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1. Israel erneuert Einreisesperre für Tourist_innen

Nach Bekanntwerden der neuen Virusmutation Omikron verhängte Israel erneut eine zunächst auf zwei Wochen begrenzte Einreisesperre für Tourist_innen. Aus dem Ausland zurückkehrende Israelis müssen in eine dreitägige Quarantäne. Zudem wurde zur Eindämmung der neuen Variante erneut die umstrittene Handy-Überwachung von Erkrankten eingeführt. Bei zwei israelischen Kardiologen, die von einer medizinischen Konferenz in London zurückkehrten, wurde Omikron festgestellt. Die beiden waren zuvor dreifach mit dem Biontech/Pfizer-Vakzin geimpft worden. Bei beiden Ärzten traten nur milde Symptome auf. Unterdessen dürfen nach Entscheidung des Gesundheitsministeriums in Jerusalem auch 5-12jährige Kinder geimpft werden. Bislang galt die Impfulassung erst ab 12 Jahren und für Erwachsene.

Bennett's great COVID gamble

(...) With Israel facing growing risks that our prime minister is willing to take on without hesitation, the past week showed the first possible signs that the fourth infection wave might have not completely faded away and that we might be on the cusp of a new one. (...) Ahead of the start of the vaccination campaign for children aged 5-11, the disease is mainly centered in schools and kindergartens. Most of these unvaccinated kids become ill, return home and run the risk of infecting others. (...) Israel's

leaders must wake up from their indifference and make sure that the grim realities of the past nearly two years do not return.

Sarit Rosenblum, YED, 18.11.21

Anti-vaxxers are anti-ethical and endangering public health

(...) Is there any hope to end this worldwide pandemic associated with the COVID-19 strain of the coronavirus? The answer to this question is well-known (...): vaccinations!

(...) we have within our reach the possibility to end this pandemic! So, why isn't it happening? Why are so many people resisting the opportunity to not only protect themselves, but to protect the health of the public, and thus to end this pandemic? (...) One of the central values of Judaism is the sanctity of human life. (...) As we are approaching the holiday of Hannukah—and not long after it, the festival of Christmas — perhaps we will be witness to some miracles once again. We already have the medical miracle of the vaccine. Now we need a miracle of a change in consciousness. The anti-vaxxers need to wake up! With the help of the Divine Spirit, and the partnership of human beings around the world, we can emerge from this pandemic. (...)

Ron Kronish, TOI, 25.11.21

Omicron arrival spells trouble and Israel must be ready

(...) Omicron has some level of immunity against the currently available vaccines, which itself may herald the end of the global vaccination effort. On the bright side, the majority of those currently hospitalized in South Africa due to the new variant are those who have not been vaccinated at all - which may prove the vaccine is at least partially effective against Omicron. Either way, the prevalent uncertainty surrounding the new strain obliges us to prepare for the worst case scenario. If Omicron is indeed as dangerous as many fear, the price we would all pay for resting on our past laurels would be much higher than the price we may pay for being overly cautious. (...) We must act now and not waste a single minute, if we are to avoid another economically destructive lockdown. Among the measures the government must implement as soon as possible is hermetically sealing Israel's skies, or at the least greatly reducing all flights not only to the country but also from it. Meanwhile, the greatest tool we have for preventing infections and COVID-induced health complications remains the vaccine - even if Omicron proves somewhat resistant to it. (...) now more than ever, every Israeli must contribute to the national fight against COVID and get fully vaccinated. (...) Cancelling social gathering could avoid use dealing with dozens, or even hundreds, of new infection chains. Prime Minister Naftali Bennett has called on all the parents to vaccinate their children, in order to allow them all to "go out and celebrate Hanukkah." What Bennett is selling though, is a dangerous illusion. (...) all non-essential events and venues must be shuttered, with affected businesses properly compensated. (...)

