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1. Netanyahu auf Stimmenfang bei der arabischen Minderheit

Ausgerechnet bei den arabischen Landsleuten geht Israels Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu auf Stimmenfang für die im März anstehende Parlamentswahl. Kaum eine Gelegenheit ließ der streitbare Likud-Chef im Verlauf seiner langjährigen Regierungszeit aus, um gegen die Minderheit im Land Stimmung zu machen. Die neue Kampagne signalisiert Verzweiflung beim Ministerpräsidenten, der sich innerhalb von nur zwei Jahren nun zum vierten Mal zur Wiederwahl stellen muss. Die Vereinte Liste, Bündnis dreier arabischer und einer arabisch-jüdischen Partei, ist auch über die Frage, ob der Likud Partner für die arabischen Politiker_innen sein kann, heftig zerstritten. Bei den letzten Wahlen erreichte die Vereinte Liste mit 15 der insgesamt 120 Knesset-Mandate ihre bisherige Höchstleitung. Sollte sich das Bündnis auflösen, drohen die einzelnen Parteien an der Sperrklausel zu scheitern. Auch in Israels links-liberalem Lager könnten Alleingänge das zumindest vorläufige Aus einzelner Parteien sein, darunter auch Israels legendäre Arbeitspartei.

Netanyahu's wooing of Arab voters unwittingly sets an important precedent

It's hard to believe that anyone takes anything Benjamin Netanyahu says or does at face value. And regarding his change of attitude toward the Arab community, it's clear to everyone that he's not acting in good faith. (...) What does he think – that Arabs

will vote for him after the incitement campaigns he has led against them? (...) But all the people criticizing Netanyahu are missing the point. All the feelings that his actions provoke in them are part of his political magic. Remember that magic is intended mainly for entertainment. The surprise, confusion, revulsion, shock and anger – the feeling that you want to tear your hair out in frustration because he's once again pulling one over on us – are all part of the pleasure Netanyahu offers his audience. (...) The truth is, it doesn't make any difference what his motive is. (...) if the wall of the delegitimizing of Arab votes is cracked, that would be enough. If, following Netanyahu, other parties begin wooing Arabs and reserving spots for them on their tickets (see Meretz), that would be enough. If this results in new alliances, commitments to more funding, improved infrastructure, investment in education, support for a plan to end violence, improved status for the Arabic language, or a battle to repeal the nation-state law and progress toward equality, that would be enough. (...)

Carolina Landsmann, HAA, 17.01.21

The increasingly divided Joint Arab List

Although the Joint Arab List is still operating as a united faction in the Knesset, it seems a bitter war is raging between two of its members: the Hadash party and the Ra'am party representing the Islamic Movement's Southern Branch. (...) Every political party wants to embarrass its rivals. Hadash mem-

bers have attacked the Islamic Movement and its representative MK Mansour Abbas for negotiating with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Likud in recent months. Indeed, Abbas and his party are paying a high price for the move. On the other hand, members of the Islamic Movement's Southern Front are reminding voters how Hadash's representatives voted in support of a law banning gay conversion therapy, accusing them of excessive support for the LGBT community, a phenomenon deemed unacceptable among more conservative members of Arab Israeli society. (...) The disconnect between the Islamic lawmakers and the rest of their Joint Arab List colleagues is also getting worse by the day. (...) Nevertheless, the Arab parties will need to work a lot harder than they have in the past to earn the Arab vote when they are busy quarreling among themselves. They will also need to explain why Arab voters should not believe the campaign promises of the Right, and the Likud and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in particular, as it tries to earn the Arab sector's trust and its vote for the first time in decades.

