

## ISRAEL'S GREAT SOVEREIGNTY DEBATE

Is the Jewish state about to extend its  
civilian law to parts of the West Bank?

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

**T**his *AIR* edition's cover story offers insights and context on the possibility that, from July 1, Israel could make a controversial decision to extend its sovereignty to certain parts of the West Bank, as outlined in the US Trump Administration's Israeli-Palestinian peace plan.

A detailed BICOM backgrounder looks at the circumstances, permutations, legalities and possible consequences, as well as the main arguments for and against such a move. Meanwhile, Palestinian Affairs reporter Khaled Abu Toameh analyses the reasons why there has been a limited reaction from the Palestinian street, so far, to these plans.

Also featured this month is top Israeli missile defence expert Uzi Rubin looking at how cheap precision-guided missiles are transforming warfare, and what Israel must do to meet this new threat. Plus, Ahron Shapiro provides some valuable historical context for the current debate in the Jewish world about the Black Lives Matter movement, with many supporting its goals, but also worried about anti-Israel and antisemitic elements associated with it.

And don't miss Amotz Asa-El on Israel's coronavirus-related economic challenges, Sharyn Mittelman on the UAE-Israel relationship coming in out of the cold, and David Harris on why, 53 years after the 1967 Six Day War, the story of that conflict still matters.

Please give us your comments about any aspect of this edition at [editorial@aijac.org.au](mailto:editorial@aijac.org.au).

Tzvi Fleischer

## ON THE COVER

Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu speaks of his plan to apply Israeli sovereignty to the Jordan Valley on September 10, 2019 in Ramat Gan, Israel. (Photo: Amir Levy/Getty Images)



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# FROM THE EDITORIAL CHAIRMAN

COLIN RUBENSTEIN

## AN IAEA WAKE-UP CALL

**R**eports about the ongoing Iranian violations of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) nuclear deal surface so often they have become almost routine. Each of these violations reduces the time it would take for Iran to produce a nuclear weapon and increases the urgency to pressure Teheran back to the table to renegotiate a better nuclear deal. Yet other important global issues, such as the coronavirus pandemic and the international Black Lives Matter protests, have pushed the Iranian nuclear issue to the backburner.

However, the latest International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) expert reports (June 5 and 6) and the June 19 Board of Governors' resolution on Iran are in a whole different category. They ought to break through the current international complacency on Iran's nuclear program.

This is because this IAEA resolution, tabled by the European powers and passed by a landslide of 25-2 (with Russia and China the sole opponents) criticises Iran for violating the Additional Protocol of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), not the JCPOA, by refusing to allow the agency's inspectors access to two suspected former nuclear research and development sites.

The resolution marks the first time that Teheran has been accused of obstructing inspections since February 2012.

As US Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation Christopher Ford told reporters in a briefing, "It is the first time ever, by any country, anywhere, that a government has rejected and refused to comply with its obligations under the IAEA's Additional Protocol."

The vote may also be seen as a minor diplomatic watershed event for the US, as it marks the first time the UK, France and Germany have fully backed Washington on a major policy regarding Iran's nuclear program since May 2018. That's when the US withdrew from the JCPOA, which it saw as "defective at its core", and reimposed sanctions in order to pressure Iran to renegotiate a better, enforceable deal that would permanently block it from building nuclear weapons.

Some have, wrongly and dangerously, been willing to excuse Iran's open violation of the JCPOA as a response to the US withdrawal. These excuses should now be abandoned in the face of Iran's violations of the NPT – obviously illegal regardless of how one feels about the JCPOA.

In any case, five years on, the dangerous vulnerabilities in the JCPOA should be evident to all: the sunset provisions mean that Iran is only five years from having all restrictions on its uranium enrichment lifted; apropos of the latest IAEA finding – the deal's inspection regime is inadequate and slow in dealing with Iranian stonewalling; the deal allowed Iran to continue to develop much faster centrifuges – designed, perfected and currently under testing with the JCPOA's blessing; and it simply ignored Iran's ongoing development of long-range ballistic missiles tailor-made for nuclear warheads. It also ensured that Iran could receive maximum economic benefit without sacrificing either its nuclear weapons ambitions or moderating its behaviour as a regional destabiliser through its proxies and clients such as Hezbollah, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Hamas.

Ironically, the ease with which Iran has unravelled its commitments and resumed nuclear activity proscribed by the JCPOA has only validated the Trump Administration's criticisms of that deal.

In recent months, Iran has steadily stopped complying with a growing number of restrictions outlined in the agreement, including exceeding limits on both the level of uranium

enrichment and the size of its stockpile, developing advanced centrifuges, and resuming enrichment at its fortified, underground bunker in Fordow.

There have, of course, been other violations of the deal that Iran has not owned up to, such as maintaining a secret archive of nuclear weapon development research that

Israel's Mossad exposed in 2018. Documents obtained from this archive reportedly revealed the nuclear sites the IAEA has been trying to inspect.

Yet for Teheran, the JCPOA has been the gift that keeps on giving. In a move that defies all logic, the nuclear deal bestowed upon Iran, unconditionally, an end to the long-standing conventional arms embargo on that country from October 18 of this year.

Whatever motivated this ill-conceived concession to the Iranians in 2015 – today, at a time when an Australian frigate has just returned from protecting commercial shipping vessels from Iranian attacks in the Strait of Hormuz, and Saudi Arabia is still feeling the effects of last year's Iranian drone and missile attack on its largest oil field – lifting the embargo under current circumstances would be an own-goal of epic proportions.

This is true whether looking at it from the perspective of Iranian imports that would allow it to modernise its military, involved in considerable regional aggression,

or exports that would empower its terrorist proxies and clients.

Unfortunately, US efforts to extend the embargo through the UN Security Council appear unlikely to succeed due to resistance from Russia and China, both of whom are potential arms suppliers for Iran. This is itself a cause for worry, as an open arms trade with either of these patrons has the dangerous potential of leading to alliances that could upset the delicate geopolitical balance between the global superpowers.

Yet should the bid to stop the lifting of the embargo fail in the Security Council, the US is threatening to unilaterally activate "snapback" sanctions on Iran as permitted under the provisions of the JCPOA and UNSC Resolution 2231.

There are genuine risks in such a course, but to allow the lifting of the arms embargo to proceed would be riskier still.

In a year of unprecedented challenges for governments around the world, the Iranian threat, both nuclear and conventional, must remain a priority. Australia, together with its Western partners, should lend all diplomatic support to US efforts to extend the arms embargo on Iran. The latest IAEA decision should serve as a wake-up call as to how important the Iranian nuclear file remains to international peace and security.

AIR

## WORD FOR WORD

"Iran has denied us access to two locations and that, for almost a year, it has not engaged in substantive discussions to clarify our questions related to possible undeclared nuclear material and nuclear-related activities."

**Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency**  
**Mariano Grossi (New York Times, June 15).**

"What we have here for the first time since... the JCPOA was agreed, is the emergence of evidence of potential undeclared nuclear material and/or activities being potentially hidden in Iran... it is the first time ever by any country anywhere that a government has rejected and refused to comply with its obligations under the IAEA's Additional Protocol. Those two facts together are rather a game changer."

**US Assistant Secretary of State for International Security and Nonproliferation Christopher Ford (US State Department, June 19).**

"The extension of Israeli sovereignty to certain territories in Judea and Samaria will not, as many critics suggest, destroy the two-state solution. But it will shatter the two-state illusion. And in doing so, it will open the door to a realistic two-state solution

and get the peace process out of the cul-de-sac it has been stuck in for two decades."

**Israel's Ambassador to the US Ron Dermer (Washington Post, June 20).**

"The ships from the fraternal Islamic Republic of Iran are now in our exclusive economic zone."

**Venezuelan Petroleum Minister Tareck El Aissami on the arrival of Iranian oil tankers carrying gas and supplies to Venezuela (Reuters, May 23).**

"We never were and never will be enemies, and we hope you will support us. It is only circumstance which has separated us up until this point... We share a common interest. [Turkish President Recep Tayyip] Erdogan is a terrorist, and both of us are on the same side. It would be idiotic of us to ignore that."

**Abdul Salam al-Badri, Deputy Prime Minister of the unrecognised government associated with General Khalifa Haftar in eastern Libya, sending a message to Israel (Times of Israel, June 12).**

"It is to treat the citizens, to stop the chain of infections. We will not return to a total lockdown, but in military terms to a 'breathing lockdown'. I hope from next week we will see the results, and slow the pace of infections."

**Israeli Health Minister Yuli Edelstein announces new "red zone" restrictions on certain neighbourhoods as Israel seeks to cope with a burgeoning second wave of coronavirus infections (Jerusalem Post, June 23).**







# SCRIBBLINGS

Tzvi Fleischer

## MORE DANCING AND SINGING FOR TERROR

Last month in this column, I discussed a dance video repeatedly broadcast on official Palestinian Authority (PA) TV which openly promoted suicide bombings with lines like “Strap on the explosive belt, detonate the first in Haifa, the second in Atlit [Israeli cities]”

Just to demonstrate this is not a one off, I wanted to mention a few other music videos recently broadcast on official Palestinian TV (all examples documented and translated by Palestinian Media Watch).

**May 25, 2020** – Popular *PA TV* children’s host Walaa Al-Battat sings a song about how Israel is an “occupation,” existing on “stolen land,” because “Palestine is Arabian.” However, Palestinians will “get all of it back” and Israel “will disappear.” The video includes footage of Palestinian rioters throwing rocks and burning tyres and other violence.

**May 30, 2020** – A music video contains lyrics about how Palestinians are a “great people, it fights with daggers and rocks, with knives and cannon shells, with a poem and a song” against “Allah’s enemy”.

**June 1, 2020** – A song in a *PA TV* video includes lyrics “Allah is with us. He is stronger and greater than the Children of Zion... My red blood waters the greenery with lemon flavour... We are the victors... My chest is a machine gun’s magazine...”

**June 1, 2020** – A music video with lyrics including “We are at your service, O Al-Aqsa, our blood is your torch... Defend the honour and the religion, With the help of men who are not traitors – they do not fear death...” When the lines about “men who are not traitors” are sung, the video featured footage of two actual stabbing attacks by Palestinians against Israelis.

**June 1, 6, 9, 2020** – A patriotic song with lyrics such as “I’ve remained loyal to my religion. On my land you will find me. I will sacrifice myself for my family. My blood is Palestinian, Palestinian” is accompanied by images of famous Palestinian terrorists, such as Dalal Mughrabi, who led a 1978 attack on an Israeli bus in which 37 civilians were murdered, including 12 children, and Salah Khalaf, who planned the massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in 1972.

**June 8, 15, 16, 17, 2020** – A music video is broadcast with lyrics such as “Jihad is necessary and self-sacrifice is necessary... Draw your sword from its sheath, and let it not return to the sheath afterwards... Kiss a Martyr on the land, who called on its behalf to Allah and fell as a Martyr.”

There is more, but hopefully that’s enough to demonstrate that musical incitement to terror and violence is a major element of the programming of the official TV station of the supposedly moderate Palestinian Authority.

## COURT OUT

On June 9, there was a ruling by the Israeli Supreme Court which didn’t receive much coverage outside of Israel, but should have. By a ruling of 8-1, the Court declared that the controversial Regularisation Law, passed by the Knesset in February 2017, was unconstitutional and would be annulled.

This was a law that occasioned much criticism of Israel when it was passed, because it allowed buildings in West Bank settlements which had been built on privately-owned Palestinian land in the good faith belief that the land in question was state land to remain in exchange for compensation to the land’s owner.

As most Israel experts predicted at the time, the powerful Israeli Supreme Court said Israel can’t have such a law, because it “*knowingly and unequally infringes upon the property rights of Palestinian residents of the area.*”

This Supreme Court finding deserves attention for two reasons:


- It is often the case that controversial and even ill-advised proposals, laws or ideas are thrown up and debated in Israel’s raucous democracy, and then professional Israeli critics and international media seize on them. The activists present them as proof that Israeli democracy is a sham and Israel is racist by nature, with the media happy to report sympathetically on such critical claims. But when Israeli democracy rejects or reverses an ill-advised idea or legal change, as it has in the current case, this is rarely even reported. Media consumers who heard the initial highly critical coverage of controversial Israeli moves may never find out that they were never implemented or were rapidly reversed.

- The Court finding also illustrates a basic fact about Israeli settlement construction that many outside observers do not understand: Israeli settlements have never been allowed to be built on privately-owned Palestinian land. I have seen claims that Israel is bulldozing Palestinian neighbourhoods to build settlements and replacing the local population with Jews. This is simply fiction.

The Regularisation Law was passed to deal with a relatively small number of cases where the Israeli courts have found that valid Palestinian land ownership claims were inadvertently violated. Many cases involve illegal outposts created without Israeli Government approval and later legalised.

When the Regularisation Law was passed in 2017, it was widely claimed by critics both inside and outside of

Israel that it would pave the way for the wholesale seizure of private Palestinian land for settlement expansion in the future – even though the language of the law itself permits no such thing.

The Supreme Court ruling calls attention to the reality – settlement buildings are not allowed to be built on privately-owned Palestinian land, and the Israeli judiciary will likely guarantee this will always be the case. 

## DECONSTRUCTION ZONE

David Harris

### WHY HISTORY STILL MATTERS

Mention history and it can trigger a roll of the eyes.

Add the Middle East to the equation and folks might start running for the hills.

But without an understanding of what happened in the past, it's impossible to grasp where we are today.

Fifty-three years ago on June 5, the Six Day War broke out.

While some wars fade into obscurity, this one remains as relevant today as it was in 1967.

Politicians, diplomats, and journalists continue to grapple with the consequences of that war, but rarely consider, or perhaps are even unaware of, the context.

First, in June 1967, there was no state of Palestine. It didn't exist and never had. Its creation, proposed by the UN in 1947, was rejected by the Arab world because it also meant the establishment of a Jewish state alongside.

Second, the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem were in Jordanian hands. Violating solemn agreements, Jordan denied Jews access to their holiest places in eastern Jerusalem. To make matters still worse, they desecrated and destroyed many of those sites.

Meanwhile, the Gaza Strip was under Egyptian control, with harsh military rule imposed on local residents.

And the Golan Heights, which were regularly used to shell Israeli communities far below, belonged to Syria.

Third, the Arab world could have created a Palestinian state in the West Bank, eastern Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip any day of the week. They didn't. There wasn't even discussion about it.

Fourth, the 1967 boundary at the time of the war, so much in the news these days, was nothing more than an armistice line dating back to 1949 – familiarly known as the Green Line. That's after five Arab armies attacked Israel in 1948 with the aim of destroying the embryonic Jewish state. They failed. Armistice lines were drawn, but they weren't formal borders. They couldn't be. The Arab world, even in defeat, refused to recognise Israel's very right to exist.

Fifth, the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), which supported the war effort, was established in 1964, three years before the conflict erupted. That's important because in 1964 the only "settlements" were Israel itself.

Sixth, in the weeks leading up to the Six Day War, Egyptian and Syrian leaders repeatedly declared that war was coming and their objective was to wipe Israel off the map. There was no ambiguity in their blood-curdling announcements.

The record is equally clear that Israel, in the days leading up to the war, passed word to Jordan, via the UN and United States, urging Amman to stay out of any pending conflict. Jordan's King Hussein ignored the Israeli plea and tied his fate to Egypt and Syria. His forces were defeated by Israel, and he lost control of the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem.

Seventh, Egypt's then-president Gamal Abdel Nasser demanded that UN peacekeeping forces in the area, in place for the previous decade to prevent conflict, be removed. Shamefully, without even the courtesy of consulting Israel, the UN complied. That left no buffer between Arab armies being mobilised and deployed, and Israeli forces in a country one-fiftieth, or two per cent, the size of Egypt.

Eighth, Egypt blocked Israeli shipping lanes in the Red Sea, Israel's only maritime access to trading routes with Asia and Africa. This step was understandably regarded as an act of war by Jerusalem.

Ninth, France, which had been Israel's principal arms supplier, announced a ban on the sale of weapons on the eve of the June war. That left Israel in potentially grave danger if a war were to drag on and require the resupply of arms.

And finally, after winning the war of self-defence, Israel hoped that its newly-acquired territories, seized from Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, would be the basis for a land-for-peace accord. Feelers were sent out. The formal response came on Sept. 1, 1967, when the Arab Summit Conference famously declared in Khartoum: "No peace, no recognition, no negotiations" with Israel. More "noes" were to follow.

Today, there are those who wish to rewrite history.

They want the world to believe there was once a Palestinian state.

They want the world to believe there were fixed borders between that state and Israel.

They want the world to believe the 1967 war was a bellicose act by Israel.

They want the world to believe post-1967 Israeli settlement-building is the key obstacle to peacemaking. The Six Day War is proof positive that the core issue is, and always has been, whether the Palestinians and larger Arab world accept the Jewish people's right to a state of their own. If so, all other contentious issues, however difficult,

have possible solutions.