Sarit Rosenblum, YED, 28.11.21

Against COVID Omicron variant, we need Hanukkah spirit

There is no doubt that as Jews around the world lit the first candle of Hanukkah last night, everyone needed some festive cheer, light, and the reminder of miracles. The corona pandemic is yet again casting a pall this year over the festivities and general feeling of well-being, as news of the new Omicron variant takes its toll. There is even talk of a fifth wave and new restrictions coming into force. (...) It is miraculous in its own way that Jews today not only still celebrate the festival, but are free to do so in their own state. (...) At the same time, we must not forget the modern-day threats (...). There is no reason for anyone who can be vaccinated to turn down that gift. It has been proven beyond doubt that vaccination reduces the chance of being infected by

COVID, and vastly lowers the risks of serious illness. Israel's swift rollout of the vaccinations brought light not only at home, but served as an example and shed light around the world. (...) We need to each help fight the spread of this terrible disease by all means available - vaccination, wearing masks in public, regular handwashing, and no crowding. And we need to look forward to a time when we can fully rededicate the economy, tourism, travel, cultural and religious events and a return to a better, healthy life. The Maccabees of yore fought back and won despite the odds. We need to collectively maintain that fighting spirit today. (...) We cannot afford to rely only on miracles, but neither is there a reason to give up hope.

Editorial, JPO, 28.11.21

It's time to get vaccinated

(...) vaccines are the safest way to prevent severe illness and death, and of course to maintain regular life between COVID-19 waves. (...) The decision to vaccinate the Israeli population with a booster shot has been proved correct (...). The booster shot has helped reduce the number of those falling severely ill, the overload in hospitals, and the infection rate. (...) While early on Israel was considered an international success story in combating COVID-19, in the past two months the rate of vaccination has come to a halt. The spread of anti-vaccination fake news and a flaccid effort by the government to locate and encourage vaccine-resistant individuals, are preventing Israel from reaching vaccination rates that will protect most of the population and allow us to move on. The coronavirus vaccine has been tested on hundreds of millions of human beings, and is recommended for use from age 5 by the world's leading physicians. Each of us has a duty to get vaccinated to protect ourselves, our loved ones and the population at large. Even if vaccine efficacy turns out to be lower against the omicron variant it will still inhibit infection, and according to health experts reduce severe illness as well. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 28.11.21

Omicron: Help global vaccine rollout to stop new variants

How ironic that just as we were about to celebrate the festival of lights, Hanukkah, something totally beyond our control reared its head to darken the mood. (...) Plans have been thrown into disarray, leaving many scratching their heads, wondering what best to do. (...) We thought that the conundrums of the last two years had all but disappeared.

Now, sadly, they are rearing their ugly heads again. Quarantine, isolation, bidud... words that had become part of our everyday vocabulary were fading fast from our memories and stability and calm in the past few months seemed to be setting in. (...) After nearly two years of zoom, fear, loneliness and even death, the world seemed to be getting back on its feet. For us, here in Israel, it's been all too easy to become complacent about COVID. The government has "got our backs." We were the first country to roll out the vaccination program; the trail blazer, the envy of other nations. (...) Across Africa (...) the vaccination rollout has been sparse and in some areas, almost nonexistent. (...) if we fail to recognize that the world is akin to a small village, we do so at our peril. It is not just those citizens who will suffer as a result of a severe lack of vaccines available to them. Granted, their misery far outreaches ours in terms of lack of medical facilities, lack of economic support and ultimately loss of life, however, we are not immune to their suffering, simply because we have been vaccinated. For as long as the pandemic is allowed to flourish anywhere in the world, variants will flourish too and we will all be affected by it.

