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Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

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1. Korruptionsaffäre um Olmert

Gegen den israelischen Premierminister Ehud Olmert läuft ein Korruptionsverfahren. Dies ist bereits das vierte Mal in Olmerts politischer Karriere, dass er wegen Korruptionsvorwürfen untersucht wird – bisher bewies er sich immer wieder als politisches „Stehaufmännchen“. Die neuen Anschuldigungen scheinen jedoch besonders schwerwiegend zu sein. Es geht um Bestechungsgelder in Höhe von Hunderttausenden Dollar, die der amerikanischer Geschäftsmann Morris Talansky an ihn gezahlt haben soll. Olmert besteht darauf, dass es sich bei den Geldern um legale Wahlkampfspenden handelte, kündigte aber auch seinen Rücktritt im Falle einer Anklage an. Der Ruf nach seinem Rücktritt war bereits aus allen politischen Richtungen laut geworden. In den Medien gab es zudem Kritik am Wahlsystem in Israel, das die Kandidaten zwingt, riesige Geldmengen aufzubringen, und an der Nachrichtensperre, die es der Presse verbot über Details des Verfahrens zu berichten.

The Olmert scandal

„Clearly, this is not a good time for Prime Minister Ehud Olmert to be focused on anything but running the country, addressing a vital range of security, foreign policy and (let's not forget) domestic agenda issues. [...]

But realistically speaking, how can he be paying complete attention to his job and his health while under multiple investigations by police and prosecutors?

Given the composition of his governing coalition and absent an indictment, Olmert may be able to hang on as prime minister even as the investigation continues. And it must be stressed that he is presumed innocent unless proven otherwise. [...] Israel's governance is simply too challenging a burden for a leader preoccupied with facing down

investigators in a complex financial scandal. If the prime minister cannot put this latest scandal to rest without delay, he must hand over the reins of power. The welfare of the country demands it.“

JPO 10.05.08

Olmert's system

“In the Olmert school of politics, one can learn how to connect with the wealthy members of world Jewry, how to get them to support the party the candidate is representing at any given moment, how to operate on the borderline of the law [...].

This is not how politics should be conducted, and if Olmert says there is no choice but to raise money from the wealthy, he will be doing an injustice to other politicians - those that are no less talented, but far more honest and modest, who make do with party funds. The law designates what is permissible and what is forbidden in relation to raising funds in Israel and abroad, and the manipulators and those who walk on the edge interpret the law and bend it to their needs, laughing in the face of those who keep the law.“

HAA, 11.05.08

Find a better way

“The State of Israel is about to mark its 60th Independence Day [...], when world leaders will be arriving to help us mark this extraordinary accomplishment. The decision to authorize the police to pursue a completely new investigation *just now* embarrasses not just the premier, but the entire nation. Could this probe really not have waited a few more weeks? [...]

And if there wasn't a better way, and the timing was unavoidable, isn't it curious that a gag order is preventing this newspaper from fully reporting on the nature of the investigation and keeping Olmert from presenting his side of the story. [...]

Buffeted by a drawn-out - and to this day unresolved - investigation of a sitting president (now out of

office), many Israelis are starting to lose faith in the effectiveness of the attorney-general and the police to efficiently address wrongdoing among politicians." JPO 04.05.08

The power of weakness

"Today, Olmert is a weak prime minister [...]. In a state that is as complex as Israel, a weak prime minister can actually do things that strong and popular leaders are scared to do.

For example, let's take the decision faced by every prime minister: Engaging in courageous and very unpopular negotiations with Syria. No secret messages and no deliberate headlines about the willingness to pay the price – rather, genuine talks. A prime minister that enjoys public and parliamentary support knows that going into this arena could cost him dearly. The ability to possibly reach a deal with Syria will always be weighed against the possibility of dropping in the polls and seeing the coalition collapse.

But what does Olmert have to lose? [...] Is there a better time for him to disregard what people say about him and do something that may earn him a few lines in Wikipedia that have nothing to do with being investigated under warning?"

Emmanuel Rosen, JED 12.05.08

Let's be done with all the Talanskys

"Serious questions need to be asked about the relationship between American Jewry and Israel. [...] The question here is why did Talansky, or any other Jewish American, invest, allegedly, in Olmert? What do they receive in exchange for this pot stirring? [...] It is time to say to the American Jews directly, as is customary among relatives: Leave us alone. Take your hands off Israel. Stop using your money to buy influence in Israel. Stop 'contributing' to advance your interests and views, some of which are at times delusionary and extremely dangerous to the future of the country you're supposedly trying to protect. [...] We no longer need [the American's] money, certainly not at the price of their interference [...]. Let's part as friends, then. Let American Jews attend to their own business, and us to ours. And let's be done with any more Talanskys."

