



Schlaglicht Israel Nr. 13/22
Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen
1.-31.Juli

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1. Bidens Reise nach Jerusalem und Riad

US-Präsident Joe Biden hat sich im Verlauf seiner Nahost-Reise erneut für eine Zwei-Staaten-Lösung im Konflikt zwischen Israel und den Palästinenser_innen ausgesprochen. Um Sicherheit, Wohlstand, Freiheit und Demokratie sowohl für israelische Bürger_innen als auch für Palästinenser_innen zu erreichen, sei das der beste Weg, sagte Biden nach einem Treffen mit Palästinenserpräsident Mahmoud Abbas in Bethlehem. Gleichzeitig dämmte er mit dem Zusatz, er wisse, dass das Ziel in weiter Ferne zu liegen scheine, die Hoffnung auf eine baldige Wiederaufnahme der Friedensverhandlungen. Konkrete Fortschritte gab es im Umfeld der Reise des US-Präsidenten hingegen bei den Beziehungen zwischen Israel und Saudi-Arabien. Riad öffnete den Luftraum für israelische Flüge. Jerusalem und Riad unterhalten keine diplomatischen Beziehungen, kooperieren allerdings hinter den Kulissen im Kampf gegen den gemeinsamen Gegner Iran. Biden positionierte sich unmissverständlich: Die USA würden nicht zulassen, dass der Iran eine Atomwaffe erhält. Bereits im Vorfeld seiner Reise sah sich der US-Präsident heftiger Kritik wegen seines Zusammentreffens mit dem saudischen Kronprinzen Mohammed bin Salman ausgesetzt, den US-Geheimdienste für den Mord an dem Journalisten und Regimekritiker Jamal Khashoggi verantwortlich machen.

US ponders agonizing handshake in Saudi Arabia it wants to avoid

US pundits are currently pondering a picture the US president hopes to avoid: a handshake with Mohammed bin Salman, Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler. (...) The American interest requires doing business with the young MBS, who is expected to rule Saudi Arabia for many years to come. For Washington, a country that controls vast oil reserves must not fall into the sphere of influence of Russia or China, especially as the great powers competition has intensified in the wake of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. (...) Biden's expected visit to Saudi Arabia shows that even a great power like the United States cannot be guided by moral considerations alone. (...) The Middle East will continue to be a violent and anarchic neighborhood, the occupation will not vanish tomorrow, antisemitism is unlikely to dissipate, the sense that "the whole world is against us" will retain its currency, and Israeli public opinion will not pressure the government to grant more weight to moral considerations. And Israel – politically and demographically – is not becoming more liberal, quite the contrary. (...) what is left are flesh and blood people, those who happen to be at the decision points. They know that Israel is significantly stronger than in the past and therefore has greater leeway to take moral considerations more seriously. At the moment of truth, the variable that makes the difference is the moral education those who make

fateful decisions on our behalf received in their parents' home. (...)

Avi Gil, JPO, 05.07.22

What Biden and Lapid have in common

(...) Biden and Lapid are of different ages (...) and backgrounds (...), but they each hold the political center in their own countries. In this polarized era, that is no small feat. Furthermore, both are dealing with populist predecessors who want to return to power: Donald Trump in the United States and Benjamin Netanyahu in Israel. (...) Biden and Lapid also share key policy priorities, which will likely strengthen their connection. Biden has stressed the US role of leading a club of democracies, while, as foreign minister, Lapid (...) views Israel's association with Western liberal democracies as a key source of its strength. (...) Lapid and all Israeli leaders are rooting for Biden's success when it comes to first steps between Israel and Saudi Arabia — namely enabling overflights of Israeli aircraft and enabling Israeli Arabs to fly directly to Mecca for the annual pilgrimage. (...) Beyond liberal democracy and regional integration, Biden and Lapid also share an aversion to airing dirty laundry in public, for reasons both of principle and politics. Biden appreciates it when Lapid publicly tempers his criticism of the Iran nuclear negotiations, and Lapid values keeping US criticism of the Palestinian issue and settlements behind closed doors. (...) Yet it may be easier to keep criticism within bounds than it will be to actually chart a way forward on both issues during a political season for both leaders: midterms for Biden and elections for Lapid. (...)

