im Vorfeld hatte der Parteivorsitzende Benjamin Netanjahu intensive Lobbyarbeit gegen Feiglin geleistet. Befürchtet wurde, dass ein gutes Abschneiden Feiglins zu einem Rechtsruck innerhalb des Likud führen und Wähler/innen der Mitte abschrecken würde. Trotzdem wurde Feiglin auf den 20. Listenplatz gewählt. Diese Position verlor er jedoch einige Tage später, nachdem der parteiinterne Wahlausschuss eine Petition angenommen hatte, der zufolge die Plätze, die für weibliche Kandidatinnen reserviert worden waren an Regionalvertreter vergeben werden sollten, da die Kandidatinnen verhältnismäßig gut abgeschnitten hatten. Die Petition, die von Netanjahus Verbündetem Ophir Akunis eingereicht worden war und Feiglin auf den 36. Platz versetzte, wurde als Triumph für den Vorsitzenden gewertet.

Außerdem bemühte sich Netanjahu verstärkt, seine Position als gemäßigt darzustellen, indem er seine Verhandlungsbereitschaft im Friedensprozess betonte und sich mit Botschaftern der EU-Staaten traf. Umfrageergebnissen zu Folge liegt der Likud im Rennen um die meisten Knessetsitze weiterhin in Führung.

Let Feiglin be Feiglin

“Who is Moshe Feiglin and why is Binyamin Netanyahu, poised to be Israel's next prime minister,

working so feverishly to torpedo his chances of being elected on the Likud Knesset ticket? [...] Feiglin, 46, first gained prominence in 1993 when he led the Zo Artzeinu movement in strident protests against the Oslo Accords. [...] He opposes any territorial concessions, under any circumstances. He has reportedly said that Arab citizens of Israel hostile to the state should be encouraged to leave. [...]

Not unreasonably, Netanyahu is worried that allowing Feiglin too high a profile will send the wrong message about Likud philosophy. In our view, however, he could solve this problem by rejecting the advice of his handlers to stay vague and explicitly articulate his vision for the party. [...] Tactically, letting Israelis know where he stands on territorial concessions and negotiations with the Palestinians would settle the Likud's orientation. Feiglin could hardly then claim, as he does now, that he represents ‘the real Likud.’

But the estrangement of the broader far Right stems, at least in part, from a feeling that politicians, jurists, academics and the media unlawfully manipulate the levers of power (including the army) to pursue an agenda antithetical to its values. This wider far Right says that when it seeks redress of its grievances within the system, it is blocked. And when it looks at how Feiglin has been thwarted in the Likud, it must be saying: ‘I told you so.’

The political system is destabilized when a growing minority of citizens feel they have no incentive to vote; or when they cast ballots for parties which play a polarizing role. Yet to encourage people to vote for one of the major parties - this newspaper's position - those parties must embrace a welcoming, big-tent philosophy. [...]

To paraphrase Lyndon B. Johnson, Israeli politics is probably better off having Feiglin inside the tent, pissing out, than outside the tent, pissing in.”

JPO 03.12.08

Ostracize, boycott, do not join

„This list must be ostracized, this parliamentary group must be boycotted.[...] If the Israeli government boycotted an Austrian government that included Joerg Haider, who was much less of a racist than Feiglin and with much less blood on his hands than Ehud Yatom, an Israeli government formed by Likud can, should and must be boycotted. [...] This list is filled with refusers of peace, rebels against authority and deniers of democracy. Netanyahu understands this, and the time has come for Livni, Barak and their voters to recognize it. They must not lend a hand to legitimizing it.”

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Moshe Ishon, HZO 10.12.08

Netanyahu's grand coalition

“Disturbingly, rather than drawing distinctions between his party and its rivals, Netanyahu has spent the days since the primary drawing distinctions between himself and a minor player in his own party. Both ahead of the primary and in the days since, Netanyahu has devoted the majority of his time to attacking his sharpest critic within the party - Moshe Feiglin, who heads the far-right Jewish Leadership Forum in Likud and won the not-particularly-senior 20th position on Likud's Knesset slate. On Thursday, Netanyahu succeeded in pushing Feiglin down to the 36th spot. [...] The threat he constitutes to Netanyahu is negligible.

Given Feiglin's inherent weakness, Netanyahu's post-primary focus on him is shocking. Netanyahu has argued that Feiglin will lose votes for Likud. But assuming that is true, the last thing Netanyahu should be doing is placing a spotlight on Feiglin. Rather, Netanyahu should be emphasizing his strongest suit: the clear distinction between Likud on the one hand and Kadima and Labor on the other hand.”

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Great victory for Israel

“The manner in which Likud officials are dealing with the Feiglin mess is not perfect, to say the least, but

make no mistake about it: The victory that we saw Thursday against Moshe Feiglin is everyone's triumph, not only Benjamin Netanyahu's win.