Jalal Bala, IHY, 20.01.21

Israel Elections: 'Anyone but Bibi' not enough anymore

(...) Most of the parties and politicians running for election are either hyper-focused on the coronavirus, how to contain the virus while getting the country's economy back on its feet, or on doing anything possible to ensure that Netanyahu isn't able to head another government. However, the pandemic will one day be over, and Israel, as well as the rest of the world, will manage to get back on its feet, with perhaps some temporary or permanent variations from the life to which we have grown accustomed. The issues that we considered "life or death" matters before anyone ever heard of COVID-19 are still very much out there, but nobody seems to be talking about them. (...) Israeli politicians, as well as most of the populace, have forgotten that there's still an ongoing dispute with the Palestinians. (...) Domestically, young Israelis, irrespective of corona-inspired unemployment, have been leaving the country in search of a life where they can earn a decent wage and buy an apartment that is actually affordable. Another issue driving away secular Israelis is that Israel still does not have a civil marriage option. (...) The to-do list goes on and on. It's time for our MKs to focus on the issues that Israelis cope with on a day-to-day basis. (...) The upcoming campaign season leading up to the March elections

needs to be full of substance with candidates addressing these issues and laying out their plans and vision of Israel. "Anyone but Bibi" just doesn't cut it anymore, not after three elections that have pushed the country to the brink of disaster. Let us know what you stand for and how you're going to make Israel a better country for its citizens. Then, maybe, a strong, working coalition might begin to emerge.
Editorial, JPO, 28.01.21

Three reasons Yair Lapid will lead Israel's center-left

(...) in this election round, Lapid will head the bloc. Yesh Atid is riding high in the polls, slowly approaching the 19 seats with which it burst on the scene in 2013. The departure of Ofer Shelah didn't fluster Yesh Atid supporters, who have a hard time identifying the candidates beyond the party's founder and sole ruler. Lapid deserves to lead the bloc because of three correct decisions he made. The first was his vote against the nation-state law. It's true that he never reached out to Arab voters, and he'll never live down his derogatory "Zoabis" comment about Arab lawmakers. But at the moment of truth, when Israel had to decide if it was an egalitarian state with equality between all its citizens or a state of Jewish supremacy, Lapid's finger pressed the right button. His second right decision was to agree to be number two on the Kahol Lavan slate, under Benny Gantz – not because he thought Gantz was more suitable to lead the party, but to set aside ego and honorifics for the goal of winning more Knesset seats. Then came the moment of truth, when Gantz betrayed his voters and stole their votes to join Benjamin Netanyahu's governing coalition. Lapid remained outside the government. This was his most worthy decision, one that made him the bloc's leader. (...) Lapid (...) did show impressive political skills by maintaining his party's base and clearly expressing his revulsion for corruption and corrupt politicians. Because of his skills, the party didn't collapse like other centrist parties. (...) his resolute stance against Netanyahu gives new hope to his voters. If he bolsters his diplomacy wing with Tzipi Livni, the two will present a team that could work well with the Biden administration. (...)

Aluf Benn, HAA, 28.01.21

Not just Ron Huldai: More Israeli political upstarts will fade

(...) Ron Huldai launched his new party with a decent acquisition – Avi Nissenkorn, the justice minister who separated himself from Kahol Lavan's fail-

ures and remained popular due to his reasonably tough approach to Benjamin Netanyahu. The polls gave the party eight or nine Knesset seats. (...) Huldai apparently didn't imagine that within a month the question would be whether he'd be willing to be the No. 2 of new Labor Party chief Merav Michaeli. Michaeli is now the hottest name on the center-left stock exchange, though it's a bit heartbreaking that "a hot name" in Labor means winning just enough votes for the party to make it into the Knesset. Michaeli kept her oppositional spirit while her party cohorts Amir Peretz and Itzik Shmuli entered the cabinet. When she was elected Labor leader she demanded that they leave the government and made Peretz quit the party. Putting a feminist at the helm infuses the party with a sense of new life. After the primary for the Knesset slate and a possible decent acquisition by Labor, too, Michaeli could well extend her days of glory and maybe even expand the party to five or six Knesset seats. But Huldai's case can provide more than a hint of what's in store. (...) Anyone who believes he or she is somebody – with or without any connection to reality – founds a party and sweeps in whoever, only to discover that getting voters to the ballot box is much harder. The polls predict shifting sands. Today they're here, tomorrow they're somewhere else (...).
Ravit Hecht, HAA, 30.01.21

