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By Paul Scham



King Salman, Presidents Trump & President el-Sisi inaugurate the Global Center for Combating Extremism by touching an illuminated Earth globe.

Palestinians and the Israeli left, as well as their sympathizers abroad, have a choice to make—and so far I haven't seen indications that they are handling it well. That choice is whether to support and build on the so-called "Abraham Accords," signed on September 15, 2020, which seemed to be part of the now-defunct "Deal of the Century" when announced but now appear to be the only (arguably) positive part of Trump's Middle East legacy. The alternative is to ignore them, which would be a serious mistake.

I was scornful of the Abraham Accords when they were rolled out, seeing them (rightly, I still think) as a baldly transparent effort to avoid dealing with the real issue in the conflict which, since 1967, has always been primarily about Palestinian national rights and the occupation. What I didn't expect was that the UAE and Bahrain, and subsequently Sudan and Morocco, were so ready to ignore the stigma of "normalization" and establish full and open diplomatic relations with Israel. Obviously, the sweeteners the United States offered were integral to their acceptance

of the Accords: permission to purchase F-35's in the case of the UAE and, for Sudan, its removal from the U.S. list of supporters of state terrorism. Morocco received perhaps the greatest prize: U.S. endorsement of its bitterly disputed annexation of Western Sahara, where it has battled fierce indigenous resistance since Morocco occupied it in 1974 (that irony is clear).

We also shouldn't forget that in July and August of 2020, we were anticipating that then Prime Minister Netanyahu appeared ready to go ahead with annexing some portion of the West Bank, having been given the go-ahead by Trump's "peace plan." When the UAE announced it would recognize Israel, it claimed that its action headed off the bruited annexation. It's still not precisely clear if that explains why Bibi didn't annex as we expected, but he has never been an ardent annexationist, while acquiring diplomatic relations with Arab countries has always been a major objective of his, at least as trophies. And I, unlike some others on the left, hew to the traditional view that annexation is always bad and preventing it is always good, barring

unusual circumstances.

Almost two years on, to all appearances, the Accords are thriving. The UAE, Bahrain, and Morocco have established full diplomatic relations with Israel. Sudan is currently embroiled in the aftermath of a military coup and, at least at this point, its stance toward Israel is unclear.

Of course, the biggest diplomatic prize for the Accords would be endorsement by Saudi Arabia. Public recognition of Israel by his kingdom is a step too far for King Salman, the latest and almost certainly the last of Ibn Saud's sons to rule the Kingdom. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (the notorious "MBS"), however, has shown he recognizes few constraints—and my guess is that recognition of Israel is likely to be one of his first acts when he becomes king. King Salman is currently 85 and has been reported to be in poor health ever since he began his reign in 2015. MBS's succession seems assured. It is a potent signal of how things have changed that President Biden is coming to the Middle East in July to repair badly frayed relations with Saudi Arabia, while Saudi-Israeli relations are (seemingly) always getting better. Biden may arrive in an Israel whose governmental coalition is about to collapse, which is not really too bad, as he doesn't seem to have much that's new to discuss.

Should progressives support this process, given our recognition that every new step along this road is one seemingly away from any settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict? Or, as some argue, should it be accepted because it is a step further towards the one-state solution that increasing numbers of Palestinians and leftists maintain has, in fact, all but arrived?

Personally, I believe that we on the left are obliged to actively support the reality of Israel's relations with increasing numbers of Arab states. Acceptance of Israel in the Middle East is a desirable goal, even if Israel is not the state we wish it to be, nor is the Middle East's political climate anything resembling democratic. Thus, to repurpose the already clichéd statement of David Ben-Gurion at the beginning of World War II, we should accept Arab recognition of Israel as if there was no Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and we should fight for Palestinian national and civil rights despite the

apparent withdrawal of many Arab states from that cause.

One recent example of the good that is flowing from the Accords is the agreement in Dubai announced last November between Israel, Jordan, and the UAE, brokered by John Kerry, for a massive [deal](#) involving Jordanian use of its solar resources to produce electricity, which will be traded to Israel in return for significant amounts of desalinated water, badly needed by Jordan. The UAE will finance, probably do the construction for (and profit from) the deal. My understanding is that Palestinian participation would be welcome, but Ramallah is refusing because of its antipathy to the Abraham Accords, under which umbrella the deal was formulated, which is understandable but regressive and ineffective. Palestinians have a long history of refusing to recognize and act on political realities in a timely manner, thus missing any number of boats over the last century. There is every reason to believe that the Abraham Accords will continue—and even flourish. Why wait until Palestinian refusal is part of the landscape—and eventual Palestinian participation will come with little leverage?

And what about the one-state debate that is au courant? Is one state now inevitable—or already here, as is increasingly maintained by [Ian Lustick](#) and many others? Can anyone really believe that a two-state solution is even conceivable, much less viable? Both sides are currently thoroughly stalemated; Israel by its anti-Bibi coalition agreement of strange bedfellows and now elections, with no idea when a government may be formed, and the Palestinians by their institutional incapacity in the face of the entrenched occupation. What should progressives look towards, if they're not willing to give up in utter frustration?

I agree that the same old same old two-state solution (2SS) is almost certainly dead but, in my view, 2SS 2.0 is concurrently being unveiled. It's called confederation, but it corrects some of the flaws in the old two-state model that most of us have shut our eyes to for the last 30 years while we thought that it was possible in its conventional form—or even imminent. [Eretz l'Kulam](#) (A Land for All) is the primary organization comprising Israelis, Palestinians, and others to publicize, explain,

and advance confederation as a politically viable option.

We can recognize now that the first nail in the conventional two-state solution's coffin is Ariel Sharon's revenge from the grave. In his role as The Bulldozer, he openly sought to build so many settlements that the two-state solution could never be implemented. He—and others with that goal—have succeeded, and that needs to be acknowledged. Whatever you count as a “settlement” (French Hill? Gilo? Neve Yaakov? Ariel? Hebron?) and however many settlers you can keep in their homes by artfully arranging borders, at least 100,000 will have to be moved out. That will never be politically possible for any imaginable Israeli government and, for me, that is a practical and irrefutable argument against a conventional, hard-bordered two-state solution. The fact that it may be technically possible is thus irrelevant. Confederation's premise is that settlements would remain, contingent, of course, on their inhabitants recognizing Palestinian sovereignty.