David Makovsky, TOI, 08.07.22

Biden's strategic goals in his Mideast tour are in the Gulf

(...) Biden is not traveling here to appease Israel or the Palestinians. He is coming to the Middle East because this is home to much of the world's oil and gas production which has once again become of utmost strategic importance to the United States and the West. (...) Convincing Arab Gulf oil producers to ramp up production would be a show of support for Biden, who is facing both China and Russia in the global arena and is vital after Russia's position in the region took a hit by virtue of its less-than-impressive military exploits in Ukraine. (...) A secondary goal the Biden administration hopes to secure on this trip is regional stability so that Washington won't have to be dragged into conflicts between its Mideast allies and Iran or between Israel and the Palestinians. (...)

Jerusalem hopes demonstrating close cooperation with the leader of the Western world would deter Iran and encourage more Sunni nations to join the Abraham Accords and further strengthen the regional air defense pact. Such an agreement would be of great concern for Tehran and a leverage point for the U.S. in its negotiations on a return to the nuclear deal. (...) When the president returns to Washington, negotiations with Iran on a return to the nuclear deal will resume. (...) Israel will try to keep pressing the Biden administration to turn the screws on Iran and refrain from signing a bad deal. (...)

Ron Ben Yishai, YED, 09.07.22

The True Price of Biden's Mideast Refueling Campaign

U.S. President Joe Biden's visits to Saudi Arabia and Israel (...) will be overshadowed by the absence of two journalists unable to cover the events: Jamal Khashoggi and Shireen Abu Akleh. The two were killed under completely different circumstances, but ahead of the presidential visit, they have become, jointly, a symbol of the lack of international consequences for attacking the press and journalists. (...) In the Saudi case, most Israelis can understand why Khashoggi became a symbol (...). Most Israelis would be infuriated at any attempt to equate his case with that of Abu Akleh. But although the cases are completely different, there is one fact that is hard to argue with: Despite the extensive findings, of the Americans as well, by which it is "most likely" that the military was indeed responsible for shooting Abu Akleh, Israel so far has not accepted any real responsibility. No one has been interrogated, no one has been punished and no clear lessons have been drawn for the future. In this sense, Israel has single-handedly turned Abu Akleh into a symbol by its continued insistence on abdicating responsibility for the affair. (...) although they make fewer headlines — partly because of censorship restrictions — (...) high-tech security agreements, such as the alleged Saudi purchase of Israeli capabilities like Pegasus — have a critical role in the breach of liberal values. (...) And just a reminder, this whole show is just to fight Russia in the name of these values. It would have been far better for them to admit that this is the true price of gasoline.

Noa Landau, HAA, 10.07.22

Biden is a true friend, but he doesn't work for Israel

A visit by an American president is always a reason to celebrate, regardless of who the visitor is. (...)

these visits demonstrate the strength of our bilateral ties and how important each country is to the other. (...) President Joe Biden is (...) still the most important person in the world. (...) Biden is pro-Israel and has defined himself as a Zionist. This is his 10th visit to Israel, and despite all the disputes between the two countries he remains faithful, like his predecessors, to Israel's existence, security, and well-being. His (...) decision to visit Israel first is a clear signal – to the Shiite axis, to Russia, and also to the moderate players – that for Washington, Jerusalem comes first. This powerful alliance (...) is yet another component of Israel's national security. The fact that a Democrat president is confirming it of vital importance, given the processes of radicalization taking place in the US and internationally. Still, make no mistake. Biden doesn't work for Israel. He works with it. His foremost interests are those of the US. This is the root of the differences on the Palestinian issue and the Iranian nuclear program. During his trip, Biden will try to promote the former, if only to make a show of getting a peace process moving. Israel will lobby on the latter in an attempt to block or make significant improvements to a new Iran deal. One can cautiously say that both these attempts are doomed to fail; Israel and the Palestinians won't move ahead on anything in the foreseeable future, and the administration in Washington will remain locked into the most problematic solution when it comes to the Iranians. (...)