It doesn't matter who you intend to vote for in the upcoming general elections, the decision to bump Feiglin down to the 36th spot on the Likud Knesset list is an important achievement in national terms. The arguments for doing it are logical, yet the way it was done was twisted. [...]

We need to understand something: Moshe Feiglin has been attempting to enter the Knesset for 15 years now. We are dealing with a person backed by a movement that knows it has no chance to get the people's vote of confidence should it offer its dangerous merchandise to the public. So instead, it attached itself to another movement, Likud, and through it is making a name for itself. [...]

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Hanoch Daum, JED 12.12.08

Enough already

„Benjamin Netanyahu couldn't have expected a better result. The right-wing leader both used Moshe Feiglin to depict himself as a moderate statesman and erased him from the Likud ticket. This brilliant move paves Netanyahu's way to the center – the object of desire for every Israeli politician striving for power.”

Akiva Elder, HAA 15.12.08

2. Ende des Waffenstillstandes mit der Hamas

Der Waffenstillstand zwischen Israel und der im Gazastreifen regierenden Hamas ist am 20. Dezember offiziell ausgelaufen. Doch schon in den Wochen vorher hatten sich israelische Armee und palästinensische Militante vereinzelt Gefechte geliefert. In den letzten Tagen hatten sich zudem Angriffe durch Kassam-Raketen auf die israelischen Grenzgebiete des Gazastreifens vermehrt.

In den Medien wurde darüber spekuliert, wie Regierung – und Hamas – weiter verfahren würden. Während die Führung der Hamas zunächst widersprüchliche Aussagen machte, verkündete ein Sprecher der Organisation schließlich, die Waffenruhe werde nicht fortgeführt werden. Allerdings gab die Hamas auch an, nur auf Angriffe durch Israel reagieren zu wollen. Auch israelische

Politiker ließen sich auf keine klare Strategie festlegen. Verteidigungsminister Barak sagte, Israel werde vor einer ausgeweiteten Militäroperation nicht zurückschrecken, sie jedoch auch nicht überstürzt beginnen.

Das Ende des Waffenstillstandes wurde indes schon am ersten Tag deutlich: Während Samstag mindestens 13 Raketen auf israelisches Gebiet niedergingen, griffen Flugzeuge des israelischen Militärs Stellungen im Gazastreifen an und töteten einen palästinensischen Kämpfer.

The election campaign in Gaza

“The barrages of Qassam rockets and mortar shells being fired from the Gaza Strip [...] attest to the collapse of the lull Israel and Hamas had achieved. At first glance, it seems that those who viewed the lull as a fleeting and pointless episode were right. But such a view fails to take all the facts into account - because it is impossible to ignore the fact that for more than four months, the calm was preserved, proving that Hamas is capable of maintaining almost complete quiet. [...]

It is also important to consider the proximate cause of the collapse: Israel uncovered a tunnel that, it claims, was slated to be used to abduct soldiers. It therefore went into Gaza to blow the tunnel up. During this operation, several Palestinians were killed. That is when Israel and Hamas began shooting at each other again. [...]

The most important question now, however, is not who is to blame; it is how to restore the calm, rehabilitate the truce and stabilize the Gaza border. After all, the cease-fire's collapse does not have to be final and definitive. [...]

Nevertheless, [...] the upcoming election serves as fertile ground for those who like to brandish slogans that drag Gaza and the lull into the political battle. [...] It is enough to listen to the indirect exchanges between Tzipi Livni and Ehud Barak to understand that politics, not logic, is driving this talk. [...] Anyone seeking to rehabilitate the truce in Gaza must first obtain a truce on the political battlefield.”

HAA 09.12.08

The post lull era

“By now it's already too late to raid the Gaza Strip. Hamas completed the establishment of a long-range strategic arm, created a system of fortifications in the Strip, and reinforced the underground tunnels as a way to circumvent the Gaza crossings. [...] We missed the train. Now there's no reason to rush. We need to wait for the next government to be formed,

in the hopes that it would be able to take decisions. Until that time, Israel's conduct vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip will continue in the format of one-time responses to developments on the ground. [...]

What is most infuriating in this story is the fact that the Palestinians too know that Israel won't invade the Strip in the near future, and that there is no chance that it would exact a heavy price tag for the continued attacks on Gaza-region communities. The Palestinians are so sure about Israel's restraint policy that they allow themselves to continue the fire. [...] Hamas established new rules of play vis-à-vis Israel ahead of the post-lull era, and Israel finds itself being dragged by Hamas, instead of breaking these rules. [...] Meanwhile, Gaza's defense system has been completed. It includes eight divisions and 16,000 armed personnel, as well as anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons. [...]

Israeli officials expected that the lull would serve to advance negotiations on the release of Gilad Shalit. Yet this did not happen.