There is also the increasingly powerful ideological argument, which shades into the theological. Neither the Jewish nor the Palestinian/Muslim attachment to the “Holy Land” can be limited by the Green Line or the border wall, wherever it may be placed. Even apart from religious Zionists, few who are alive in Israel today can remember the day-to-day reality of being hemmed in by an impassible and largely arbitrary armistice line before 1967 or would be happy to have that reinstated. In addition, the demographic and political reality of Israel's and Palestine's increased religionization must be recognized. There is, again, no border that could be drawn to contain it.

However, neither can the solution of “no borders west of the Jordan” resulting in “one democratic state” succeed in the Israeli-Palestinian reality. Jamming together two peoples in approximately equal numbers who have fought each other all their lives in conditions of extreme power disparities and expecting them to adjust expeditiously to treating the “Other” equally cannot work, even over time. Two peoples, both suffering from inflamed nationalisms since the death of Oslo, who are forced together in a single polity, are unlikely to be able to create, much less maintain, a functional government.

There is no doubt that confederation appears somewhat utopian given the current reality, but so is every solution that posits a consensual, functional, and peaceful end to the conflict. More so than any other solution, though, confederation is inherently flexible and can be configured to fit different degrees of separation and integration. It is certainly no harder to imagine than it is to posit Jewish Israelis giving up on any form of a Jewish state, which is the only reality most have ever lived under.

Both of these positions—accepting the Abraham Accords and confederation—involve pills that are difficult for the Israeli left, and even more so for Palestinians, to swallow. The Accords emanated from the most anti-Palestinian U.S. president, Trump, and were specially designed to diminish the Palestinian cause in the eyes of Arab states, taking advantage of so-called “Palestine fatigue,” combined with what were, in essence, bribes. Confederation, for its part, requires both the Israeli left and Palestinians to accept the permanent presence of the settlements, which we have rightly regarded as enemies of peace and coexistence since 1967. Realities change, however, and political movements that do not adjust find themselves on the margins—or even in the dustbins—of history. Both the Israeli left and the Palestinian national movement—facing existential crises as they are—need to come to terms with that historical truth. ■

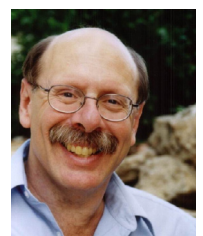
Sincerely,



President, Partners for Progressive Israel

Note: A slightly different version of this article appeared in the [Palestine-Israel Journal](#) earlier this year. Reprinted with permission.

Paul Scham is President of Partners for Progressive Israel and the Director of the Gildenhorn Institute for Israel Studies at the University of Maryland.



JUSTICE ALITO delivered the opinion of the Court.

Abortion presents a profound moral issue on which Americans hold sharply conflicting views. Some believe fervently that a human person comes into being at conception and that abortion ends an innocent life. Others feel just as strongly that any regulation of abortion invades a woman's right to control her own body and prevents women from achieving full equality. Still others in a third group think that abortion should be allowed under some but not all circumstances, and those within this group hold a variety of views about the particular restrictions that should be imposed.

June 24, 2022

We are shocked, though not surprised. The Supreme Court's reversal of *Roe v. Wade*, though far from the issues we normally work on, has a strong connection to them: **It is a denial of human rights.** Where a line is drawn is another matter. But when rights are violated in such a basic and important way, we must speak out, together with the vast majority of American Jews and say:

THIS IS WRONG!

What do we do? That is what tens of millions of Americans will be trying to figure out in the coming days. There will be many answers: legislative, legal, grassroots, Jewish, and others. But the important thing is to understand what directions we should go in. One suggestion: On **Tuesday, July 14**, Rabbi Danya Ruttenberg of the National Council of Jewish Women will lead an in-depth teaching on Jewish sources around abortion justice over Zoom. You can register and get the link [here](#), where there are other events listed as well.

Meanwhile, our friends and allies in Israel have been

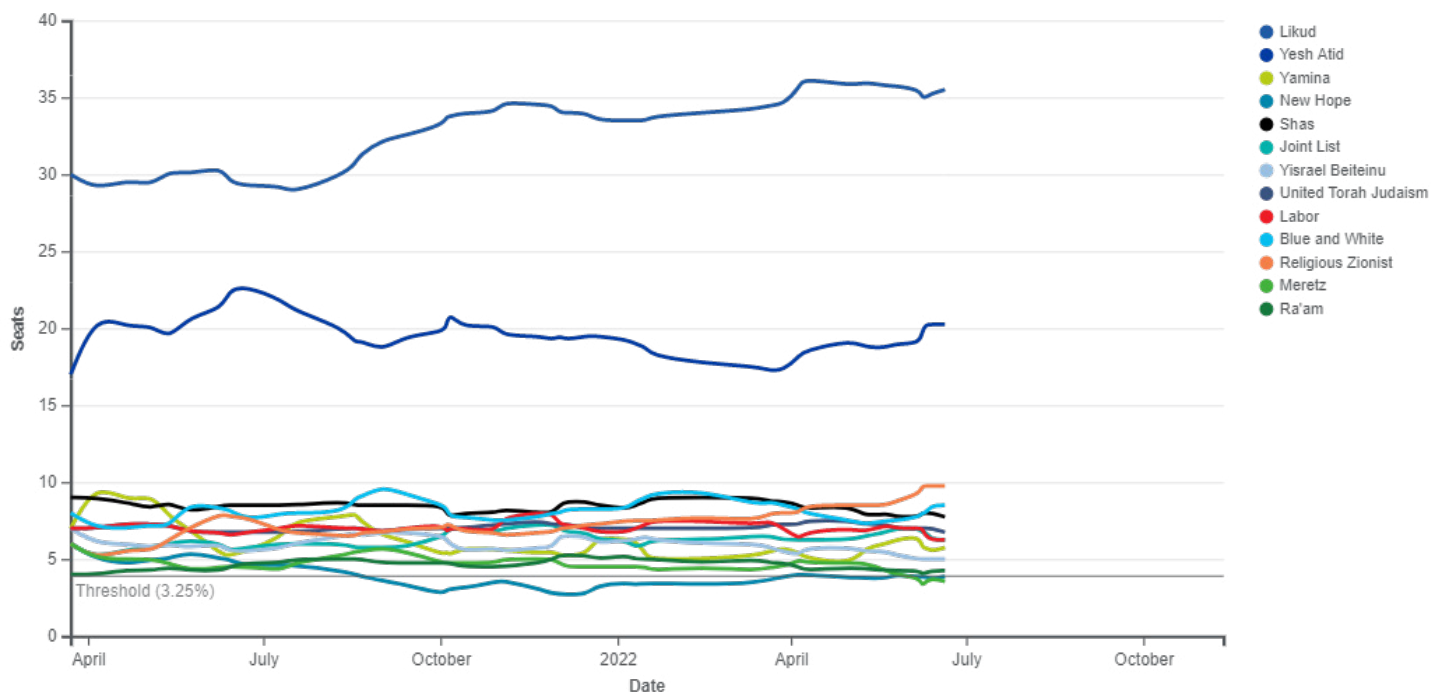
expressing their solidarity, as well as their concern that the SCOTUS ruling could have a knock-on effect in that country.