Yoav Limor, IHY, 14.07.22

Biden's visit – behind the smiles

(...) Joe Biden (...) is not a Bush, Trump, or even Barack Obama, who, as we recall, tried riding the wave of the Arab Spring to encourage the younger generation to seek change but ultimately found himself mired in chaos and a swelling tide of Islamist extremism. Biden came here weak and domestically challenged, who needs the goodwill of the region's rulers – namely from Saudi Arabia – more than they need him. To be sure, Biden's primary goal was to enlist Saudi support for stabilizing global oil markets before it costs him a trouncing in the midterm elections this November and of course the presidency in two years. (...) he doesn't really care about the Middle East (...) unlike Eastern Europe (...) he wants to cut a deal with Iran that will allow him to disengage from the Middle East and its assortment of problems. (...) The person who capitalized on Biden's visit to the region was Russian President Vladimir Putin, who will visit Iran this week. No one particularly likes Putin either, not even Iran, but

Putin is respected and Putin is feared. Hence, it could still emerge that Biden not only failed to advance a regional defense alliance against Iran but brought Russia and Tehran closer together – a blunder for which Israel might have to pay in the form of reduced freedom of action in Syria.

Eyal Zisser, IHY, 18.07.22

Biden leaves Palestinians – and Israelis – without hope for peace

(...) Despite the pressing need to restart peace now between Israel and the Palestinians, the Biden administration appears to have concluded that with minimal incidents of violence in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip, Israel can live with the status quo for a very long time – allowing it to keep expanding Jewish settlements throughout the West Bank and East Jerusalem and consolidating control over the Palestinian political structure, the Palestinian Authority. (...) Palestinians were hopeful Biden's visit would lead to an announcement of the resumption of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians. They hoped to hear announcements about the imminent reopening of the US consulate in East Jerusalem and the reopening of the PLO office in Washington. Palestinians wanted a commitment to remove the PLO from the US list of terrorist organizations, and they sought an ironclad US commitment to finding and punishing the killers of American-Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. What they got instead were vague pronouncements with no vision or hope. (...) Come what may, statehood will remain the Palestinian goal now and for the indefinite future. (...)

Bishara A Bahbah, TOI, 19.07.22

This Wasn't the Biden Israel Hoped For

We got nothing, absolutely nothing, out of Joe Biden. We thought he would utter something about the illegal settlements, or at least rebuke the killing of journalist Shireen Abu Akleh. We dreamed that he would unveil a new diplomatic plan. But nada. This U.S. president was, quite simply, a disappointment. (...) The president of the world's greatest power – which has declared economic war on Russia, is willing (...) to go to war against Iran and is confronting China – can't solve our little conflict with the Palestinians for us? Then what good is he? How lucky the left is to have someone to blame. It had nothing to do with this crime. (...) The warped view that has become entrenched on the left for decades – that it's America's job to take Israel's chestnuts out of the fire for it – has become a defensive shield

against any diplomatic process with the Palestinians. The disappointed left has forgotten all the American presidents and secretaries of state who went home scarred by their Israeli experience. Anyone who even tries to hint at an intent to promote negotiations is immediately denounced as a hater of Israel. They are "Arabists" whose sole goal is to undermine the country's security. They are hypocrites who see the Israeli occupation and its injustices but do nothing about the slaughter in Syria, the tragedy in Yemen and the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan. (...) The left, which defines itself solely by its opposition to the occupation, makes do with ideology and leaves the battle to America, the European Union and fire-breathing op-eds. It bemoans Biden's weakness, but isn't capable of or even willing to invest in the minimal political effort required of it – uniting all the parties and movements that boast of being "left-wing." (...)