In other words, when it comes to this conflict, dismissing the past as if it were a minor irritant at best, irrelevant at worst, won't work.

AIR

*David Harris is the CEO of the American Jewish Committee (AJC). ©AJC, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## ASIA WATCH

Michael Shannon

### HEAVY HANDS

Three years after Islamic State-aligned extremists triggered a five-month siege in the southern Philippines city of Marawi, violent jihadist banditry continues to flourish in the shadows of the COVID-19 pandemic. President Rodrigo Duterte has vowed to flush out the notorious Abu Sayyaf and allied groups from the thick jungles of Mindanao and the southern islands, but his roughneck authoritarian approach to all problems tends to derail any worthy initiatives. Meanwhile, the weekly gains and losses continue.

An alleged Abu Sayyaf bomb expert, identified as Kahar Indama (also known as Khang), was arrested on June 19 in a raid on a safe house in which explosives and detonators were recovered. Khang is known to have played a key role in the audacious car-bomb attack on the Philippines parliament that killed seven people in 2007. He is also a cousin of Furuji Indama, the Abu Sayyaf's leader on Basilan Island — a stronghold of the group.

Days earlier, two policemen were killed when two militants believed to be Abu Sayyaf members opened fire at a police station on Jolo island in the province of Sulu. On the same day, a member of the Bangsamoro Islamic Freedom Fighters (BIFF) was killed and five other BIFF suspects were captured during a clash with soldiers in North Cotabato province.

BIFF is a hardline, IS-aligned splinter faction of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, a former rebel group that signed a peace deal with Manila and now administers an autonomous Muslim region in the southern Philippines.

Islamist recruiters have used economic misery and chaos to strengthen their numbers, but they now have another rallying cry, analysts say — the pandemic lockdown.

Rommel Banlaoi of the Philippine Institute for Peace, Violence and Terrorism told the *Asia Times*, "Islamic militants are taking advantage of the quarantine measures against the pandemic as rallying issues to recruit members and to propagate the idea of violent extremism, especially in depressed rural areas heavily affected by lockdowns."

Since mid-March, Philippine military forces have been fighting on multiple fronts: IS-aligned rebel groups, the

communist New People's Army, and the invisible coronavirus threat. In April, with the country under a full lockdown, 11 soldiers were killed and 14 injured in a fierce, hour-long encounter with the Abu Sayyaf in Sulu province. Then in May, BIFF militants killed two soldiers and wounded another helping to carry out a COVID-19 community quarantine in a clash launched under cover of darkness.

Such acts clearly require a response, but the predicted signing of anti-terrorism legislation by President Duterte has met widespread domestic and international objection. Opposition legislators, religious figures, press and civil rights organisations and legal scholars have voiced alarm that the bill passed in the congress could pave the way for a permanent curtailment of democratic rights.

Since gaining emergency powers to combat the COVID-19 crisis in March, Duterte has already presided over a broad crackdown on critical voices, shutting down the country's largest independent news broadcaster, the ABS-CBN network. The broadsheet *Philippine Daily Inquirer* and the popular news website Rappler have also come under heavy pressure.

The emergency powers have ushered in heavy penalties, including two months' imprisonment and up to 1 million peso (A\$29,000) fines, for anyone who dared to "create, perpetuate, or spread false information" without clearly defining the term, and a spate of warrantless arrests has as many as 41,000 Filipinos facing various punishments, including being forced into animal cages for allegedly violating the lockdown regulations.

Dozens of citizens have also faced subpoenas by intelligence and other state agencies for supposedly spreading false information online, which has increasingly come to include criticism of the President and his government's policies.

In this context, the terms of the new bill point to some alarming prospects.

Authorities would be permitted to arrest people it designates as "terrorists" without warrant and to detain them without charge for up to 24 days. Under the existing law, terrorism suspects must be brought before a judge within three days.

While the definition of terrorism also includes threats to the fundamental social, economic or political structures of the country, it does not require such intent, which critics say is so broad that even a minor street disturbance is susceptible to being considered "terrorism". Those convicted on the basis of "terrorism" definitions would face up to life in prison without parole.

Similarly, the law against incitement to commit a terrorist act offers no clear definition of incitement, providing an open-ended basis for prosecuting speech.

Meanwhile, the fight against genuine terrorism in the troubled south risks being undermined, as popular grievances intensify in a nation sliding towards Marcos-style authoritarianism.

AIR



Miriam Bell

## ELECTORAL CONSIDERATIONS

Cross-party political unity – it is not often that you see it in a functioning democracy. But back in March-April as the COVID-19 pandemic closed down the world, New Zealand's politicians joined forces and agreed to work together to fight the virus.

Not surprisingly, that unity was fleeting. Today, the headlines are filled with politicians' angry claims and counterclaims about COVID-19-related border controls, quarantine and testing.

One major reason for this is that New Zealand has an election in September and campaigning is now well under way, with politicians gearing up to make their mark.

The Labour-led coalition government, helmed by the very popular Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, is currently riding high in the polls. While it is expected the large gap in the polls between the two main parties will eventually narrow, at this stage a major upset seems unlikely.

Yet going forward, only one thing is certain: the focus of the campaign will be the response to COVID-19 and the post-COVID economic recovery.

So what does that mean for those interested in where the respective parties sit on issues of importance to the Jewish community?

NZ Jewish Council spokesperson Juliet Moses highlights a political divide in attitudes towards the Jewish community and Israel. Most parties have a favourable attitude towards the community to the extent that Israel-related issues can be compartmentalised, she says.

"The Government – primarily via the Labour ministers and with special mention of Minister of Ethnic Communities Jenny Salesa – has tried very hard to support us, particularly after the Christchurch mosque attacks, and that support has been significant in many different ways.

"National has worked hard to build bridges since UNSC resolution 2334 passed under its auspices, and [National MP] Alfred Ngaro who chairs the NZ-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group, deserves special mention in that respect. ACT Party [a libertarian minor party] leader David Seymour is a friend of the community."

In contrast, one of NZ First's MPs has made what many consider to be antisemitic "jokes" in Parliament, while relations with the Green Party have been pretty fractious.

And, as far as Israel goes, the bag is mixed, with National generally better disposed towards Israel than Labour, Moses says.

"NZ First leader Winston Peters, who is also Minister of Foreign Affairs, has been very disappointing, after making all sorts of promising statements before the elections. Our UN voting record [on Israel-related resolutions] hasn't changed for the better, if anything it is worse."

Zionist Federation of NZ president Rob Berg's assessment of the parties is similar. He too points to NZ First and Winston Peters as a disappointment. Likewise, he says that over the last three years the community has established some good relationships with key Labour MPs.

"There have also been some bi-lateral agreements between ... Israel and New Zealand during this government's term. But, on the whole, I rate their attitude to Israel as poor and... heavily influenced by the unions, who are mostly anti-Israel."

With respect to National, Berg says, "The party's new leader, Todd Muller, is a member of the New Zealand-Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group. However, his position on Israel remains unclear."

David Zwartz, the former Honorary Consul of Israel in New Zealand and veteran Jewish community activist, says that, historically, the National Party and other right-of-centre parties have been more supportive of closer New Zealand-Israel connections than Labour and left-of-centre parties. He doesn't see that changing.

But domestic issues that are relevant to the Jewish community are often matters that are important to other minority ethnic and faith groups as well, Zwartz says. "We all tend to work together through interfaith or multi-ethnic organisations... to get problems solved.

"These issues tend to be non-political issues like security for places of worship following the Christchurch mosque massacre and education for public acceptance of religious and ethnic diversity."

Meanwhile, the findings of a recently released survey of the New Zealand Jewish community reveals that, in terms of political affiliation, the majority of New Zealand Jews surveyed were left-leaning, except in Auckland, where right-wing political affiliations were dominant.

What that means for how community members are likely to vote come September is, obviously, unknown. Berg thinks that while views on Israel will influence the way the Jewish community votes, it won't be the main factor.

"Most will vote according to their political beliefs and those undecided will look at the COVID-19 response and plans for the economy. I do believe though that disappointment *vis-à-vis* NZ First and their stance on Israel will prevent some from voting for them again.

"And what happens in Israel in terms of the 'annexation' proposals and New Zealand government comments on this might also influence voting here – although I am guessing there is a fair split in the community on this issue too."

# BEHIND THE NEWS

## ROCKET AND TERROR REPORT

A mortar shell was fired from Gaza into Israel on June 15, causing no casualties and prompting Israeli retaliatory strikes. It was the first projectile fired at Israel since May 6.

After three months of quiet, Palestinians resumed attacks using incendiary balloons from Gaza in June. On June 17, Israel announced it had foiled an attempt to smuggle weapons to Hamas forces from the Sinai into Gaza via the Mediterranean “a number of weeks ago.”

There was an attempted stabbing on May 25 in Jerusalem. Vehicular attacks on Israeli soldiers in the West Bank occurred on May 29 and June 23.

On May 18, an Israeli court convicted settler Amiram Ben-Uliel for the arson murder of the Palestinian Dawabsheh family in 2015 in the village of Duma. He faces a life sentence.

## PA'S REFUSAL TO COOPERATE WITH ISRAEL CAUSES DIFFICULTIES

Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas announced on May 19 that he was no longer bound by any agreements or understandings with Israel, and would also sever security ties with the Jewish state. Despite this, Israel reportedly continues to provide security alerts to the PA, but has received few in return. Nonetheless, Palestinian security forces did thwart an attack against Israeli soldiers near Jenin on June 7, while senior PA official Hussein al-Sheikh hinted in a June 8 *New York Times* article that security coordination continues discreetly.

The PA's refusal to cooperate with Israel is also reportedly leaving hundreds of sick Palestinians unable

to seek medical treatment in Israel. Patients say that PA agencies have stopped accepting their requests for exit permits, and some patients have reportedly attempted to make their requests directly to Israeli authorities instead. In addition, the Palestinian Health Ministry is refusing to make appointments in Israeli hospitals for Palestinian patients and won't issue certificates of coverage to pay for their treatment in Israel.

## EMBARRASMENTS FOR ABBAS

Despite active recruitment by Fatah and Palestinian security forces for protesters to show up at a June 8 rally in Ramallah against Israeli plans to extend sovereignty to parts of the West Bank, barely 200 people attended.

Meanwhile, on June 11, a video released by “The Palestinian Centre for Communications” news agency and the Hamas-affiliated *Shehab News Agency* showed Yasser Jadallah, a former director of the political department of the PA, claiming that funds given to the PA by international organisations are being diverted into private accounts by Abbas and his close associates. Jadallah is seeking political asylum in Belgium.

## US SANCTIONS ICC

On June 11, US President Donald Trump signed an executive order authorising the blocking of assets and imposition of travel restrictions against employees of the International Criminal Court (ICC) involved in investigations into alleged US war crimes in Afghanistan. In addition to sanctions, the US announced that it was launching a counter-investigation into the ICC for alleged corruption.

The ICC investigation was ap-



ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda

proved in March and according to the ICC, Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda is seeking to investigate alleged crimes by the Taliban and its allies; various Afghani security and defence forces; and “alleged war crimes by US military personnel in Afghanistan and by members of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in ‘secret detention facilities’ in Afghanistan ‘and on the territory of other States.’”

The US also indicated that the sanctions were aimed at defending Israel, given the current ICC investigation into alleged Israeli war crimes in the “State of Palestine”. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stated, “Given Israel’s robust civilian and military legal system and strong track record of investigating and prosecuting wrongdoing by military personnel, it’s clear the ICC is only putting Israel in its cross-hairs for nakedly political purposes.”

Israel’s Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi responded, “I thank President Trump for taking steps against the politically driven tribunal which illegitimately claims jurisdiction over Israel and the United States.”

Neither Israel nor the US are members of the ICC.

## IRAN'S NUCLEAR BREAKOUT TIME NOW LESS THAN FOUR MONTHS

Two reports issued on June 5 and 6 by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) reveal that Iran has now breached all of its obligations

under the 2015 JCPOA nuclear deal. Teheran's stockpile of 1.5 tons of uranium enriched up to 4.5% – much more than the JCPOA allows (300kg up to 3.67%) – is getting close to being enough to build two nuclear warheads. The breakout time required for Iran to produce enough highly-enriched uranium for one nuclear bomb is now estimated at approximately three to three and a half months.

In the reports, the IAEA also expressed strong concerns that Iran continues to block the access of inspectors to two sites suspected of having been part of the AMAD nuclear weapons project. In response to the reports, on June 20, the IAEA Board of Governors adopted a resolution urging Iran to fully cooperate with the agency.

## ASSAD REGIME FACING SEVERE PROBLEMS ON NUMEROUS FRONTS

Syrians in the Druze-majority city of Sweida in south-west Syria turned out for several days in June protesting worsening economic conditions and widespread corruption, while calling for the withdrawal of Russian and Iranian troops and the fall of President Bashar al-Assad.

Meanwhile, the Syrian currency has collapsed, falling to 3000 Syrian pounds to the US dollar, after starting the year at 700. Before the civil war commenced in 2011, it had traded at 47 to the US dollar.

Likely to exacerbate the situation for the Assad regime, despite its apparent victory in the Syrian civil war, are US sanctions on the leaders of that regime that came into force on June 17 under the *Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act*.

## HARDLINER IRANIAN PARLIAMENT'S NEW SPEAKER

Iran has appointed a new speaker to its parliament (Majlis), Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC)

veteran Brigadier General Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf. Elected on May 28, Qalibaf is the former air force commander of the IRGC (1997-2000), chief of police (2000-2005) and mayor of Teheran (2005-2017).

In the Majlis, Qalibaf joins many other powerful MPs who are also former IRGC commanders. His appointment is another success for the radical conservatives headed by Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei, increasing their dominance of the Government.

Meanwhile, former radical president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad (2005-2013), is reportedly making moves to run again in next year's presidential election, despite expected opposition from Khamenei. Prospects of the reformist camp gaining power in the elections are dim, as the radicals will likely use their executive powers to block reformist candidates from running as they did in the parliamentary elections earlier this year.

## ISRAEL HELPS OTHERS FIGHT COVID-19

Throughout June, Israel has been doing its part to help other nations fight the coronavirus pandemic.

On June 2, Israel donated medical supplies to the Philippines, including 50,000 medical gloves, 30,000 surgical masks, 4,500 medical gowns, 3,000 filtered face masks, 1,500 face shields and 500 non-contact thermometers.

On June 5, Israel donated wheelchairs to Ecuador.

On June 16, Israel donated to Nepal over 550 units of personal protective equipment, along with 10,000 masks, 5,000 pairs of surgical gloves, 50 infrared digital thermometers and other medical supplies.

Not all assistance was in the form of physical supplies. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the country's first "drive-thru" coronavirus testing facilities were established in June after officials there sought the assistance of Israel's Magen David Adom emergency medical agency.



## STRANGER THAN FICTION

### FAKING IT

Palestinian Authority (PA) President Mahmoud Abbas has long been accused of saying one thing in English for Western listeners, and something else more inflammatory in Arabic.

A recent example may take the cake.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is considering undertaking an investigation into alleged war crimes in the "State of Palestine" that the PA wants to go ahead in hopes it will condemn Israel. However, the claim that the court has jurisdiction over "Palestine" relies in part on the 1995 Oslo Accords, which created the PA.

So after Abbas announced on May 18 that, "The... State of Palestine [is] absolved, as of today, of all the agreements and understandings with the American and Israeli governments and of all the obligations based on these understandings and agreements..." the ICC wrote to the PA asking if the Oslo

Accords were still in effect.

The PA decided to have it both ways. Despite Abbas saying the agreements with Israel are no longer in effect "as of today", the PA told the Court on June 4, "Substantively, the statement declares that if Israel proceeds with annexation... then it will have annulled any remnants of the Oslo Accords..." This is not what Abbas said at all, nor what other PA leaders have been saying.

Moreover, the PA's submission to the court included an ostensible translation of Abbas' speech – but the translation omitted some of the more extreme claims in the text that the PA released to its own people in Arabic.

For instance, a promise to continue paying salaries to imprisoned terrorists and their families, which the ICC has said could be a war crime, was omitted from the version sent to the ICC.

If the PA continues to play this "double speak" game, it risks being called out not just by Israel, but by anyone with access to Google Translate.



## COVER STORY

# ISRAEL'S SOVEREIGNTY DEBATE

## BACKGROUND AND IMPLICATIONS

by BICOM

**A**s early as July 1, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu could ask the government or Knesset to approve a plan to extend Israeli law (often referred to as “annexation”) to areas of the West Bank. The details of the plan have not yet been released, but according to the new government’s coalition agreement, any step must be coordinated with the US while maintaining regional stability and existing peace agreements. This is a Q&A primer on the Israeli context and significance of extending sovereignty in the West Bank.



Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu has been promising to extend Israeli sovereignty to parts of the West Bank for several months

### WHY NOW AND WHAT DOES THE TRUMP PLAN SAY?

There has been a US shift, under the Trump presidency, on the conditions and the timing for applying Israeli sovereignty to parts of the West Bank. All previous US administrations had rejected any Israeli move outside the context of a peace agreement and coordination with the Palestinians. The “Prosperity for Peace” document, known as the Trump peace plan, has provided Israel an opportunity to apply sovereignty in up to 30% of the West Bank in advance of future negotiations with the Palestinians. However, reports suggest the US has conditioned its recognition of Israeli sovereignty in the West Bank on four terms: the completion of the work of a joint US-Israeli mapping committee; Israel agreeing to suspend construction in parts of the West Bank that are not designated to fall under Israeli sovereignty; the Prime Minister communicating to

the Palestinians that he will negotiate, in good faith, on the basis of US President Donald Trump’s peace plan – i.e. a two-state solution; and agreement on the plan between Netanyahu and his coalition partners in Blue and White.

The Trump plan outlines a political agreement between Israelis and the Palestinians in which Israel can apply “the law and the administrative and jurisdictional regulations” in areas of the West Bank that are not allocated to a future Palestinian state, and in return has to begin negotiations with the Palestinians for their statehood within four years. Prime Minister Netanyahu has remained silent so far about when and where Israel might apply its sovereignty in the West Bank. Despite promising to bring the Jordan Valley and all settlements under Israeli law prior to the March 2020 election, political realities have meant Netanyahu and his Blue and White coalition partners agreed that only after July 1 can the Israeli government bring the issue to the

cabinet and/or Knesset.

According to the Trump plan, a future Palestinian state would rule more territory than the Palestinian Authority (PA) does now – although less than what Israel offered at Camp David in 2000 and during the Annapolis talks in 2008. Israel could be required to relinquish about half of what is currently referred to as Area C (30%) to the PA, which is already in control of 40% of the West Bank, as well as transfer to the future Palestinian state territory in the western Negev that equals approximately 15% of the West Bank. The allocation of land in the Trump plan could mean that “approximately 97 per cent of Israelis in the West Bank will be incorporated into contiguous Israeli territory ... the Jordan Valley, which is critical for Israel’s national security, will be under Israeli sovereignty,” whilst no population centre would move from Palestinian to Israeli control.

## WHAT IS THE LEGAL STATUS OF THE WEST BANK?

Immediately after the 1967 Six-Day War, the Israeli cabinet held a debate about what to do with the newly acquired territory of the West Bank. Some wanted to keep hold of the ancestral Jewish homeland for ideological or security purposes, and others wanted to exchange the land for peace. Over the last 53 years, this debate has divided Israeli society, as well as the political establishment.

Given the Arab states’ immediate rejection of peace with Israel after the war, Israel decided to bring the governance of the West Bank under the authority of the IDF and created a military court system, which observed the provisions of the Fourth Geneva Convention for civilians under “belligerent occupation”. Palestinians were regarded as a stateless people but they were given individual rights, including the right to petition the Israeli Supreme Court over legal disputes in the West Bank. Israel has treated the legal status of the West Bank differently to east Jerusalem. On 27 June 1967, Israel passed two amendments that effectively brought eastern Jerusalem under Israeli administrative law.

In 1993, Israel and the Palestinian leadership agreed to change the legal status of the West Bank. The 1993 Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements (the DOP, also known as Oslo I) outlined a framework for the transfer of self-governing authority to the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. The subsequent 1995 Israeli-Palestinian Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (also known as Oslo II) divided the West Bank into three non-contiguous areas, Areas A, B, and C. The PA was given full internal security and civilian

control over Area A and civilian control over Area B (90% of Palestinians live in Area A and B). Israel retained full security control over Area B and full security and civilian control over Area C, excluding civil affairs issues for the Palestinians who reside in Area C, apart from the administration of the land.

Historically, Israel has justified the construction of the settlements on security grounds, i.e. grounds that the military commander is entitled to consider in accordance with international law, rather than on the basis of any claim to a sovereign right to the territory.

## WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF EXTENDING SOVEREIGNTY?

There are several arguments as to why Israel should not extend sovereignty:

**Rise of Violence:** The IDF’s Coordinator for Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT), Maj.-Gen. Kamil Abu-Rukun, has warned that annexation could lead to a “shattering of security coordination and a wave of violence and terrorist attacks.” In time, this situation could require Israel to take over the territories at a huge economic cost. Former US Ambassador to Israel Daniel B. Shapiro and John R. Allen, a retired US Marine Corps four-star general who led the security dialogue during the Israeli-Palestinian peace process under the Obama Administration from 2013 to



Maj.-Gen. Kamil Abu Rukun:  
“Annexation could lead to a wave of terrorist violence”

2014, warned that annexation of all the settlements “will create hundreds of miles of serpentine borders, with dozens of crossing points, that would be difficult to defend, requiring expensive new infrastructure and large troop deployments.”

**Diplomatic sanctions:** It could result in economic or diplomatic sanctions from the EU, including restricting the import of Israeli settlement products to the European market (the EU is Israel’s largest trading partner). Other aspects of EU-Israel relations could also be put on the table: from the Association Agreement and existing trade arrangements, to cooperation programs (such as Horizon Europe) and funding through the European Neighbourhood Instrument. The EU could also stop funding the PA, a move which could cost Israel millions of dollars per year, and individual EU states could also recognise a Palestinian state in order to placate Palestinian concerns about the end of a two-state solution.

**“The Trump plan outlines a political agreement between Israelis and the Palestinians in which Israel can apply ‘the law and the administrative and jurisdictional regulations’ in areas of the West Bank that are not allocated to a future Palestinian state”**

**Impacting ties with the Gulf states:** It could freeze or curtail Israel's ties with Arab Gulf states and so weaken the fight against Iran, as well as redirect the international community's attention away from Israel's existential threat. As the IDF's former head of military intelligence Maj.-Gen. (Res.) Amos Yadlin states: "It is important that we focus on the Iranian nuclear program in our dialogue with the Americans. Iran has continued to stockpile enriched uranium; it has continued to operate advanced centrifuges and has shortened the time to reaching the nuclear threshold from one year to half a year. The world's support for taking more steps to stop Iran is vital, as is the open and covert cooperation with the Arab world against Iran. But an act of annexation will focus the international community's attention on Israel, and not on Iran..." And on 13 June, the UAE's Ambassador to the US, Yousef Al Otaiba, wrote in *Yediot Ahronot* that "Annexation will definitely, and immediately, reverse all of the Israeli aspirations for improved security, economic and cultural ties with the Arab world and the United Arab Emirates."

**Destabilise Jordan:** Maj.-Gen. (Ret.) Amos Gilead, a former director of the Political-Security Staff in the Defence Ministry, has argued that the application of sovereignty to the Jordan Valley will not produce any strategic benefit for Israel. He recently wrote: "The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has become Israel's ally and has provided Israel with a deep strategic security zone that runs all the way to its border with Iraq. This is a security zone that, as opposed to the past, has not been used by terrorists to infiltrate Israel. All of that is liable to change the moment that Israel annexes [territory in the West Bank], which is a step that Jordan holds to be a violation of the peace treaty."

**Undermine peace agreements:** Jordan and Egypt have called for Israel not to take unilateral steps in the West Bank. Jordan's king has warned of a "massive conflict" with Israel and said that all options remain on the table in re-

sponse to such a move, whilst Egypt has expressed concern that such a move would strengthen Hamas and Islamist forces in the Sinai Peninsula. Furthermore, according to Joel Singer, Israel's legal advisor during the Oslo talks, annexation would violate Article 37(1) of the Oslo Accords which contains a clear undertaking that "[n]either party shall initiate or take any step that will change the status of the West Bank and Gaza Strip pending the outcome of the permanent status negotiations." Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh recently said annexation would also end the possibility of a two-state solution acceptable to the Palestinians and lead the PA to unilaterally declare an independent state along the 1967 partitions, with Jerusalem as its capital.

**International lawsuits:** It could also open up Israelis to international lawsuits. Israel's Attorney General Avichai

Mandelblit has warned that extending sovereignty may increase the chances that the International Criminal Court (ICC) will rule in the next few months that it does have jurisdiction over Palestine, which could lead to criminal investigations against IDF soldiers and officers, government officials, and heads of municipalities in the West Bank.

**Complicating land swap agreements with the Palestinians:** Applying Israeli

law beyond the 1967 Green Line could make it harder for Israeli governments to gain Knesset approval to withdraw from land in a future peace agreement. The 'Basic Law: Referendum' states that at least 80 MKs (or, in the alternative, a vote of at least 61 members and a majority of all Israelis through a general referendum) must approve any agreement by the Israeli government that will result in a situation where "the law, jurisdiction and administration of the State of Israel shall no longer apply to territory in which they currently apply."

## WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF EXTENDING SOVEREIGNTY?

**Finalise Israel's borders:** Supporters of applying Israeli law in the West Bank argue that such a move would allow Israel to finalise its borders for the first time since its establishment in 1948. All Israeli governments have opposed a complete withdrawal to the former armistice lines, a position generally accepted by the international community. There have also been provisions in most peace negotiations with the Palestinians for land swaps where Israel would retain major settlement blocs close to the border, although no agreement has been reached on the exact size.

**Control eastern border:** The opportunity to maintain Israeli control over the Jordan Valley is seen as a key advantage to extending sovereignty. Historically, this has



Jordan's King Abdullah has been warning of the potential for "massive conflict" if Israeli plans go ahead

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received broad support from across the political spectrum as it provides Israel with valuable strategic depth. Former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said Israel should maintain control over the Jordan Valley “in the broadest meaning of that term”. Furthermore, Brig.-Gen. (Res.) Yossi Kuperwasser argues that extending Israel’s sovereignty to the Jordan Valley will send a clear message that Israel is determined to keep this area, which many deem critical for its security. During the 2013-14 talks between Israel and the US, then-Secretary of State John Kerry proposed installing technological means on both sides of the Jordan River as a solution for the eastern border. Israel’s Defence Minister at the time Moshe Ya’alon refuted the US plan, saying that full Israeli control of everything that entered or exited the areas in the State of Israel and the Palestinian Authority – by land, air or sea – was a mandatory condition. Without such control Ya’alon said, Iran, ISIS and other hostile entities would take advantage of the situation, like they have done in Gaza.

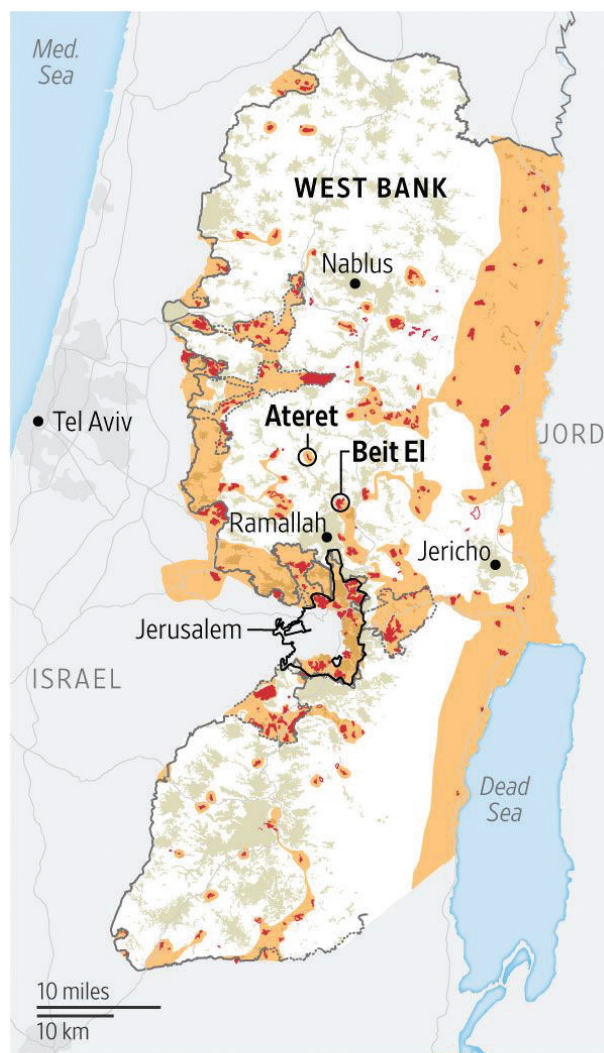
**Timing is now:** Supporters underline that today is Israel’s best chance to apply its sovereignty in the West Bank, as long as Donald Trump is US President, since the Trump plan promises US support for the move. Several reports, predominantly in the right-wing *Israel Hayom*, further argue that the public warnings from Arab and European leaders of dire consequences if annexation goes ahead differ from private messages sent by the same leaders. It is argued that Israel’s relations with Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the Gulf states will also not be ruined. These states rely on Israel to help mitigate the Iranian threat, so why would these states choose the Palestinian issue over interests which they perceive as existential to them?

**Apply now, negotiate later:** Many leaders in the settlement movement argue that any plan that allows Israel to extend its sovereignty should be supported. Oded Revivi, Mayor of Efrat, says: “We have an opportunity with this president,

## Annexation Plan

A Trump administration proposal would allow Israel to annex up to 30% of the West Bank.

- Proposed annexation area
- Israeli settlements □ Israeli outposts
- Palestinian communities
- Barrier ——— Planned barrier



Source: Washington Institute for Near East Policy

this prime minister and this international climate and we have to seize it. For mayors of settlement towns like Revivi, Asaf Mintzer (Elkana), Nir Bartal (Oranit) and Eli Shviro (Ariel), the Oslo Agreement allocated full Palestinian control over Area A and partial control over Area B (about 40 per cent of the West Bank), with the other 60% designated as “disputed” but under Israeli control. The application of sovereignty now could reduce the size of the “disputed” land by up to half, and this opportunity must not be missed.

**Greater risk of inaction:** Maj.-Gen. (Ret.) Gershon Hacohen argues that if the Israeli government rejects the opportunity for sovereignty that President Trump’s plan features, Israel’s future will face exponentially higher risk potential. Israel cannot really maintain its temporary security presence in the Jordan Valley in perpetuity. Other supporters of extending sovereignty believe that the reaction of the anti-annexation camp has been exaggerated. Raphael G. Bouchnik-Chen, a retired colonel who served as a senior analyst in IDF Military Intelligence, says such visions “are dark prophecies,” “not realistic,” and “obscure the strategic significance” of extending sovereignty for the security of Israel.

## DO ALL SETTLERS AGREE ON EXTENDING SOVEREIGNTY?

Whilst the overwhelming majority of settlement leaders agree on the need for Israel to apply its sovereignty in the West Bank, not all settlers agree with the Trump plan’s approach. Some oppose it from a more right-wing perspective. Those who oppose it argue that the plan will result in 19 settlement enclaves (home to over 20,000 people) becoming surrounded by a future Palestinian state, which would create complicated security issues for the IDF, as well as meaning those settlements would also have no room to expand, leaving their long-term existence in doubt with little desire from Israelis to live or move there.

Other settlers reject the Trump plan on ideological grounds, citing the US condition that Israel can only annex areas if it agrees to the entire plan, including its agreement to conduct direct negotiations with the Palestinians for at least four years, and that in this period Israel must freeze all construction and demolitions in the territory earmarked for the Palestinian state, as well as possibly in other areas.

## WHAT ALTERNATIVE PLANS EXIST FOR THE FUTURE OF THE WEST BANK?

Despite years of failed efforts to find a permanent solution to the conflict, many Israelis still favour separation from the Palestinians, in order to maintain the state's Jewish and democratic character. As a result, more Israelis have taken the view that Israel cannot afford to wait and hope that the conditions that will allow a permanent status agreement will emerge, and instead must act – unilaterally if necessary – to offer practical solutions to reducing Israel's footprint in the West Bank without jeopardising its security needs.

Policy alternatives proposed include:

**Unilateral Separation:** The Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) has proposed that Israel should begin a process of unilaterally separating from the PA and ending Israeli rule over the majority of the Palestinian population in the West Bank, whilst at the same time entering negotiations for a permanent status agreement based on the two-state solution. The plan proposes that Israel transfer security control in Area B to the PA, similar to the authority it now has in Area A, so that a uniform Palestinian entity will be created in 40 per cent of the West Bank (A + B) that will be the foundation for the future Palestinian state. In the remaining area, the IDF will stay in 20% of the West Bank for security interests (most of which is in the Jordan Valley, including strategic sites and transportation routes), and allocate up to 25% of Area C for the development of Palestinian infrastructure and economic projects.

**Minimising the conflict:** This idea emerged from the centre of Israeli politics, and its most prominent advocate is Micah Goodman. According to Goodman, Israel can

and should implement eight practical steps on the ground that can minimise the cost of occupation for the Palestinians without impacting the security needs of Israel until such time as conditions are conducive for a return to peace negotiations. The steps range from allocating parts of Area C for Palestinian economic development and industrial estates; building a new railroad between Jenin and Haifa and giving permission to the Palestinians to export their goods overseas; and allowing Palestinians greater freedom of movement in the West Bank.

