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Aktuelles aus israelischen Tageszeitungen

13. Dezember 2012 – 14. Januar 2013

1. Wahlausschlussverfahren gegen MK Hanin Zoabi

Hanin Zoabi, Mitglied der arabischen Partei Balad, ist die erste weibliche arabische Abgeordnete in der israelischen Knesset. Im Vorfeld der für den 22. 01.2013 stattfindenden Neuwahlen wurde sie jedoch von der Zentralen Wahlkommission disqualifiziert. Ihr war vorgeworfen worden, den "bewaffneten Kampf gegen Israel" zu befürworten. Insbesondere wurde sie wegen ihrer Teilnahme an der "Gaza-Flotille" kritisiert, die 2010 die Seeblockade des Gazastreifens zu durchbrechen versuchte. Die Entscheidung der Wahlkommission, die sich mit 19 zu 9 Stimmen und einer Enthaltung für die Disqualifizierung aussprach, wurde jedoch vom Obersten Gerichtshof aufgehoben. In der Vergangenheit waren arabische Parteien wiederholt disqualifiziert worden, jedoch jedes Mal vom Obersten Gericht zur Wahl zugelassen worden. Balad hatte einen Wahlboykott angekündigt, sollte Zoabis Disqualifizierung nicht aufgehoben werden.

The Zoabi test

"The real test of a democracy is its ability to allow room for the expression of irregular, aggravating, critical positions, including those that seemingly undermine democracy itself. [...] By contrast, a state that grasps the excuse of 'defensive democracy' in order to stifle political opponents isn't worthy of being called a democracy. [...]"

Overtuning Zoabi's disqualification would not just be a course correction for a democracy that has gone off-course, but a test of the High Court's ability to be a defensive barrier for its loyalists against those who take potshots at it."

HAA 30.12.12 Editorial

Cover-up led to anti-Zoabi campaign

"The request to disqualify [...] Zoabi [...] raises serious questions regarding the easiness in which an

Arab Knesset member can be delegitimized and demonized – to the point where she is branded a terrorist. [...]"

The investigation conducted by the attorney general, who watched footage from the Mavi Marmara, concluded that there was no evidence indicating that Zoabi was involved in the violence that transpired when Israeli commandoes raided the Turkish vessel. [...] But the attorney general did not disclose these findings to the government. [...]"

The Zoabi affair must concern the entire public, which did not receive relevant information from the law enforcement agencies. What should concern us most is the possibility that these agencies did not speak up for fear of criticism from the political establishment. [...]"

The attorney general should have acted more responsibly and declared that MK Zoabi was not involved in any illicit activity. Such a statement would have possibly hurt his popularity a bit, but it could have prevented a two-year incitement and demonization campaign against an elected official."

Sawsan Zaher, JED 03.01.13

An Arab-free Knesset?

"Zoabi has taken part in terrorism against Israel. [...] And still, I hereby recommend that the Central Elections Committee reject the efforts to disqualify her. [...]"

There are two reasons for this: One is that for most Israeli citizens, there is no point in distorting the picture. If the reality is that some part, or even a majority, of Israel's Arabs want to be represented in the Knesset by a candidate who is affiliated with terror, there is no point in burying our heads in the sand. [...] The other, main reason is that this move to disqualify Zoabi and the Arab parties will cause unprecedented damage to Israel's image in the West, right at the most sensitive time. Israel's enemies are trying to sabotage its status as the only democracy in the Middle East, and such a move can

be used by them as proof that Israel is in fact not a democracy. What are the initiators of this disqualification bid trying to achieve? An Arab-free Knesset? That is ill advised."

Dan Margalit, IHY 11.12.12

First Zoabi, then you

"There is no doubt that Balad and Zoabi – like most MKs who represent the Arab minority – infuriate the right. If there is something that the Kahanist right of Ben-Ari, Danon and their ilk cannot tolerate it is other opinions, particularly if these opinions relate to the rights of the Palestinians. [...]

As far as they are concerned, Balad is to blame for all of Israel's troubles; Balad – not the occupation; Balad – not the escalating discrimination against Israel's Arab citizens; Balad – not the racist legislation introduced by the right in the 18th Knesset.

Now the group headed by Ben-Ari and Danon found the perfect victim: The opinionated, articulate and combative MK Hanin Zoabi. [...] All Zoabi wanted to do during the flotilla affair was to enter Gaza to express her solidarity with the besieged residents. [...]