Zvi Bar'el, HAA, 20.07.22

2. Zweikampf bei den vorgezogenen Neuwahlen

Bei den für den 1. November angesetzten Neuwahlen zeichnet sich ein Zweikampf zwischen Ex-Regierungschef Benjamin Netanyahu und dem amtierenden Ministerpräsidenten Yair Lapid ab. Dessen Amtsvorgänger Naftali Bennett hatte bereits vor einigen Wochen ohne Angabe von Gründen angekündigt, nicht erneut kandidieren zu wollen. Bennett hatte der Acht-Parteien-Koalition vorgestanden und räumte seinen Platz für Lapid, nachdem die Knesset mehrheitlich für die Auflösung des Abgeordnetenhauses votiert hatte. Lapid's Wahlkampf konzentriert sich vorrangig auf seinen Kontrahenten. Netanyahu muss sich in mehreren Anklagepunkten wegen Korruption vor Gericht verantworten. Bis zu den Neuwahlen, dem fünften Urmengang innerhalb von knapp dreieinhalb Jahren, will Lapid mit den bisherigen Partnerparteien erklärtermaßen so weiterregieren, als gäbe es keinen Wahlkampf.

Israel's November Election: A Last-ditch Battle for Democracy

(...) Crucial elections. At the moment, Israel has a liberal camp that is fighting to preserve the status quo, and a reactionary-revolutionary camp that is trying to shake up the entire political reality. The reactionaries prefer to call themselves conservatives, because that's a respectable name, but there's nothing conservative about what they want:

They want to erase 60 years of progress. (...) The goals (...) are the advancement of Jewish superiority, a traditional social order and pushing minorities and women back to the 1950s. (...) The reactionary camp wants, first and foremost, to complete the occupation of the West Bank and drive out the Palestinians by making their lives insufferable. The reactionary camp has established welfare-state settlements using Israeli public money; at the same time, it is fighting to prevent a welfare state in Israel. The problem of the reactionaries is that there are still forces in Israel that oppose the apartheid regime that it has established in the settlements. (...) the reactionary camp needs to vanquish the liberals. (...) Likud, which was once a liberal movement, has been subjected to a hostile takeover by reactionaries. If Netanyahu manages to get elected again, he will be dependent on the reactionaries. Because he has no real commitment to anything, except evading justice, and because he wants to take revenge on the liberal camp for distancing him from the leadership of the government, in the next Knesset – if he wins – he will persecute anyone who is not a reactionary. (...) But it is still in our hands. (...) On November 1 (...) No one dare be absent.

Zehava Galon, HAA, 03.07.22

Right-wing Israelis must vote only for Netanyahu

(...) what did former prime minister Naftali Bennett do right and what brought about his downfall. (...) Deri, a convicted criminal who financially cheated the state, an offense against God, set himself up as the defender of the Jewish and religious people when he said he "takes offense on behalf of our Creator." What unspeakable arrogance. In no other civilized country would such a disgraced politician be allowed to return to the legislature. The Shas Party's choice for political leader does not reflect well on their spiritual heads, which no doubt had to sanction Deri's appointment. That, to me, is politics corrupted by religion and vice versa. (...) Shas should never have a place in government. Unfortunately, as politics is often far removed from morality, it will be inevitable for the next right-wing politician, probably opposition leader Benjamin Netanyahu, to invite Shas to make up a workable government majority. As for me, after Yamina and its predecessors have – after each of three elections – misused my trust and that of many others, that party does also not deserve consideration. I hope and even predict, that in the forthcoming election, thousands who previously cast protest votes for unsuccessful fringe parties will this time place an envelope with

the designated letter for Likud into the ballot box, so that the country again gets the government it so desperately needs for our security.
Walter Bingham, JPO, 06.07.22

The not-so 'Joint' Arab List

The Joint Arab List (...), which in 2019 took the unprecedented step of including the Ra'am party in the elections, is not a faction that unites representatives of the Arab minority as a national and ethnic one, but rather a prestigious fraternity that makes it hard for newbies to join. One can even say that there is a boycott in the works, for the vast majority of the Arab public are expected to sit out the upcoming elections, not only because of ideological reasons but also due to apathy and disappointment. The prevailing feeling is that the Arab voice has no impact in the coalition, and certainly not in the opposition, and will always remain on the political sidelines. (...) The Arab public in Israel (...) feel great disappointment with politics, especially its almost non-existent impact on significant matters in the Knesset, but also see the anti-Arab rhetoric and calls by the Right against including Arabs in the coalition, and even the opposition. The challenge of the Joint Arab List is more external than internal (...). There are also rumors Balad might run separately, which will surely result in its failure to garner enough votes to make it into the Knesset, but the goal is to exert heavy pressure on Joint Arab List members to accept some of their terms. The main requirement is two leading positions on the electoral list, for example in the first five, which under the current circumstances, will not happen, since Balad is the smallest faction of the Joint Arab List.
Jalal Bana, IHY, 07.07.22