In summary, what the IDF could have done six months ago is much more complicated today. Therefore, there is no rush now. Or as the defense minister put it: The war won't run away.“

Alex Fishman, JED 18.12.08

Who is calling the shots in Hamas?

„During the past week, Hamas officials issued contradictory statements as to whether they would agree to the extension of the truce, which they refer to as a *tahadiyeh* (period of calm), sparking speculation about sharp differences among the movement's top brass. [...]

The divisions surfaced earlier this week when Khaled Mashaal, the Damascus-based leader of Hamas, announced that his movement was not going to renew the cease-fire. Mashaal's statement caught the Hamas leaders in Gaza by surprise. Many of them were quick to announce that Hamas still hadn't taken a final position on an extension of the truce. Some Hamas figures in the Strip said (in private) that the movement had no choice but to continue with the *tahadiyeh*, while others openly supported Mashaal's position. [...]

The Hamas leaders also appear to be divided over strategy. While some argue that a cease-fire is in Hamas interest because the movement needs a 'lull' and should not provide Israel with an excuse to invade the Gaza Strip, others insist that the rocket and terror attacks on Israel are the only means to extract further concessions from Jerusalem.

The Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip is keen on renewing the truce for various reasons. One reason is that Haniyeh and Hamas Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahar know very well that a military escalation would mean they would be the first to be targeted by Israel. The two are currently trying to convince Mashaal and the 'outside' leadership of Hamas to accept their stance and to sign on to an agreement with Israel, even if that means that the border crossings would remain closed for now."
Khaled Abu Toameh, JPO 18.12.08

Extend the truce

„On Friday, the Gaza cease-fire will officially expire. [...] For its part, Israel must consider whether it is best to return to the lull in its original incarnation or to accept a reality of a daily battle of attrition. At present, it seems as though there is no alternative other than to continue the lull and to dig up from the rubble of history the series of understandings reached with Hamas in June via Egyptian mediation. In another two months, a new government is expected to emerge in Israel, which will have to decide on a policy toward Hamas. In another month, when Mahmoud Abbas' term in office comes to an end, there is liable to be an upheaval in the Palestinian government. Under these circumstances, it would be better to refrain from causing unnecessary uproar in Gaza by embarking on operations that are liable to further complicate Israel's position, particularly among residents of the western Negev. Empty, threatening slogans certainly do not constitute an alternative to a carefully thought-out decision, which must be made as soon as possible."
HAA 16.12.08

We can't go on like this

"The Israeli government firmly refuses to recognize Hamas' Gaza regime. This might be the right decision, or not. As result, Israel does not engage in direct negotiations with senior figures in the Strip. [...] However, at the same time, Israel refrains from committing itself to a military solution that would put an end to the bombings. [...]
Meanwhile, Gaza-region residents are abandoned. [...]
On Thursday, Hamas officially declared that the truce is over. This is not a joyful announcement, and it may not mark the lull's end. In any case, this is a golden opportunity to reformulate the rules, even if terribly late.

The preferable solution, also when it comes to most area residents, is a comprehensive and binding truce agreement, with an option for diplomatic and economic progress. Yet in the absence of such agreement, the ongoing attacks on Israeli communities require a strategic military response. We can't go on like this."
Uri Misgav, JED 20.12.08

3. Medienquerschnitt

Die Vielfalt der israelischen Presse kann in einem Medienspiegel natürlich nicht umfassend wiedergegeben werden. Um den deutschen Leser/innen einen Einblick in das große Themenspektrum, das in den Medien behandelt wird, zu gewähren, veröffentlichen wir in dieser Schlaglichtausgabe einen Querschnitt an weiteren Themen, die in den letzten Wochen die israelische Gesellschaft bewegten.

Über den seit 2006 im Gazastreifen gefangen gehaltenen Gilad Shalit und den Kommentar der Außenministerin Tzippi Livni, die bezüglich entführter israelischer Soldaten sagte, es sei „nicht immer möglich alle nach Hause zu bringen“.

In Israel hat das Schicksal dieser Soldaten einen hohen emotionalen Stellenwert. Die Regierung ist stark dafür kritisiert worden, dass sie bisher trotz indirekter Verhandlungen mit der Hamas und einer Belagerung des Gazastreifens keine Fortschritte erzielen konnte:

Nothing but the truth

Last Thursday a senior political figure, who is running for prime minister, stood up and told the nation the truth about kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit. Tzipi Livni stressed that they are making and will continue to make every effort to bring Gilad home, but added a sentence that was clearly the whole truth and nothing but the truth: "It is not always possible to bring everyone home."
Thus Livni, with admirable courage, faced off against the emotional, populist, irresponsible public discourse. [...] Were Hamas not certain that internal Israeli pressure would force the government to accept all its demands, Shalit may have been home a long time ago. [...]