- The Meretz party's Tamar Zandberg, Minister of Environmental Protection, wrote that the **"bad winds blowing out of the United States prove that our fight for rights is never-ending and doesn't move in one direction."**
- Knesset Member Michal Rozin of Meretz wrote that, **"here in Israel, too, our fight hasn't ended. We must do all we can to protect women and their rights."**
- Zehava Galon, the president of the think-and-do-tank "Zulat: Equality and Human Rights" and a former chair of Meretz, wrote: **"The U.S. Supreme Court's horrendous ruling is liable to have shockwaves that will impact Israeli legislation if, heaven forbid, a Likud and Religious Zionism government arises here that tries to restrict women's freedom in Israel even more."** ■

Meretz's Participation in the “Government of Change”: A Post-Mortem

INSIGHTS

By Ron Skolnik



*“Should I stay or should I go now?
If I go there will be trouble
And if I stay it will be double.”*

Over its twelve months in the now lame duck government of Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, Israel's Meretz faced a thankless political predicament, encapsulated above in the lyrics of the British band, The Clash—remain in the predominantly center-right coalition, and severely compromise the progressive party's principles, or leave and pave the way for a virulent version of rightwing Zionism, led by former prime minister Binyamin Netanyahu and the disciples of the racist Meir Kahane. “Thankless,” because the alternatives between which Meretz needed to choose were both damaging to Israel's future—just in different ways and with different timelines.

Ultimately, with the news that the government's two co-leaders have agreed to call for new elections after their coalition had irreparably fallen apart, Meretz was freed from its dilemma. Nonetheless, its quandary is

likely to remain relevant for the foreseeable future—at least as long as the Occupation continues and the threat of Netanyahu looms.

Meretz entered the Bennett/Lapid “government of change” last year, we will recall, as part of a desperate effort at national salvation. After four rounds of indecisive elections in less than two years, and with an increasingly authoritarian Netanyahu holding on to power as “transitional prime minister” while on trial in various cases of corruption, eight widely different parties with one thing in common—aversion to the danger Netanyahu represents—came together in a narrow, unlikely, and unwieldy coalition.

The fundamental idea seemed sound: Create a government that would “right the ship”—end the demagogic incitement (against Arabs, against leftists, etc.), restore good governance, and bolster Israel's core democratic (within the Green Line, that is) institutions, particularly the judiciary, whose independence “defendant Netanyahu” remains intent on [destroying](#).

For Meretz, however, such participation came at a steep price: Agreeing to the demand of the coalition's rightwing anti-Netanyahu parties that the "Palestinian issue" be frozen—that there be no diplomatic engagement with the Palestinians toward a political solution, alongside no move toward formally annexing the occupied West Bank.

The rub, however, was that the mechanisms of Occupation and *de facto* annexation never stopped churning: As has been the case for decades, the drive to control the Occupied Territories at the expense of the Palestinians living there required no decision about the area's statutory definition. So, while the pro-annexation parties in the government, Yamina and New Hope, indeed upheld their part of the bargain not to push for a change to the West Bank's official status, steps furthering the area's annexation *in practice* proceeded as before.

As the price of compromise with its rightwing and centrist partners, for example, Meretz was forced to accept the approval of major [expansions](#) of West Bank settlements for Jewish Israelis. And it needed to acquiescence in the expulsion of Palestinians, including in the South Hebron Hills, where the government also did exceedingly little to prevent ongoing settler violence designed to get Palestinians to "self-expel."

In addition, in order to maintain the fragile coalition, Meretz legislators were compelled to sacrifice their principles and vote in favor of blatantly discriminatory "perennial" laws requiring periodic renewal by the Knesset. Last year, for example, Meretz agreed to support an extension of the Citizenship and Entry into Israel Law, which discriminates against Palestinian citizens of Israel by barring their family unification with spouses from the Occupied Territories. Just recently, Meretz MKs, in the interest of keeping a flailing government afloat, voted to renew a set of "emergency regulations," which grant Jewish Israeli settlers a superior legal status in the West Bank, exempting them from the military law to which all Palestinians there are subject.

Meretz figures argued throughout that, despite the sizable "frogs" they were regularly forced to swallow, they remained a moderating influence in the government—

that, without their presence, the situation would be even worse, and that, should (heaven forbid!) the current government be replaced by one led by Netanyahu and his racist, homophobic, anti-democratic allies, the results would be far more tragic. This claim is not to be dismissed lightly.

Meretz has also pointed proudly to its accomplishments. The party's chair, Nitzan Horowitz, in his service as Health Minister, leveraged the office to expand the rights of women, the LGBTQ community, and Arab citizens. Tamar Zandberg utilized her position as Minister of Environmental Protection to advance Israel's first piece of climate legislation, which includes a commitment to reach net-zero greenhouse emissions by 2050.

Furthermore, Meretz's Esawi Freij, the Minister for Regional Cooperation, and only the second Arab citizen to serve in the Cabinet, used his role to mend ties with Palestinian leadership and regional Arab leadership in order to create a future platform for full-fledged political negotiations. Freij's senior position, together with the participation in the government of Ra'am, the United Arab List—the first-ever Arab party in Israel to be an official part of a ruling coalition—were also cited by Meretz as examples of the Jewish-Arab partnership that (even if shaky) was furthered by the government's very existence.

There certainly can be value in Meretz's participation in a government of this type, even if it entails difficult concessions. The question, however, is where is this leading? At the start, Meretz leaders seemed to believe that their seat at the table would restore faith in the party's relevance by showing that it could deliver. For years, it has been hanging on by a thread at the ballot box, with many voters choosing more centrist parties, like Labor or Yesh Atid, out of a sense that a "too principled" Meretz was doomed to an everlasting and ineffective stay in opposition. Meretz leaders also felt that their involvement could help "re-legitimize" it in the eyes of sympathetic, but hesitant, voters, after years of intense delegitimization (e.g., "leftists are traitors") by the Israeli right.