The Curse of Re-elections

(...) We established the Jewish state based on laws we borrowed from the British Mandate that ruled here before us, with some leftovers from the rules of the Ottoman Empire that ruled here before the British. These are not the laws of the Israeli nation, but laws of the nations of the world. This incongruity wore down the legitimacy of the judicial structure to such an extent that lawmakers and laypeople alike are leaning increasingly toward following their own interpretations of the law. Without a common goal and a collectively adopted constitution, we will never have a stable government and a solid Jewish state. (...) We are a collective of persecuted migrants and refugees, many of whom feel that the country they live in does not belong to them and dream of the

moment they can return to the country from which they or their parents were chased away. Herzl's vision of forming a safe haven for Jews is not enough. If this is the only reason for our gathering here, we will not be able to form a cohesive and stable society. The obstinate, opinionated nature of our people will soon take over, and division and hostility will develop. This is what is happening to Israel today. As a result, the political parties have splintered and become fragmented, and a succession of elections ensued. If we want to stabilize the Israeli society and prevent its disintegration, we need to fall in line behind a single goal that we value more than our own opinion. Also, the goal of our country should not be to save the Jews, but to save the world from division and conflict. (...) We proved that foreigners can bond in peace and love if they value unity more than their own culture and tradition. The modern-day curse of endless elections reflects a decline in the level of the unity of our people in the State of Israel. Instead of lining up around the tenet of unity above all other considerations, each party promotes its own agenda and claims that it will lead Israel to success. Yet, they are all wrong because if their ideas do not require national unity as a precondition, it makes no difference what agenda they support; it is condemned to failure. (...) Michael Laitman, TOI, 08.07.22

Lapid's scant military experience could be his undoing

(...) Lapid became prime minister after being present at security consultations for a whole year. He's convinced that he has a firm grasp of the material, which is both true and false at the same time. There is a glaring difference between someone who sits through a briefing and then goes back to tend to his business and someone who must make decisions immediately. (...) In his speech (...) he mentioned two individuals in whose footsteps he would like to follow — David Ben Gurion and Begin, whom he called "the two most important prime ministers we had." There are some things he can learn from Begin, but it would be best not to take his example in dealing with Israel's military and intelligence services. He better learn from Rabin and Yitzhak Shamir — trust, but verify. The people at the top of the defense establishment nowadays are very competent and undoubtedly dedicated to Israel. Their credibility is higher than that of politicians. However, they too have interests, egos and impulses that require restraint. (...) Lapid will face throughout the election campaign claims he does not possess the experi-

ence or courage required to take responsibility for military operations. His opponents will try to push to make hasty, irresponsible moves. This is the bane of every prime minister who does not come from the right. The truth is that there is no right or left when it comes to military action, certainly not in a caretaker government. What do we have? Seriousness and carelessness, and I hope Lapid would opt for the former.

Nahum Barnea, YED, 08.07.22

Meretz Has Nothing More to Offer the Israeli Public

It's nice that Zehava Galon finally decided to run for the leadership of Meretz, but it ultimately doesn't matter who heads the party, she or Yair Golan. It doesn't matter to the future of the state, it doesn't matter to the future of society, nor does it matter to the future of government policies who becomes prime minister. The banner that Meretz flies, its vision, is as tattered and threadbare as an old rag, one that is, at most, able to salvage just a little of the conscience of the Zionist left. The two-state solution, which Meretz supports, is today the easiest political stand to take, because it (...) is the easiest to adopt simply because it doesn't require those who espouse it to lift a finger. You don't have to remove settlers, you don't have to clash with them. This isn't feasible in Israeli society. You can't end the occupation and the apartheid, and no one has practical plans to do so. (...) There is no democracy and rule of law in a country that imposes a system of apartheid and occupation on a million Palestinians. (...) As far as Meretz is concerned, it's as if time stood still when Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated. Its political formula is stuck deep in the nineties, while the settlement project has grown and strengthened since then. Lapid just declared allegiance to two states. His oath of allegiance is also meaningless. That's why he is calling for the two-state solution – because it relieves him of the need to do anything. It is the ultimate exemption from taking diplomatic steps. The occupation determines facts on the ground. And those facts determine that a Palestinian state will not be established alongside Israel by negotiations and a peace agreement. It's over. (...) What is left is to adopt a just, courageous and revolutionary solution of a state of all its citizens. To this end, a Jewish-Arab party must be established soon that will replace Meretz, the Labor Party and part of the Joint List.