He who supports the muzzling of Zoabi and Balad today may find out tomorrow that he is also being silenced."

Sami El-Ali, JED 17.12.12

Zoabi, leave the Knesset

"You had it in your hands, Hanin. You were given on a silver platter the best opportunity to make history and become the first Arab woman to succeed in doing what no Arab man has done before. You could have created the new Arab, who is not willing to give up on his principles, [...] but also understands that dialogue must be the starting point for both sides. [...]

But you chose to care for your brothers in Palestine first; you preferred to challenge the sovereignty of the country in which you live; you chose violence over dialogue. Instead of lowering the scorching flames, you fanned them time and time again; instead of mediating between the Marmara passengers and the Israeli government, you preferred to side with those who attacked IDF soldiers with clubs and sticks. [...]

If you have any sense of decency, which you demand from the other side, don't fight for your right to sit in the parliament of the Jewish state. Give up your Knesset seat to someone who will use it to make things better."

Merav Betito, JED 13.12.12

Don't make Zoabi a hero

"As a member of parliament, the actual damage she can cause is almost negligible. But as soon as she is disqualified [...], Zoabi will become an international figure admired by all anti-Israel organizations. By disqualifying Zoabi we would be taking a marginal Knesset member and turning her into a hero."

Yakir Elkariv, JED 11.12.12

An unacceptable disqualification

"The Central Elections Committee's decision [...] is arbitrary and unacceptable. [...]

Zuabi represents views that are widespread among the Israeli Arab community, even if they seem radical to parts of the Jewish community. These views need to be given expression in the Knesset. Democracy is judged by how it treats minority views, and Zuabi's disqualification is the removal of a legitimate worldview, attesting to a dangerous mood of ostracizing the Arab voice in Israel's public discourse."

HAA 21.12.12 Editorial

Arabs, out

"If those behind Zuabi's targeted political assassination were even vaguely familiar with the history of the Zionist movement, maybe they would see her participation in the flotilla that protested the choking confinement of her brethren in Gaza as an act of national courage. Maybe they would see it as an act comparable, in the deepest sense, to the Zionists' protests in the Soviet Union during the 1970s against Soviet Jewry's confinement behind the Iron Curtain.

But Israel's current leaders [...] aren't interested in remembering Zionism as a liberation movement of an oppressed and degraded people."

Dmirty Shumsky, HAA 23.12.12

2. Rücktritt von Außenminister Avigdor Lieberman

Nachdem Generalstaatsanwalt Yehuda Weinstein ein Gerichtsverfahren gegen Avigdor Lieberman angekündigt, ist der Yisrael Beitenu-Chef von seinem Amt als Außenminister zurückgetreten. Gegen den Politiker wird bereits seit 12 Jahren wegen Korruption und Betrug ermittelt. Allerdings sind die Hauptanklagepunkte – dass Lieberman Millionengelder von ausländischen Geschäftsmännern mit Interessen in Israel erhalten habe – aus Mangel an Beweisen und Aussagewille der ausländischen Zeugen fallengelassen worden.

Angeklagt wurde Lieberman nun aufgrund einer weniger schwerwiegenden Affäre: Ihm wird vorgeworfen, Zeev Ben Aryeh, seinerzeit Botschafter in Minsk, befördert zu haben, weil dieser ihn über polizeiliche Untersuchungen zu Liebermans Verbindungen in Belarus unterrichtet hatte.

Auch die jetzt erhobene Anklage war noch einmal verschoben worden, um zusätzliche Zeugen zu befragen. Obwohl Lieberman sich zuversichtlich zeigte und auf einen Freispruch noch vor den kommenden Parlamentswahlen hofft, ist unwahrscheinlich, dass das Verfahren so schnell ein Ende finden wird. Sollte Lieberman eines Vergehens mit „besonders moralischer Schwere“ – so der offizielle Terminus – für schuldig befunden werden, müsste er sein Knesset-Mandat sofort niederlegen.

A heavy cloud of suspicion

"It is absolutely clear that the rule of law has failed in the Lieberman case. Even if the decision [to drop the major charges] is justified, it was made not due to the attorney general's deep conviction that the powerful suspect is innocent, but due to the police and prosecution's inability to gather cutting evidence in Cyprus, Moldova and Belarus."