Gideon Levy, HAA 11.05.08

Olmert muss nach Hause gehen

"Als jemand, der Olmerts Verhalten seit Jahren verfolgt, und als jemand, der persönlich in die Großzahl der Ermittlungen involviert war, stelle ich

klar und deutlich fest, dass er sofort zurücktreten muss."

Arie Avineri, HZO 05.05.08

Will Olmert survive this time?

"[...]he political system is putting out feelers, whispering, and mostly guessing. At this time, nobody has real and credible information regarding what is happening in the prime minister's investigation. Therefore, the politicians are waiting for developments and media reports. The sense is that now of all times something big may happen.

The quiet that currently prevails in the political system could give rise, in the coming days, to a grave political crisis that would shake up the country and the political system. Those who were looking for reasons to topple the government can now find them at the Fraud Investigation Unit.

If the affair becomes messy, the first to rock the boat would be the Labor Party. Its leaders won't be able to allow themselves to sit idle in a government whose leader is facing such severe suspicions."

Attila Somfalvi, JED 02.05.08

2. Kämpfe im Libanon

Nachdem sich der Libanon seit fast 18 Monaten in einer politischen Krise zwischen der Opposition unter Führung der Hisbollah und der Regierung befindet, kam es nun zu gewalttätigen Auseinandersetzungen. Hassan Nasrallah, der Führer der Hisbollah, hatte zwei Resolutionen der Regierung als Kriegserklärung aufgefasst. Diese zielten darauf ab, den Sicherheitschef des Beiruter Flughafens, der Verbindungen zur Hisbollah hält, abzusetzen und das Telefonnetzwerk der Organisation aufzulösen. Als Reaktion besetzten Kämpfer der Hisbollah und ihre Verbündeten große Teile der Hauptstadt, unterbrachen die Ausstrahlung eines regierungsnahen TV-Senders und umstellten das Büro von Premierminister Siniora. Die Regierung bezeichnete den Angriff als bewaffneten Putsch und rief ausländische Regierungen um Hilfe an, gab jedoch nach drei Tagen nach. Die Entscheidungsgewalt über die beiden Resolutionen wurde der Armee in die Hände gelegt, die zu verstehen gab, keine Änderungen vornehmen zu wollen.

In Israel schaut man mit Sorge auf die Entwicklungen im Nachbarland und die potentiellen Auswirkungen auf die Nordgrenze Israels.

Die Kämpfe im Libanon: Was wird an der Nordgrenze geschehen?

"Um ehrlich zu sein wollte die Hisbollah den letzten Konflikt im Libanon gar nicht. Nasrallah hätte es vorgezogen, die Macht im Libanon auf eine Weise zu übernehmen, die nach außen hin und der Welt gegenüber legitim aussieht [...]. Die letzten Kämpfe begann die Hisbollah, weil sie keine andere Wahl hatte, denn die Regierung von Fuad Seniora hatte sie mit zwei Punkten in Gefahr gebracht.

Der eine ist, dass Nasrallah die Handlungsfreiheit am Flughafen benötigt [...], der andere, dass er einen Überwachungs- und Kontrollapparat braucht, der vom libanesischen Kommunikationssystem unabhängig ist. [...]

Nasrallah hat zwar an Glaubwürdigkeit und Rechtmäßigkeit eingebüßt, als sich herausstellte, dass seine Leute Libanesen mindestens so gut töten können wie es Israelis können, aber Seniora hat angesichts der militärischen Macht der Hisbollah einen Rückzieher gemacht und somit wurden zwei Dinge klar: Die Hisbollah wird ohne zu zögern Gewalt anwenden, wenn sie keinen anderen Ausweg sieht, und es gibt heute niemandem im Libanon, der sie aufhalten kann. [...] Die zweite Sache ist, dass der Westen nur gut im Reden ist. Amerika wird Seniora nicht zu Hilfe kommen, auch die Franzosen oder andere Europäer nicht. [...] Daher muss der Staat Israel sich auf die Möglichkeit vorbereiten, dass der Libanon sich in ein Land in der Macht der Hisbollah, sprich des Irans, verwandelt."