But if the expectation was that the "government of change" would be Meretz's fountain of youth—that hope

has been dashed by poll after poll, which show Meretz not only not gathering new support, but actually losing it—and in some cases [failing](#) to clear the minimum threshold needed for Knesset representation.

Similarly, hopes that the coalition would weaken Jewish Arabophobia and cultivate the idea that Arab citizens should have equal rights and an equal say in the country's governance have, to date, proved far too optimistic. Recent polls found that between [62 percent](#) and [77 percent](#) of Jewish Israelis are now against having an Arab party in a future coalition, and that [60 percent](#) of Israel's Jewish public endorses segregation—up from 45 percent last year. Meanwhile, other polls indicate that Israeli voters continue to trend rightward, with the bloc of parties loyal to Netanyahu having [increased](#) their support by over 10 percent, compared to the results of the March 2021 election. (See [chart on page 6](#)).

Meretz now enters an election campaign in a weaker position than before, with a more limited ability to cite its unique value to the voter. When asked to choose between its anti-Occupation stance and its commitment to Israeli democracy within the Green Line, it chose the latter. And while Meretz's senior leaders handled their ministerial responsibilities admirably, they tended to refrain from speaking out on Occupation-related topics, allowing their party colleagues in the Knesset to do the heavy lifting.

Perhaps that was due to their desire to focus on their jobs and perform them professionally (which they did). Perhaps it was aimed at maintaining harmony with their rightwing colleagues. Either way, the implied message was that Occupation was not only off the government's agenda, but possibly the party's as well—or, at very least, that it had been relegated to secondary importance. This is not to say the party made wrong decisions—only an observation that, in practice, it now looks much less different than before from the centrist Yesh Atid and the center-left Labor.

This represents a major problem in terms of Meretz's electoral "brand." Based on polls, there is almost no chance that elections can produce a center-left government in today's Israel. As a result, Meretz could (as a best case) soon be forced to make the same choice as last year. But if voters believe that Meretz will behave

little differently than Yesh Atid or Labor, then why not simply vote for a larger party, one guaranteed to cross the vote threshold?

On the other hand, if the party signals that its anti-Occupation position could sabotage a second anti-Netanyahu government, many voters might migrate to Yesh Atid or Labor for the exact opposite reason! Evidence of this comes from a recent internal [poll](#), which revealed that more than 90% of Meretz voters rejected the idea that sacrificing its principles in the government obliged it to quit and bring it down.

This unenviable electoral position also has severe implications for the anti-Occupation camp overall. For years, Meretz has been the only party that has both delivered a consistent anti-Occupation message and drawn the lion's share of its votes from the Jewish public. The wrong campaign messaging by Meretz leaders could cause it to disappear from the political map. On the other hand, a continued decision to make the Occupation "expendable" will communicate to Israel's Jewish majority that even the "bleeding hearts" of Meretz now regard the issue to be essentially an "Arab concern." It will be taken by an ascendant right as a signal of final ideological victory.

Of course, the worst-case scenario, but arguably the more likely one, is that the upcoming elections (likely to be held in late October or early November) will lead to a Netanyahu-led government supported by the far-right and ultra-orthodox parties, with some of Israel's most fanatical politicians in key Cabinet positions. If that's what turns out, then the "government of change" will have amounted to little more than a brief holding action. And Meretz's participation in it will have been a finger in the dyke, so to speak, which delayed the "deluge," but ultimately failed to prevent it. ■

Ron Skolnik is an American-Israeli political columnist and public speaker, whose articles have appeared in a variety of publications, including Haaretz, Al-Monitor, Tikkun, the Forward, Jewish Currents, & the Palestine-Israel Journal.



Bimkom: Promoting Justice for Palestinians and Israelis through Equitable Planning

KOLOT
Voices of Hope

By Sam Stein and Bimkom Staff



Gender, planning, human rights seminar in Kasr al-Ser (recognized Bedouin village)

This essay is the latest in our series of 'Kolot: Voices of Hope' profiles of Israelis and Palestinians, furthering the cause of peace and equality. Find all the profiles in this series [here](#).

Bimkom - Planners for Planning Rights is an Israeli non-profit organization formed in 1999 by planners and architects in order to strengthen democracy and human rights in the field of planning. Since that time, we've helped hundreds of marginalized communities and villages, both in Israel and in the areas it occupies, in their struggle for the right to live safely and securely, in well-built homes, with access to infrastructure and services.

Planning plays a central role in determining the quality of our environment and our prospects for socio-economic development, as well as the general wellbeing of communities and individuals alike. Specifically, governmental planning policies regulate our access to

housing, schools, health clinics, parks, and industrial and employment zones, as well as to water, electricity, sewage, and roads.

Bimkom's teams work with disadvantaged communities that are being harmed by the consequences of flawed, discriminatory, insufficient, or inappropriate planning. In the Negev area in southern Israel, for example, we work with Bedouin communities, many living in dire conditions in villages that have gone unrecognized by the state. In East Jerusalem and in "Area C", the 60 percent of the West Bank where Israel maintains absolute control, we work with Palestinian residents, who face insurmountable problems in their efforts to obtain building permits, and are vulnerable, therefore,

to home demolitions and displacement.

We work in various Arab localities, as well as with the Arab population in mixed cities (e.g., Lod), where restrictive and insufficient planning has resulted in poor living conditions. We also work with the Jewish Israeli population, especially in urban areas housing marginalized groups, including immigrants, public housing tenants, and residents of lower socio-economic status. These individuals have no access to affordable housing, or are faced with market-driven urban renewal schemes that bring on gentrification and displacement of the current residents. We provide members of these communities with tools and knowledge to counter planning that is harmful or ignores the interests of the average citizen, and to promote planning that takes into account the residents' needs and vision. We make sure that each of these communities is given a voice in the planning of the spatial environment in which they live.



Preparing for court in case of unrecognized Bedouin village, Wadi al-Naam

Bimkom also advocates for greater democracy and social justice on the part of the authorities charged with planning and decision making. We hold one-on-one meetings with planning and decision-making officials, write position papers and research reports, run seminars and workshops for professionals and elected officials,

hold public events, use traditional and new media, and, in some cases, resort to legal measures. Our aim is to promote solutions geared toward the resilience of disadvantaged communities and the provision of their basic rights and needs with regard to planning, land, and development.