2. Wachsender Unmut gegen Israels Ultraorthodoxe

Trotz der massiven Impfungen und trotz der strengen Lockdown-Bestimmungen geriet Israel in eine dritte Corona-Welle mit neuen Rekordzahlen von über 10.000 an einem Tag. Ein Grund dafür sind die Virus-Mutationen. Massive Verantwortung wird aber auch der ultraorthodoxen Bevölkerung zugesprochen. Tausende strengreligiöse Schüler_innen im ultraorthodoxen Bnei Brak setzten sich über die strengen Ausgangsregeln hinweg und gingen zur Schule. Berichten zufolge gehören rund 40 Prozent der Neuinfizierten dem tieferreligiösen Sektor an. Kritiker_innen werfen Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu vor, er nehme zu viel Rücksicht auf die Interessen der Ultraorthodoxen, während die Polizei in weltlichen Wohngebieten mit Härte gegen Lockdown-Verstöße vorgehe. Kritiker_innen sagen auch, Netanyahu habe zu zögerlich die Landesgrenzen, allen voran den Ben-Gurion-Flughafen, gesperrt. Im Ausland macht sich unterdessen verstärkter Unmut laut, weil Israel massiv impft, bei den Palästinenser_innen hingegen die Impfungen noch gar nicht

begonnen haben. Als Besatzungsmacht trage Israel die Verantwortung, so urteilte u.a. Amnesty International.

Israel has no obligation to give the Palestinians vaccines

As was to be expected (...) the favorable international attention being devoted to Israel's successes in acquiring vaccines and in vaccinating its population against COVID-19 is being offset by a parallel and concerted wave of international criticism and hostility against Israel among states, organizations and the international media. This criticism emanates from a number of flawed and misplaced assumptions, or deliberately misleading claims, that Israel is an occupying power, in full occupation of the West Bank areas of Judea and Samaria, and the Gaza Strip. Following on from that is the mistaken and false assumption that international humanitarian law requires Israel, as an occupying power, to provide medical support and distribute vaccines to the occupied Palestinian population, to provide the funding to enable distribution of vaccines, as well as to ensure and maintain medical and hospital establishments and services. (...) Israel is under no obligation to provide vaccinations to the population of the territories. Israel's status is not that of an occupying power, and the Fourth Geneva Convention is not applicable to the territories. (...) the Palestinian Authority has the full responsibility to govern those parts of the territories that are under its control, including the full civilian responsibility for health and dealing with epidemics, and for importing vaccines and other medical equipment. The (...) agreement requires the PA and Israel to cooperate and exchange information between them in order to combat epidemics. Nothing more, nothing less. (...)

Alan Baker, JPO, 16.01.21

How Israel failed to manage the coronavirus crisis

Some think Israel should be congratulated for a relatively low death rate from coronavirus with around 4,000 Israelis having succumbed to the virus since the start of the pandemic. But countries that have suffered a much higher death toll per capita, such as Sweden or Spain, have a considerably older population. Countries with a population as young as Israel's have seen fewer fatalities. (...) Israel (...) failed to prevent coronavirus spread when it kept its international airport open and allowed people to enter the country without being tested. Many of those arrivals then went on to violate self-quarantine

rules, causing a surge in cases - particularly in the Arab and ultra-Orthodox sectors. (...) After years of starving hospitals of funds, the government vowed to increase professional staff and beds to meet the need, but (...) the promises have not been kept. (...) many Israelis have shown they understood the risks from coronavirus. Most of the population wears masks when in public, no small feat compared to other Western nations. Israel also leads the world in testing for the virus, which after a slow start was accelerated and made available all over the country, thanks to the health funds and their infrastructure. But tracing and disrupting the chains of contagion, an effort assigned to the IDF Home Front Command months after the pandemic began, have still not met expectations. (...) The bitter truth must be said. Only countries that enforced mitigation with an iron fist succeeded in limiting morbidity. All the others failed one way or the other. There are no easy answers or solutions, but we must recognize that Israel could have been in far better shape and many lives could and should have been saved.