Those who disagree with Livni propose that Israel knuckle under to all of Hamas' demands. [...] This must not be allowed to happen.”
Yehuda Ben Meir, HAA 15.12.08

The Gilad Shalit fiasco

„The foreign minister and defense minister have been engaged in an incisive debate regarding the feasibility of and price required for the release of a captive soldier. Yet overall it is a phony debate [...]. Had the above controversy been approached as an academic issue, we may have had some interest in it. Yet when this bogus disagreement emerges between two of Israel's top three decision-makers, this is an infuriating and outrageous matter.

It is clear to everyone that the State of Israel is helpless vis-à-vis countries where our soldiers are being held. For example, an Air Force navigator lost somewhere in Iran's vast expenses. [...] Should we embark on a war? [...] When Israel is required to pay a 'heavy' price to secure the captive's release or gain some information about him, the cruel question of 'at any price' emerges.

Yet Gilad Shalit is alive and is held a few kilometers away from IDF forces. He has not disappeared deep in any country. He is in the Gaza Strip, in a constrained, besieged zone. Israel can operate against it, within it, and around it with almost no interruption. [...]

Our decision-makers are engaged in a discussion regarding the 'price' of the release of a captive soldier.

At the same time, Hamas holds an animalistic display of 'entertainment' featuring the Israeli soldier begging to be released. And while the Gaza mob cheers on, our ministers continue to argue, and our government rushes to declare its desire to extend the lull – without presenting any conditions in respect to the release of Gilad Shalit.”

Dov Weissglas, JED 17.12.08

Über den von jüdischen Rechtsextremisten geplanten Marsch durch die arabische Stadt Um el-Fahm.

Die Demonstration wurde vom Obersten Gerichtshof aus Gründen der Meinungsfreiheit erlaubt, wurde von der Polizei jedoch kurzfristig aus „Sicherheitsgründen“ auf ein unbestimmtes Datum verschoben worden. Von der israelischen Linken sowie Vertretern der arabischen Bevölkerung war der Marsch als eindeutige Provokation gewertet worden:

Marching through Um el-Fahm

“A march by extremists potentially promoting racist messages against Arab citizens and scheduled purposely in an Arab town poses a trying dilemma. [...]

While blatant incitement to racism must not be permitted, restrictions on speech should be imposed only when absolutely necessary. Prohibiting a march because it constitutes a provocation, or for fear of a violent reaction, sets a dangerous precedent. If there is no clear indication that participants would incite to racism or commit acts of violence, the march must be allowed to take place, with both demonstrators and the residents of Umm el-Fahm appropriately protected. [...]

The most genuine test of freedom of expression is in the facilitation of its most outrageous, extreme and controversial forms. Proof of this is in the rich public debate the planned march in Umm el-Fahm has spurred. Proposed counterdemonstrations, condemnations of racism and support for the rights of the country's Arab minority are some of the encouraging by-products of this discourse. [...]

A democratic state cannot silence people because certain people do not want to hear them. The prohibition of the proposed march in Umm el-Fahm would violate the freedom of all - not only of the demonstrators. It would also prevent the rest of us from hearing what they have to say and from voicing our responses.”

Melanie Takefman, JPO 17.12.08

Über die zweite UN-Konferenz gegen Rassismus („Durban II“), die im April 2009 in Genf stattfinden wird.

Nachdem die erste Konferenz 2001 unter anderem als Plattform für anti-israelische und antisemitische Propaganda genutzt worden war, haben Kanada und Israel einen Boykott der Folgeveranstaltung angekündigt:

Now get ready for round 2

“The 2001 UN Durban Review Conference was an eight-day platform for attacks against the State of Israel. At the conference, driven primarily by nongovernmental organizations in close cooperation with Iran and other Islamic regimes, Israel was repeatedly singled out and internationally isolated. [...] Durban 1 may have been the largest anti-

Semitic and anti-Israel meeting of the 21st century. Now get ready for Round 2. [...]

So far, the [2009] conference promises to be nothing more than a dangerous reprisal of the 2001 debacle - a broad campaign to demonize Israel while ignoring racist and discriminatory acts by UN members such as Sudan, Iran and China. [...] Already, a number of Western governments and international organizations [...] are preparing for more of the same. [...] With enough blood spilled, it isn't too late for world powers and leaders of the future to take an affirmative stand - this time in support of Israel's right to live in security and peace."

Jennifer Laszlo Misrahi, JPO 17.12.08

The anti-racism debate

„The Durban review conference is a timely opportunity to reaffirm the principles of non-discrimination and to build on the Durban Declaration and Program of Action. [...] If all states are not engaged in the process, this goal may remain elusive. Thus, the concerns expressed by Canada and Israel that the review conference will become a platform for denigrating Israel must be assuaged. Seven years ago, states did so by elevating the conference's outcome above the hatred and hostility that took place on its periphery, and by reaching a broad agreement on the necessary measures to combat racism and intolerance. They must achieve that commonality of purpose again through active engagement rather than withdrawal. [...]