In the Negev

We're delighted to share that, just in the past year, three unrecognized Negev Bedouin villages—Rachme, Hashem Zaneh, and Abde—were included in an official governmental decision, starting a process leading to their recognition. Bimkom is proud to have played a part in this success and is already working with the communities and the authorities to ensure that the planning of the villages is appropriate and realistic. The village of Tel Arad may be joining this process as well, per a government announcement in late March 2022.

Our Negev team continues to fight for the recognition of all unrecognized Bedouin villages, especially those in the Beer Sheva Valley. We are joining the newly-formed inter-village council in this struggle, working towards a just solution and a viable municipal framework for these communities. In addition, the team also supports Bedouin communities in their struggle against harmful plans, notably a proposed train line that contains no stops in Bedouin towns or villages, and forestry and nature plans that threaten to displace Bedouin residents, as well as community planning in which residents have little say, and consequently is unsuitable for their needs.

In East Jerusalem and the West Bank

In December 2019, Bimkom launched the [Mobile Pastoralist database](#). This is a constantly-growing, free-access source of information that currently details over 100 herder communities in the West Bank. The database provides the history of each community, their planning status, and whether they have infrastructure, such as water and electricity. It also documents what threats the communities face, from settler violence to inaccessible roads and potential demolitions, and what initiatives the communities themselves are currently undertaking. This information is diligently gathered in person by our dedicated fieldworkers, who travel to

the different communities to interview their leaders and residents and ascertain their living situations. Beyond helping Bimkom keep track of the important data it needs to fight for planning justice, the Mobile Pastoralist database also helps other stakeholders, including NGOs, aid organizations, and supporters, become better informed and get a fuller picture of the reality on the ground.

Bimkom scored a recent success in the village of Dkeika in the West Bank. For years, our Area C team has worked hard promoting the housing rights of marginalized Palestinian communities through planning and legal action vis-à-vis the Israeli military's "Civil Administration." This work has paid off in Dkeika, which is now expected to receive a statutory plan—a huge achievement for the community that will prevent demolitions and forcible transfer. The Area C team also worked in tandem with 115 affected Palestinian residents to submit objections to the new planned settlement in the "E1" area between Jerusalem and the Ma'aleh Adumim settlement city. The proposed settlement in E1 would lead to the displacement of three Bedouin communities, block grazing land, and restrict movement between the northern and southern sections of the West Bank, seriously harming the prospects of a contiguous Palestinian state. The plan has been put on hold for now.

In Palestinian East Jerusalem, the State of Israel has been advancing several planning schemes. However, while these plans provide crucial commercial and employment development, they ignore the ongoing housing crisis, leaving the Palestinian residents of the city with no choice but to build unauthorized homes. This situation ultimately leads to home demolitions and undermines equitable development.

Two important and very different cases we are focusing on in East Jerusalem are the lack of planning and the potential demolitions in al-Walajah, and, conversely, the innovative new outline plan for al-Isawiyyah, which has the potential to provide real solutions and set a precedent for a more flexible planning approach.

- **al-Walajah:** We have scored a success in [al-Walajah](#), with the Supreme Court's March 30 extension of the

freeze on the demolition of 38 homes there, and its call for continued progress of the planning process.

- **al-Isawiyyah:** In recent weeks, we submitted a formal objection to the al-Isawiyyah plan, together with residents: While we praise its new planning tools, our objection recommends ways to improve their potential for implementation, and calls for increasing the plan's very restrictive size, which is an attempt to limit al-Isawiyyah's growth and ultimate improvement.

Additionally, we've been analyzing the recent renewal of the process for disposition of land rights throughout East Jerusalem, and have, on the basis of data collected with our partner human rights NGO, Ir Amim, produced an [interactive map](#) updating the status of those lands (so far only in Hebrew, but with Arabic and English versions to be published in the coming months); the map links to a rights brochure aimed at raising awareness and providing information to help the Palestinian residents with their decision making. (The link will go live in the coming weeks).



Bimkom lawyer with residents of East Jerusalem neighborhood, Ash-Shayyah

New Projects and Programming

In October 2021, Bimkom hosted the "Human Rights and Ethics of Planning Cultural Landscapes in Israel/Palestine" conference. The conference saw current and former Bimkom employees and board members lead tours, discussions, and panels with urban planning experts who delved into how best to plan, design, develop, and preserve cultural landscapes. With more

than 200 attendees over Zoom, Facebook, and in person, the conference helped shed light on the crucial role urban planning can play both in contributing to systemic oppression and in promoting social justice. The entire conference can be viewed online in Hebrew [here](#).



Planning seminar for Palestinian women in Area C

Bimkom is also tackling broader social issues as well as urban planning issues. This past year, we launched our new project, “Increasing the Role of Marginalized Women in Gender-Sensitive Spatial Planning and Development.” As part of this project, we’ve held seminars for women in Bedouin villages as well as Arab women living in the Old City of Akko (Acre). We provide women with tools and knowledge about planning, gender, and human rights, and support their involvement in the planning processes of their communities. We’ve also completed a series of lectures for Haredi (ultra-orthodox) women students of architecture and planning. Bimkom is organizing

similar projects and seminars for women residents of the Wadi Nisnas neighborhood in Haifa, and for Bedouin youth, both men and women.

There have been many achievements in the past year, but the fight for housing and planning rights is far from over. Moving forward, Bimkom is planning for a key court session regarding the military-declared Firing Zone 918, which could see thousands of Palestinian residents in the South Hebron Hills lose their homes. We are also getting ready for hearings in a variety of planning and legal cases, and providing planning assistance and support to communities facing violations of their rights. This includes the 214 families of the “Crates Neighborhood” ([Shechunat HaArgazim](#)) in Tel Aviv, who are being forcibly evicted, with little to no compensation, to make way for high-rise buildings.

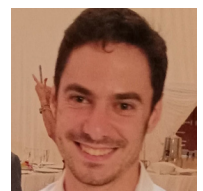
To learn more about these topics, please follow Bimkom on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) and check their [website](#) to stay up to date on all of their activities. ■

מתכננים למען זכויות תכנון
مخططون من أجل حقوق التخطيط
PLANNERS FOR PLANNING RIGHTS

בִּמְקוֹם
במקום
BIMKOM



Sam Stein is the Shatil Social Justice
Fellow at Bimkom.