Ari Shavit, HAA 13.12.12

There is law and there is morality

"The criminal charge of fraud and breach of trust should not be taken lightly, but in comparison with the tower of mammoth allegations that the prosecution built against him, you can certainly say that a mountain was made [...] out of a molehill.[...]"

As for Lieberman's political future, a distinction needs to be made between the 'obligated' the 'allowed' and the 'appropriate.' Lieberman was right when he said that legally, he is not obligated to resign because of this indictment. [...]"

But for the sake of public integrity and the public's faith in elected officials, it would be appropriate for him to do so of his own accord, and not by force. Staying in office after a criminal indictment will not dignify the government and a trial will affect Lieberman's ability to perform his duties. This is not just a legal question. It is also, and perhaps mainly, a moral and ethical question."

Aviad Hacoen, IHY 14.12.12

No plea bargain for Lieberman

"Lieberman's resignation does not seem to reflect what a public figure should understand from it, but rather a tactical race against the clock. [...] He is seeking a quick and easy plea bargain that would let

him off with almost nothing and would bring him back into the cabinet within a few months. [...] Such an arrangement must not be accepted. [...] The political timetable must not influence the prosecution's position on a plea bargain. [...]"

The remaining case against Lieberman should be heard in court, not disposed of in a deal between the defense and the weak prosecution [...]. Let the judge hear the case and rule."

HAA 16.12.12 Editorial

For Lieberman, plea bargain would be a trap

"Lieberman hopes that he will be able to put the whole corruption case behind him by the Knesset election in January. If he does, this will mark the first time in the past decade and a half that he will not have a legal cloud hanging over him during election time. [...]"

Lieberman's voters, who gave his party 15 Knesset seats in the last election, want him to be a top minister in the government. A small legal charge against Lieberman does not bother them. In fact, Lieberman's image of being hounded by the justice system may only help him. What affects most politicians in one way has the opposite effect on Lieberman. For others, comebacks occur only after resigning. For Lieberman, resigning is part of the comeback."

Mati Tuchfeld, IHY 17.12.12

A blot on the criminal justice system

"Details of the investigation have flooded the media: [...] This was not a 'leak'; this was an open floodgate of information consciously designed to vilify Lieberman in the public eye. [...] The source of these disclosures was never investigated since this is considered normal operating procedure in the Israeli criminal justice system – notwithstanding the fact that release of information concerning an ongoing investigation is a serious crime. [...]"

An ordinary citizen, faced with such constant and protracted public vilification, would 'break.' And that is what prosecutors want: to secure an unfair advantage, to the point that the subject of the investigation, under enormous pressure, cannot maintain a calm, logical defense. [...]"

There is [...] much in the criminal justice system for which we should hang our collective heads in shame: one-sided disclosures of sensitive, private information; delays; and hanging public figures in the city square before and sometimes without trial. Shame."

David Martin, JPO 24.12.12

The mountain and the mouse

"Lieberman is [...] damaging as a foreign minister and he is damaging as the leader of a party that seeks to destroy the democratic regime. He also causes damage with the norms he has adopted for himself as a public figure, the improper means by which he made money for himself and members of his family and the trickery he used to thwart the investigations against him.

It would have been better if someone such as Lieberman would have left the public arena for good, but in a country that is ruled by law, a person can only be convicted in court. [...] Those who wish to convict someone based on a gut feeling or fragments of facts - and not on evidence that has been examined in a courtroom - are guided by the rule of the guillotine, not the rule of law."

Nahum Barnea, JED 14.12.12

Lieberman good for Palestinians

"Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza did not celebrate Lieberman's resignation. Over the past few years Lieberman has served the Palestinians' public relations efforts all over the world very well, mainly due to his problematic personality and boorish ways. Most of the world's leaders view him as persona non grata, and who would have believed that an American secretary of state would avoid meeting her Israeli counterpart?

During Lieberman's tenure the Palestinians succeeded in isolating Israel and exposing its ugly face. During his term Israel made new enemies and the boycott campaign against the country intensified. [...]

In the end Lieberman was forced to resign because of the indictment against him and not because of his failures as a foreign minister [...]. But one thing is certain: Those who benefited most from Lieberman's position at the forefront of Israeli diplomacy were the people in charge of the Palestinians' public relations efforts."