States have a responsibility to show leadership against racial discrimination and intolerance. What message does a state boycott send to those who are suffering from racism?"

Navanethem Pillay, HAA 16.12.08

Über die verhältnismäßig große Zahl israelischer Journalisten/innen, die im Vorfeld der kommenden Knessetwahlen in die Politik wechseln. Die prominenten Medienvertreter spiegeln das ganze politische Spektrum in Israel wieder und kandidieren für so unterschiedliche Parteien wie die linke Meretz und die rechte Habayit Hayehudi. Zwar sind auch in der Vergangenheit bekannten Journalisten wie z.B. Uri Avnery und Tommy Lapid in die Politik gewechselt, in diesem Jahr ist das Phänomen jedoch besonders auffällig. Dies wirft auch Fragen über das Zusammenspiel von Politik und Medien in Israel auf :

From the paper to the plenum

"Some of the most interesting headlines of this otherwise sleepy campaign have been supplied by journalists announcing that they are joining a party in order to run for Knesset. [...]

They [include] Daniel Ben-Simon (Labor), Nitzan Horowitz (Meretz), Gideon Reicher (Pensioners) and Uri Orbach (Habayit Hayehudi). [...]

The switch from media to politics is laudable for several reasons. [...] The entry of new forces strengthens the political system's legitimacy [...]. There is also symbolic value in the fact that journalists, who must always defend themselves against the claim of being critics who scorn politicians because they themselves bear no responsibility, are descending from the judge's seat to the political playing field. [...]

This new phenomenon also obligates the media to be scrupulous about maintaining ethical firewalls, so that presenters and reporters do not abuse the platforms they have been given to build a party following for themselves. The public must be convinced that such career switches stem from unimpeachable motives. Otherwise, its faith in the media will be further eroded."

HAA 18.12.08

HAA = Haaretz
HZO= Ha Tzofe
IHY = Israeli HaYom
JED = Jedioth Ahronoth
JPO = Jerusalem Post
MAA = Maariv

Der Artikel aus HZO wurde dem Medienspiegel der Deutschen Botschaft Israel entnommen.

Veröffentlicht am: 22. Dezember 2008

Verantwortlich:

*Dr. Ralf Hexel,
Leiter der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Israel*

Redaktion:

Maike Harel

Anita Haviv

Homepage: www.fes.org.il

Email: fes@fes.org.il



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Hanoch Daum, JED 12.12.08

Enough already

„Benjamin Netanyahu couldn't have expected a better result. The right-wing leader both used Moshe Feiglin to depict himself as a moderate statesman and erased him from the Likud ticket. This brilliant move paves Netanyahu's way to the center – the object of desire for every Israeli politician striving for power.”

Akiva Elder, HAA 15.12.08

2. Ende des Waffenstillstandes mit der Hamas

Der Waffenstillstand zwischen Israel und der im Gazastreifen regierenden Hamas ist am 20. Dezember offiziell ausgelaufen. Doch schon in den Wochen vorher hatten sich israelische Armee und palästinensische Militante vereinzelt Gefechte geliefert. In den letzten Tagen hatten sich zudem Angriffe durch Kassam-Raketen auf die israelischen Grenzgebiete des Gazastreifens vermehrt.

In den Medien wurde darüber spekuliert, wie Regierung – und Hamas – weiter verfahren würden. Während die Führung der Hamas zunächst widersprüchliche Aussagen machte, verkündete ein Sprecher der Organisation schließlich, die Waffenruhe werde nicht fortgeführt werden. Allerdings gab die Hamas auch an, nur auf Angriffe durch Israel reagieren zu wollen. Auch israelische

Politiker ließen sich auf keine klare Strategie festlegen. Verteidigungsminister Barak sagte, Israel werde vor einer ausgeweiteten Militäroperation nicht zurückschrecken, sie jedoch auch nicht überstürzt beginnen.

Das Ende des Waffenstillstandes wurde indes schon am ersten Tag deutlich: Während Samstag mindestens 13 Raketen auf israelisches Gebiet niedergingen, griffen Flugzeuge des israelischen Militärs Stellungen im Gazastreifen an und töteten einen palästinensischen Kämpfer.

The election campaign in Gaza

“The barrages of Qassam rockets and mortar shells being fired from the Gaza Strip [...] attest to the collapse of the lull Israel and Hamas had achieved. At first glance, it seems that those who viewed the lull as a fleeting and pointless episode were right. But such a view fails to take all the facts into account - because it is impossible to ignore the fact that for more than four months, the calm was preserved, proving that Hamas is capable of maintaining almost complete quiet. [...]