END THE EXPULSIONS

Matching Grant Campaign



Photo Credit: דשנמ יפיצ

Masafer Yatta, Sheikh Jarrah, and the Negev are today's flash points in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

- **Masafer Yatta:** In early May, Israel's High Court of Justice approved the expulsion of nearly a thousand Palestinians from this group of hamlets in the South Hebron Hills area of the West Bank. If implemented, the eviction would be the largest removal of Palestinians from their lands in decades.
- **Sheikh Jarrah:** Israel's quasi-governmental Jewish National Fund (JNF-KKL) has bought up parcels of land in East Jerusalem owned by Jews before 1948, and is trying to evict Palestinian families who have lived there since before 1967. Due to strong international pressure, the courts have temporarily halted some of these expulsions.
- **Negev Bedouin:** The Israeli government has been trying to expel Negev Bedouin from their land for decades, despite their Israeli citizenship. Most recently, in January, the Jewish National Fund tried

to expel Bedouin in order to plant trees for a new forest.

The Israeli government's expulsions of Palestinians, home demolitions, denial of access to farmland, and settler vandalism have led to increasingly violent clashes and instability in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Israel proper. These persistent and ongoing efforts to expel Palestinians from the land on which they have lived for generations is not only cruel and inhuman, but also violate international human rights and humanitarian law.

We say it is time to END THE EXPULSION of Palestinians.

On June 1, 2022, Partners for Progressive Israel launched a month-long campaign to rally attention and raise our voices to stop Palestinians' expulsion and home demolitions. Throughout the month of June, we have been presenting a series of programs in collaboration with progressive Israeli and Palestinian organizations and individuals who have been fighting these evictions on the ground.

END THE EXPULSIONS Campaign: Program Highlights

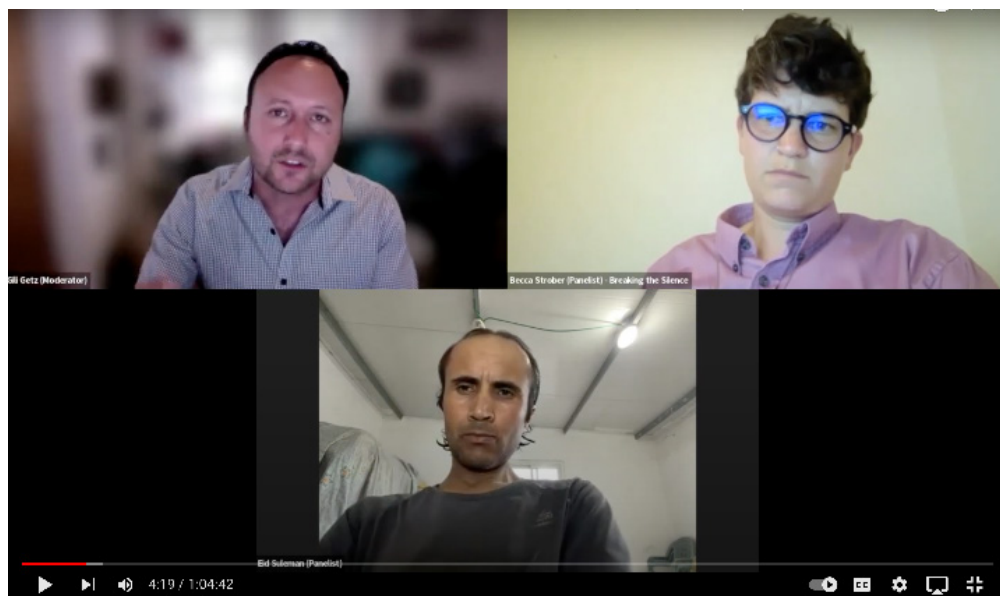
To support our END THE EXPULSIONS campaign Partners has received a generous gift that will [match dollar for dollar each contribution made by June 30th, up to \\$15,000](#).

We call on you to take advantage of this matching offer. In addition to doubling your contribution, you will be an integral part of making sure that we keep our voices loud and build our campaign against forced expulsions and home demolitions of Palestinians, wherever they live.

Please [CONTRIBUTE NOW!](#)



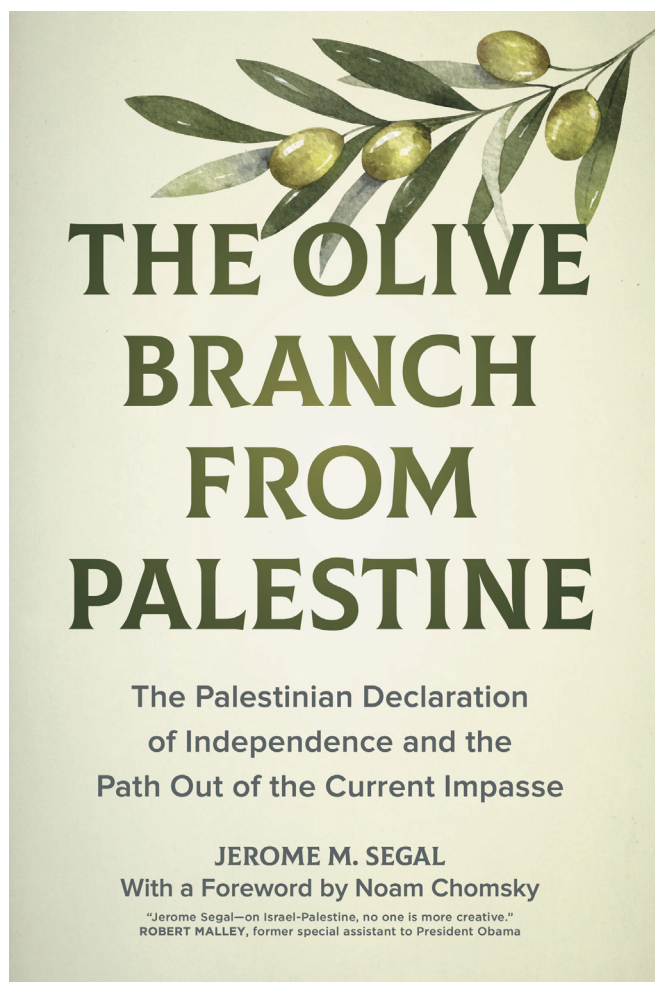
Missed our latest webinar, **#SaveMasaferYatta: The On-the-Ground Effort to Prevent Mass Expulsion?**
We post them on our [YouTube channel!](#)



Jerome M. Segal, *The Olive Branch From Palestine: The Palestinian Declaration of Independence and the Path Out of the Current Impasse*