Andrea Samuels, JPO, 30.11.21

Same tools, new battle

Having just exited the Delta coronavirus wave, Israel finds itself facing a new challenge. The Omicron variant (...) is cause for alarm. (...) While the world's greatest minds are trying to learn more about the new strain, Israel and the rest of the world must take a series of immediate measures (...) officials imposed a two-week travel ban on foreigners as well as mandatory self-isolation for Israelis who return from abroad. Those who claim these measures are hasty must remember that we have a duty to exhibit caution, given that we do not possess all the information about the new strain. (...) the Health Ministry must continue vaccinating the population, with an emphasis on booster shots and doses for children ages 5-11 who have not yet gotten inoculated. It must also impose restrictions on the 600,000 Israelis who outright refuse to be vaccinated. Another complex matter is Hanukkah. Nobody wants to disturb festivities, but neither do we want another morbidity outbreak. To reduce transmission we must follow the "green pass" guidelines and test children who have not yet been vaccinated, or who are in the process of building immunity. Omicron is another opportunity to remind policymakers of the importance and necessity of strengthening the healthcare system, increasing the number of beds in intensive care

units, and more.(...) Israel has a great advantage, both due to a high number of vaccinated citizens and the advanced healthcare system. We have the tools to minimize the impact of Omicron. And we will if we make sure to follow health guidelines, get vaccinated and wear masks. By doing so, we will show that we are responsible for one another.

Arnon Ofek, IHY, 30.11.21

2. Erneute Verhandlungen über ein Atomabkommen mit Iran

Nach einer mehrmonatigen Unterbrechung sind die Gespräche über ein erneuertes Atomabkommen mit dem Iran wieder aufgenommen worden. Die USA, Russland, Frankreich, Großbritannien und Deutschland hatte 2015 ein Abkommen mit Iran unterzeichnet. Ziel war, eine Atommacht Iran zu verhindern. Bereits 2018 stiegen die USA unter dem damaligen Präsidenten Donald Trump wieder aus dem Abkommen aus. Seitdem hält sich die Islamische Republik nicht mehr an ihre Zusagen und fährt ihr Atomprogramm schrittweise nach oben. Zusätzlich wurde der Zugang der Internationalen Atomenergiebehörde (IAEA) zu den iranischen Atomanlagen massiv eingeschränkt. Israel zeigte sich stets skeptisch über die Aussichten, Teheran von der Entwicklung ihres atomaren Rüstungspotentials abhalten zu können.

Why Israel may soon attack Iran

(...) the United States and Israel have reiterated their determination to prevent Iran from producing nuclear weapons. Both have stated their preference for a diplomatic means of achieving that goal. But there the symmetry ends. While the United States can live with an Iran that has the ability to make a bomb but doesn't do so, Israel simply cannot. (...) What is the difference between an Iran that could quickly make a bomb and an Iran that already has one? Why would America implicitly accept a threshold-capable Iran while Israel regards it as a strategic – and potentially existential – threat? "Threshold" describes a nuclear program that has all the components necessary for swiftly making a bomb. Enriching uranium to the 90% level necessary for weaponization takes as much as two years. But by enriching uranium to 60%, as it does now, Iran has completed the longest stretch of the process and is now installing centrifuges capable of spinning four or even six times faster than the current rate. Once it decides to break out and create a nuclear arsenal, Iran can do so in a matter of weeks or even days – well before the international community could react. (...)

Iran does not have to possess the bomb to damage Israel irreparably. Threshold capacity provides Iranian-backed terrorists with a nuclear umbrella that can open and shield them from retaliation. Responding to rocket attacks from Hezbollah or Hamas, Israel will be hobbled by the fear of an Iranian breakout. Defending the country will be dangerously more difficult. (...) the timetable for action is much shorter, and while our military capabilities cannot equal America's, we do have the means to defend ourselves. And though Israel has no expectations of US military intervention, we trust that the United States will provide us with the logistical, diplomatic and legal assistance we need and stand by all its Middle Eastern allies. (...)

Michael Oren, TOI, 18.11.21

Israel's strategy against Iran will hurt its alliance with the U.S.

The diplomatic dialogue that endangers Israel isn't between the six powers and Iran on the nuclear agreement, but the one that is leading Israel and the United States down the path of conflict. (...) Washington has taken off its gloves, too, via The New York Times, which recently quoted senior U.S. administration officials warning Israel that "repeated attacks on Iranian nuclear facilities may be tactically satisfying, but they are ultimately counterproductive." Words like these, which until now had only been exchanged behind closed doors, show that this isn't just a disagreement between the two countries over tactics but a signal to Israel about the limits of American tolerance. (...) it seems that Israeli freedom of action will now carry a price tag. (...) the diplomatic, strategic, economic and historic links between Israel and the United States, not to mention Israel's reliance on a power that regards Israel's security as a pillar of its defense policy, requires that Israel stand by Biden's side and not place land mines in his path.