It is also important to consider the proximate cause of the collapse: Israel uncovered a tunnel that, it claims, was slated to be used to abduct soldiers. It therefore went into Gaza to blow the tunnel up. During this operation, several Palestinians were killed. That is when Israel and Hamas began shooting at each other again. [...]

The most important question now, however, is not who is to blame; it is how to restore the calm, rehabilitate the truce and stabilize the Gaza border. After all, the cease-fire's collapse does not have to be final and definitive. [...]

Nevertheless, [...] the upcoming election serves as fertile ground for those who like to brandish slogans that drag Gaza and the lull into the political battle. [...] It is enough to listen to the indirect exchanges between Tzipi Livni and Ehud Barak to understand that politics, not logic, is driving this talk. [...] Anyone seeking to rehabilitate the truce in Gaza must first obtain a truce on the political battlefield.”

HAA 09.12.08

The post lull era

“By now it’s already too late to raid the Gaza Strip. Hamas completed the establishment of a long-range strategic arm, created a system of fortifications in the Strip, and reinforced the underground tunnels as a way to circumvent the Gaza crossings. [...] We missed the train. Now there’s no reason to rush. We need to wait for the next government to be formed,

in the hopes that it would be able to take decisions. Until that time, Israel’s conduct vis-à-vis the Gaza Strip will continue in the format of one-time responses to developments on the ground. [...]

What is most infuriating in this story is the fact that the Palestinians too know that Israel won’t invade the Strip in the near future, and that there is no chance that it would exact a heavy price tag for the continued attacks on Gaza-region communities. The Palestinians are so sure about Israel’s restraint policy that they allow themselves to continue the fire. [...] Hamas established new rules of play vis-à-vis Israel ahead of the post-lull era, and Israel finds itself being dragged by Hamas, instead of breaking these rules. [...] Meanwhile, Gaza’s defense system has been completed. It includes eight divisions and 16,000 armed personnel, as well as anti-aircraft and anti-tank weapons. [...]

Israeli officials expected that the lull would serve to advance negotiations on the release of Gilad Shalit. Yet this did not happen.

In summary, what the IDF could have done six months ago is much more complicated today. Therefore, there is no rush now. Or as the defense minister put it: The war won’t run away.“

Alex Fishman, JED 18.12.08

Who is calling the shots in Hamas?

„During the past week, Hamas officials issued contradictory statements as to whether they would agree to the extension of the truce, which they refer to as a *tahadiyeh* (period of calm), sparking speculation about sharp differences among the movement's top brass. [...]

The divisions surfaced earlier this week when Khaled Mashaal, the Damascus-based leader of Hamas, announced that his movement was not going to renew the cease-fire. Mashaal’s statement caught the Hamas leaders in Gaza by surprise. Many of them were quick to announce that Hamas still hadn’t taken a final position on an extension of the truce. Some Hamas figures in the Strip said (in private) that the movement had no choice but to continue with the *tahadiyeh*, while others openly supported Mashaal’s position. [...]

The Hamas leaders also appear to be divided over strategy. While some argue that a cease-fire is in Hamas interest because the movement needs a ‘lull’ and should not provide Israel with an excuse to invade the Gaza Strip, others insist that the rocket and terror attacks on Israel are the only means to extract further concessions from Jerusalem.

The Hamas leadership in the Gaza Strip is keen on renewing the truce for various reasons. One reason is that Haniyeh and Hamas Foreign Minister Mahmoud Zahar know very well that a military escalation would mean they would be the first to be targeted by Israel. The two are currently trying to convince Mashaal and the 'outside' leadership of Hamas to accept their stance and to sign on to an agreement with Israel, even if that means that the border crossings would remain closed for now."
Khaled Abu Toameh, JPO 18.12.08

Extend the truce

„On Friday, the Gaza cease-fire will officially expire. [...] For its part, Israel must consider whether it is best to return to the lull in its original incarnation or to accept a reality of a daily battle of attrition. At present, it seems as though there is no alternative other than to continue the lull and to dig up from the rubble of history the series of understandings reached with Hamas in June via Egyptian mediation. In another two months, a new government is expected to emerge in Israel, which will have to decide on a policy toward Hamas. In another month, when Mahmoud Abbas' term in office comes to an end, there is liable to be an upheaval in the Palestinian government. Under these circumstances, it would be better to refrain from causing unnecessary uproar in Gaza by embarking on operations that are liable to further complicate Israel's position, particularly among residents of the western Negev. Empty, threatening slogans certainly do not constitute an alternative to a carefully thought-out decision, which must be made as soon as possible."
HAA 16.12.08

We can't go on like this

"The Israeli government firmly refuses to recognize Hamas' Gaza regime. This might be the right decision, or not. As result, Israel does not engage in direct negotiations with senior figures in the Strip. [...] However, at the same time, Israel refrains from committing itself to a military solution that would put an end to the bombings. [...] Meanwhile, Gaza-region residents are abandoned. [...] On Thursday, Hamas officially declared that the truce is over. This is not a joyful announcement, and it may not mark the lull's end. In any case, this is a golden opportunity to reformulate the rules, even if terribly late.