**The Sovereignty Movement:** On the Israeli Right there are several proposals that claim to enable Israel to control all of the West Bank without ruling over the Palestinian population. Yamina leader Naftali Bennett's "Stability Plan" calls for Israel to apply sovereignty in Area C and Palestinians living there to become full citizens of the State of Israel (approximately 80,000 people). Those living in the Palestinian-controlled areas (Areas A and B) would govern themselves in all aspects barring two elements: overall security responsibility and not being able to allow the return of descendants of Palestinian refugees. Likud MK Tzipi Hotovely advocates for delaying citizenship for the Palestinian-Arab population in the West Bank for up to 25 years under the heading of "annexation-naturalisation."



Right-wing Yamina party leader Naftali Bennett has a controversial "stability plan" for the West Bank

**The Regional Approach:** The Israeli Peace Initiative, co-founded by Koby Huberman, seeks to combine a two-state solution with a comprehensive regional agreement, which would provide international normalisation to Israel and moral and financial support to the Palestinians, in order to help both sides pay the price for securing a peace agreement. Huberman argues that negotiations should also include Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and the UAE in order to secure regional buy-in. The Arab states could provide solutions to the permanent-status issues of Jerusalem, security and Palestinian refugees.

## HOW WOULD EXTENDING SOVEREIGNTY AFFECT PALESTINIANS IN AREA C?

Netanyahu has recently stated that Israel will not apply its laws to areas where Palestinians reside, meaning it will not need to give Palestinians Israeli citizenship. Therefore, it is expected that the US-Israeli mapping committee will exclude Palestinians by creating Palestinian enclaves. These enclaves could continue to be part of Area C or be transferred to Area B, which will make the Palestinians living there subject to Palestinian law, but under Israeli security control. Nevertheless, the IDF's Civil Administration has begun preparations to carry out a census of Palestinians

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who currently reside in Area C for the possibility that some may be given resident rights if they live in land that is eventually annexed to Israel.

Applying Israeli law in the West Bank could also lead to the Israeli Supreme Court becoming overwhelmed with mass petitions or Palestinian requests for Israeli citizenship.

## CONCLUSION

At the time of writing, no decision has officially been made by Prime Minister Netanyahu on the extent and depth of any move. Recent media reports suggest that the smaller the amount of land annexed, the less pushback will follow for Israel domestically and internationally.

Nevertheless, a dual process has emerged in Israel which could delay Netanyahu announcing his plan. The US-Israel mapping team is yet to finalise its task and Netanyahu has reportedly suggested that the process, when completed, could happen in stages, most likely with areas closest to the 1967 Green Line being incorporated under Israeli law first, which avoids any entanglement with Jordan.



New Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz (left) and Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi (right) may have a crucial role in shaping any plans for sovereignty in the West Bank

The second process has emerged under the political reality of the new unity government. The Trump Administration is reportedly demanding Blue and White's agreement on Israel's plan in the West Bank before it gives Netanyahu a green light to move forward with it. During the press conference with German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas on 10 June, Foreign Minister Gabi Ashkenazi reiterated that the Trump peace plan "will be pursued responsibly, in full coordination with the US, while maintaining Israel's peace agreements and strategic interests. We intend to do it in a dialogue with our neighbours." Alternate Prime Minister Benny Gantz and Ashkenazi have also held several talks with Netanyahu and representatives of the US Administration to try to reach an agreement.

AIR

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# THE APATHY OF THE PALESTINIAN STREET

by Khaled Abu Toameh

On June 20, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and the ruling Fatah faction repeated their call to Palestinians to stage mass protests against Israeli intentions to apply its sovereignty to parts of the West Bank.

The PA and Fatah are hoping that the widespread protests will start in various parts of the West Bank.

So far, however, the Palestinians have failed to heed the call for taking to the streets *en masse* to demonstrate against the Israeli "annexation" plan, much to the dismay of senior PA and Fatah officials.

Palestinian political analysts said that the apathy could be attributed to a number of factors.

First, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic and its impact on the Palestinian economy has taken attention away from political and security issues, particularly those related to Israel. Many Palestinians seem to be more worried about the growing number of coronavirus infections and the poor economy than the annexation plan.

Second, many Palestinians remain sceptical about the PA leadership's motives and intentions, particularly regarding PA President Mahmoud Abbas' May 18 decision to renounce all agreements and understandings with Israel, including halting security coordination between the Palestinian security forces and the IDF.

These Palestinians do not take Abbas' recurring threats to walk away from agreements signed with Israel seriously. They see his announcement as a mere tactical step aimed at pressuring Israel into abandoning its annexation plan and placating the Palestinian public.

Third, many Palestinians seem to have lost confidence in the Palestinian leadership's ability to confront Israeli and US Administration policies and decisions. As far as these Palestinians are concerned, the PA leadership has failed in preventing Israel from pursuing its policies and measures

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Palestinian demonstrations against sovereignty extension have had small turnouts

in the West Bank and east Jerusalem, including settlement construction.

In addition, in the past three years the PA leadership has failed in stopping the US Administration from recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital, relocating the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, closing the PLO office in Washington DC and halting US financial aid to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA).

Fourth, Palestinians do not feel that most Arab states now fully support them in their conflict with Israel and the US Administration. In fact, Palestinians have seen that some Arab states are on board with US President Donald Trump's Administration, especially the US "Peace to Prosperity" plan.

Moreover, the Palestinians see how some Arab countries, while paying them lip service, are continuing to engage in the normalisation of their relations with Israel.

Fifth, the ongoing power struggle between Fatah and Hamas, which recently entered its 13th year, has further convinced Palestinians that their leaders are acting on the basis of personal, not national, interests. A common argument made by Palestinians is that the split between the West Bank and Gaza Strip "plays into the hands of Israel" and "poses an existential threat to the Palestinian national project."

Under the current circumstances, Palestinians feel less motivated to take to the streets to protest Israeli or US policies as Fatah and Hamas leaders continue to engage in an incomprehensible struggle over money and power.

Sixth, apparently some Palestinians are afraid of being targeted by the PA security forces if and when they engage in violent attacks against the IDF and settlers in the West Bank. Despite Abbas' decision to suspend security coordination with Israel, the PA security forces continue to arrest

and interrogate Palestinian activists, especially those affiliated with Hamas and other extremist groups in the West Bank.

"The Palestinian Authority leadership is very weak," said Ghazi Hamad, a senior Hamas official in the Gaza Strip. "The correct approach for addressing the state of regression, failure and helplessness among Palestinians is by finding a new national leadership that is honest and has a strategic vision. The weakness of the Palestinian leadership and its failure to take serious measures in response to dangerous moves, such as settlement expansion and land confiscation, have encouraged Israel and the US administration to undervalue our people. This shameful weakness has killed the national spirit of our people

in the West Bank and prevented any serious movement to confront Israel."

Palestinian political analyst Marwan Ezzadin said he does not believe that Palestinians are prepared for another Intifada against Israel. "The Palestinian Authority and Fatah are making a big effort to send thousands of people to the streets to protest the annexation plan," Ezzadin noted. "We may see large demonstrations in the coming days, but neither the Palestinian Authority nor Fatah want an all-out confrontation with Israel. They know that a new Intifada would have catastrophic consequences for the Palestinians."



Palestinians are largely not heeding PA head Mahmoud Abbas' calls for mass protests

On June 19, Abbas chaired another meeting of the Fatah Central Committee in Ramallah to discuss ways of curbing the spread of the coronavirus in the West Bank and thwarting Israel's annexation plan.

"Our people won't accept the annexation of one centimetre of their land," the committee said in a statement after the meeting. It also called on Palestinians to "continue

popular activities, on all levels and in all areas, to confront the Israeli annexation plan."

A Fatah official who attended the meeting said some of his colleagues expressed concern over the "apathy of the Palestinian public" to repeated calls for holding mass demonstrations against the Israeli plan.

"There's a gap between the leadership and the people," the official said. "We need to make a bigger effort to organise popular activities in the West Bank. We also need to find ways to restore our people's confidence in their leadership."

AIR

*Khaled Abu Toameh is an award-winning Palestinian Affairs journalist based in Jerusalem. Reprinted from the Jerusalem Post. © Jerusalem Post, (www.jpost.com), reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

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TOGA is undertaking all precautionary measures to limit the potential spread of the Covid-19 virus and will continue to monitor guidance from the World Health Organisation, The Australian Department of Health and DFAT.

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# Missiles can win wars

## Israel and the precision-guided missile threat

by Uzi Rubin

**T**he emergence of pinpoint precision-guided rockets and missiles on the battlefield is a turning point in the history of warfare. This is because they provide terror organisations and non-government militias with the means to achieve air superiority without operating any combat aircraft.

Air superiority means having access to hostile airspace while denying the enemy access to friendly airspace. It provides its possessor with the freedom of action to strike the enemy at will. This freedom of action is achieved through conventional air power by suppressing the hostile air force and neutralising the enemy's ground-based air defences.

Every campaign in World War II opened with a bid for air superiority. The Third Reich's Luftwaffe (airforce) succeeded in achieving this in Poland, Norway, and France, bringing about the swift defeat of those armies and the overrunning and occupation of those national territories by Adolf Hitler's Wehrmacht. The Luftwaffe failed to achieve air superiority over Britain, leading to the cancellation of Hitler's planned invasion of the British Isles ("Operation Sea Lion").

In 1967, Israel opened the Six Day War with Operation Focus, which obliterated the air forces of Egypt and Syria. The purpose of this operation was twofold: to deny the enemy's capability to strike Israel's territory and armed forces from the air; and to provide an umbrella for the IDF's offensive, which ultimately defeated the opposing land forces.

In Operation Mole Cricket 19 during the opening stage of the 1982 Lebanon War, the Israel Air Force gained full air supremacy over Syria and Lebanon, thus largely knocking Syria's ground forces out of the war.

Since the early 20th century, when flying machines evolved from rich men's toys into lethal weapons of war, all the world's armies have invested heavily in countering

the threat from the air.

Initially, such efforts were focused on access denial; in other words, preventing hostile aircraft from collecting visual intelligence about friendly troop dispositions and blocking hostile bombing of troops and cities. The response was the perfection and deployment of integrated air defences that relied on interceptor aircraft and anti-aircraft artillery (later replaced by ground-to-air missiles). The Battle of Britain was the first victory of this access denial strategy, with Britain managing to combine radar, fighter aircraft, and fire control centres into the first modern integrated air defence system.

Later on during WWII, when Britain's integrated air defence became virtually impenetrable to the Nazi Luftwaffe, the Germans conceived the idea of bombing by missile rather than by aircraft. Since the air defences of the time were unable to intercept missiles plunging at supersonic speeds, ballistic missiles promised the penetrability that conventional bomber aircraft had lost.



The German V-2 was conceived as an alternative way to achieve air superiority, but without precision guidance, it failed

This marked a major shift. In making this adjustment, Germany achieved the essence if not the form of classic air superiority – namely, the freedom to strike the enemy's territory at will – with no loss of aircraft or pilots.

While Germany's ballistic and cruise missiles wreaked havoc and killed thousands in Britain and later in Belgium, their poor accuracy prevented them from changing the course of the war. The disproportion between the immense effort of the Germans in developing, building, deploying

and launching the missiles – a brilliant technical achievement – and their minimal impact on the war was internalised by all post-war military establishments, including the IDF. The expression "Missiles and rockets don't win wars" blinded Israel for years to the looming missile threat.

Between WWI and WWII, several air forces – particularly the British and American – worked to achieve the second goal of air superiority, that of gaining access to enemy airspace with fleets of strategic bombers. During WWII, strategic bombing by swarms of heavy bombers caused unimaginable damage to German cities and killed at least one million civilians, but the effect on the course of the war is still up for debate. Only in the waning phases of the war, when the Luftwaffe's capabilities were nearly exhausted, did the Allied bombers gain access to German airspace with acceptable losses.

Air offence and air defence clashed next in Southeast Asia, when the dense array of North Vietnam's ground-to-air missiles, backed by the judicious use of interceptor air-



craft, nearly blunted the US's air superiority and exacted a heavy price in downed US aircraft and lost aircrew.

Another landmark – if largely forgotten – clash between air offence and air defence occurred during the Iran-Iraq War (1980-88). Once Saddam Hussein's plan to defeat Iran by a lightning campaign fizzled out, the conflict deteriorated into a war of attrition over the course of which Iraqi jet bombers, purchased from the Soviet Union, bombed Teheran and other Iranian cities.

The Iranian air force was still equipped at the time with cutting-edge US interceptor aircraft purchased by the Shah prior to the 1979 Islamic Revolution. The consequence was that Iran managed to down many Iraqi bombers, forcing Saddam to call off his strategic bombing campaign.

In desperation, Saddam – like Hitler before him – turned to ballistic missiles. His fleet of Soviet Scud missiles did not have the range to hit deep within Iran. Using the expertise of aerospace companies in Europe and South America, he developed an extended-range version and converted most of his Scud stockpile. The new missile, dubbed Al-Hussein, was used for strategic bombardment.

Almost 200 missiles were fired at Teheran and three other major cities deep within Iran, killing thousands, destroying houses, and compelling millions to evacuate the cities. The common wisdom among most analysts is that those missile attacks were the last straw that compelled Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini to “drink the poison chalice” and agree to a ceasefire. After eight years of bloodletting, Iraq emerged victorious. It can be safely concluded that in that case, missiles did win the war.

A similar logic compelled Hafez Assad, Syria's ruler, following the trouncing of his air force in the 1982 Lebanon War, to acquire a huge fleet of Scud missiles tipped with locally-developed chemical warheads. His minister of defence, Mustafa Tlass, pointed out the interchangeability between aircraft and missiles when he wrote that “the 1982 war was an air war, the next one will be a missile war.”

The non-state terror organisations now confronting Israel from Lebanon and Gaza, Hezbollah and Hamas, have never had the option of acquiring air forces. Hence they



Middle Eastern regimes have also turned to missiles as an alternative to airpower, whether Soviet-made Scuds (top) or this more sophisticated, indigenously-developed Iranian missile (bottom)

have equipped themselves with huge stockpiles of simple missiles – AKA rockets – and have used them to terrorise Israel's homeland, killing hundreds of civilians and causing considerable property damage and economic loss.

## THE PRECISION BREAKTHROUGH

Rockets and missiles, as originally conceived during WWII, were not very accurate, making them unfit for precision strikes. As a result, they were used mainly to saturate troop concentrations and terrorise population centres.

Improved accuracy could only be achieved via heavy, extremely costly, and highly complicated electromechanical guidance systems. Precision strikes thus remained the sole domain of manned combat aircraft that could close in on targets and hit them with

short-range precision-guided munitions.

Over time, however, technology has caught up. Today's smartphones contain all the wherewithal necessary for precision guidance of vehicles, be they automobiles, drones, or missiles. For about a decade, it has been possible to incorporate such technologies into even simple Grad missiles, converting unguided rockets into pinpoint precision missiles at modest expenditure.

This technological shift makes missiles as effective as air power for precision strikes. Precision-guided missiles are being developed and deployed today by all the major world powers, as well as by many smaller states.

In the Middle East, Iran is leading the way. It is cur-

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rently converting all its older rockets and missiles into precision weapons. It also supplies its allies in the region with expertise and materials with which to build their own precision missile capabilities – hence the Precision Project of Hezbollah and other Iranian proxies in the region.

Why is Israel so anxious to frustrate Hezbollah's Precision Project? Because once it is achieved, it will elevate Hezbollah's war-making capability to that of a state military force. Hezbollah will possess all the advantages of an offensive air force without needing to own a single combat aircraft. Its precision missiles will be able to paralyse any vital installation or terrorise any civilian population centre in Israel.

One of the biggest advantages of ground-launched rockets and missiles is their small footprint. Precision rockets and missiles enjoy the same advantage: their launchers are as small, stealthy, and as hard to find and destroy as those of their more imprecise predecessors. Air power, by contrast, has the Achilles heel of a reliance on huge air bases replete with kilometres-long runways, aircraft hangars, workshops, communication centres, and so on.

The vulnerability of giant, stationary air bases to precision missile strikes was demonstrated during the January 2020 Iranian missile strike on the US-operated Ein Assad air base in Iraq. Prior to the attack, the US teams at that base had launched a fleet of Predator unmanned aerial vehicles (UAV) for patrolling the base perimeter. One of the incoming Iranian missiles hit an underground communications conduit and cut the fibre optic lines between the UAV's control vans and the system's transceivers. This caused a loss of ground control over the entire UAV fleet. It took hours to re-establish communication via satellite and bring the UAVs back in.

Needless to say, US combat aircraft based in Iraq were powerless against this missile strike. Simply put, Iran gained air superiority over the air base by virtue of its precision missiles.

## ACTIVE AND PASSIVE DEFENCE

Once Hezbollah is equipped with precision missiles, it stands to reason that it will launch an Operation Focus of its own in the opening stage of any future war with Israel, firing salvos of precision missiles to paralyse Israel's air bases. Israel's active missile defence structure – Iron Dome, David's Sling, and any future high power laser defence system – will probably be able to destroy most incoming missiles, but not all of them. Active defence

cannot guarantee a hermetic defence. Precision missiles that do manage to leak through the defensive shield could erode the IAF's capability – witness what Iranian precision missiles did in Iraq.