Editorial, HAA, 25.11.21

Israel should ensure that politics don't get in way of Biden-Iran talks

(...) The world – and particularly the administration of US President Joe Biden – is bent on reaching a new deal with the Iranians, even if it means one that has less restrictions and assurances than the JCPOA brokered by the Obama administration in 2015 and which Donald Trump withdrew from only three years later. This does not mean that Israel should not do what it can to try and impact the outcome of the talks. It should. But it needs to have

realistic expectations and more importantly, it needs to ensure that it doesn't let politics get in the way. (...) Explaining that Israel will retain a military option is important and will hopefully serve as something of a deterrent against Iran as well as motivation for the nations participating in the talks to ensure that the deal is stronger and longer so that Israel will not have to act, something they definitely don't want to see. (...) Iran's nuclear program has long been a challenge for the world and particularly the State of Israel, which is openly threatened and attacked by the Islamic Republic and its proxies. But to confront it appropriately, Israel needs to focus on policy, not politics.

Editorial, JPO, 27.11.21

Israel cannot take out Iran's nuclear program

Let us lay our cards on the table: Israel is unable to launch a campaign in Iran to take out the country's nuclear program. This option (...) is part of the diplomatic game. Israel cannot signal flaccidity and defeatism to the outside world. Given the Israeli position that a nuclear Iran is a strategic threat, Jerusalem must demonstrate determination and decisiveness. Not only is an open war with Iran operationally too much for regional powers to take on but it is doubtful stability- and economic prosperity-seeking Israel would be able to deal with the outcome of such a war and the need to contend the day after with a never-ending "trickle" of long-range missiles and drones on its cities in particular. (...) To this, we must add a highly uncomfortable strategic picture. Although it is the only country that could succeed in the mission, the progressive United States will not do the dirty work of taking out Iran's nuclear facilities for Israel. The way things look now, US President Joe Biden's administration is the worst US administration to date as far as Israel is concerned, even when compared to that of former US President Barack Obama. (...) A nuclear threshold Iran is not a particularly pleasant idea, but the threat it will pose extends beyond the possibility the ayatollah regime will actively and directly use its nuclear weapons against Israel. (...) The more realistic threat presented by a nuclear threshold Iran concerns the possibility it will expand its regional freedom of operations and mainly, the utilization of the umbrella provided by pro-Iran players that undermine stability in our neighborhood, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and Hamas in the Gaza Strip. (...) Iran's transformation into a nuclear threshold state will not only chew away at Israeli deterrence and increase the willingness of those same organiza-

tions to challenge it on a regular basis, but it will also make Israeli efforts to contend with the undermining of the security situation ten times harder. The sands in the Israeli hourglass are running out as the country faces two kinds of threats. The first is the time that remains until Iran becomes a nuclear threshold state, and the second is the time that remains until members of the region's activist camp directly threatening Israel are able to enjoy Iran's strategic umbrella. (...)

Doron Matza, IHY, 29.11.21

3. Internationaler Tag gegen Gewalt an Frauen

Der diesjährige internationale Tag gegen Gewalt an Frauen stand im Zeichen der Corona-Pandemie. Aufgrund der wirtschaftlichen Anspannung und der Lockdowns stieg weltweit die Zahl der Gewalttaten innerhalb der Familie. In Israel ist allerdings schon in diesem Jahr ein positiver Trend erkennbar. Im Vergleich zum Vorjahr ist die Zahl der Femizide deutlich gesunken. Auffällig ist die große Zahl der Mütter, die Berichten zufolge mehr als ein Drittel der Todesopfer ausmachten. Weltweit organisierten zahlreiche Initiativen Aktionen, um auf die vielfältigen Formen der Gewalt gegen Frauen aufmerksam zu machen.