BOOK
REVIEW

By Peter Eisenstadt



University of California Press, 2022

Another book with a plan to end the Israel-Palestine conflict. Is there a less satisfying genre of reading material anywhere? I have read many, too many. They come in all varieties. Books written by unbowed optimists, books by battle-scarred realists. Tales told by idiots, not worth the paper they are printed on, and books bursting with hard-won insight and wisdom. But however they start, they all have, more or less, the same final chapter, filled with uncertainties, lots of maybes, too many sentences that begin with “perhaps.” I hope the next book of this sort I read has the title, “How I Solved the Israel-Palestinian Conflict.” Reading *The Olive Branch From Palestine* I was reminded of how a few decades ago

there was a big splash when someone finally solved one of perennial unsolved problems of mathematics, Fermat’s Last Theorem. The explanation of the solution was utterly incomprehensible to me, but I was glad that human ingenuity won out over life’s failures and uncompletedness. So I await the day, and may it not be long, when a professor, fresh from her triumph, will explain her solution to the world on a blackboard covered with a series of very long and complex equations, and proclaim: “This is how I solved the Israel-Palestine conflict, quod erat demonstrandum.”

But until then we will have to make do with excellent books like Jerome M. Segal’s *The Olive Branch From Palestine*, written by an author who has spent a lifetime troubling and untroubling these treacherous waters. Like all good books of this sort, they remind us, however tempting it might be at times, that cynicism is not an option; it only gives aid and comfort to the enemies of a fair and comprehensive Israel Palestine settlement. This is not only a “how-to-fix-it” book. It is also a gripping first-person history of the creation of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence (PDI), issued on 15 November 1988 by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Segal played an important role in its gestation.

Now, if, gentle reader, if you, like me, had forgotten whatever little you once knew about the PDI, this book is for you. Segal insists, with much merit, that the PDI is more than an obscure footnote in the dispiriting history of post-1967 efforts to resolve the occupation. Indeed, perhaps the key sentence of the book is “the period from 15 November to December 15, 1988 [the date in which Arafat agreed to American conditions for starting dialogue] represents thirty days of unilateral Palestinian action during which more progress was made toward ending the conflict than in the thirty four years of on-again/off-again negotiations that occurred subsequently.” (xviii–xix). As with many a failed romance, Segal argues that in Israel-Palestine peace efforts, if certain opportunities are missed, they

will not come again in a lifetime of moments, and late November 1988 was one of those opportunities. I don't know if there was enough flexibility in any of the parties at the time to bring about this devoutly to be wished for consummation, but it certainly was an opening that all too quickly closed.

The PDI certainly was issued at a key moment in the conflict, nine months into the First Intifada, which if nothing else, demonstrated to Israel that they did not control the bodies, to say nothing of the hearts and minds, of the Palestinians on the West Bank and Gaza. The intifada was not nonviolent, but neither was it characterized by repeated acts of terrorism against Israelis. In July 1998 King Hussein proclaimed that Jordan no longer claimed sovereignty over East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The PLO, exiled in Tunis since Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, was eager to return to Palestine. Israel's habitual hubris, between the fallout from the intifada and the Lebanon invasion, was at a low ebb.

Segal played an important role in getting the PDI drafted, with long editorials in the Palestinian newspaper *Al-Quds* on the topic, reprinted in the book, and meetings with various Palestinian leaders. The book talks about his activities, but it is not really an autobiography, and I can understand why Segal did not want the book to be more about himself than it already is. But I really wanted to know more about his personal history, and how an American Jew became so close to the Palestinian cause, and what he has been doing for the past 36 years, but that is perhaps the subject of another book.

*In appreciation
of
Mahmoud Darwish*

The main drafter of the PDI was the remarkable Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish, who was Segal's friend, and is the book's dedicatee. If, as in Shelley's

famous words, poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world, other countries should follow Palestine's lead and put their best poets to work in polishing the pedestrian prose of their public promulgations.

The main provisions of the PDI were that, for the first time, the Palestinians accepted the 1947 partition plan, which had created a Jewish state and an Arab one, pledged to "join with all states and peoples in order to assure a permanent peace," and recognized that many different peoples had lived in historic Palestine. And although negotiations were difficult, the PDI had the backing of all the major Palestinian factions, including the militant Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. As its drafters expected, Israel's reaction—Yitzhak Shamir was then prime minister—was entirely dismissive. The United States was opposed to the PDI and to a Palestinian state, and announced three conditions that the Palestinians must meet before starting a dialogue: a willingness to begin negotiations with Israel on the basis of UN resolutions 242 and 338, a declaration that it would live at peace with Israel in the West Bank and Gaza within mutually recognized boundaries, and a commitment to firmly renouncing terrorism. This eventually happened to the satisfaction of the US, but subsequently the US opposed efforts by the PLO to gain non-nation member status at the UN. For their part, Segal criticizes the PLO for not disbanding itself and working towards the creation of a democratic Palestinian state representing all Palestinian factions, and for not unambiguously renouncing violence. His main point is that the Palestinian reliance on negotiations was doomed to fail; instead it should do what Israel did in 1948 declare its independence on its own.

Like all books of this sort, Segal's is full of counterfactuals. Speculating about "what-if" histories is a good Jewish tradition dating back to, at least, "Dayenu," and like that song, Segal wonders what "would have been enough" to solve, or at least greatly ameliorate, the Israel Palestine conflict. And Segal suggests that if the Palestinians had held out for statehood and independence, instead of trading that ambition for the mess of pottage offered them at Oslo, a non-sovereign Palestinian Authority, the current situation could have been much better. It

certainly could not have been much worse. Because when, after Oslo, the will-o-the wisp of Palestinian sovereignty evaporated, it hardened opinion on all sides, leading to the Second Intifada, an emboldened Hamas, and an equally ascendent hard Israeli right.

At the core of *The Olive Branch From Palestine* is Segal's defense of Palestinian unilateralism. It is a paradoxical claim. The best way to end the Israel Palestinian conflict, Segal argues, is not to negotiate, but to assert a non-negotiable claim. He argues that the weaker party in a negotiation, in this case the Palestinians, cannot win at the table what they have not already accomplished on the ground. Instead, the Oslo negotiations merely gave Israel veto power over Palestinian ambitions. For Segal, the best Palestinian option would have been working to create the structures of a functioning and stable Palestinian state, rather than wishing and hoping that somehow their half a loaf will grow into a full loaf. On the other hand, it's hard to see that Israel ever would have a let a state develop on the West Bank and Gaza after 1988.