Against a precision missile threat, active defence is a necessary but insufficient condition. It requires complementary measures. One such measure is passive defence, meaning the shielding of vital installations with thick

concrete walls that could withstand direct hits. While technically feasible, this kind of response is very expensive and time-consuming.

Another response would be to diversify the IAF's offensive capability to compensate for degradation of its offensive power during the initial phase of future war. If Hezbollah can establish an "air force without aircraft," so can Israel.



Iran's attempt to upgrade Hezbollah's vast missile arsenal with advanced guidance systems would elevate the threat to Israel to a new level

## ISRAEL'S RESPONSE

Israel's own Precision Project is more than a decade old. Israel's defence industries have developed and tested a number of ground-launched precision missiles with varying ranges and warheads. To date, the IDF has agreed to buy only the shortest-range version, and even that only in limited numbers. Longer-range precision missiles, such as the recently tested 400-km range LORA, are successfully exported to foreign armies, but not to the IDF.

A proposal to establish an Israeli missile strike force to back up Israel's aircraft strike force was mooted a couple of years ago. As far as is known, it was rejected by the IDF. The relatively short-range precision missiles now acquired are slated to provide ground forces with long-range artillery support for ground operations, not to back up and complement the IAF's capability to conduct strategic strikes when its bases are under precision missile fire.

Modern precision missiles have the same punch as combat aircraft yet are less vulnerable, as they don't rely on huge, immovable, target-rich air bases. Precision-guided missiles and rockets can paralyse the civilian and military infrastructures of entire countries, paving the way to their defeat.

Israel needs to do everything in its power not only to prevent defeat by such weapons but to use them to defeat its enemies.

AIR

*Dr. Uzi Rubin was the founding director of the Israel Missile Defence Organisation, which managed the Arrow missile defence program. He is now a senior research associate at the Begin-Sadat (BESA) Centre for Strategic Studies. © BESA, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

# TREATING A SICK ECONOMY

by Amotz Asa-El

With stadiums emptied, malls shuttered, trains idled, airports nearly desolate, and a strict curfew confining them to within 500 metres of their homes, Israelis this year missed the vistas and fragrances of a blossomy spring that followed an unusually rainy winter.

Fortunately, the tightest restrictions that the Government had imposed in March in response to the coronavirus pandemic had largely been lifted by June.

Unfortunately, the dramatic economic impacts of the pandemic could not be as easily reversed. Then again, there is reason to believe that the initial shock has been absorbed, and that the journey to recovery, while young and long, is nonetheless underway – providing the impact of Israel's current "second wave" of coronavirus infections does not derail it.

Israel's response to the medical challenges of the pandemic was ranked by the *Economist Intelligence Unit* as the fourth best in the developed world – reflecting early and decisive pre-emptive measures that also benefitted from the country's tightly controlled borders, relatively young population, and long experience in coping with emergency situations.

However, what worked well epidemiologically has been derided by some as economically excessive, inspiring fiery debates between the Health Ministry's medical professionals and the Treasury's economists. Nonetheless, the international context of a global, and thus inescapable, crisis is not a matter of debate, and neither is the severity of the recession it has spawned.

The most economically destructive anti-pandemic measure was likely the Government's order that employers must allow no more than 30% of their workers to be physically present at their workplaces. Thousands were consequently sent on furlough or simply dismissed.

The other great shock was caused by the near-complete halting of flights into and out of the Jewish state.

In terms of the stark numbers, these measures initially spiked unemployment from a negligible 3.9% to roughly a quarter of the workforce, representing a jobless rate that is more than double any Israel has ever experienced before.

At the same time, the government's NIS 88.4 billion (A\$37 billion) stimulus and compensation program, including new health spending, unemployment payments, tax deferments, and emergency payments to shuttered businesses, created a NIS 46.2 billion (A\$19.5 billion) budget deficit for the first five months of the 2020 fiscal year.



Israelis are back in the shops – but unemployment remains at an unprecedented high

That's almost the size of the deficit for all of 2019, which was NIS 52.2 billion (A\$22 billion).

Fortunately, things have improved a bit since the initial shocks, as the Government began easing lockdown restrictions. By June, the Government reported that 275,000 furloughed workers had returned to work, and the head of the Labour and Welfare Ministry's Labour Service has estimated that, by September, the unemployment rate should decline to around 10%.

Better yet, economists also estimated the Government will manage to finance the growing deficit by new bond issues abroad. Previous fears that the deficit would run so deep that covering it would require printing money – and risk courting an inflationary spiral – seem to have been dispelled.

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Israeli law currently forbids printing money to cover deficits, as a result of the 1985 hyper-inflation crisis and the stabilisation plan which ultimately ended it. Printing money to deal with the current crisis would have required new legislation – which in turn might have generated a sense of historic retreat and economic pessimism.

Still, by late June, it was clear that the pandemic's economic impact would last longer and run deeper than many had initially hoped.

Two good indicators of this reality are the conditions of the national airline El Al and of Israeli energy tycoon Yitzhak Teshuva.

El Al had been in trouble prior to the crisis, having lost NIS 98 million (A\$41.3 million) in 2019. It was therefore in no position to sustain the huge economic shortfalls caused by having its fleet grounded during the pandemic, even after firing 17% of its workforce and cutting the pay of its remaining employees by 20%.

The result has been negotiations with the Government that might lead to the privatised company being re-nationalised, with the Treasury offering to guarantee NIS250 million (A\$105.3 million) in private loans for the company, and to buy up to US\$150 million (A\$218.4 million) in shares at a public offering, should the stock not be taken up by private investors.

Meanwhile Yitzhak Teshuva, a self-made real estate tycoon and one of Israel's wealthiest people, had been the main beneficiary of Israel's newly found offshore gas fields in the Mediterranean through his ownership of the Israeli petroleum company Delek. Having thus become an energy baron, in recent years he has invested in oil drilling in the North Sea, Canada and the Gulf of Mexico.

In May, with energy prices in free fall, his heavily leveraged foreign investments proved beyond his means, and for a while, he seemed to be on the brink of insolvency. Fortunately for him, he managed to reach a deal with his creditors for the latter to take a major haircut on his debts. Even so, his financial reputation is now badly dented, and his situation looms as a reminder of the unpredictability and volatility of the coronavirus economy.

More broadly, Israel's important tourism, entertainment, and restaurant industries have been severely crippled, even after the Government allowed eateries to partially reopen, and reception centres to hold events of up to 250 people.

**N**onetheless, when viewed from neighbouring capitals, Israel's pandemic economic dilemmas probably seem enviable.

In Iran, the Government's initial denial of the coronavirus threat, and its admission of flights from China well after others had banned them, resulted in more than 150,000 reported infections by June, and wild rumours about thousands of unreported fatalities. The pandemic's financial pressure led Teheran to request from the International Monetary Fund an emergency US\$5 billion loan, while Iranian currency has hit historical new lows, with US\$1 buying close to 200,000 rials at the end of June.

In Lebanon, the effect has been even worse, as the already vulnerable Lebanese pound's depreciation accelerated. By mid-June, it had plunged by 70% in its dollar value over the last nine months. Protesters had been taking to the streets to express their anger over the desperate economic situation even before the outbreak, as Beirut reached the brink of insolvency.

The pandemic, however, only multiplied mistrust in the Government, and also against Iran's Lebanese proxy Hezbollah, and generated a sense of despair that saw protesters in Beirut and Tripoli clash with police, at times attacking them with firebombs, while absorbing tear gas and rubber bullets in return.

Debt-ridden Lebanon's economic crisis is underpinned by protracted governmental paralysis and fiscal waste, aggravated by the presence of an estimated one million Syrian refugees, all of which led to imposition of capital controls. This, in turn, has resulted in soaring food prices and unemployment, and a cash crunch that most Lebanese households are feeling acutely.

Things are even worse in Syria, where the pandemic's pressure is dragging down the Government's effort to attract badly-needed foreign investments in order to rehabilitate and re-ignite its ravaged economy, while the war still goes on, although limited in scope and confined to specific areas. The Syrian lira, which last September traded on the black market at 650 to the US dollar, had sunk by mid-June to more than 3,000 to the dollar, as new US sanctions went into effect.

With large parts of the country reportedly suffering from food shortages, thousands have taken to the streets in multiple locations, openly demanding President Bashar Assad's departure, in scenes reminiscent of the beginning of the Syrian civil war in 2011.

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Israel's economic crisis is obviously of an entirely different nature, largely resembling what the rest of the developed world has had to face in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

Then again, the economic burden that has so suddenly befallen every household is creating social pressures of a sort no Israeli Government has had to face since the great economic crisis of 1985.

The business sector's disgruntlement convinced the Government to fully reopen the school system by mid-May, earlier than most other OECD nations.

The rationale was that the pandemic's initial wave had been weathered, and the school lockdown was a major burden for the workplace, since it forced parents to stay home with their kids.

However, shortly after students returned, there were coronavirus outbreaks in schools in major Israeli cities, soon resulting in more than 40 schools being once again shuttered.

Even so, pressure to open the economy intensified, most notably from artists and stage workers who held well-attended and loud demonstrations outside the Knesset, demanding that theatres reopen, and that Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu meet with them to hear their demands.

Netanyahu, who could hear the protests through his office window, met with their representatives, and soon announced that public performances would resume – but audiences will be limited to 500 people.

While these and other restrictions began to be lifted, the number of infections began rising, exceeding 250 new cases per day in mid-June, after having declined the previous month to nearly zero.

Referring to the international travel lockdown, Netanyahu has promised that the skies will be reopened on August 1 to a limited set of “green” countries with low infection rates, most notably Greece, a favourite destination for Israeli vacationers.

Optimists see this as a light at the end of the tunnel. Pessimists see it as proof that most of the world will remain inaccessible for at least the rest of the year.

Both pessimists and optimists agree the virus is far from eradicated, and expect it to continue to impact every aspect of their lives at least until the middle of 2021.

What sets it apart from Israel's previous economic crises is its global scope, and the realisation that its eruption had nothing to do with Israeli policies, actions or inaction, and that, in coping with it, Israel is in the same boat as the rest of mankind.

In this regard, it fits both halves of a pair of contradictory Hebrew adages: one says that a plight shared by a multitude is half a consolation, while the other says that a plight shared by a multitude is a consolation only for fools.

## A SECRET AFFAIR GOES PUBLIC

by Sharyn Mittelman

Israel's warming relations with its Gulf Arab neighbours have often been a “secret affair”. In recent weeks, however, the Jewish state's growing ties with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have increasingly come out into the public spotlight.

Despite the UAE having no formal diplomatic relationship with Israel, on both May 19 and June 9 the UAE sent medical supplies to the Palestinians to help battle coronavirus via Israel's Ben Gurion airport, the second of which arrived in Israel in a clearly marked Etihad Airways plane. The Palestinian Authority refused to accept the medical supplies – because the arrangement was coordinated between the UAE and Israel, the PA condemned it as an act of “normalisation”.

Meanwhile, on June 12, an Emirati diplomat published an opinion article, in Hebrew, in a major Israeli daily – something once unthinkable for representatives of Arab governments with no formal ties to the Jewish state.

There have been many other public acts to indicate a thawing in the relationship. The UAE is allowing Israel to participate in the Expo 2020 in Dubai (now postponed to 2021), and in February an Israeli cycling team took part in the UAE Tour racing through Dubai.



Israeli Culture and Sports Minister Miri Regev in Abu Dhabi in 2018

In November 2015, the UAE allowed Israel to establish a diplomatic office in Abu Dhabi, and there have been a number of visits to the UAE by Israeli politicians including by Israel's ambassador to the UN Danny Danon in 2016.

In 2018, Israel's then Culture and Sports Minister Miri Regev heard and saw the Israeli anthem played in Abu Dhabi after Israeli Sagi Muki won a gold medal in an international judo tournament there.

Israeli Communications Minister Ayoub Kara also visited the UAE in 2018.

The warming relationship has been influenced by shared interests, particularly concern about Iran – its destabilising activities across the region through its proxies and its nuclear ambitions. On Dec. 17, 2019, the US Administration reportedly convened a secret trilateral meeting with Israel and the UAE to coordinate their policies in dealing with the Iranian threat.

According to reports, Israel and the UAE also discussed a potential non-aggression pact as an interim step toward full diplomatic relations. Days after the meeting, the UAE Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed tweeted an article headlined: “Islam’s reformation, an Arab-Israeli alliance is taking shape in the Middle East,” apparently indicating approval.

A UAE diplomat attended the launch of the Trump Administration’s Israeli-Palestinian peace plan in January, along with diplomats from Oman and Bahrain, lending the proposal implicit support.

However, UAE officials do appear to be warning Israel that the progress achieved over many years of backroom meetings may be set back by Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu’s plans to apply sovereignty to parts of the West Bank, as part of the Trump Administration’s peace plan.

Indeed, this was the background to the UAE’s Ambassador to the US Yousef Al Otaiba’s unprecedented June 12 op-ed for Israel’s largest Hebrew-language newspaper *Yediot Ahronot* titled, “It’s Either Annexation or Normalisation.”

A translation of the article stated, “Annexation will certainly and immediately upend Israeli aspirations for improved security, economic and cultural ties with the Arab world and with the UAE.”

Al Otaiba wrote, “Our shared interests around climate change, water and food security, technology and advanced science could spur greater innovation and collaboration,” but he warned, “Annexation will also harden Arab views of Israel just when Emirati initiatives have been opening the space for cultural exchange and broader understanding of Israel and Judaism.”

He concluded, “In the UAE and across much of the Arab world, we would like to believe Israel is an opportunity, not an enemy. We face too many common dangers and see the great potential of warmer ties. Israel’s decision on annexation will be an unmistakable signal of whether it sees it the same way.”

Al Otaiba also made a video in English in which he said: “We wanted to speak directly to the Israelis. The message was ‘All the progress you have seen and the attitudes that have been changing towards Israel. People becoming more accepting of Israel, less hostile to Israel, all of that could

be undermined by a decision to annex... I wanted to make sure people understood how we saw this possibility and the risks associated with it.”

However, the article appeared to contrast with comments made by the UAE’s Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, Dr. Anwar Gargash, on June 16, at the American Jewish Committee’s (AJC) virtual Global Forum. Dr. Gargash said, “The UAE is clearly against any annexation as is being proposed by the current Israeli government. Having said that, that is the political domain. Do I have to really look at all the other domains and make them almost static because of the political domain?”

Gargash went on, “I think we can come to a point where we come to a given Israeli government... and say, we disagree with you on this [annexation], we don’t think it’s a good idea, but at the same time there are areas, such as COVID, technology and other things, where we can actually work together.”

It may be that Gargash and Al Otaiba are not actually saying contradictory things but rather it is part of the same message – the UAE would like to move towards normalisation with Israel given their common interests but that would be made difficult if Israel moves ahead with extension of sovereignty in the West Bank because of the reaction in the “Arab street” – both in the UAE and in neighbouring Gulf states. Therefore, if such a legal change in the West Bank were to occur, the relationship could be put on ice and limited to “non-political” collaboration on shared interests.

Indeed, Israeli analysts noted that even Al Otaiba’s statements emphasised the carrot of improved relations rather than making threats or issuing harsh warnings. Seth Frantzman of the *Jerusalem Post* pointed out that Otaiba’s comments:

“...were not overly harsh. They appeared more like a warning from a colleague than from an adversary. They were tempered as well, without threats. This is important because it leaves some room for manoeuvre within this context of annexation and discussions of ‘normalisation.’ They did not appear to draw a red-line, but rather a warning in the kind of soft chiding terms the Gulf is used to. This means that annexation might not totally derail relations.”

However, the UAE may wish to consider that it could have greater influence on Israel if it were to privately offer a timeline for full normalisation in the near term in exchange for “no annexation”, rather than a theoretical hope of normalisation at some future date. It would also be helpful if UAE diplomats considered writing an op-ed in the Palestinian press telling them the time to negotiate with Israel on a two-state peace is now.

**According to reports, Israel and the UAE also discussed a potential non-aggression pact as an interim step toward full diplomatic relations”**



# US SYRIA SANCTIONS PUT HEZBOLLAH UNDER PRESSURE

by Hanin Ghaddar

Washington's imminent implementation of the *Caesar Syria Civilian Protection Act* is setting off alarm bells in Lebanon. Although the law's main intent is to punish Bashar al-Assad's government for atrocities committed against the Syrian people, the regime would not have been able to survive long enough to commit these abuses without direct and indirect support from Lebanese militias, officials, and businesses.

Most notably, Lebanese militant group Hezbollah was at the forefront of the Syria war for years, helping Bashar al-Assad conduct his brutal campaigns more efficiently by drawing on fighters and resources from Lebanon. The group's deep ties with the regime persist today, including in the fuel industry and other sectors explicitly targeted by the US Congress' Caesar Act. This gives US officials an opportunity to sanction Lebanese individuals, channels, and instruments that Hezbollah and Damascus use to keep the regime afloat.