Ya'akov Amidror, IHY 13.05.08

Only through the sights of its guns

"Lebanon is a hair's breadth away from civil war. But even if a lull is reached, it will not last for long in this divided country. [...] The recent events in Lebanon are not isolated occurrences, unrelated to the results of the Second Lebanon War. Israel continues to star as a 'political side' in Lebanon, with Nasrallah continuing to use Israel to goad the government, accusing it of collaborating with Israel and the United States. [...]

[W]hile Israel continues to view Hezbollah as nothing but a militant organization that can be crushed by a military operation, it is ignoring the possibility that Lebanon will shortly be run by that very organization. [...] If it so greatly fears Iran's expansion into the Mediterranean, Israel can advance talks with Syria. [...] Israel sees the political threat developing in Lebanon [...], but is prepared to respond only through the sights of its guns."

Zvi Bar'el, HAA 11.05.08

Nasrallah lost, for now

"Headlines and commentators over the weekend declared that a 'civil war is raging in Beirut' [...] and 'Iran is taking over.' Yet the truth is far from that, and again attests to how little we understand what goes on in Lebanon, and possibly in the whole Middle East. [...] Prime Minister Siniora adopted the tactic of weakness. This is the same tactic he used against us during the Second Lebanon War, when he broke into tears in order to exert international pressure on Israel. Siniora is a true artist when it comes to understanding the Middle East. He did not fall into the trap of Hizbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and did not unleash the Lebanese army against Hizbollah's fighters. [...] Instead, Siniora allowed Hizbollah to enter areas it doesn't belong in, thus making Nasrallah fall into a trap himself.

The latest developments completely exposed Hizbollah's grave deception, which in the past argued that it will be using its arms only against Israel. With his own hands, Nasrallah proved the falsehood of its supposed right to exist as Lebanon's last militia. [...]

Hizbollah lost quite a few points in Lebanese public opinion in the past few days [...]. Beyond that, Nasrallah's decision to initiate a crisis failed to undermine the Siniora government's foundations [...]. On the contrary, he boosted the Siniora government, because through this belligerent move he united many Lebanese around the position that Nasrallah is the greatest danger to Lebanon's stability."

Guy Bechor, JED 11.05.08

How Lebanon was lost

"[...]he Shi'ite-dominated Lebanese army rendered Hizbollah the victor in its coup when the generals announced they would not carry out the Saniora government's anti-Hizbollah decisions from last Tuesday. [...]

It should have been clear long ago to anyone paying attention that far from being a national institution which serves Lebanon's democratically elected government, the Lebanese army is just another militia. And it also should have been clear that in the absence of a loyal, subservient army, the Saniora government was little more than a lobbying group.

Yet many colluded to ignore this reality. First of course there is Israel. The Olmert-Livni government has upheld Resolution 1701 and its prescribed deployment of the Lebanese army to the border with Israel as their crowning achievement in office. They have to maintain the fiction that the Shi'ite-

dominated Lebanese army opposes Hizbullah control over Lebanon in order to keep up the appearance that Resolution 1701 was a good deal for Israel."

Caroline Glick, JPO 12.05.08

The Syrian option

"[...F]or the time being Hizbullah prefers to govern without assuming upon itself the responsibility required from a ruling party. Yet when its leaders wish to do so, the movement would take the helm and we shall find ourselves rubbing up against a dark Shiite state, which serves as an Iranian outpost. [...] Upon the elimination of the Christian hegemony in Lebanon, the old Israeli interest in maintaining an independent Lebanon will dissipate. The real alternatives are an Iranian Lebanon or a Syrian Lebanon. We do not know the price Syria will be willing to pay for a secret pledge that Israel would not do a thing to prevent Lebanon's annexation to Syria, but it is worthwhile looking into it – this price may be Syrian willing to renounce its claims for the Golan."

Yaron London, JED 12.05.08

Between Gaza and Beirut

"Many Arab analysts see the events in the Gaza Strip and Lebanon as part of a conflict between two camps in the Arab world - one supported by Teheran and Damascus, and the other openly affiliated with the US.

The Iranians and Syrians are using their proxies in Hizbullah and Hamas to undermine the 'moderate' Arabs and to thwart what they see as Washington's attempts to consolidate its 'hegemony' in the Middle East.

The lesson to be drawn from what happened in the Gaza Strip and Beirut is that whenever the US openly backs an Arab, he or she is immediately discredited on the Arab street.