Akram Atallah, JED 20.12.12

3. Überraschender Aufsteiger im Wahlkampf: Naftali Bennett

Naftali Bennet ist der überraschende Star des Wahlkampfes in Israel. Der Hightech-Millionär und ehemaliger Stabschef Netanyahus (2006-08) ist der neue Vorsitzende der rechtsgerichteten nationalreligiösen Partei Habayit Hayehudi (Jüdisches Heim). Durch sein Image als moderner und erfolgreicher Richter, der die Gräben zwischen Religiösen und

Säkularen überbrücken kann, gelang es ihm, viele Anhänger zu gewinnen. Jüngsten Umfragen zufolge könnte seine Partei gar drittstärkste Kraft in der Knesset werden. Stimmenzuwächse erzielt Bennett doch vor allem auf Kosten von Netanyahus Wahlbündnis mit Ex-Außenminister Lieberman: Likud-Beitenu hat in den Umfragen nachgelassen. So kritisierte Netanyahu Bennet heftig für ein Interview, in dem jener angab, er würde den Befehl verweigern, sollte er als Soldat zur Evakuierung jüdischer Siedlungen in der Westbank aufgefordert werden. Ungeachtet dessen machte Bennet deutlich, dass er einer Regierungskoalition beitreten wolle.

When it comes to polls, count me out

"The dramatic rise of [...] Habayit Hayehudi [...] has impressed the kind of people who are impressed by polls. [...]

I met a long-standing Habayit Hayehudi activist [...]. She told me the polls do not accurately reflect what she sees on the ground. In her opinion, veteran Habayit Hayehudi members will not vote for the party this time because Bennett is not focused on Jewish education and Jewish values. [...]

Habayit Hayehudi [...] has transformed into a start-up party for a single man, a talented entrepreneur who bought himself a shelf party on the cheap. [...]

The only reason the media are fanning the flames of these distorted poll results is that they believe Habayit Hayehudi has a chance of undermining the Likud party. They despise Bennett's views, but have no problem using him.

The day after the elections he will disappear onto the opposition benches and the media will forget his name and everything he stands for."

Haim Shine, IHY 30.12.12

Bayit Yehudi: Don't blow this opportunity

Bennett [...] has sensationally rejuvenated the national religious party Bayit Yehudi. [...] But [...] this could fall apart if far-right trends within the party are not contained. [...]

Those of us with traditional religious Zionist inclinations yearn for Bayit Yehudi to distance itself from demagogic populist policies and the messianic commitment to retaining land at any cost. While this alliance may attract support from extremists, Bennett himself must surely be aware that such policies would incur disastrous repercussions on Israel's global status. [...] Bayit Yehudi must not blow this unique opportunity to reform Israeli society, bring an end to the era of [ultraorthodox] domination, pro-

mote Jewish values and enable religious Zionism to reclaim the central religious role in the state."

Isi Leibler, JPO 06.01.13

In defense of Naftali Bennett

"If I were forced to choose between him and Netanyahu in elections [...] I would definitely choose him. The main reason is that I believe what he says, which is something I cannot say about Netanyahu. [...] Furthermore, Bennett appears to be truly sympathetic to the demands for social justice – including justice for Israel's Arab citizens, and genuine in his wish to build bridges between the religious and the secular.

My main problem with Bennett is that regarding political issues I am convinced that if he were prime minister he would lead Israel straight into a brick wall."

Susan Hattis Rolef, JPO 30.12.12

Danger – extreme right

"Anyone considering voting [...] Bennet should be aware of his parties' official policies [...] – ultra-nationalist, anti-democratic and particularly dangerous. The party is committed to action that would 'make the Israeli media more balanced.' [...] 'Balancing' the media is a sanitized expression for intimidation and censorship. [...] Habayit Hayehudi is committed to weakening the Supreme Court. [...] Habayit Hayehudi's slogan is 'Something new is beginning', but the truth is that the platform contains nothing new: the same threat to democracy's pillars, which are already weakened, the same xenophobia, the exact same ultra-nationalism as in other extreme right-wing parties. The innovation is its impressive success in misleading the public."

HAA 03.01.13 Editorial

The Bennett threat

"Bennett is [...] articulate and smart. [...] He is also a financial success. But that is not what makes him dangerous to the establishment. The threat he poses stems not so much from his ideology, but rather from the fact that that he actually has one, that he articulates what he believes and stands for.

As refreshing as that sounds, it is a world away from most other politicians and so-called 'leaders,' [...]. Bennett represents a kind of honesty and integrity that has not been seen in Israeli politics since Menachem Begin. [...]

