



Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 19

Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

15. Oktober – 28. Oktober 2007

1. Israel und Hizbullah vollziehen Tauschgeschäft

Die israelische Regierung hatte am Montag den 15. Oktober bekannt gegeben, dass bei den Verhandlungen um die Freilassung der entführten Soldaten Eldad Regev und Ehud Goldwasser ein zusätzlicher Schritt unternommen worden ist..

So hat Israel am Montag Abend am Grenzübergang bei Rosh Hanikra der Hisbollah die Leichen von zwei Mitglieder der Organisation, die im zweiten Libanonkrieg getötet worden waren, sowie einen Gefangenen, der aus gesundheitlichen Gründen freigelassen wurde, übergeben. Im Austausch dafür hat die Hisbollah die Leiche eines äthiopischen Juden, Gabriel Dwait, ausgehändigt, sowie einen Brief des seit über 20 Jahren verschollenen israelischen Piloten Ron Arad.

Dieses Tauschgeschäft stellt ein neue Etappe innerhalb der andauernden von der UNO vermittelten Verhandlungen zur Rückführung der entführten Soldaten dar. Obwohl der Weg hin zum Abschluss dieser Verhandlungen noch lang ist, erwartet Israel nun eine Beschleunigung des Prozesses, der seit mittlerweile mehr als einem Jahr in Gang ist.

Prelude to larger deal?

"The exchanges involving bodies and a Lebanese prisoner Monday looks like a prelude to a more significant deal involving our captives and MIAs. The question is – how significant? The Prime Minister's Office already made it clear that it received information regarding Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, the two IDF soldiers who were kidnapped prior to the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War. However, these deals are usually like an onion – layer after layer must be peeled in order to reach the core, which is also made up of several parts. For

example, the return of the body of Israeli national Gabriel Dwait as well as the return of the Lebanese prisoner was in fact merely a cover story for the core of the deal, which was the return of the bodies of two Hizbullah fighters killed in battles in Maroun al-Ras, in exchange for information on Goldwasser and Regev. The fact that Israel was asked to hand over two bodies in exchange for information is not a good sign.

The question is whether what happened Monday is part of a larger story. Or in other words, is Germany's intention to release Iranian intelligence officer Kazem Darabi related to this deal?" Ron Ben-Yishai, JED 15.10.2007

Israel's Dilemma

"What doesn't meet the eye is the painful dilemma placed on the Israeli government's lap. Perhaps Hizbullah - via German mediation - did give Israel its explanations as to the disappearance of Airman Ron Arad. If I presume correctly, what is prominent about these explanations is what they do not entail, not what they do. Nasrallah would not have handed over any substantial information in exchange for two corpses and one mentally disturbed person. He either has no information, or he is prevented from handing over the information he has. Nasrallah prefers keeping his cards close to his chest: Namely, abducted IDF soldiers Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser. In exchange for them he wanted a long list of prisoners, headed by Samir Kuntar, the murderer of the Haran family in Nahariya in 1979.

The Israeli government can insist on clarifying that without Ron Arad there will be no further deals in the offing. Such a move must be premised on the assumption that Nasrallah is lying: Namely, that he knows more about Ron Arad than he is telling, and that he has the means to find out more. However, such a move also entails a terrible risk, i.e. what

happened to Ron Arad may happen to Eldad Regev and Ehud Goldwasser as well. They are likely to disappear somewhere in the Islamic fundamentalist expanse, between Beirut and Tehran. The slim hope of finding out more about Ron Arad vis-à-vis the risk of losing Regev and Goldwasser is a cruel dilemma reminiscent of the Solomon trial. One should not envy the prime minister and his cabinet ministers called to task on this decision. Any decision that is made will be shrouded in uncertainty and will be painful, cruel and thankless." Nahum Barnea, JED 16.10.2007

Close the Arad file

"The time has come to say this out loud: There is virtually no chance that Ron Arad is alive. Only Japanese soldiers emerge from the thick of the forest after 21 years. We should fold the flags of this struggle and lower our heads in sadness, and focus all our efforts on those who still have a chance of returning. As the struggle for Arad has become not only hopeless but is liable to undermine the effort to return the others, we must make the painful and unavoidable choice to give up on his case.