On the other hand, Washington's open efforts to undermine Hamas and Hizbullah over the past few years have backfired, increasing the two groups' power among their publics. "

Khaled Abu Toameh, JPO 11.05.08

3. 60. Unabhängigkeitstag

Am 8. Mai wurde in Israel gemäß dem jüdischen Kalender das sechzigjährige Bestehen des Staates gefeiert. Zu diesem Anlass kamen in der folgenden Woche zahlreiche Staatsgäste ins Land, unter anderem US-Präsident Bush. Am 15. Mai hingegen – dem Datum der Staatsgründung nach gregorianischem Kalender – gedachten Palästinenser und arabische Israelis der „Nakba“, der Katastrophe, die die Gründung Israels und die Vertreibung der Palästinenser für sie darstellt. Die israelischen Medien reflektierten den 60. Geburtstag des Staates und die Bedeutung des Unabhängigkeitstages.

Israel is stronger than its ills

"The present Independence Day will be celebrated by the citizens of Israel as it is every year, ignoring the investigations of corruption, because basic pride at the success of the Zionist enterprise still beats in their hearts. A random government, more corrupt or less so, is temporary and replaceable, as long as democracy maintains its vitality. In this sense Israel still serves as an example and a model for more veteran countries. [...] This is likely to be a year of opportunity, in light of the fact that all of the country's prime ministerial candidates, on the right and the left, and all the U.S. presidential candidates, on the right and the left, support peace with Syria at the price of withdrawal from the Golan Heights and its demilitarization. The existence of a steadily growing bloc of moderate Arab countries, the understanding that Iran and Hamas constitute a threat to them and not only to Israel, breathes new hope into the attempt to achieve peace in the region."

HAA 07.05.08

The next 60 years

"Faith in the basic decency of the men and women who lead the nation has waned. The political system has been irresponsibly undermined by elected officials, judges, holy men and the media. Some in the national-religious community still feel alienated by the trauma of disengagement.

And yet a degree of perspective is in order. From 70 CE, when most Jews were exiled, until 1948, when Jewish sovereignty was regained, this land remained at the epicenter of Jewish aspirations. Absent the collective dream of a return to Zion, the Jewish people would have long ago disappeared

from history. And, by the grace of God, we have returned!

The process of state-building remains incomplete - but look how far we've come. The Jewish population in 1948 was 650,000; today it's 6 million. [...]

That the Jewish people have sovereignty and the chance to enjoy a civilizational renaissance in this land after a millennium in exile is - quite literally - a miracle. May God shine His countenance upon us and navigate us safely through the next 60 years, and beyond. "

JPO 06.05.08

A good day for hope

"Until a few years ago, today, May 15, was known in Israel as the parallel to the 5th of Iyar, the day of the establishment of the state. In recent years, as more Israeli Arabs started commemorating their national catastrophe - the Nakba - on this date, it suddenly took on a threatening significance. [...]

On the human level, a Jew, as a member of a nation that mourned its destruction for 2,000 years, should have no trouble understanding why Israeli Arabs are mourning. [...] We cannot and should not prevent them from remembering this day with sorrow. [...]

On the contrary, human respect for the pain can lead, at least for some of the Arab population, to a renewed sense of belonging. If, for example, this day is defined as the Day of the Israeli Citizen, with an emphasis on the Israeli citizenship common to Jews and Arabs and the need for equal rights and resources, and meetings are held between Jews and Arabs of all ages, perhaps this date [...] can be transformed from 'mourning to a holiday'; or at least into a day that signifies hope."

Yair Sheleg, HAA 15.05.08

3 days and 60 years

"How different Israel is 60 years on. Its population has multiplied more than tenfold and its military power exceeds anything Ben-Gurion could rationally have dreamed of. But there's no feisty Ben-Gurion at Israel's helm today. Our current premier intones that 'we're tired of fighting, we're tired of being courageous, we're tired of winning, we're tired of defeating our enemies.' Israel is headlined by a crew which perceives the cradle of our history through the spectacles of the nation's worst genocidal enemies - as holdings which we arbitrarily invaded. To Ehud Olmert they're a burdensome legacy to be ditched at the earliest opportunity. It's preferable to appease none-too-sympathetic world opinion than to struggle steadfastly.

Ben-Gurion's successors don't merely bow to pressure from abroad when they agree to outfit Fatah's 'good terrorists' with firepower and armored vehicles [...]. The culprit isn't external coercion. It resides in defeatist mind-sets which overcompensate by earmarking NIS 100 million to celebrate Israel's 60th anniversary with pomp, pageantry, circumstance, spectacles, fireworks and crass street entertainment galore."

Sarah Honig, JPO 07.05.08

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

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