The year that killing women finally caught Israelis' attention

This year, as the COVID lockdowns that had intensified domestic violence eased, Israel finally broke its apathy about femicide. (...) As the world marks the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women (...), we are reminded that extreme violence against women inevitably ends up as femicide, the intentional killing of a woman because she is a woman. Here in Israel (...) we actually have a lot to be thankful for: Femicide rates, relative to the general population, are low compared to other countries. However, in a small country like Israel, where everyone knows everyone else, each murder is felt as a personal loss and a personal tragedy. (...) Some argue that femicide statistics are unreliable, and definitions are flexible. Femicide usually relates to women being killed because of their gender. This year, Israel has seen an alarming rise in violence and crime within the Israeli Arab community. Well over 100 Israeli Arabs have been killed in gang warfare. The vast majority of the homicides are male, but a few women have also become targets, or got in the way. (...) The good news in Israel continues. The number of femicide cases in Israel in 2021 is significantly lower than the femicide rate in

2020. (...) the termination of the harsh COVID restrictions and the cessation of a strict lockdown may be one reason for the decrease in femicide. Another may be the unprecedented, and long-delayed, Israeli media coverage of femicides. (...) Thirty six percent of all femicides this year in Israel were matricides: the killing of mothers. (...) No single sector in Israeli society "owns" the trend. (...) In future, when we think of the elimination of violence against women, we also have to reflect upon the mothers who gave birth to children who would end up being their murderers.

Prof. Shalva Weil, HAA, 23.11.21

Eradicating violence against women requires revolutionary reforms

While our forefathers believed the people of Israel are "the enlightened" ones, the recent and worrying uptick in violence, rape, and murder of women across the country proves otherwise. (...) Girls, teenagers and adult women have all been exposed to violence, be it within their own family - from which many cannot simply escape on their own - or out in the world. (...) Since the start of 2021, at least 21 women were murdered by their spouse or partner. Most of their names have been all but forgotten by the public. The same goes for the majority of sexual violence victims, many of whom find themselves at the mercy of rich and powerful superiors, who believe they can simply ignore or even shred any evidence of misconduct. (...) Nothing changed in the last 26 years despite the various associations formed, shelters constructed, politicians vowing to eradicate the problem, the media coverage, or the various campaigns meant to raise awareness. But, we can also point to some positive changes. Back in 1994, Knesset had only 11 female MKs and only two female ministers. Today the government has nine cabinet ministers and no less than 36 female lawmakers. The current government even allocated funds from the state budget for 2021-2022 to finally implement the national program for the eradication of violence against women (...). And while this is indeed a good omen, it is not enough. (...) Too little has changed. The prevalent issue of violence against women necessitates nothing less than a revolution of reforms, and as soon as possible.

Limor Livnat, YED, 25.11.21

On day for ending violence against women, we need less talk, more action

Israel, along with the rest of the world, on Thursday marked the International Day for the Elimination of

Violence against Women, a day meant to recognize the battle to end sexual and domestic abuse directed toward women. It came one day after a Gilboa Prison guard reportedly confirmed a 2018 finding that female prison guards were pimped out to inmates. There's an opportunity now, as the world opens back up amid the corona pandemic, to hope for a better future. The UN is recognizing this hope with its campaign "Orange the World," with orange representing the image of a future without violence toward women and girls. (...) Israel has not sat idly as this crisis has grown. It officially joined the Istanbul Convention, the first international, legally binding agreement that creates a comprehensive framework for countries to approach the crisis of violence against women, marking a massive step in the movement for the eradication of abuse. (...) NIS 155 million will go toward Israel's plan to combat violence against women. The Constitution, Law and Justice Committee approved in a first reading in mid-October a bill that would save samples taken from victims of sex crimes for 50 years. (...) Surely, there is an air of change in Israel. But it is not enough. We encourage the government to not just speak the names and preserve the memories of the victims of abuse – especially those 21 women who were murdered in acts of domestic abuse this year alone – but to act and push for the UN's "orange" – that bright future without abuse toward women and girls. More budgets must be allocated to create safe spaces for women, and for mandatory educational programs in schools – because abusive tendencies oftentimes start at a young age. Programs for abusive men should also be made available. (...) regulations must be put in place to monitor systemic patterns of sexual abuse within governmental systems, including in the healthcare system, which has been accused of refusing to release data about sexual harassment and assault among its staff. This also includes the prison system. Female guards being pimped out has no place in a modern democratic state. (...) Once more, words are proven meaningless when no action is taken. It is the government's responsibility to bring about the change necessary to eradicate this shadow pandemic. Editorial, JPO, 26.11.21