The state should free itself from hollow declarations and fulfill its real mission - to bring back Gilad Shalit, Udi Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. Those who wish to continue to hold rallies, off-road races and flyovers, to roam the world or distribute rewards to anyone providing information on the fate of Ron Arad, are welcome to continue doing so, of course. But the state should focus on the others so that they do not become Ron Arads." Gideon Levy, HAA 21.10.2007

Moderate those Hizbullah hopes

"Prime Minister Ehud Olmert was right to describe Monday's limited swap with Hizbullah as "reasonable" - in relative terms, of course. Israel still paid in excess of what it received, but at least it didn't release hundreds of potentially active terrorists. The body of a drowned Israeli civilian, which accidentally washed up on a Lebanese beach, was purchased for "only" the bodies of two Hizbullah fighters and one low-ranking mentally-ill Lebanese prisoner. The very fact that the body of an incontrovertible noncombatant had to be ransomed at all, however, is exceptionally telling. Too many Israelis see it as a fact of life - almost an acceptable rule of our absurd Middle Eastern game - that our enemy may exact payoffs whenever any sort of an

opportunity falls into its hands, even if it's the corpse of a hapless individual. If Hizbullah were truly out to build confidence, of course, it would have returned Gavriel Daweet's body "free of charge," and released information gratis about abducted reservists Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. As members of a non-state, terrorist organization, Hizbullah fighters do not qualify for protections accorded lawful combatants under the Geneva Convention. This, of course, does not stop them from demanding such protections, even though they refuse to comply with the most basic requirements of allowing access to and sharing information regarding Israeli prisoners. Hizbullah's "goodwill" is that of ruthless pirates. JPO 16.10.2007

2. Gedenken an Rabin

Am 4. November jährt sich die Ermordung Yitzhak Rabins zum 12. Mal. Die zentralen Gedenkfeiern fanden nach dem jüdischen Kalender bereits am 24. Oktober statt. Auch in den israelischen Zeitungen wurde Yitzhak Rabin gedacht und gleichzeitig die Geburt des Sohnes Yigal Amir's, dem Mörder Rabin's, diskutiert. Die Schwangerschaft Larissa Trembovler's, der Ehefrau Amir's, wurde seinerzeit durch künstliche Befruchtung herbeigeführt.

From the assassination of Rabin to Democracy Day

"He whose candle was snuffed out, he's buried in the dust, a bitter cry won't wake him, and won't bring him back." These were almost the last words of Yitzhak Rabin, of blessed memory. The shy, introverted man sang them, with flushed cheeks, from the platform in the square that was later named after him. At the end of the worst night in our public lives, the "Song to Peace" was found in the prime minister's pocket, soaked in his blood. There is no question that those words are also true of Yitzhak Rabin himself. Bitter weeping on his memorial day won't bring him back. [...] The situation today is different. The public mourning attracts fewer and fewer participants. The pain is becoming dulled; the memory is becoming blurred; the shock is gone. They are replaced by ceremonies, lofty words and a mark on the calendar. Rabin's assassination is no longer a real experience but an Israeli ritual that is undergoing an accelerated process of erosion. The terrible moment when a nation stopped has been taken over by the routine of "a day of mourning"."
Yedida Stern, HAA 23.10.2007

Hope has gone underground

"In many senses the murder of Yitzhak Rabin left a scorched earth behind in Israel's political arena. The Right is no longer the Right, the Left is no longer the Left, and the path taken by "centrists" is not quite clear. And what about the public? It's apathetic, keeping its head low and shrugging its shoulders. Yigal Amir succeeded; he succeeded in confusing everything and everyone. Shimon Peres, Benjamin Netanyahu, Ehud Barak, Ariel Sharon and now Ehud Olmert – they have all tried and are continuing to try – each in their own way - to stabilize the political establishment without much success. [...] Those who try to follow in Rabin's footsteps by advancing the diplomatic process vis-à-vis the Palestinians are quickly removed from the prime minister's office. [...]

It is not clear as to what extent Yitzhak Rabin would have succeeded in leading the peace process to a safe harbor vis-à-vis the Palestinians and Syrians. However it is clear that the murderer succeeded in severing any hope." Atila Somfalvi, JED 24.10.2007

Democracy or hypocrisy

"Every year on the anniversary of Yitzhak Rabin's assassination the religious camp feels persecuted and shunned, and in its feeling of collective guilt it turns on the left, the secular community, the media and the Rabin family - as if they have all come together to perpetuate the shame. The other camp, whose boundaries also shift and sharpen on the assassination's anniversary, sees the multiplicity of statements by the religious camp as a sign that the feeling of collective guilt has been internalized. The desire to distinguish itself from the assassin Yigal Amir and what he represents is encouraging. Since the murder, the settler leadership has also become divided between the more and less extreme, with the latter prepared to agree to withdrawal in exchange for peace and the Oslo borders, the same borders that sent the right to demonstrate at Zion Square before Rabin's assassination. It should be remembered, and people should be reminded, that Amir is not insane and that only 15 years ago even the current prime minister, not to mention the previous one, shared Amir's positions on Oslo, although not his actions." HAA, 24.10.2007