Nadav Eyal, YED, 17.01.21

Strive for settlement with the Haredim, not their submission

(...) Israeli society is crying out for help. (...) There are extremists in every sector. (...) Language creates meaning. When the dialogue focuses on Haredim that violate the coronavirus guidelines and the term used is "Haredi," this is a missed opportunity. The Haredim are not the only ones violating the guidelines, and with a little bit of effort, we can focus on this specific group. (...) The generalization leads to a loss of brave voices who know how to stand up against unacceptable phenomenon despite various forms of pressure. On the other hand, there is talk of the police using excessive force, this is also a generalization. (...) Dialogue is power. It is not weakness or submission. We must strive for a settlement and not for submission. When society's sectors are made to submit, the discourse is one of winners versus losers, and there is no partnership or accountability for forging a better reality. (...)

Aliza Bloch, IHY, 19.01.21

Haredi brethren, protect yourselves before it's too late

(...) The leaders of the ultra-Orthodox community in the Knesset have hundreds of coronavirus victims on their hands, and none of them are stepping up to take any responsibility for it. The only thing they do is occasionally call for the community to adhere to

lockdown guidelines. (...) The media is blowing the Haredi sector's responsibility for the spread of the virus way out of proportion. There are quite a few people that take advantage of this to garner a few more votes (...) we need to put this aside and address what is truly happening, and that is a disaster. (...) There is hardly an ultra-Orthodox home that has not been hit by the coronavirus. There is not a single Haredi person who doesn't know someone who has died from COVID. The grief continues to grow and is being joined every day by orphans, widows and widowers, young and old, mothers and fathers. (...) We are in the midst of a war. When scuds were fired at Israel, no one was expecting the rabbi to teach. Everyone grabbed their children and ran to the shelters. My Haredi brothers, it all depends on you. Shelter yourself, close your doors, save your lives. Do it now before it's too late.

Yehuda Shlezinger, IHY, 20.01.21

Netanyahu, who's to blame for Israel's 4,000 coronavirus dead?

(...) Who's responsible for the deaths of 4,000 Israelis since the pandemic began? If Bibi Netanyahu was in the opposition and Yair Lapid was prime minister, it's clear what would be happening. (...) Bibi would be spending his days hopping from funeral to funeral, and his evenings hopping from one shiva call to another. (...) But right now Bibi is in power and the opposition is in a coma. Let's (...) ask Avigdor Lieberman, Moshe Ya'alon, Yair Lapid, Ron Huldai and Gideon Sa'ar: Don't you understand that 4,000 dead is a game-changer? (...) We are a nation that can't absorb losses. And Bibi, because he understands this very well, keeps telling us that Israel is in a better situation in terms of the number of fatalities than countries like Italy, France and Germany. He neglects to mention that these countries have 100-150 transit points with the rest of Europe that cannot be sealed, while we have just a single entry point: Ben-Gurion International Airport. We should rightly be compared to island (...) countries. The picture, in that case, is horrifying: Taiwan has had just seven fatalities, Singapore 29, Cyprus 167, Vietnam 35, Thailand 70, New Zealand 25 – and we've had 4,000! And in all of these countries, there are no new fatalities. Life has returned to normal, more or less. Because there the leaders worried about their people, while here the leader worries about canceling his trial, and this contradiction caused major fiascos: Bibi opposed doing more than 400 tests a day, he opposed testing the elderly in nursing homes, he refused to hand authority for

handling the pandemic to the Home Front Command and did nothing to prevent the large weddings in Haredi and Arab communities. He allowed mass events to continue in the rabbis' dynasties, and Haredi elementary schools and yeshivas to keep operating. (...) He turned the airport into a super-spreader station for the virus by not preventing the entry of 12,000 yeshiva students from New York or of vacationers returning from Turkey and Dubai. Is it any wonder we've reached 4,000 dead? (...) Nehemia Shtrasler, HAA, 22.01.21