4. Medienquerschnitt

Übertritt zum Judentum für Weltliche umstritten

Orthodox-only conversion will end the Jewish people

(...) when MK Yulia Malinovsky (...) asked the head of Israel's government conversion services (...) if a secular woman could convert to Judaism, his answer was unequivocal: No. You can't convert and still live as a secular Jew (...). This is a remark based on condescension and a patronizing attitude toward anyone who wants to join his or her life to that of the Jewish people. (...) conversions in the Reform and Conservative streams, which are not government-funded (...) are seeing a steady rise. (...) unlike kashruth, when it comes to conversion, there are more voices from within the hegemony that support the move for reform. Still, the discourse about conversion and the changes that need to be made to it do not indicate any real change. In contrast to many other issues, conversion deals with the future of the Jewish people, rather than how it expresses itself currently. Therefore, it must be adjusted to the time and place and mainly to meet the needs of the men, women, and children who want to undergo the process. (...) Israel is home to some 400,000 citizens who have "no nationality or religion." Many of them served in the army, pay taxes, and see Israel as their future home. (...) leaving conversion and the fate of the Jewish people in the hands of the Orthodox alone will eventually lead to the end of the Jewish people. Reforms to kashruth supervision and certification – important and progressive though it may be – doesn't apply to most of the Jewish people. This cannot happen with conversion.

Sharon Banyan Primor, IHY, 29.11.21

Arabischunterricht an staatlichen Schulen

Israelis should be taught Arabic in schools

(...) For the first time in almost a decade, we've seen an Israeli prime minister meeting with the Egyptian president in Egypt. Since assuming office five months ago, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid has visited the UAE and Morocco. (...) In the Arab street, some say that the peace with Israel is peace among governments, but not among the peoples. An Israeli citizen, for example, cannot walk freely and feel safe in the streets of Cairo or Amman. This mostly has to do with the popular view of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But Israelis can do more to assimilate into the region. The most basic step to change this is to start teaching Arabic at a younger age and to include spoken Arabic as part of our schools' curricula. (...) In this age of peace, it is time to change the direction. (...) This is the right time for us, the people, to show that Israel is more than just

an exporter of military technology. We have a lot to give, and a key step is learning the language of the region, which will help all of us communicate in the new language of peace.

Editorial, JPO, 17.11.21

Kein Preis für Goldreich

The Israel Prize is not about excellence, but government loyalty

In her decision not to grant the Israel Prize for mathematics and computer science to Prof. Oded Goldreich, Education Minister Yifat Shasha-Biton has made it clear that the new government is no harbinger of change when it comes to the ongoing effort, which crosses party lines, to obliterate all trace of the occupation. The objection of the Weizmann Institute scientist to another academic institution established in the West Bank is a reminder that in today's Israel one must hide any trace of the Green Line, or at least punishment those who recognize it, to demonstrate to all the limits of what is permitted and what is forbidden. Shasha-Biton's decision is thus contributing to the gag culture that has taken root in Israel. (...) Shasha-Biton decided to deny Goldreich the Israel Prize because he signed a petition calling on the European Union not cooperate with Ariel University. (...) Although the prize committee reiterated that Goldreich is worthy of the prize for his research, Shasha-Biton chose to contaminate the prize with political considerations. From now on the most prestigious prize awarded by Israel will not be the mark of scientific excellence but of loyalty to the government. Disqualifying Goldreich is a harsh blow to the Israel Prize's status and marks a further erosion in the basic right of freedom of speech. (...)