Dealing with an assassin's baby

"The upcoming birth of the son to Larissa Trimbobler and Yigal Amir, the man who assassinated former

prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, forces Israeli society to face a sensitive new dilemma. Many murderers have brought children into the world, but never in history has the killer of a president or a prime minister lived to see such an event, simply because they have always been executed or otherwise killed shortly after committing the crime. Now, Israel's young and still-developing democratic policy-makers must ponder the question of how to deal with this birth. How much attention and media coverage should this saga receive? Where should the line be drawn, and who should draw it? And what life does this unborn child have ahead of him?" Shelly Paz, JPO 24.10.2007

3. Lobbying für verschärfte Sanktionen gegen den Iran

Nachwievor bestimmt das Thema Iran die Tagesordnung in Israel. Premierminister Ehud Olmert besuchte den britischen Premier Gordon Brown und den französischen Präsidenten Nicolas Sarkozy, um über die Bedrohung durch einen nuklear bewaffneten Iran und für eine Verschärfung der Sanktionen einzutreten. Unterdessen warnte US Präsident George W. Bush vor einem dritten Weltkrieg. Der Besuch Olmert's beim russischen Präsidenten Putin erhielt vor dem Hintergrund der Waffengeschäfte zwischen Russland und Syrien und des Besuchs Putins in Tehran anlässlich des Gipfeltreffens der Anrainerstaaten des Kaspischen Meers am 17. Oktober zusätzliche Relevanz. Nach israelischer Einschätzung spielen Russland und China eine Schlüsselrolle bei dem Beschluss des UN Sicherheitsrats für verschärfte Sanktionen. Auch bei dem Besuch von Außenministerin Tzipi Livni in Peking steht das Thema auf der Agenda.

Sanctions or force

"Against the background of a noticeable toughening of the rhetoric against Iran by senior American government officials, Sarkozy and Brown are seeking to give diplomacy another chance and to exert "soft power". The challenge they face is to persuade two other key European states – Germany and Italy – to join the French sanctions in initiative and cut back on their booming business with Iran. The European Union is Iran's principle trading partner. [...] The position adopted by sanctions opponents is liable to achieve the opposite of what they intend: Those who prevent economic pressure on Iran are making the use of military force against it

more likely. If there is still any chance for the diplomatic effort to succeed, as Olmert says, it must not be missed because of short/sighted business considerations. This is the moment for Europe to display unity and leadership and to prove that its way can achieve results in solving "the most important international issue", as Sarkozy termed it." HAA, 26.10.2007

Leave it to the Big Guys

"The Israeli ethos of not relying on foreign troops to defend this country is all fine and well, but there's no need to be stupid about it. Israel should not be racing ahead of the pack with its threats on Iran. Iran's outright threats to destroy Israel prompted President Bush to declare that those who want to prevent World War III should keep the Iranians from building the bomb. As long as he's president, it's up to him to attack Iran and knock out its nuclear facilities. For the moment, it's just talk. [...]

Israeli defense officials are convinced that the "enlightened world" will not stop Iran from manufacturing the bomb, and because Israel is a designated target, it should attack before it gets attacked. [...]

With all due respect to the ethos that the defense of Israel must not rely on outside forces, the Olmert administration does not have the leadership skills, political credibility or public backing for a military entanglement in Iran. Resolving a crisis that threatens the world is beyond our ability. Israel would do well to leave the use of force to the big guys." Yoel Marcus, HAA, 23.10.2007

Column one: Preventing World War III

"It appears that both the IDF and the government are earnestly preparing for the possibility of war. Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's sudden visits to Moscow, Paris and London, and Defense Minister Ehud Barak's trip to Washington this week were all devoted to the Iranian nuclear project. [...] How would Iran respond? What would be the long-term effect of such a strike? [...]

As this scenario has it, Iran will direct a counter-strike against Israel that will include a ballistic missile attack carried out jointly by Iran, Syria and Hizbullah in Lebanon. Furthermore, Iran will direct Hizbullah terror cells throughout the world to carry out attacks against Jewish and American targets.

But again, as bad as it may be, there is no comparison between an Iranian missile and terror offensive and Armageddon. By pushing back Iran's

acquisition of nuclear weapons by several years, a strike against Iran gives the world the opportunity to bring down the regime through non-military means by fomenting an internal revolution of Iranians. This outcome remains the most likely scenario." Carolyn Glick, JPO, 25.10.2007

HAA = Haaretz
HZO = Ha Tzofe
JED = Jedioth Ahronoth
JED engl. = www.ynetnews.com
JPO = Jerusalem Post
MAA = Maariv

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Verantwortlich:

Hermann Bünz,
Leiter der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Israel

Redaktion:

Ingrid Ross
Marcus Guhlan
Nadine Rödel

Homepage: www.fes.org.il

Email: fes@fes.org.il