He is the spokesman for a genuine Zionist and Jewish ideological position. [...]

If Bennett has a singular potential, it is to enliven our ability to think beyond the brainwashing ads, photo-ops and sound bites that have been substituted for intellectual seriousness."

Moshe Dann, JPO 31.12.12

Waiting for an ideological revolution

"Bennett is relatively successful because in certain respects he really is refreshing. He has merged the high-tech world with the knitted kippa, family values with businesslike conduct. He did well to recognize that [...] energy can be generated by combining the religious and the secular."

Avi Shilon, HAA 26.12.12

Our rabbis, our commanders

"Bennett merely reflects the consensus that Netanyahu and his ideological doppelgangers took care to create. He represents the views of hundreds of thousands of Israelis who view the settlers' state as the *raison d'être* of the State of Israel. [...] These are the same people who are very proud of Netanyahu's arrogant behavior toward the world and who support his refusal to comply with international standards of conduct in the occupied territories. [...]

Bennett's expression of refusal, against which left and right momentarily united eagerly, is a negligible threat. Much more dangerous is placing the directives of the rabbis above cabinet resolutions or military orders."

HAA 23.12.12 Editorial

4. Medienquerschnitt

Die Vielfalt der in Israel relevanten Themen kann in einem Medienspiegel nicht umfassend wiedergegeben werden. Um den deutschen LeserInnen dennoch einen Einblick in das breite Themenspektrum, das in den Medien behandelt wird, zu gewähren, veröffentlichen wir in dieser Schlaglichtausgabe wieder eine kleine Auswahl an weiteren Themen, die in den vergangenen vier Wochen die israelische Gesellschaft bewegten.

*Über den Versuch der Hatnuah-Vorsitzenden Tzipi Livni, die **Mitte-Links-Parteien zu einen:***

Tzipi Livni's gambit

"Tzipi Livni called on Labor Party head Shelly Yachimovich and Yesh Atid Chair Yair Lapid [...] to discuss creating a common bloc for the remainder of the elections and beyond. It was a bold move. [...] So far it has not succeeded and may actually cost

Livni's Hatnuah party some Knesset seats. But it was the right thing for the country. [...]

The rejection of a joint front should be a disappointment to an Israeli public increasingly aware of just how right-wing and Orthodox a new Netanyahu government is going to be. They can hardly imagine what it will mean in terms of lost peace prospects, international isolation, human rights and quality of life. [...]

If all candidates had appeared unified in a last push press conference, showing that they are willing to overcome their personal differences in order to prevent the likely disaster of a far-right Netanyahu government, it could have been a critical 'tipping point.'"

Alon Tal, TOI 13.01.13

A group hug on the left

"A union between the leftist parties after the elections to prevent Netanyahu from forming a coalition is one thing, but a group hug during the campaign could prove fatal for one or more of them. [...]

Talk of a union between these parties might even help Netanyahu. He can now go back to his initial campaign slogan. [...] A strong Right against all that's Left."

Mati Tuchfeld, IHY 06.12.12

*Über die **Oscar-Nominierung** zweier israelischer Dokumentarfilme, die die Besatzung der palästinensischen Gebiete kritisieren:*

Anti-Israel Festival

"The two documentaries [...] slander Israel. While the films are well-made, we can suspect that their nomination does not stem from international recognition of the Jewish state's filmmaking abilities, but from an international obsession with shaming it. [...]

The Israeli film industry could have produced movies about exploding buses or a settler family that was massacred in the middle of the night by a Palestinian, but it chose to support the other side."

Hagai Segal, JED 14.01.13

Chutzpah for the course

"These films were made despite Israel, not because of Israel. They represent not official Israel but rather the other Israel, maligned and vilified. [...]

In the place where Israel's news media is derelict in its duty, its documentary film industry bravely steps in. [...] It is precisely Israel's dissidents, and only its dissidents, who receive recognition abroad. They serve the interests of the state much more than all its nationalists and propagandists. [...]

If there is any positive feeling toward Israel remaining in the world, it derives from the endeavors of the small number of Israelis who dare to voice criticism from within, to expose and protest the injustices of the occupation."

Gideon Levy, HAA 13.01.13

HAA = Haaretz

JED = Jedioth Ahronoth

JPO = Jerusalem Post

IHY = Israel HaYom

TOI = Times of Israel

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