Rogel Alpher, HAA, 20.07.22

3. Streit mit Moskau um die Jewish Agency

Großen Unmut löste in Israel die Ankündigung des russischen Justizministeriums aus, das Büro der Jewish Agency in Moskau schließen zu lassen. Begründet wird die Absicht mit dem Vorwurf, die israelische Einwanderungsorganisation hätte gegen Gesetze des Landes verstoßen. Dabei geht es angeblich um die illegale Sammlung personenbezogener Daten russischer Bürger_innen. Die Jewish Agency wäre nicht die erste ausländische Nichtregierungsorganisation, die die Arbeit in Moskau einstellen müsste. Für Mitte August ist ein Verhandlungstermin über die Klage des Justizministeriums gegen die Jewish Agency geplant. Israel hatte sich seit Beginn des Krieges in der Ukraine überwiegend neutral verhalten, die Angriffe gegen die Ukraine zwar verurteilt, aber keine Sanktionen gegen Russland verhängt. Gute Beziehungen zu Moskau sind von strategischer Bedeutung, denn Moskau verschließt vor den israelischen Angriffen gegen iranische Militäreinrichtungen in Syrien bislang weitgehend die Augen. Zudem will man es sich mit dem Kreml nicht verderben, um ausreisewilligen Juden und Jüdinnen den Weg nach Israel offenzuhalten. Allein in diesem Jahr sind nach Angaben des Integrationsministeriums knapp 17.000 Menschen aus Russland nach Israel ausgewandert. Regierungschef Yair Lapid warnte vor einer Verschlechterung der bilateralen Beziehungen, sollte die Jewish Agency in Moskau tatsächlich ihre Arbeit einstellen müssen.

Thanks, Putin, for Outlawing the Jewish Agency in Russia

Finally, some good news: Russia's Justice Ministry appealed (...) to a Moscow court to shut down the Jewish Agency, which has been operating in the country for 30 years as an independent Russian organization. The reason cited in the appeal is violations of Russian law, even though the Agency has been doing what it has always done – encouraging aliyah to Israel (...) to encourage aliyah, you need to locate the Jews. Which means to collect data on Jews who are, naturally, Russian citizens. Translated into Russian, this spells out a violation of the data retention law and the information protection law. (...) Stopping the operations of the Jewish Agency in Russia will not prevent Jews who wish to do so from making aliyah. There are regular flights from Russia to Israel (...) there is no longer any need for a designated body to facilitate such contact. On the other hand, cessation of the Agency's operations in Rus-

sia, and later on (hopefully) the rest of the world, may have a salutary if not a positively therapeutic effect on the distinction between being Jewish and being an Israeli, which has been shredded to bits in recent years, and to building up Israeli sovereignty's muscle tone. (...)

While Russia seeks to draw a boundary, the United States has completely lost any sense of separation. (...) In the choice between the Judeo-American symbiosis, and the separation Russia seeks to create, the latter should be preferred to the former. It may be scarier, but there is no true independence without such a separation.