Indeed, the ground is fertile for more pressure on the group and its allies inside Lebanon.

The Hezbollah-led government in Beirut has asked the International Monetary Fund for an aid package of US\$10 billion, so local officials understand the repercussions of defying US law and the broader international community at this critical moment. Accordingly, Washington and its partners should make clear that the country cannot expect IMF aid until it begins cutting specified military and commercial ties with the Assad regime.

## WHO SHOULD BE ALARMED?

Lebanon has long been connected to Syria politically, economically, and financially. The fact that the border between the two countries is still not officially demarcated allows for unchecked daily smuggling operations, making it difficult to estimate the size of financial exchanges between the two countries. But some details are evident – as Reuters reported in November, “Wealthy Syrians are believed to have deposits of billions of dollars in Lebanese banks.” Much of this money became trapped when Lebanon's economy cratered and local banks imposed tight limits on cash withdrawals in US dollars.

Some of these banks and their associated Lebanese partners and businesses may be subject to new sanctions for materially assisting the Assad regime, particularly if they are tied in any way to logistical support for Hezbollah military operations in Syria.

Yet the Caesar Act's most significant effect may be deterrence – namely, Lebanese companies that were hoping to gain access to the Syrian market through trade or reconstruction projects will now have to reconsider those plans.

Fuel smugglers are another important group who could be affected by the act. At a time when Lebanon cannot afford to lose more of its foreign currency reserves, Central Bank governor Riad Salameh hinted last month that the country is haemorrhaging US\$4 billion per year due to Hezbollah and other actors smuggling government-subsidised fuel into Syria.

## STRENGTHENING THE BORDER, SEPARATING FROM ASSAD

By using these and other Syria-related violations as leverage, the Caesar Act could help Lebanon strengthen its sovereignty and empower its institutions against non-state actors. In particular, if the threat of Caesar sanctions convinces Lebanese officials to formally demarcate their border and begin properly implementing Security Council Resolutions 1559, 1680, and 1701, then Hezbollah would be less free to exploit national institutions in support of the Assad regime next door.

Moreover, smugglers would be less free to continue activities that damage Lebanon's economy and bring dangerous weapons into its territory.

On the diplomatic level, the Caesar Act can help discourage efforts to normalise Lebanese relations with Syria so long as an unreformed regime holds power in Damascus.


When Lebanese activists and opposition figures raised concerns last month about how fuel smuggling is hurting the economy, Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah stated that the only solution is to normalise relations in order to properly coordinate with Syria on resolving the problem. The group prefers this solution because it needs to keep the estimated 120 illegal crossings under its control, instead of having the border demarcated and supervised by the Lebanese Armed Forces. Yet Lebanese citizens (and banks) can no longer afford the damage caused by loose borders and Hezbollah involvement in Syria.

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The Caesar Act is a strong instrument to reinforce the argument that Lebanon can no longer be tied to the current Syrian regime on the economic and security levels. In order to prevent a total economic collapse, the country needs to distance itself from the Assad-Iran axis and defy any normalisation with the present regime in Damascus. The threat of Caesar sanctions is one way of prodding Lebanese citizens to realise that clear, firm distancing is a prerequisite for international aid. 

*Hanin Ghaddar is the Friedmann Fellow in The Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Geduld Program on Arab Politics. © Washington Institute, reprinted by permission, all rights reserved.*

## AIJAC IN WEBINAR LAND

by Jamie Hyams

**W**ith crisis often comes innovation and opportunity. Thus, the coronavirus pandemic has seen a flourishing of webinars from Jewish communal organisations, with AIJAC in the vanguard. If we can't bring guests to Australia in person, we can certainly bring them to viewers' screens for an hour of fascinating analysis.

Starting with the doyen of Israeli political commentators, Ehud Yaari, in late March, AIJAC had conducted 11 webinars by the third week of June. The broad range of speakers have provided not just valuable insights, but at times important messages for all concerned with the state of the world. Below are some highlights from each.

### EHUD YAARI

Yaari explained that Benny Gantz's decision to join Binyamin Netanyahu in a national unity government was the least bad option open to him once his own hopes of forming a government failed. Yaari expected Gantz to moderate the government's stance towards the Palestinian Authority (PA), but pointed out that no-one in the Israeli mainstream, including Gantz, expects negotiations to resume anytime soon.

He also noted that the need for both sides to work together to fight the coronavirus had seen some of the closest security cooperation ever between Israel and the PA, and even between Israel and Hamas.

### DR. JONATHAN SCHANZER

Dr. Schanzer, a former terrorism finance analyst at the US Treasury, warned that 2020 would be the year of Iran's extremely accurate precision-guided missile (PGM). He explained that the Iranian regime is using the US\$150 bil-

lion freed up by the JCPOA nuclear agreement to fund its terror proxies including Hamas and Hezbollah to project its power across the Middle East.

However, he pointed out, there have been an estimated 1,000 attacks targeting Iranian PGMs and associated facilities in Syria and Iraq since the end of 2018, seemingly by Israel, as Iran tries to supply these weapons to Hezbollah. He added that the whole of Hezbollah and Iran's other terrorist proxies should be proscribed as terror groups.

### DR. EINAT WILF

Former Israeli Labor Knesset member and adviser to Shimon Peres, Dr. Einat Wilf described the Second Intifada, following Yasser Arafat's refusal of the 2000 Camp David peace offer, and Mahmoud Abbas rejecting an even more generous offer in 2008, as a massive wake-up call for many on the left, including herself.

This demonstrated to Dr. Wilf that the Palestinians want not a state, but to abolish Israel. She says at the heart of this is the claimed Palestinian "right of return" for the millions of descendants of refugees, and that UNRWA, the UN agency that caters for them, perpetuates the problem. She therefore calls for UNRWA's abolition and for the Palestinian refugees to be treated the same as all other refugee populations.

### PROFESSOR WALTER RUSSELL MEAD

Distinguished academic and *Wall Street Journal* "Global View" columnist Professor Mead said that US President Donald Trump's strategy on Iran – to use sanctions to pressure Teheran to renegotiate the JCPOA on the nuclear issue and rein in its regional misbehaviour – is working, but there is as of yet no end in sight.

He advised that, in considering extending sovereignty in the West Bank, Israel should calculate what it hopes to achieve against the cost in international relations, especially given its warming relations with various Arab countries.

Asked about the spike in antisemitism, he responded that to counter it, the Jewish people need a strong national state that can defend itself and act as an advocate for all Jews. A major difference between now and previous outbreaks of antisemitism is that Jews now have Israel to go to if needed, he said.

### BRIG. GEN. (RES.) YOSSI KUPERWASSER

Brigadier General (res.) Kuperwasser, a former senior IDF intelligence officer, and Director-General of Israel's Ministry of Strategic Affairs, also addressed antisemitism, saying that criticism of Israel is antisemitism when it amounts to delegitimising Israel, in effect denying Jews the right to self-determination; demonising Israel, calling it a Nazi state, apartheid, colonialist or racist; and double-standards, expecting of Israel different behaviour from that expected of other states.



Kuperwasser, who calls this embedded hatred of Israel and Jews “Israelophobia”, warns it has implications for Israeli security as it finds support in the left of Western society. He called for Australia to join other parliaments such as Austria’s and Germany’s in declaring the BDS movement antisemitic.

### MICHAEL RUBIN

Middle East scholar and former Pentagon official Michael Rubin advised that the coronavirus will not change Iran’s or Turkey’s ambitions for Middle East hegemony, because it is the nature of ideological dictatorships to prioritise their ambitions above all else, including what is best for their own citizens.

He said that quiet diplomacy won’t work to free Kylie Moore-Gilbert, the Australian-British academic imprisoned in Iran, because that’s what Iran wants. Instead, the Australian Government should make the issue front and centre in all its interactions with Iran, and press its allies to do the same, because Iran will only listen when the cost of keeping her hostage becomes too high. He added that Australia has more moral authority and weight in Washington than it realises.

### LT. COL. (RES.) SARIT ZEHAVER

Former Israeli military intelligence officer Lt. Col. (res.) Zehavi, an expert on the threat to Israel from its north, said Australia needs to follow Germany’s lead and ban all branches of Hezbollah. Otherwise, she added, we are just enabling its military wing. By storing its arms in civilian areas in southern Lebanon and Beirut, Hezbollah uses “Lebanese civilians as human shields” as a matter of strategic policy, Zehavi said. She warned that, while Israel’s attacks on Iran and its proxies in Lebanon and Syria were based on careful calculations, the potential for escalation is ever present if a raid inflicts more damage than intended.

### HIS EXCELLENCY JUSUF KALLA

Former Indonesian Vice President Jusuf Kalla was bluntly dismissive of suggestions that Australia’s recognition of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital had damaged its relations with Indonesia, saying that Australia’s politics is an internal issue for Australia, not Indonesia. He explained that, while there are no official ties between Indonesia and

Israel, 100,000 Indonesians visit Jerusalem each year, Indonesia still finds ways to import Israeli technology, and the country stands ready to support peace initiatives between Israel and the Palestinians. Kalla, who has met Binyamin Netanyahu and has visited Israel three times, added that Indonesians on the whole have no problems with Jews, and the country would easily establish diplomatic relations with Israel once peace with the Palestinians was achieved.

### DR. ERAN LERMAN

Dr. Eran Lerman, an Israeli expert on foreign relations and the Middle East, addressed the nuclear deal with Iran (JCPOA). He said Australia “should lend moral and diplomatic support for the efforts to force the Iranians to the table to renegotiate what was I think a catastrophic deal back in 2015, and if there’s one specific issue that must be renegotiated, it is what they call the sunset clauses. The time and moment at which the Iranians would be free from their obligations and would run their centrifuges at will.” He also called attention to Turkey’s intensifying efforts to dominate the eastern Mediterranean.

### DAVID HARRIS

David Harris, the long-serving CEO of the American Jewish Committee, explained that the three main sources of antisemitism are the far right, the far left and Islamists or jihadists, adding, “All three were threatening, all three were existentially important... And those on the right who only wanted to point the finger at the left and those on the left who only wanted to point the finger at the right were doing a disservice to the cause.”

He was also adamant that Palestinian rejectionism is the real challenge in discussing the Israeli-Palestinian situation.

### EMILY SCHRADER

Digital marketing expert Emily Schrader gave valuable insights into the way antisemitic groups use social media, and how to counter them. She noted the tendency of antisemites to attack “Zionists” using traditional antisemitic tropes, rather than directly attacking Jews, to escape censorship. Antisemites have also latched on to the coronavirus pandemic and the Black Lives Matter issue to attack Jews and Israel, she said. She noted that social media platforms seem to react less strongly to attacks on Jews than against other types of bigotry, but urged people to get involved in fighting back, saying, “It’s important to say the truth when you know the truth and to fight back when you see lies.”

For those interested in knowing what else our speakers said, reports of the webinars, video excerpts and recordings of the entire presentations are on the AIJAC website and Facebook page, and can be viewed on AIJAC’s YouTube channel. The webinar program will be continuing, so look out for coming events.







# ESSAY

## Racial Tensions

### Jewish dilemmas over “Black Lives Matter”

by Ahron Shapiro

The death of George Floyd, an unarmed Black man, at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer on May 25, was a breaking point for race relations in the USA, setting off massive protests that spread to cities around the world and awakened sympathies of people of all ethnicities, including world Jewry.

The masses poured into the streets, despite the coronavirus pandemic, to endorse the simple messages that Black lives matter, that the blood of minorities is not cheap and the injustices they face, past and present, need to be addressed much more vigorously.

Organising the protests is Black Lives Matter (BLM), a self-styled activist group that was born in the outrage following the shooting death of Black teen Trayvon Martin by a neighbourhood-watch volunteer in Florida in 2012. BLM soared in popularity after thousands took to the streets after another Black teen, Michael Brown, was fatally shot by a white police officer in Ferguson, Missouri, in 2014.

But BLM, the group that organises protests and purports to represent these protesters, effectively insists the demonstrators endorse a series of far-flung political demands that, in truth, many would not even be aware of, let alone agree with.

substantive changes in policy.”

M4BL’s website explicitly spells out these policy changes that the organisation is pressuring the protesters to support, big and small. Of special concern to world Jewry, M4BL calls for cutting off all US military support for Israel, which it terms an “apartheid” state that is perpetrating “genocide... against the Palestinian people.”

“The US justifies and advances the global war on terror via its alliance with Israel and is complicit in the genocide taking place against the Palestinian people,” the brief reads, without offering evidence for the outrageous and unsupportable claim. M4BL further alleges that US



The murder of George Floyd by police has been a breaking point in US race relations – but has also created some dilemmas for the Jewish community

These political objectives are not found on the BLM website itself but on the site of its sister organisation, the Movement for Black Lives (“M4BL”), an umbrella group founded by BLM’s organisers in December 2014. M4BL’s platform has been available online since mid-2016.

Moreover, BLM’s message to its newfound supporters appears clear: it’s their way or the highway. In a *Washington Post* story on BLM from June 10, M4BL strategist Thenjiwe McHarris, said she “is pleased to see the movement broadening but that it is ‘meaningless and harmful’ when people join marches and post ‘Black Lives Matter’ but do not advocate for

military aid to Israel, which it concedes is mostly used to support the American defence industries, “diverts much needed funding from domestic education and social programs” (that’s not how Federal budgets work). It also makes spurious claims such as “Israeli soldiers also regularly arrest and detain Palestinians as young as four years old without due process.” (They don’t. According to the laws under which the IDF operates, Palestinian minors under the age of 12 are not criminally responsible for their actions and therefore cannot be arrested, though they can be temporarily restrained if they are creating a danger to themselves or to others, be-

fore being returned to their families.)

When informed about several major Jewish organisations that said they would withhold direct support for the BLM movement in light of their anti-Israel platform – while still supporting the Black community – Rachel Gilmer, one of the drafters of the brief, told *Haaretz* in 2016, “I don’t think it’s a loss” to the Black Lives Matter movement. “It’s just made it clear that they weren’t real allies.”

## ANTI-RACIST – BUT A BLIND SPOT ON JEWS?

To date, most leaders of Black Lives Matter have shown little concern about who their allies are, provided they support the platform and show up at protests or flood social media with content. As such, BLM has been troublingly silent about antisemitic posts in social media by their supporters or antisemitic incidents that have taken place during recent protests organised in their name.

For example, in Los Angeles on May 30, roving BLM demonstrators spray-painted anti-Israel slogans on synagogues and looted and torched several Jewish-owned businesses. On June 13, in Paris’ Place de la République, anti-racism protesters gathering

in solidarity with BLM chanted “dirty Jews” and waved signs with inflammatory slogans such as “Israel, laboratory of police violence.”

In early June, actor and rapper Ice Cube tweeted antisemitic memes without consequence, while talk show host and activist Chelsea Handler circulated a video by Black militant and openly antisemitic “Nation of Islam” leader Louis Farrakhan, getting likes from several Hollywood A-listers before deleting it.

Black Lives Matter has also kept mum over outrageous, fabricated and factually unsubstantiated allegations circulating under its hashtag, claiming police brutality in the US was somehow a product of military-style training US police officers had received in Israel as part of international exchange programs. There were even allegations that Israeli forces taught Minneapolis police the knee-to-neck choking technique that killed George Floyd.

Stephen Pomerantz, who, following the 2001 September 11 attacks, organised many of the counter-terrorism exchanges in question for the Jewish Institute for National Security of America, has pointed out how absurd this claim is. He noted that:

“...there is no field training involved in either the conferences or trips, and no training on holds or arrest mechanics. The exchanges, which are hosted by the Israel National Police, focus on effective counterterrorism techniques.

Participants learn how Israeli law enforcement detters, disrupts, and responds to terrorist attacks. They explore the ideology of suicide bombers and other attackers, ways to de-escalate an ongoing incident, and the intelligence-gathering and sharing process.”

Yet, Rodney Bryant, who



Acting Atlanta Police Chief Rodney Bryant: Targeted for having once attended a law enforcement exchange program in Israel

was appointed Atlanta’s police chief following the killing of a Black drunk-driving suspect by policemen in that city on June 12, came under attack in social media for having participated in Georgia State University’s Georgia International Law Enforcement Exchange (GILEE) program in Israel a number of years ago.

In 2014, Bryant – who incidentally is Black – gave his own account of his work with the Israeli police which debunks the claim that US police officials who visit Israel are schooled in violent techniques. Bryant’s feedback from the program actually revealed a focus on sensitivity training and community relations.

“One of our greatest challenges in American policing is serving a community that is vastly more diverse than the local police department,” Bryant wrote. “Comparatively, the Israeli police are responsible for serving a variety of demographics. I was impressed by the level of community policing efforts employed by the Israeli Police to build relationships and maintain peace among such diverse populations. The mentor shadowing was considerably inimitable and having the opportunity to observe the daily operation of a station and its command staff was enlightening.”