Israelis are dying but the ultra-Orthodox keep dancing

(...) More so than any other conflict, the war against the coronavirus served to deepen the gap between Israel's secular and ultra-Orthodox populations. It is no longer merely the question of why secular Israelis need to carry the Haredi population who do not work, do not pay taxes and vehemently refuse to enlist in the military. Now the questions are much harsher and accusatory. We will remember the images of huge Haredi weddings in Bnei Brak while people in secular cities were fined for even daring to take off their masks on the street. We will remember Haredi children walking to schools operating illegally while secular parents were forced to stay home with children who had long since lost patience with remote studies. (...) The Haredi population, egged on by their leaders, have endangered the lives of countless people (...) and may have even contributed to national COVID death toll while almost single-handedly bringing the country's health system to its knees. This is because Haredi leaders think the rules don't apply to them and their followers. (...) It seems that 4,000 dead Israelis are not enough to convince Haredi leaders to adhere to pikuach nefesh - the Jewish principle that preserving human life overrides any other religious regulations. (...) Sima Kadmon, YED, 22.01.21

The police have not created a deterrence for coronavirus violators

Israel is in the middle of the world's most effective campaign to get citizens vaccinated against coronavirus. At the same time, the rate of infection and the death toll continue to climb alarmingly. (...) the cabinet approved the extension of the current lockdown (...). Ultra-Orthodox cities and neighborhoods are registering record numbers of coronavirus cases. Thirty percent of all COVID-19 infections nationwide came from the haredi sector, despite it representing just 12% of the total population. (...) The deterrence

of fines for violating the restrictions doesn't seem to be working. (...) The number of fines issued in the largest haredi cities (...) is proportionally some 18 times lower than in the 50 cities with the highest rates of fines to COVID-19 patients (...) the haredi community in Israel behaves like an autonomous body, with its own set of rules and norms. (...) However, despite their blatant disregard of restrictions and appeals by the prime minister of the country of which they are citizens, the kid-glove treatment afforded haredim by Netanyahu is likely to continue, primarily due to one issue – elections. Ahead of the March 23 poll, Netanyahu can't afford to alienate his possible coalition partners – UTJ and Shas – in his last-gasp attempt to remain in power as his corruption trial heads into its main act. It's highly unlikely that the Likud would be able to form a coalition without its haredi partners. So heavy pressure on religious leaders to implement an "equal enforcement" of the coronavirus restrictions throughout Israeli society – as Blue and White has regularly demanded in return for its support of continued restrictions – is just not going to happen under Netanyahu's watch. It's a deadly game of politics, in the literal sense. And we are paying the ultimate price – with our lives.

Editorial, JPO, 20.01.21

Haredi autonomy needs to stop so Israel can beat COVID-19

(...) The one indication that a pandemic is indeed raging across the country are the pashkevilim, the posters plastered along the walls throughout the neighborhoods.

One warned against taking the corona vaccine, with a long list of supposed rabbis and their endorsement of that irresponsible position. Other posters informed the public of recent deaths in the community (...). What did they die from? (...). Haredim right now make up approximately 40% of daily infections in Israel, an infection and death rate in the community that is out of control. (...) In a normal country, a government would take immediate action. (...) But here in Israel, unsurprisingly, the opposite is true: haredi cities have the lowest proportion of fines (...). Israel is a world expert in reining in public disturbances, like sending in security forces as needed to impose curfews and break up riots. If the government so wanted, it could dispatch police to break up mass gatherings and shut down schools. But besides the occasional attempt to shut down a yeshiva here and there – mostly done, it seems, to put on a show for the public that something is happening –

the haredim have continued to live in their own little bubble.

(...) It seems that Netanyahu would almost have an easier time launching an attack against Iran's nuclear facilities than he would acting to stop haredi insurrection.

It's time we face reality: Israel has lost control over the haredi sector in the country. (...) While there is no doubt that the blood of the dead rests on the hands of the rabbis and haredi community leaders, they are not the only ones to blame. There is a complete lack of trust between the community and the state. (...) It has been the case for pretty much all of the last 72 years of Israel's existence. (...) What we are seeing is mass insurrection. It is against the state, its institutions, its laws and its people.

This is Israel's real challenge for the years to come. Not Hamas, Iran or Hezbollah. With those we will manage. It is internally that we are lost and divided. (...) The haredi autonomy in Israel needs to come to an end. No one is above the law. (...)