Carolina Landsmann, HAA, 24.07.22

Putin's Russia gives Zionism the cold shoulder

(...) the Russian effort to curb aliyah to Israel is well on its way and the order came from the highest office in the land. This is (...) an official Russian initiative directed by the Kremlin and fueled by its economic worldview. (...) Putin decided that the conditions for the great clash of civilizations were right. With the ascension to power of Western European leaders he saw as weak – including US President Joe Biden – he gave the order and the Russian army to invade Ukraine in an attempt to quickly topple the Kyiv regime and forge ahead, westward. For all its brutality, the ongoing war in Ukraine is only the tip of the iceberg. (...) These changes are increasingly turning Russia into a mobilized dictatorship reminiscent of the Soviet Union era. As such, the fall of a new iron curtain is only a matter of time. A dictatorship cannot allow organizations like the Jewish Agency to operate freely on its soil. Its internal logic demands the extermination of every vestige of freedom, especially if this freedom seeks to shape a Jewish identity or promote leaving Russia for Israel. (...) It would take a miracle to stop it – if the Russians come to their senses and refrain from further escalation until a new government is established, perhaps it will still be able to undo this evil decree.

Ariel Bulshtein, IHY, 26.07.22

Jewish Agency row proves interests of Jews and Israel don't always overlap

Moscow claims the agency violated a local law and the reasons for the apparent closure are legislative. But, the move could be political, and the issue could just be an excuse to punish Israel for its support of Ukraine, the alleged Israeli strikes in Syria, or even to push Israelis to transfer ownership of the Alexander Nevsky Church, in the Old City of Jerusalem, to

the Russians. The whole issue is a wake-up call for proper consideration of the balance between national and Jewish interests. In this context, assuming an aggressive stance by Jerusalem would save the Jewish Agency in Moscow, is it really worth going on this path? Israel may pay a heavy price, and the Russian retaliation would be in the form of selling advanced anti-aircraft missiles to Syria, which will erode the superiority in the region and will make it hard to thwart Iranian proxy expansion. (...) Is the State of Israel even allowed to use taxpayer money to support Jewish interests outside Israel or aspects of Jewish education in the Diaspora? (...) What is the extent of Israel's responsibility to non-Jewish citizens? (...) The fundamental law says Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish people, and it imposes a constitutional obligation on the state to focus on ensuring the safety of Jewish people in trouble and to act to preserve the Jewish heritage among the Diaspora Jewry. The law, however, doesn't require Israel to go head-on against Putin. Beyond the formal obligation of the law, Israel must consider the extent of its willingness to implement the role of a nation-state by weighing the pan-Jewish interest compared to the internal Israeli national interests. (...) In the long run, translating the vision and statement of being a "Jewish state" into an array of actions (...) is the realization of our existence. Indeed, the Jewish interest, at the end of the day, is in Israeli interest.

Yedidia Stern, YED, 28.07.22

Russia should let the Jewish Agency work freely

Israel is in the midst of a complex and potentially difficult dispute with Russia. (...) that this controversy erupted during the Ukraine war, with Israel being pressured by Moscow and Washington regarding its stance on the conflict, makes the timing suspect. (...) It is essential that Jews not be used as pawns. (...) The Russian Justice Ministry petition to close the agency is a disturbing development. (...) Prime Minister Yair Lapid and President Isaac Herzog have done a good job trying to keep any tensions from boiling over. Both of them are right to work at keeping the issue from growing into a larger spat. This is because there is nothing to be gained by having Russian Jews used as pawns, or having the agency's work ended in Russia. (...) Not only is Israel the sole Jewish state, it is also a destination for Jews who are fleeing persecution or want to immigrate to Israel. (...) Israel is unfairly put in the middle with no easy way to thread the needle of making the right moral decisions while keeping out

of the conflict. (...) We don't want to see the controversy in Russia exploited for politics in Israel, and we don't want to harm relations with Moscow. However, Israel must make it clear that Jews in Russia and immigration to Israel should never pay the price for political differences. We value relations with Russia but the Jewish Agency should not be at the center of a legal controversy. Russia should allow the Jewish Agency to work as it has in the past. Editorial, JPO, 28.07.22

4. Medienquerschnitt

Atomverhandlungen weiter auf Eis

Have the Iran nuclear deal talks reached a dead end?