Bryant concluded, “Although generally ensuring public safety was important, understanding the concerns of the community was equally significant.”

The fact that many BLM activists promote antisemitic views, or refuse to denounce antisemitism in their ranks, is unsurprising, UK *Telegraph*



F THE NEW NORMAL UNTIL THEY FIX THE OLD NORMAL!



7:36 AM · Jun 6, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone  
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An antisemitic tweet from the rapper Ice Cube





columnist Zoe Strimpel wrote on June 20.

“Anti-racism movements often foster antisemitism,” Strimpel explained. “This is because the most committed anti-racists see Jews as part of an imperialist racist Zionist conspiracy, represented by Israel”.

“According to their political lights,” she continued, “Israel is the world’s single biggest problem, and they believe it exists solely to egregiously and brutally oppress people of colour – including, but not limited, to their Arab neighbours. Jews, Zionists and racists unite, for them, in one toxic brain fog.”

## BLACK ANTISEMITISM: A TROUBLING PHENOMENON

Antisemitic elements in the BLM movement, unfortunately, may in part reflect the popularity of antisemitic views among sectors of America’s Black community, which according to numerous studies, is relatively high.

As UCLA law professor and popular blogger Eugene Volokh noted in December 2019 in the midst of a wave of Black-on-Jewish violence in the New York area:

“According to an October 2016 Anti-Defamation League survey, ‘antisemitic views’ among black respondents were materially more common than among whites, with 23% of black respondents scoring high on the ADL’s scale, compared to only 10% of whites.”

While the ADL seems to have stopped polling antisemitic views by ethnic group since the 2016 survey, Volokh noted that “The results remain largely the same when aggregating the ADL’s 6 surveys from 2007 to 2016; between that and the oversample of Blacks and Hispanics among the 1532 respondents in 2016, the comparison seems likely to be pretty reliable.”

In January 2020, commenting on the same wave of antisemitism, columnist Jonathan Tobin wrote about the importance of addressing the

problem of Black antisemitism without losing sight of the fact that the vast majority of the American Black community are not antisemitic.

Tobin wrote: “as much as we must resist the impulse to avoid criticising Black antisemitism because of their long history of oppression, the opposite is also true. It is equally important for those calling attention to Black antisemitism to realise that Jews and Blacks are not competing for victim status. Nor is it helpful or accurate to assume that minority communities are invariably hostile, or that common ground can’t still be found.”

## AMERICA’S BLACKS AND JEWS: HISTORIC PARTNERSHIPS

Encouragingly, while Black antisemitism remains a serious problem, and elements of the Black Lives Matter movement leadership appear to show little interest in combatting it, let alone welcoming supporters of Israel into their tent, the majority of the American Black community and its core institutions have much less tolerance for antisemitism and Israel-bashing.

Much of this goodwill can be traced back to historic partnerships between Black and Jewish activists which reached a peak during the American civil rights era, some of which have endured and are continuing to be nurtured to this day.

The depth of cooperation between Black and Jewish organisations during the American civil rights era would be almost impossible to exaggerate, with Jewish groups contributing vital legal assistance to the civil rights cause in virtually every landmark court case, including *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which ended segregation in schools.

Jewish groups assisted in drafting legislation such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, prohibiting discrimination based on race, colour, religion, sex or national origin, and the Voting Rights Act of 1965, barring racial discrimi-

nation in voting – both of which were crafted in the conference room of the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, by the Black and Jewish-led Leadership Conference, which was based in the same building.

In his work *A History of Jews in America*, historian Howard M. Sachar estimated Jews “made up at least 30 percent of the white volunteers who rode freedom buses to the South, registered Blacks, and picketed segregated establishments. Among them were several dozen Reform rabbis who marched among the demonstrators in Selma and Birmingham.” Also very prominent among them was Dr. Martin Luther King’s friend and confidante Rabbi Avraham Joshua Heschel, a Conservative rabbi and professor of ethics.



Dr. Martin Luther King (front row, second from right) with his friend and confidante Rabbi Avraham Joshua Heschel (front row, third from right)

Jewish volunteers even gave their lives in the fight for civil rights for Blacks – perhaps most famously Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, who in 1964, together with Black colleague James Chaney, were killed by the Ku Klux Klan in what became known in FBI case files as “Mississippi Burning”.

While historians note a decline in relations between the Black and Jewish communities from the mid-1970s onwards, some strong ties endured, while others revived. Nowhere are these ties more evident than at America’s oldest and most accomplished Black civil rights organisation, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People



— better known by the acronym NAACP.

Founded in 1909 by a group of visionary Black, Jewish and white social reformers, and continuing to feature a rabbi on its national board today, the NAACP is aimed at correcting injustices against Black people in the context of a universal mission. According to the organisation, its mission is “to secure the political, educational, social, and economic equality of rights in order to eliminate race-based discrimination and ensure the health and well-being of all persons,” placing it in the same category as the Jewish Anti-Defamation League civil rights organisation. Indeed, the two organisations routinely work side by side.

At crucial moments in history, NAACP actually went beyond simple support for Zionism to actually lobby for Israel’s creation.

In 1972, in a JTA story about the NAACP pulling out of that year’s National Black Political Convention over anti-Israel resolutions that had been passed there, then-NAACP assistant executive director Dr. John Morsell reminded the news agency that the NAACP’s support for Israel was always a matter of principle and predated the founding of the state. He recalled that, in 1947, then-NAACP executive secretary Walter White “lobbied vigorously for [the UN’s Palestine] partition [plan] with the delegates from Ethiopia, Haiti and Liberia, and succeeded in influencing two affirmative votes and one abstention.”

While NAACP’s support for Israel has become more complex over the years, it refuses to cave in to political pressure to make the Jewish State a wedge issue. In 2017, then-NAACP President Cornell Brooks tweeted “On the issue of Palestine and Israel... we don’t necessary [sic] need a consensus but we do need to keep talking.”

The NAACP has been quick to root out antisemitism in its ranks, on several

occasions censuring and removing local officials who have made antisemitic remarks. Just as importantly, the group has embraced opportunities to increase Black-Jewish dialogue in communities where antisemitic attacks have occurred to reduce antisemitism at its source.

In November 2018, former US Attorney General Eric Holder was the keynote speaker at a major NAACP fundraiser in South Carolina held under the theme of “saluting our Jewish and Black Founders.”

“We are once again at a time in our nation when we need to band together to eradicate hatred and work together to advance the cause of civil rights,” Holder said, “We must resist

**“The depth of cooperation between Black and Jewish organisations during the American civil rights era would be almost impossible to exaggerate”**

those who would try to put asunder the historic Jewish/Black alliance that has meant so much in the fight for equality for both groups.”

## LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR

While Jewish and pro-Israel activists debate how to address the problems within the Black Lives Matter movement, disparate Jewish communities are not allowing the controversy to silence them. Rather, they are continuing to raise their voices in support of their Black neighbours, letting them know that whatever objections they may have with elements of BLM as a political movement, on a personal



Hasidic Jews march for Black Lives Matter in Crown Heights, once the site of Black riots targeting the local Jewish community

level, they have their support.

Virtually all mainstream American Jewish organisations have publicly supported the main goals of the Black Lives Matter movement, if not the details of the controversial policies of BLM as an organisation.

And so it was, on June 7 in Crown Heights, New York — once the scene of Black riots against the local Jewish community in the early 1990s — where hundreds of members of the Chabad Hasidic sect marched down Eastern Parkway in a show of brotherly solidarity with their Black neighbours.

“Whoever can protest to his townspeople and does not, is accountable” read one sign, quoting a passage from the Talmud.

A rally organiser told the *Forward* that speaking out against police violence was a religious obligation.

“If an agent of the justice system can murder a person in cold blood that doesn’t just call out as a human issue, as an American issue, to me that calls out as a Halachic issue, a Jewish law issue,” he said. “It should call out to every Jew.”

AIR

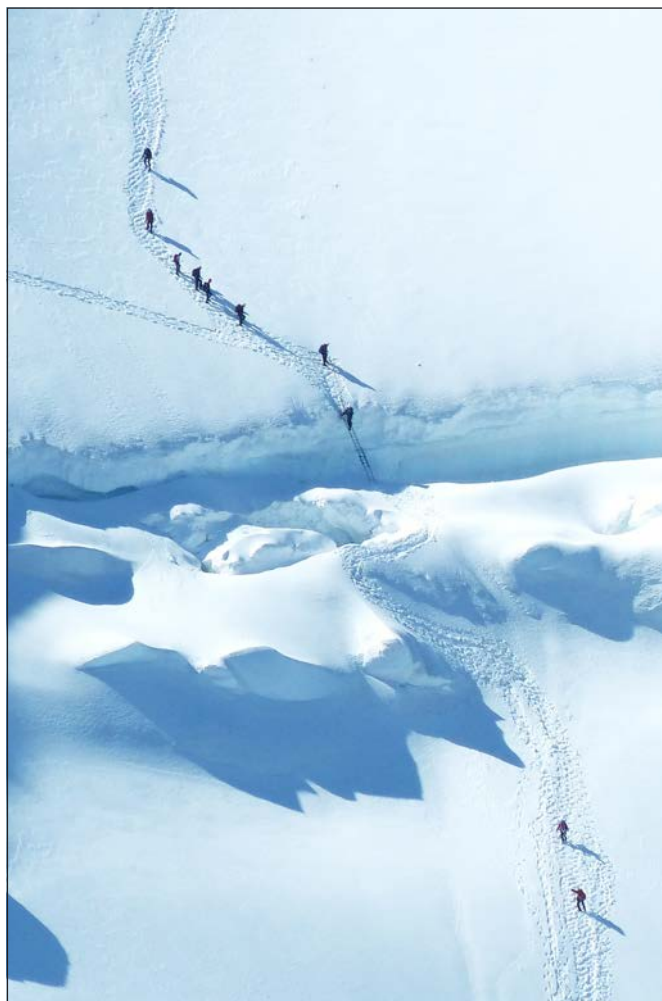
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# NOTED AND QUOTED

## THE MONTH IN MEDIA

### JULIE NOTED

On the ABC website (June 2), the Executive Council of Australian Jewry's research officer Julie Nathan warned that far-right groups are spreading antisemitic conspiracy theories under the cover of the COVID-19 crisis.

"Within Western right-wing extremist circles, many are directly blaming 'the Jews' for COVID-19. Some say that there was a Jewish owned scientific laboratory in Wuhan that developed the virus. Others say that the State of Israel itself developed COVID-19. In both cases, the accusation is that the virus was designed by Jews to be used as a biological weapon against those of European ethnicity.

"However, some right-wing extremists have rejected these claims of this strain of coronavirus being created by Jews on the basis that it would be counter-productive for 'the Jews' to inflict a virus that has resulted in government policies which, they claim, are opposed by 'the Jews' — such as closing national borders. More to the point, they argue that the virus itself, and its effect, is potentially a major recruitment and incentive to the anti-globalist and ethno-nationalist cause, a cause which sees 'the Jews' as the primary enemy," she wrote.

### NO EASING OF EXTREMISM

The *Australian's* foreign editor Greg Sheridan lamented the unhealthy rise in extremism on both the left and right, which is permeating throughout the West, and the prominence of Jews and Israel as targets (June 20).

According to Sheridan, "in the US,

there is serious, violent extremism on left and right. On the right, white supremacists and racists generally spout vicious conspiracy theories and atavistic hatreds that shame humanity. There are active racist groups in the US that allege the coronavirus is a deliberate creation of the Jews. Others claim the Jews are behind the riots, while of course Black Lives Matter claims that US racism is connected to what it alleges is Israeli racism."

He said the "same people who founded BLM also founded the Movement for Black Lives, and it is more overtly political. Its 2016 platform, for example, included the declaration that Israel had committed genocide against the Palestinians. This is a grotesque statement that is manifestly untrue and as disconnected from reality as any far-right website or QAnon nuttiness. But the Movement for Black Lives is far more powerful than a crazy right-wing website. The statement demonstrates how virulently the old moral disease of anti-Semitism infects both the extreme right and the far left. Rioters in Los Angeles attacked synagogues and Jewish schools."

### FIRST AND FOREMOST

Nine Newspapers' Bevan Shields reported (June 23) that Israel belongs to a selection of countries called the "First Movers" — including Austria, Denmark, Norway, Greece, the Czech Republic, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand — which are "an eclectic group of nations that ordinarily would have zero geographic, political or economic need to talk" but which are regularly discussing how to respond to the challenges of coronavirus.

Shields detailed how Israeli PM

Binyamin Netanyahu had helped spark the decision to create the "First Movers" by warning Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz in early March that Europe was underestimating the threat of coronavirus and needed to "wake up" and introduce tough measures.

According to Shields, Australian PM Scott Morrison would soon be sharing phone calls with Kurz and Netanyahu as the pandemic spread.

"Leaders privately believe the group has been hugely valuable at a time when bigger multilateral institutions like the United Nations, World Health Organisation and European Union have struggled to respond swiftly and practically to the crisis," Shields added.

On June 11, the *Australian* editorial noted that "together with Israel, Taiwan, New Zealand and a few others, Australia is in the top tier of nations in curbing the coronavirus."

### HEALTHY DEBATE

Israel's successful handling of the first wave of COVID-19 and its position as a model for others to emulate was highlighted in an episode of the ABC podcast, "Coronacast" (June 2).

Fielding online questions, hosts Dr Norman Swan and Tegan Taylor were asked to comment on why Israel had experienced "a surge in school cases" and been forced to shut the affected schools down.

Dr Swan said the high school in the upmarket Jerusalem suburb of Rehavia had 111 infected students, which meant that "somebody has come into that school and really spread the virus."

He added that the coronavirus "needs a cluster to take off. It doesn't seem to transmit easily just between





individuals. An individual goes home or goes to a funeral or goes to a wedding, or indeed goes to a school, and then you get an enclosed environment and it spreads within that and bursts out from there. So it is a virus that needs a cluster, and it has certainly got a cluster in that school in Jerusalem. And it's a high school, so it's older kids, and the older the kids get, then the more likely they are to spread it than younger kids in primary schools. And so there is a primary school shut in Jerusalem because a lot of the primary school kids, brothers and sisters, go to this other school in Rehavia. And I think that the other schools, there's just been one or two cases."

## A BREATH OF FRESH AIR

On May 30, *SBS TV* "World News" reported on Project Rozana – an Australian charity involving Jews, Muslims and Christians, which raises money for medical projects in Palestinian areas in an effort to foster better relations between Israelis and Palestinians – sending 20 "hospital grade ventilators" to the Palestinian Authority.

The report also noted that, in 2019, the charity set up a medical fellowship in the name of "Palestinian Israeli" woman Aiaa Maasarwe, who was murdered in Melbourne while she was studying there in January 2019.

## ABOUT TIME

The *Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald* (June 17) reported on the Trump Administration considering withholding aid to Jordan in a bid to secure the extradition of Ahlam Aref Ahmad al-Tamimi. Tamimi was convicted in Israel of masterminding a notorious 2001 bombing that killed 15 people, including seven children and two American citizens, at the Sbarro restaurant in Jerusalem.

After Israel released her in 2011 during a prisoner swap with Hamas, she moved to Jordan, and, as the report noted, "has made frequent media appearances, expressing no remorse for the attack and saying she was pleased with the high death toll..."



## IN PARLIAMENT

**Bob Katter** (Katter's Australian Party, Kennedy) – June 18 – "I would have added [to a list of the great shames of our nations]... the great shame that we would only allow 15,000 Jewish people in here before the Second World War. Six million of them couldn't get any country on earth to take them, so they perished in the gas chambers of Adolf Hitler. Sadly, we must share some of the horrific blame here. We could have taken half a million of those people and not even noticed they were here in Australia."

**Ed Husic** (ALP, Chifley) – June 18 – "The Global Terrorism Index of 2019 discovered a 320% increase in right-wing extremism over five years. In Australia, we've seen people approach mosques with machetes. We've seen racist tropes linked to genocide being graffitied on the walls of places of worship. We've seen instances of anti-Semitism played out in the community. We've seen swastika flags being flown out of residential homes. In February this year, after much urging, ASIO finally recognised this growth. ASIO, through the course of the coronavirus, indicated that there has been a massive leap in online activity. In fact, the number of domestic ASIO investigations into far-right individuals is second only to Sunni extremists."

**Tim Wilson** (Lib., Goldstein) – June 15 – "Racism has no place in our country. It doesn't matter who you are or what your circumstances are. We should not be afraid to call it out, particularly when there is any increase in it against a subsection of the community such as the discrimination or harassment against people of Chinese origin because of a health crisis that could have started anywhere in the world.... The Goldstein electorate

does not have a particularly large Chinese community, but that does not negate the need for us to show solidarity with others. We have a very high percentage of people with Jewish heritage, and they know firsthand in Goldstein the consequences of racial and ethnic bigotry – how it can corrode that sense of social solidarity, compassion and respect around our common humanity. It all comes from the same basic origins: ignorance and a lack of respect and understanding, and seeing points of division, rather than our common humanity. So, whether it's anti-Semitism, or bigotry and racism towards people of Chinese heritage or any other type of heritage, we stand proud and strong."