The preferable solution, also when it comes to most area residents, is a comprehensive and binding truce agreement, with an option for diplomatic and economic progress. Yet in the absence of such agreement, the ongoing attacks on Israeli communities require a strategic military response. We can't go on like this."
Uri Misgav, JED 20.12.08

3. Medienquerschnitt

Die Vielfalt der israelischen Presse kann in einem Medienspiegel natürlich nicht umfassend wiedergegeben werden. Um den deutschen Leser/innen einen Einblick in das große Themenspektrum, das in den Medien behandelt wird, zu gewähren, veröffentlichen wir in dieser Schlaglichtausgabe einen Querschnitt an weiteren Themen, die in den letzten Wochen die israelische Gesellschaft bewegten.

Über den seit 2006 im Gazastreifen gefangen gehaltenen Gilad Shalit und den Kommentar der Außenministerin Tzippi Livni, die bezüglich entführter israelischer Soldaten sagte, es sei „nicht immer möglich alle nach Hause zu bringen“.

In Israel hat das Schicksal dieser Soldaten einen hohen emotionalen Stellenwert. Die Regierung ist stark dafür kritisiert worden, dass sie bisher trotz indirekter Verhandlungen mit der Hamas und einer Belagerung des Gazastreifens keine Fortschritte erzielen konnte:

Nothing but the truth

Last Thursday a senior political figure, who is running for prime minister, stood up and told the nation the truth about kidnapped soldier Gilad Shalit. Tzipi Livni stressed that they are making and will continue to make every effort to bring Gilad home, but added a sentence that was clearly the whole truth and nothing but the truth: "It is not always possible to bring everyone home." Thus Livni, with admirable courage, faced off against the emotional, populist, irresponsible public discourse. [...] Were Hamas not certain that internal Israeli pressure would force the government to accept all its demands, Shalit may have been home a long time ago. [...]

Those who disagree with Livni propose that Israel knuckle under to all of Hamas' demands. [...] This must not be allowed to happen.”
Yehuda Ben Meir, HAA 15.12.08

The Gilad Shalit fiasco

„The foreign minister and defense minister have been engaged in an incisive debate regarding the feasibility of and price required for the release of a captive soldier. Yet overall it is a phony debate [...]. Had the above controversy been approached as an academic issue, we may have had some interest in it. Yet when this bogus disagreement emerges between two of Israel's top three decision-makers, this is an infuriating and outrageous matter.

It is clear to everyone that the State of Israel is helpless vis-à-vis countries where our soldiers are being held. For example, an Air Force navigator lost somewhere in Iran's vast expenses. [...] Should we embark on a war? [...] When Israel is required to pay a 'heavy' price to secure the captive's release or gain some information about him, the cruel question of 'at any price' emerges.

Yet Gilad Shalit is alive and is held a few kilometers away from IDF forces. He has not disappeared deep in any country. He is in the Gaza Strip, in a constrained, besieged zone. Israel can operate against it, within it, and around it with almost no interruption. [...]

Our decision-makers are engaged in a discussion regarding the 'price' of the release of a captive soldier.

At the same time, Hamas holds an animalistic display of 'entertainment' featuring the Israeli soldier begging to be released. And while the Gaza mob cheers on, our ministers continue to argue, and our government rushes to declare its desire to extend the lull – without presenting any conditions in respect to the release of Gilad Shalit.”

Dov Weissglas, JED 17.12.08

Über den von jüdischen Rechtsextremisten geplanten Marsch durch die arabische Stadt Um el-Fahm.

Die Demonstration wurde vom Obersten Gerichtshof aus Gründen der Meinungsfreiheit erlaubt, wurde von der Polizei jedoch kurzfristig aus „Sicherheitsgründen“ auf ein unbestimmtes Datum verschoben worden. Von der israelischen Linken sowie Vertretern der arabischen Bevölkerung war der Marsch als eindeutige Provokation gewertet worden:

Marching through Um el-Fahm

“A march by extremists potentially promoting racist messages against Arab citizens and scheduled purposely in an Arab town poses a trying dilemma. [...]

While blatant incitement to racism must not be permitted, restrictions on speech should be imposed only when absolutely necessary. Prohibiting a march because it constitutes a provocation, or for fear of a violent reaction, sets a dangerous precedent. If there is no clear indication that participants would incite to racism or commit acts of violence, the march must be allowed to take place, with both demonstrators and the residents of Umm el-Fahm appropriately protected. [...]