Yaakov Katz, JPO, 22.01.21

Netanyahu and Corona – A Tale of Incompetence

(...) Whereas Benjamin Netanyahu prides himself in the fact that Israel leads the world in terms of the agility with which it has inoculated a significant proportion of the population, our government has failed on every other count. By this stage in affairs, a public company would have already castigated its directors for gross incompetence and professional negligence and would have replaced them with people of greater competence. (...) How else explain the fact that the government – albeit a year too late – finally closed Ben Gurion airport to flights from overseas while leaving the land border with Jordan open? (...) Too little and too late. (...) However, it was crooked from the beginning. (...) When Israel's schools were already closed, the charedim continued to operate their yeshivot in complete disregard of the health ministry's pleas to close them. (...) Any responsible government would have immediately closed any business, institution, synagogue or yeshiva that was in defiance of the lockdown restrictions and also shut off its funding. (...) Perhaps the day will come when there will be a public inquiry into the manner in which Netanyahu's government handled the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely to come to the conclusion that incompetence, short-sightedness and coalition interests resulted in many more Israelis dying than need have been the case. (...)

Michael Boyden, TOI, 27.01.21

For Israel's sake, Haredi parties must be kept out of power

It is difficult to express opposition to the relationship between Israel and its Haredi population without slipping into racism and even forms of anti-Semitism. But the Haredi community is currently at the center of public discourse and must be judged according to the facts. Ultra-Orthodox Israelis make up 13% of the population and 40% of the country's coronavirus infections. But when efforts are made to reduce the spread in their own communities and prevent it from infecting others, the response is often violent.

The Sephardi ultra-Orthodox are not involved. They are for the most part in compliance with health regulations, which leaves us with the Ashkenazi sector. (...) The recent wave of violence is just the tip of the iceberg in the contentious relations between Haredi Israelis and the rest of the country. This relationship has a long history of strife that began even before the establishment of the state. (...) the Haredi community receives more than a free pass for military service that most Israeli 18-year-olds have to complete. They are also recipients of a government stipend to support them in their Torah studies (...). Without a review of the ultra-Orthodox community's relations with the state, we are surely marching towards the abyss. The recent violence, though dominating the news headlines, is but a footnote in an ongoing story. (...) the secular leaders must stop kowtowing to religious powers. Dialogue will not help. Israel needs a government that represents the secular majority and keeps the Haredi politicians away from power. (...)

Ben-Dror Yemini, YED, 30.01.21

3. Maulkorb für Menschenrechtsaktivisten

Bildungsminister Yoav Gallant geht auf Konfrontationskurs mit der Menschenrechtsorganisation B'Tselem. Anlass seines Verbots für politische Aktivist_innen, vor Jugendlichen an staatlichen Schulen aufzutreten, war ein Bericht von B'Tselem der festhält, dass Palästinenser_innen im besetzten Westjordanland, im Gazastreifen, Ost-Jerusalem und innerhalb Israels unter verschiedenen Formen israelischer Kontrolle lebten. Sie hätten dabei weniger Rechte als Juden und Jüdinnen im gesamten Gebiet zwischen dem Mittelmeer und dem Jordan. Gallant richtete sein Verbot an Initiativen, die Israel als Apartheidstaat bezeichnen. Weder B'Tselem noch die Leitung der HaReali Schule in Haifa, an der der

Vortrag per Zoom stattfand, ließen sich von dem Verbot abschrecken.

What apartheid?

(...) B'Tselem, which presents itself as a human-rights organization, is in fact known as an organization with a clear political stance that is in contrast to Israel's position. (...) people have no boundaries. How dare they say that I, an Arab Israeli who served along with Jewish soldiers in the Israel Defense Forces and managed hundreds of Jewish employees, live under an apartheid regime? How can anyone say our society is living under an apartheid regime when among us you will find doctors, judges, and even lawmakers? (...) B'Tselem has already broken the record for hypocrisy, but to compare Israel to an apartheid regime for its racial laws is not only a distorted lie but an insult to all those South Africans who actually lived through apartheid. It is contempt for and cynical exploitation of the concept. (...) I look around at our neighbors in the region and thank god I was born in the State of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. (...) When B'Tselem director Hagai El-Ad, who is Jewish, decides that I, my Arab family, and my Arab friends are all living under an apartheid regime, he and his organizations are basically telling us they see us as second-class citizens. B'Tselem, don't push your agendas at our expense. (...)