**Jenny Leong** (Greens, Newtown) – June 18 – NSW Legislative Assembly: "Tonight I speak about racism—not racism in the United States of America, where the Black Lives Matter movement is growing stronger and winning changes in the face of an extremist President, and not racism in Palestine, but right here, in this city and across this State and, indeed, across this country."

The Hon. **Shaoquett Moselmane** (ALP, NSW Legislative Council) – June 17 – "On 25 February I wrote a 1,500-word article entitled *A Nation in Crisis Needs Leadership*, pointing to the sluggishness of our leadership in tackling the coronavirus and citing the Ruby Princess as an example of utter incompetence. By way of comparison, I made reference to the way the Chinese leadership tackled the coronavirus. I merely repeated what [US] President Trump, [US] Vice President Pence and the head of the World Health Organisation were saying at the time, only to find myself being mauled by right-wing media ratbags... It was a vicious, malicious and disproportionate orchestrated campaign intended to do me maximum political damage—a campaign that is fuelled by those who oppose justice for Palestine and those anti-China zealots who oppose a respectful Australia-China relationship."

Tamimi, a Hamas activist, chose the target and guided the bomber there.”

Earlier, on June 2, the papers reported on the tragic shooting to death of autistic Palestinian man Iyad Khayri by Israeli border police, who mistakenly thought he was carrying a weapon. The story quoted Israeli Defence Minister Benny Gantz apologising and committing to ensure “every effort” is made to limit casualties while continuing to “maintain the proper level of security.”

*SBS TV* “World News” (May 31) included footage of Israelis demonstrating in Tel Aviv to protest Khayri’s death.

## A CARTOONISH ROW

*Australian Financial Review* apologised for a cartoon from its resident cartoonist David Rowe that was published on June 6, following readers’ complaints that it portrayed Australian Treasurer Josh Frydenberg – who is Jewish – as an antisemitic caricature.

Purporting to duplicate a famous painting depicting British explorer Captain Cook’s landing at Botany Bay in 1770, with Australian PM Scott Morrison in the titular role and a flag proclaiming “Black Lives Matter”, a hooked-nosed Frydenberg was depicted wearing what looked like a traditional Jewish skullcap on his head and carrying a large gold dollar sign.

Rowe said the scene was based on the “famous Emanuel Phillips Fox painting” and he had wanted to make an anti-racism statement following the global protests in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.

The report said Rowe “did not deliberately include anti-Jewish imagery” and “apologised for any hurt unintentionally caused and amended and republished the cartoon”. The paper’s website ran an amended version of the cartoon, removing the hook nose and skullcap but retaining the dollar sign.

On June 9, the paper said it “abhors anti-Semitism, from whatever part of the political spectrum and celebrates the contribution of people of Jewish faith and background to modern Australia, especially to modern Australian business.”

The newspaper reported on June 10 that NSW Jewish Board of Deputies CEO Vic Alhadeff had said “there was concern that the cartoon conveyed the message that Jewish people did not care about black lives, which was at odds with their historical support for the civil rights movements both in the US and Australia. In addition, even though unintended, the cartoon conveyed a number of anti-Jewish stereotypes.”

Executive Council of Australian Jewry co-chief executive Alex Ryvchin was quoted saying the incident was a “cautionary tale to exercise greater care when depicting people of an ethnic minority” and AIJAC’s Colin Rubenstein said, “I appreciated the constructive conversations I had with Michael Stutchbury and welcome the amended cartoon and the considered explanation and apology that went with that.”

## AP COVERAGE ALL OVER THE MAP

The *Australian* newspaper’s reliance on Associated Press (AP) reports for its coverage of Israel-related news produced mixed results.

An AP report on May 27 said, “Middle East plan, unveiled in January, envisions leaving about 30 per cent of the territory under permanent Israeli control while giving the Palestinians expanded autonomy in the rest of the area. The Palestinians have rejected the plan, saying it is unfairly biased toward Israel.”

An AP report on May 30 said, “The annexation of the Jordan Valley and the far-flung settlements would make it virtually impossible to create a viable Palestinian state alongside Israel.”

According to the report, Israeli PM Binyamin Netanyahu had said Palestinians “in the Jordan Valley, including residents of the city of Jericho, would remain under limited Palestinian self rule, with Israel having overall security control” and if the Palestinians endorsed the Trump peace plan, they would attain a state.

On June 1, an AP report on Israeli border police in Jerusalem shooting dead Iyad Halak, an unarmed autistic Palestinian they mistakenly thought was carrying a weapon, noted that “Palestinian attackers with no clear links to armed groups have carried out a series of stabbings, shootings and car ramming attacks in recent years.”

## FOREIGN SERVICE

An AP report appeared in the *Australian* (June 11) on German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas’ visit to Israel to warn against extending sovereignty to any part of the West Bank because it “would violate international law”.

The report said, “Israel intends to extend its sovereignty over Jewish West Bank settlements, in line with US President Donald Trump’s controversial Middle East plan”, with critics arguing “unilaterally redrawing the Mideast map would destroy any lingering hopes for establishing a Palestinian state alongside Israel.”

What the article failed to note is that Trump’s “controversial” plan is actually a road map for creating a demilitarised Palestinian state!

The article quoted Maas saying Germany and the EU “still believe the negotiated two-state solution is the right way, that annexation will not make this solution more probable.”

But if one party is refusing to negotiate and has refused to negotiate since 2014, then doesn’t that effectively “lead to the two-state solution no longer being viable and that we are on the wrong path,” as

Maas alleged would be the result of sovereignty extension proposals in his media conference with his Israeli counterpart Gabi Ashkenazi?

## AGELESS CLAIMS

The *Sunday Age* June 21 edition ran a small picture caption on the top of page two featuring two figures walking a camel at twilight close to a beach.

The caption said “Palestinians enjoy the beach in Gaza City – one of the few open public spaces in this densely populated city. Go online to see our World of Photos gallery.”

Whilst the caption and the *Age* website did not elaborate, the claim that there are few open spaces in Gaza is a mainstay of Palestinian propaganda, usually used to attack the blockade of Gaza. In fact, Gazans have access to the well-established and popular Asdaa amusement park which includes water slides, a train ride, a Ferris wheel, amongst other *al fresco* activities. Moreover, there are plenty of open spaces elsewhere in the Strip itself.

The claim recalls the accusation made on *ABC TV* in 2013 that there are no green spaces in Gaza and therefore there are no birds there either, despite abundant scientific and photographic evidence that Gaza is a habitat, and sometimes migratory hub, for up to 171 different species of birds.

## ICC MEETS ABC

An ABC online report (June 12) included Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s support for the

Trump Administration’s announcement that it will impose sanctions on the staff of the International Criminal Court if they are involved in investigating alleged US war crimes committed during the Afghanistan war.

The article said Netanyahu called President Trump’s decision “bold leadership” in standing up for “justice and ... truth”.

Netanyahu was quoted saying, “This kangaroo court is a politicised court. It’s obsessed with conducting witch hunts against Israel, the United States and other democracies that respect human rights, while turning a blind eye to the world’s greatest abusers of human rights, including the terrorist regime in Iran.”

Elsewhere, the *Australian* newspaper report (June 13) noted that Netanyahu is “angered by the ICC’s moves – strongly opposed by Washington – to probe alleged war crimes in the Palestinian territories” and has accused the court of “fabricating accusations that Jews living in their historical homeland constitutes a war crime” with regard to Israeli settlements. The story noted that the US under President “Barack Obama took a more co-operative approach with the court, but the US remained outside of it.”

## IN PHILIP’S COURT

The June 17 episode of *ABC Radio National* “Late Night Live” focusing on the International Criminal Court was a chance for veteran host Philip Adams to focus on his usual targets and if he could combine them into the one question, all the better.

Practically this meant that the US

and Israel were given greater focus than Russia’s invasion of Crimea, for instance, or the Assad regime’s litany of war crimes, which were both totally ignored.

Adams asked Douglas Guilfoyle, Associate Professor of International and Security Law at the University of NSW, Canberra, “Now, [Mike] Pompeo, who is one of my least favourite people, Secretary of State, said the US would punish the ICC employees for any investigation or prosecution of Americans or Israelis for alleged abuses against Palestinians?”

Guilfoyle replied, “yes, so in terms of what I was saying before about the territorial basis of the court’s jurisdiction opening the door to potential fights with non-parties, at the moment, the court has heard argument and reserves judgment on whether it should assume jurisdiction in the most recent years of the Israel-Palestine conflict. So that is a question actively before the court. I should say the court has not yet assumed jurisdiction and has not yet formally opened an investigation, but it’s on the cards.”

Asked if Pompeo was correct that the ICC is a “kangaroo court”, Guilfoyle said, “that’s wildly unfair”.

He said the ICC “operates independently. The judges are independently elected by the Assembly of state parties. There have occasionally been criticisms that the judges can be elected either on the basis of criminal or expertise or international or expertise [sic]. And maybe some of the judges lack the kind of depth of experience in courtroom management that would be desirable. But that’s a long way from saying that they’re politically motivated.”

Guilfoyle said Australia is “a steadfast supporter of the court”, making no mention of the Morrison Government’s submission that the ICC has no jurisdiction to investigate alleged criminality involving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict because there is currently no “State of Palestine”.

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# MEDIA MICROSCOPE

Allon Lee

## STATES OF CONFUSION

Many commentators in the media critical of the Netanyahu Government's announced intention to begin the process of applying Israeli sovereignty over parts of the West Bank ignored two critical pieces of context: first, the refusal of Palestinian leaders to accept multiple Israeli offers to create a Palestinian state and; second, the details of US President Donald Trump's January 2020 peace plan that would allow the sovereignty extension in some areas, but also create a Palestinian state in the rest.

In the *Saturday Age* (May 23), academics Anas Iqtait and Tristan Dunning mentioned "Trump's plan" but then avoided any details. Instead they claimed, "Israeli annexation would mean the elimination of the very few possibilities left for achieving [a two-state] solution."

The pair criticised what they saw as Australia's inadequate support for the two-state solution, such as not voting in favour of a one-sided resolution condemning Israel at the UN Human Rights Council in 2018.

On June 3, the *Age* published AIJAC's Jamie Hyams' response, which said Palestinians receive "vastly preferential treatment on the international stage, with Australia one of the few countries principled enough to call this out. Without this favouritism, the Palestinians may well have had a state by now."

Hyams suggested Palestinian leaders remain intransigent because they "don't genuinely accept Israel's right to exist in peace, and any two-state resolution would require the end of all further claims." He explained that "Israel has legal claims to the area after the 1920 San Remo Convention and League of Nation decisions designated it as part of a future 'Jewish national home'. Israel thus has at least as much right to this territory – more accurately described as disputed than occupied – as any other country."

In the *Canberra Times* (June 11), journalist Neheda Barakat refreshingly acknowledged that Palestinian leaders "had missed a number of opportunities to resolve the conflict – partition proposals from prime minister Ehud Barak in 2000, prime minister Ehud Olmert in 2007 [sic] and US president Barack Obama in 2014" but then strongly criticised Israel under Binyamin Netanyahu's tenure. Of course, Netanyahu was actually Israel's prime minister in 2014. Whoops.

**"Commentators in the media critical of the Netanyahu Government's announced intention to begin the process of applying Israeli sovereignty over parts of the West Bank ignored two critical pieces of context"**

The paper (June 17) ran AIJAC's Allon Lee's response which detailed Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas' spoiler role over the past 25 years in spiking Israeli offers of a state, including in 2008 when, as Abbas himself has said, he "rejected 'out of hand' Olmert's offer of a state on the equivalent of 100 per cent of the West Bank, all of Gaza, and a capital in east Jerusalem."

In the *Hobart Mercury* (June 22), serial Israel critic Greg Barns slammed Israel while implying it was annexing all of the West Bank. How can you condemn an action that hasn't actually taken

place and which Israel has never actually said it would do?

In the *Sydney Morning Herald* (June 25), academic Ben Saul dismissed Trump's plan to create a Palestinian state, and denied Israel has any right to be in the West Bank, saying, "annexation would be a violent, predatory, lawless act. It would compound the illegitimacy of Israel's half-century occupation of Palestine... is not democratic, since millions of Palestinians cannot vote in Israeli elections. Far from creating peace, it would doom Israelis and Palestinians to a future of ceaseless violence."

On ABC *Radio National's* "Religion & Ethics Report" (June 10) academic Eyal Mayroz suggested Palestinians should not be expected to accept 70% of the West Bank as Trump's plan proposes because "this is a tiny bit of what was promised of them in 1948 and what was theirs even beforehand. So their sacrifice has already been made... just by accepting the West Bank and the Green Line as a compromise." If Palestinian Arab leaders had not rejected the UN Partition Plan in 1947 by going to war, the Palestinian state would have been much greater than what is on offer now, but they certainly never had any sovereignty over any area before 1948, as Mayroz strongly implied.

On ABC *Radio National's* "Saturday Extra" (June 13), Netanyahu's biographer Anshel Pfeffer cautioned that "July 1 will probably be just another step in promising something vague but not actually carrying anything out." He said Netanyahu's top priorities have always been Iranian, Islamist and regional threats. Fellow guest panellist Palestinian journalist Daoud Kuttub largely agreed, saying, "Netanyahu is a person who really likes to have good relations with the top leaders of the world" and would be wary of having sanctions placed on Israel, as happened to Russia when it invaded Crimea.

# THE LAST WORD

Jeremy Jones

## RACISM IN ANTI-RACIST CLOTHING

My correspondent was clearly upset. His message to me was overflowing with feelings of pain and distress.

Given that he was writing in the days following the killing of George Floyd in the US and a wave of protests and riots, my first thought was that he was writing on the subject of racism, discrimination and inequality.

Only on reading the link he attached did I learn about the event he had witnessed that day.

My friend, a religiously committed French Muslim, had been marching in an anti-racism protest in Paris, together with Christians, Jews and others.

They passed some counter-protesters, at which time vile antisemitic slurs began to be shouted – not at, but by, self-ascribed anti-racists.

Although receiving far less media coverage, there were also first-hand reports from a Los Angeles protest – which morphed in places into a riot – of chants of “F--k the police and kill the Jews”, before looting and anti-Jewish vandalism took place there.

In London, Nazi salutes were directed at the anti-racism protestors – bizarrely by those identifying themselves as the protectors of the legacy of Winston Churchill, despite Churchill’s positive legacy resting mainly upon his leading Britain against Nazi Germany.

A number of commentators, on both sides of the barricades in the battle over the future of race relations and the call for the recognition that Black Lives Matter, have noted the way some have tried to hijack an anti-racist agenda to push a radical anti-Israel barrow. In the process, they have inserted ignorance and immorality into calls for honesty and education, but that is not the matter I am addressing here.

It may take time, but the parasitical behaviour of the anti-Israel advocates will do what it has done to other causes to which it has cynically and opportunistically attached itself over the decades – either destroy the cause acting as its host or be rejected by those concerned with the health of that cause.

My concern here is with a far more ubiquitous and dangerous phenomenon – the unabashed anti-Jewish movements which try to exploit each and every issue to promote direct

hatred for, and contempt often leading to violence against, Jews.

Just as Jews are being blamed, in an ongoing way, for everything bad related to the COVID-19 pandemic and responses to it, antisemites of varying stripes have involved themselves in the global responses to the deaths of George Floyd and the far too many others being mourned now.

In Los Angeles, there was not just antisemitic invective from rioters, but the leaders of one synagogue had to remove bollards protecting their building because of fast-spreading rumours that the bollards were actually stock-piles of rocks provided for antifa rioters!

Meanwhile the notorious long-time hate preacher Louis Farrakhan – never one to miss an opportunity to find gullible and ignorant people to sing his praises on temporal issues while

simultaneously remaining prominent for his misogyny, antisemitism and homophobia – found a handful of politically illiterate celebrities to promote his “wisdom” to more than 10 million followers.

Not too far removed from Farrakhan was the rapper and actor known as Ice Cube, who seemed equally comfortable promoting far-left, far-right and simply far-out conspiracies – as long as the ultimate target was Jews.

It isn’t too difficult to find claims on the internet that Jews were responsible for the systemic underpinnings to the actual killing of George Floyd, or that Jews are responsible for the Black Lives Matter movement.

With so much information available to undermine claims of Jewish conspiracy or culpability, it can sometimes seem that only the most malicious and malevolent, or the most simple-minded and superficial, could accept the slurs and lies.

Unfortunately, the veracity of claims seemingly bears little relationship to the damage they can cause.

This is not to argue that anti-racists should change their priorities – but that any strategy which is genuinely anti-racist will not only reject, but will actively fight, anti-Jewish rhetoric and activity.



Notorious hate preacher Louis Farrakhan



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