Talks between Iran and world powers headed by the United States over the renewal of the 2015 nuclear deal (...) appear to be at a dead end. (...) Iran is sticking to its uncompromising demand that the Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps (IRGC) be removed from the State Department's foreign terrorist organization (FTO) list. (...) Should the Iranian weapons group, which is responsible for other aspects of the nuclear program, resume its activity, the production of an actual nuclear bomb is expected to take another two years. Israel has, for many years, waged a covert campaign against Iran's nuclear program that includes, according to international media reports, attacks on uranium enrichment sites and personnel linked to the project. While these attacks have led to delays in the program, in the modern age such acts cannot stop a state that is committed to building nuclear capabilities. (...) the US and Western powers must formulate a clear policy on how to deal with Iran's unilateral steps. It seems that the options at their disposal are rather limited. (...) An initiated freeze of talks by Western powers would allow Iran to evade its responsibility for the failure of diplomacy, and create facts on the ground in the form of a nuclear threshold Iranian state as part of its ongoing efforts to become a regional hegemon. (...) Placing additional economic sanctions on Iran by the West as a sole response will only have a limited impact, since the Iranians have proven their impressive ability to adapt to a sanctions regime. Among other reasons, Iran is able to do this by exploiting Chinese assistance, as Beijing continues to purchase cheaper Iranian oil and invest in Iranian infrastructure. (...) the unavoidable alternative route is the creation of a credible, public

military option led by the US, alongside the placement of additional sanctions that will make Western determination to prevent Iran from going nuclear clear. (...)

Naftali Granot, JPO, 04.07.22

In war with Iran, political bedlam is a big handicap

(...) Iran managed to build a system that threatens the national security of both Israel and the Sunni Arab world despite being marred by social and financial woes such as economic recession, water shortages, crumbling infrastructure, corruption and steep Western sanctions which are only getting worse. Iran's strength as a nation may be waning, but it presents proudly weapon systems it believes would serve its ambitions. As far as Israel is concerned, Iran has made progress in three key fields. First is ballistics, ergo the ring of fire Tehran is building around Israel in failed states that waive their sovereignty and allow it to entrench itself like Lebanon, Syria, Yemen, and to some extent, Iraq. (...) Second, Iran has become a nuclear threshold country which would allow it to enrich uranium to military grade at its will. As far as we know, Iran still doesn't have a nuclear weapon, or an operational one at the very least. Third is terrorism and cybersecurity. Iran intermittently exerts its power through acts of terrorism and drone attacks against Saudi Arabia and other Gulf countries while developing its offensive cyber capabilities. What should Israel do? First of all, expedite its military buildup. It must do so in a fashion that would allow it to prevent Iran from attaining nuclear weapons, as it has successfully managed to do so far. (...) Israel must move forward with developing defensive systems with the U.S. that would give it an edge ahead of U.S. President Joe Biden's upcoming visit. Cooperation with the U.S. is paramount (...). Israel's gallop toward another general election in the midst of political bedlam stands in complete contrast with its need for a strong government that works day and night to counter the Iranian threat. It's unthinkable that while Iran is politically stable, Israel is locked in ugly political infighting that saps its leaders of the energy required to deal with it. (...)

Amos Gilad, YED, 06.07.22

Zwischenfälle an der Grenze zum Libanon

Israel's Hezbollah dilemma

(...) By picking fights with Israel, Nasrallah is attempting to draw the public attention away from the festering domestic issues and depict himself as Lebanon's protector. The threats culminated in three drones launched by Hezbollah (...) from Lebanon to Israel's Karish gas field in hopes to collect military intel and raise awareness of the Lebanese presence in the area. (...) It seems that several options are available to Nasrallah for attacking the gas field: sending explosive drones, underwater commando, or - what seems most likely according to IDF predictions - launching an aircraft for intelligence collection that wouldn't risk harming civilians. If this indeed takes place, IDF officials believe that it would be wrong to continue settling for downing the UAVs with no retaliation. The question is how to retaliate without causing an all-out war. One option is to identify Hezbollah targets in Syria, which the IDF already has a few of. Another option is to attack remote infrastructures within Lebanon, such as precision missile depots. (...) Nasrallah may be showing teeth and threatening an armed conflict, but it's clear that what he wants is not war, because he understands the costly aftermath a war entails. (...) Yossi Yehoshua, YED, 21.07.22

HAA = Haaretz

YED = Yedioth Ahronoth / Ynetnews

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

GLO = Globes

Veröffentlicht im: August 2022

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