Yoseph Haddad, IHY, 17.01.21

Israeli minister's decision on B'Tselem is an insult to education

Education Minister Yoav Gallant's failed attempt to bar B'Tselem's executive director, Hagai El-Ad, from addressing students at a Haifa high school is further proof that an anti-democratic plague is spreading in Israel. (...) military control and occupation go hand in hand with the violation of human rights, just as every kind of authoritarian regime requires censorship, silencing, political persecution and curtailment of freedom of expression, as Gallant has proved. (...) B'Tselem published a position paper that rejected the accepted view of Israel as a democratic state that simultaneously maintains a temporary occupation regime in the territories, in favor of describing Israel as a single polity between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea that maintains an apartheid regime throughout this territory. (...) In the wake of Gallant's order, the Education Ministry's director for the Haifa region instructed Reali's CEO to cancel B'Tselem's participation in the webinar. But the principal of the school's upper division, Mendi

Rabinovitz, rejected this attempt at silencing and insisted on holding the webinar, which had already been postponed once due to criticism by a right-wing activist. (...) Rabinovitz was right to insist on holding the webinar, as he had promised to do last month. No one should give in to the right's bullying or cave to an education minister who doesn't understand the meaning of education. Gallant should conduct his election campaign on someone else's back, not on the backs of Israeli students.

Editorial, HAA, 18.01.21

So it's apartheid, not occupation. Now what

The term "occupation," as applied to the West Bank, no longer matches reality there. What goes on in the territories cannot be understood today as being cut off from what goes on in all the areas under Israel's control. So says a courageous, straightforward and detailed new position paper published by B'Tselem(...). Since 1967, Israel has been (...) focused on irreversibly reducing the areas allotted to living, employment and movement of Palestinians, while expanding the areas designated for Jews only (...). So what has changed now? (...) The hundreds of thousands of settlers living throughout the West Bank and the total support they enjoy from the political majority in Israel, across its various parties and movements, along with the ideological brainwashing that goes on in schools and in the army – all this has profoundly changed the balance of power. Under such circumstances, the vast majority of the Israeli public probably wouldn't even understand what the B'Tselem document is talking about. What a shame. Because, 30 years ago when that human rights organization was founded, there were smart people here who said these sort of things in much stronger language and foresaw the coming disaster in great detail. (...) if Israelis really knew what was being done in the West Bank, if they knew about the oppression of the Palestinians there and the seizure of their land by Israelis, they would be outraged and would oppose it. (...)

Ilana Hammerman, HAA, 18.01.21

Gallant is right

(...) There is no apartheid inside Israel within the 1949 Armistice Lines, nor in the areas controlled by Israel beyond those lines. To say that Israel is an apartheid state is either to not know Israel, or to not know apartheid. (...) Apartheid describes a particularly grotesque form of institutionalized and systemic racism that existed in South Africa from 1948 to 1994 and was designed to preserve the dominance

of one race – the whites – over another, the blacks. Anyone who looks honestly at Israel, on either side of the Green Line, knows this is not the situation here. Inside the Green Line, Israeli Arabs have full civil rights. (...) Since Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip in 2005, Israel has had no say whatsoever in governance there. Hamas violently took control of the coastal enclave in 2007, and rules there with an iron fist. (...) And in the West Bank, the Palestinian Authority is a self-governing body meant to govern the Palestinians until the final dispensation of the territories is worked out. That no final agreement has yet been reached is as much – if not more – a Palestinian fault as an Israeli one. (...) Hagai El-Ad, executive director of the human rights organization B'Tselem, doesn't understand this – and in a dramatic announcement last week, his organization declared Israel an apartheid state. (...) El-Ad has both a right to his viewpoint and to articulate it. The state must by no means prevent him from expressing his opinion, but it need not provide him a platform. Gallant is not saying that El-Ad can't express his opinion, only that state-funded schools don't need to give him a bullhorn and an audience. While some may say this is undemocratic, we contend it is just good common sense.
Editorial, JPO, 18.01.21