Editorial, HAA, 19.11.21

Goldreich crossed a red line by calling for boycott

Professor Oded Goldreich of the Weizmann Institute of Science is without question a gifted scientist. (...) Goldreich has in the past (...) called for the boycott of colleagues at Ariel University, because of its physical location, beyond the Green Line in the settlement of Ariel. Should the latter attribute disqualify Goldreich from being awarded the Israel Prize, granted to citizens who have shown special excellence, distinguished achievements and a breakthrough in their field? (...) Goldreich had signed a petition to the German Parliament to repeal the labeling of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanc-

tions movement as antisemitic. (...) Attorney-General Avichai Mandelblit gave the opinion that the selection committee should be allowed to grant Goldreich the honor. (...) Despite that, Shasha-Biton decided to concur with Gallant, disqualifying Goldreich from receiving the honor. (...) Freedom of academia and freedom of speech are two central cornerstones of any democracy. Being able to criticize the policies of your government is also a vital element of that process. But calling for a boycott is another matter. (...) we've seen the huge reaction to the decision by Ben & Jerry's to stop selling their ice cream in Israeli West Bank settlements. That's just one of many examples of efforts to boycott, divest and sanction Israel over its presence in the West Bank, under the umbrella of the BDS movement. Israelis are certainly free to support and be involved in such an effort. But awarding an Israel Prize and giving a soapbox to someone who bears those beliefs is another matter. Believing that Israel should give up the West Bank should obviously not preclude being awarded the highest honor by the state. Calling for the boycott of professional colleagues, however, is a red line that shouldn't be crossed

Editorial, JPO, 20.11.21

Palästinensische NGOs und ihre Verbindung zu Terrororganisationen

Israel's spin in its efforts to justify labeling of Palestinian NGOs terrorist groups

(...) a 63-year-old Spanish citizen named Juana Rashmawi (...) has been imprisoned for over six months. Before her arrest, she was working as a fundraiser for the Union of Health Work Committees (...). The most that was attributed to her was that she was suspicious of the Union of Health Work Committees that it might be working at the behest of the Popular Front. (...) The indictment contains nine background paragraphs that are unrelated to Rashmawi, telling the story of the six civil society organizations that are alleged to be associated with the Popular Front. Rashmawi did not work for these organizations, and it was never argued that she was associated with them. (...) her lawyer, Avigdor Feldman, emphasized that Rashmawi could not admit to the claims since she was unaware of them. (...) The fact that military prosecutors insisted on including the paragraphs dealing with these organizations in the indictment, even though the accused argued that she had no information on this subject, was an early hint that the objective was a public relations stunt, an attempt to show something that

would justify Gantz's declaration to the world. (...) To understand the use Israel is trying to make of this plea bargain, agreed to by a woman who worked in one organization, to justify an announcement about other organizations, one must go back in time. In the course of 2020, Israel banned the Palestinian Union of Health Work Committees, claiming that it belonged to the Popular Front. Last May, indictments were filed against four employees of this organization. The indictments charged that invoices and salaries were inflated, with money funneled to the Popular Front. Investigative material was based mainly on the Shin Bet security service's investigation of two employees who were fired in 2019 after being charged with embezzling funds. Shortly before those indictments were filed, Israel showed European diplomats a classified Shin Bet document. Even though the indictment only concerned the Union of Health Work Committees, the document discussed the six organizations cited by Gantz. This document was meant to convince the Europeans to stop supporting these organizations financially. (...) Since the Shin Bet document did not present convincing evidence regarding these organizations, it had almost no impact on the diplomats who read it. (...) For most citizens of this country, the defense establishment's ruling is the final word, not something one can doubt or demand proof of. Since the organizations Gantz referred to are known and respected by the international community, it seems that in this case, keeping things obscure will not serve Israel well. (...)

Hagar Shezaf, HAA, 18.11.21

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