Photo Credit: Shaima Asem

To me, Segal's quest for Palestinian unilateralism sounds very similar to the sort of radical nonviolence advocated by folks like Gandhi, King, and Howard Thurman. The

weaker party needs to claim their equality with their oppressors, without asking their approval, and start to implement their plans, which, crucially, must involve getting widespread support and action behind their initiatives. In this way they can create new "facts on the ground." But the trick, and supreme difficulty of radical nonviolence, is to do this without increasing the fear of the more powerful group that they have lost control of the situation, and must violently suppress it. The basic problem in the Israel Palestine conflict is that any solution that is satisfactory to the Palestinians will decrease Israeli ability to control Palestinian lives, and a majority of Israelis will have to be convinced that rather than weakening themselves, the prospect of a genuine stability actually is a positive gain. And a majority of Palestinians will have to be convinced that whatever compromises this entails will result in a real and not ersatz sovereignty. And the reason why most advocates of radical nonviolence have been religious thinkers is that for this to occur, in any situation, a spiritual rather than a merely political realignment is required. Otherwise, it is likely to be just another roadmap to nowhere.

Segal's argument is that two states were possible back in the late 1980s. And he believes that two states are possible now, and devotes the last chapter to his plans, and like all such last chapters, it is written, necessarily, in the subjunctive. Some of his ideas are very intriguing. I was particularly taken with his plans for the Palestinian refugee question, where he suggests that between some land swaps including the return of some Palestinians to the sites of their destroyed villages, some return of Palestinians to Israel proper, and an overall cap of half a million returnees might solve things. I was also taken with his ideas for linking the Israel Palestinian conflict to the Israel Iran conflict, and he is surely correct that if the Abraham Accords are merely a way of forging a greater anti-Iranian coalition, nothing will be accomplished.

Is Segal's plan possible? Two states were definitely possible in 1988. As for 2022, count me as skeptical. I think that two states would be the most stable way forward. But a Palestinian state vivisected by settlements would be the least stable way forward, and I can't see

a serious dislodgement of the settlements in the near future. But I also think that the question is whether a particular peace plan is possible or practical or not is not the most important question. Given the weakness of the Palestinians every peace plan is impractical. It is always easier to make the argument that any way forward, two states, one state, confederation, what have you, is more likely to fail than succeed. Having no good options is a usual consequence of political weakness, and Segal's point is that when no good options exist, Palestinians just have to, unilaterally, create one. And, I hope, bring with it the spiritual discipline that successful unilateralism requires.

But the greatest virtue of *The Olive Branch From Palestine* is not Segal's suggestions for the future but his retrospective analysis of the PDI. Sovereignty is not only a legal and political term, but it is a social and psychological reality. To be a citizen is to have control of one's life, to know that paths to advancement are not barred, that your participation in civil society is welcome, and that the legal system is responsive to one's needs for security. What Palestinians long for, above all else, in some arrangement, is real and effective citizenship. I have known, for over half a century, that this will happen. One can look at the last half century of peace efforts as unmitigated failure heaped on unmitigated failure or, as Segal encourages us to do, as a series of near misses and lost opportunities. There are no completely new ideas when it comes to the Israel Palestine conflict. Every possible way out has been proposed at one time or another. I do believe that, as Segal suggests in the subtitle of his book, there is a path out of the current impasse. And we have walked on many, too many, paths. But Segal encourages us to hope, with the Palestinians in the lead, charting their destiny, that Israel and Palestine can together choose a path, and finish the walk. ■

Peter Eisenstadt is a member of the board of Partners for Progressive Israel and the author of *Against the Hounds of Hell: A Biography of Howard Thurman* (University of Virginia, 2021).



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In Memoriam: David Shapiro Sharif

May 28, 1997 – April 23, 2022

OBITUARY



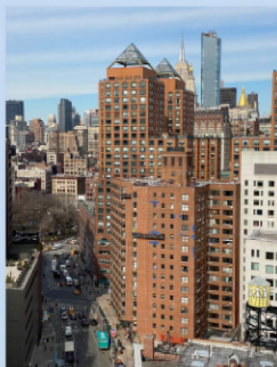
It is with profound sadness that Partners for Progressive Israel announces the sudden death of 24 year old David Shapiro Sharif on April 23rd at his home in Ridgewood, NY. David's untimely death struck us at Partners especially hard: he is the son of our Vice President, Karen Shapiro, the brother of Board member, Ben Sharif, and the grandson of our founder, Harold Shapiro. David was known and loved by many of us.

A well-known advocate for autism awareness and on the autistic spectrum himself, David was for years a motivational speaker in local, national, and international disability forums, especially those devoted to the neurodiverse community. Born in Los Angeles, David grew up as a member of Kehillat Israel in Pacific Palisades, California. For his Bar Mitzvah project, he wrote a speech on what it was like to be autistic. The talk was received enthusiastically and was eventually made into a video entitled "[My Name is David](#)," watched by close to a million people. David's creative

work included a book of poems, "[The Empowerment of My Condition](#)," and a number of prose reflections on what it meant to be autistic—all with the intent of transforming attitudes toward autism. Valedictorian of his high school and recent graduate, Magna Cum Laude, of Pace University, where he majored in Political Science and Peace and Justice Studies, David's unbounded curiosity and passion for knowledge led him to visit over forty countries during his all-too-brief life.



The Empowerment of My Condition



Poems by
David Sharif

Above and beyond these accomplishments, David was loved by all whose lives he touched. Recipients of his frequent bearhugs—indeed, all who encountered him—so often speak of the joy and sense of wonder he evoked just by being who he was. During the days of shiva celebrating his life, one after another of family members, friends, former teachers, and autism mentors spoke of the influence this young man had on their lives. David's life was a gift; one, as many at the shiva said, that will continue to give for years to come.

Partners for Progressive Israel was a direct recipient of David's passion to live life fully. In the midst of a life full of meaningful pursuits, David chose to intern with Partners during the summer of 2017. Executive Director Dinesh Sharma recalls that "David was a highly professional, motivated and ambitious person who was dedicated to fulfilling his grandfather's vision of peace between Israel and Palestine, and while David might have learned some office skills from me, he helped teach me how to handle some difficult life situations." David was always prepared to teach and be taught.

David will be sorely missed, yet his life has left a deep imprint on us all. *Y'hi Zichro Baruch*—May David's memory continue to be a blessing. ■



David at the Annual New York 'Celebrate Israel' parade.

Israel *Horizons*

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