Banning views won't help development of students

(...) One would be hard-pressed to find a national curriculum in the democratic, English speaking-world that does not include critical thinking as one of the foundation capabilities toward which it educates. (...) Our world is full of complex environmental, social and economic challenges, many of which have not been previously encountered. (...) Ethical understanding is critical so that young men and women can become ethical citizens within the modern world. (...) Today's world forces all of us to consider our values and choices. We are obliged to take a stand and often, take action. This cannot occur without an understanding of competing values, rights, interests and norms. We wish for our children to be informed, educated members of society capable of making ethical decisions based on all relevant and available information. Laying the foundations for ethical understanding is a crucial part of adolescence. (...) The Education Ministry is the governing body of all children whose parents are citizens of this country. It goes without saying that within this

group, there exists a myriad of opinions and values. It is not possible to hide those opinions with which we do not agree; on the contrary, it is counter-productive at best, and damaging at worse. In fact, by banning certain groups from visiting schools, the directive shows a lack of understanding of teenagers and their ability to think critically. Questions raised by organizations such as B'tselem are constantly raised by students; it is far better to tackle the issues in an honest, open manner than hide a view which may frighten you. (...) David Klahr, JPO, 21.01.21

Schools should invite El-Ad

The hearing the Education Ministry held (...) for the heads of Haifa's Hebrew Reali School, simply because they dared to invite the executive director of B'Tselem to talk to their students, was meant to intimidate educators and deter them from engaging with the reality of the occupation and the routine of military control over the Palestinians, which the right-wing government denies. From start to finish, this was a political hearing that sought to "reeducate" teachers and principals, and it's doubtful whether there was any legal basis for it. There should be no mistake about the message sent by Education Minister Yoav Gallant's actions: Teachers and principals are expected to fall in line with the right's political positions by either obeying them or keeping silent. Over the last two decades, right-wing education ministers have becoming experts at turning the ministry into a vehicle for reducing freedom of expression and engaging in political indoctrination. (...) The paucity of thought and discussion in classrooms clearly serves the annexationist nationalist right. (...) Schools cannot avoid discussing issues that the right-wing government seeks to silence. That is their civic and educational duty to their students and themselves, especially now. Therefore, they should also invite B'Tselem's director, Hagai El-Ad. That would be a fitting response to Gallant's attempt to gag them by holding a hearing.
Editorial, HAA, 30.01.21

4. Medienquerschnitt

US-Außenpolitik unter Biden

Don't bet on Biden reentering Iran deal

Assuming President Biden demonstrates the fortitude to hold off the extremists in his party, he is not a bad prospect, for the US, for the world, and for

Israel. (...) In the international sphere, which will not be an initial priority of the new administration (...), relations with China will be front and center. (...) It is likely that the Biden administration will take a harder line with both Russia and Turkey than Trump did, who showed a quite remarkable affinity for both Putin and Erdogan. North Korea is always lurking in the wings and can create a crisis at any time. In the Middle East, Iran will be the focus, and in this regard, testimony by both the incoming secretary of state and the incoming head of the CIA indicates that the announced intention to reenter the infamous "deal" of 2015 will be neither easy nor rapid, with conditions placed on re-entry making it unlikely to take place at all. This is, of course, good news for Israel, along with promises to keep the US embassy in Jerusalem and to support the Abraham Accords process. Whereas not a priority item, the new administration will certainly reverse the Trump administration's Palestinian policies, permitting the reopening of the Palestinian Authority office in DC and resuming financial assistance while reverting to a policy of promoting a two-state solution. (...)
Dr. Norman Bailey, GLO, 21.01.21

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

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Verantwortlich:

Dr. Paul Pasch,
Leiter der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Israel

Redaktion:

Susanne Knaul
Judith Stelmach

Homepage: www.fes.org.il
Email: fes@fes.org.il