The most genuine test of freedom of expression is in the facilitation of its most outrageous, extreme and controversial forms. Proof of this is in the rich public debate the planned march in Umm el-Fahm has spurred. Proposed counterdemonstrations, condemnations of racism and support for the rights of the country's Arab minority are some of the encouraging by-products of this discourse. [...]

A democratic state cannot silence people because certain people do not want to hear them. The prohibition of the proposed march in Umm el-Fahm would violate the freedom of all - not only of the demonstrators. It would also prevent the rest of us from hearing what they have to say and from voicing our responses.”

Melanie Takefman, JPO 17.12.08

Über die zweite UN-Konferenz gegen Rassismus („Durban II“), die im April 2009 in Genf stattfinden wird.

Nachdem die erste Konferenz 2001 unter anderem als Plattform für anti-israelische und antisemitische Propaganda genutzt worden war, haben Kanada und Israel einen Boykott der Folgeveranstaltung angekündigt:

Now get ready for round 2

“The 2001 UN Durban Review Conference was an eight-day platform for attacks against the State of Israel. At the conference, driven primarily by nongovernmental organizations in close cooperation with Iran and other Islamic regimes, Israel was repeatedly singled out and internationally isolated. [...] Durban 1 may have been the largest anti-

Semitic and anti-Israel meeting of the 21st century. Now get ready for Round 2. [...]

So far, the [2009] conference promises to be nothing more than a dangerous reprisal of the 2001 debacle - a broad campaign to demonize Israel while ignoring racist and discriminatory acts by UN members such as Sudan, Iran and China. [...]

Already, a number of Western governments and international organizations [...] are preparing for more of the same. [...] With enough blood spilled, it isn't too late for world powers and leaders of the future to take an affirmative stand - this time in support of Israel's right to live in security and peace."

Jennifer Laszlo Misrahi, JPO 17.12.08

The anti-racism debate

„The Durban review conference is a timely opportunity to reaffirm the principles of non-discrimination and to build on the Durban Declaration and Program of Action. [...] If all states are not engaged in the process, this goal may remain elusive. Thus, the concerns expressed by Canada and Israel that the review conference will become a platform for denigrating Israel must be assuaged. Seven years ago, states did so by elevating the conference's outcome above the hatred and hostility that took place on its periphery, and by reaching a broad agreement on the necessary measures to combat racism and intolerance. They must achieve that commonality of purpose again through active engagement rather than withdrawal. [...]

States have a responsibility to show leadership against racial discrimination and intolerance. What message does a state boycott send to those who are suffering from racism?"

Navanethem Pillay, HAA 16.12.08

Über die verhältnismäßig große Zahl israelischer Journalisten/innen, die im Vorfeld der kommenden Knessetwahlen in die Politik wechseln. Die prominenten Medienvertreter spiegeln das ganze politische Spektrum in Israel wieder und kandidieren für so unterschiedliche Parteien wie die linke Meretz und die rechte Habayit Hayehudi. Zwar sind auch in der Vergangenheit bekannten Journalisten wie z.B. Uri Avnery und Tommy Lapid in die Politik gewechselt, in diesem Jahr ist das Phänomen jedoch besonders auffällig. Dies wirft auch Fragen über das Zusammenspiel von Politik und Medien in Israel auf :

From the paper to the plenum

"Some of the most interesting headlines of this otherwise sleepy campaign have been supplied by journalists announcing that they are joining a party in order to run for Knesset. [...]

They [include] Daniel Ben-Simon (Labor), Nitzan Horowitz (Meretz), Gideon Reicher (Pensioners) and Uri Orbach (Habayit Hayehudi). [...]

The switch from media to politics is laudable for several reasons. [...] The entry of new forces strengthens the political system's legitimacy [...]. There is also symbolic value in the fact that journalists, who must always defend themselves against the claim of being critics who scorn politicians because they themselves bear no responsibility, are descending from the judge's seat to the political playing field. [...]

This new phenomenon also obligates the media to be scrupulous about maintaining ethical firewalls, so that presenters and reporters do not abuse the platforms they have been given to build a party following for themselves. The public must be convinced that such career switches stem from unimpeachable motives. Otherwise, its faith in the media will be further eroded."

HAA 18.12.08

HAA = Haaretz
HZO= Ha Tzofe
IHY = Israeli HaYom
JED = Jedioth Ahronoth
JPO = Jerusalem Post
MAA = Maariv

Der Artikel aus HZO wurde dem Medienspiegel der Deutschen Botschaft Israel entnommen.

Veröffentlicht am: 22. Dezember 2008

Verantwortlich:

Dr. Ralf Hexel,
Leiter der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Israel

Redaktion:

Maike Harel

Anita Haviv

Homepage: www.fes.org.il

Email: fes@fes.org.il