



President's Message: A Year's-End Grab Bag

I'm writing this while still not sure whether Israel will endure a third election within a few months; I imagine it will, though, but you'll know for sure by the time you read this. However, we probably won't know for quite awhile whether Bibi is indeed permanently out of Israeli politics, the only reason this election is taking place.

Despite that (and a lot more) I'm feeling a bit more optimistic about Israel than usual. Perhaps it is the growing vitality of PIN (the Progressive Israel Network), which combines the efforts of 11 pro-peace/pro-Israel Jewish organizations – something that has been unfortunately lacking during the more than 30 years since I set up the D.C. office of what became Americans for Peace Now back in 1989, I am also optimistic about the chances of our newly-completed Hatikvah Slate for the World Zionist Organization (WZO), comprising a diverse and impressive collection of American Jews drawn from the PIN organizations and beyond. We hope to at least triple our showing in the last (2015) election, when Hatikvah received only 3148 votes of 56,737 cast in total (i.e., only 1% of the 5.5 million American Jews voted in the 2015 WZO election). That is not a high bar to overcome, but if we manage to do it – or even better – it will make a real difference in the progressive voice and in the disposition of more than \$1 billion in funds that the WZO controls or influences.

While we have the usual eclectic selection of articles in this month's IH, I want to call your particular attention to the interview with Mickey Gitzin, Israel CEO of the New Israel Fund, conducted by my old friend Sue Hoechstetter. Mickey strongly urges the need for a "movement" on the Israeli

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Wed, Dec 18, 2020 @ 12:30 pm ET

**Welcome the Stranger: Refugees,
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Wed, Jan 8, 2020 @ 12:30 pm ET

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Left that would combine those working in the diverse fields of ending the occupation, minority, women's, and workers' rights, religious pluralism, and many more essential causes. We are committed to supporting them, but my dream (and apparently Mickey's as well) is for a rejuvenation of all those active in these issues, and their amalgamation into a political movement that would combine the energies of all those unhappy with Israel's current course, but that will not have the baggage carried by current parties, much of it stemming from the treatment of Mizrahi immigrants in the 1950s and '60s.

For the last couple of years I've been telling my students that, in fact, the Israeli-Arab conflict that has been around since 1948 is over – and no one seems to have noticed.

I am also hoping that next year we will start seeing the beginning of the end of the nationalistic and religious 'populist' wave that has swept through so much of the world during the last decade, including both Israel and the US, and throwing up a cloud of distrust and misunderstanding between seemingly more conservative Israelis and more progressive American Jews. Bibi Netanyahu has been the face of this movement since 2009, and with his (probable) departure from politics, perhaps we will find the strength and opportunities to work for a new era that will repudiate much of his legacy of division, distrust, and astronomical levels of income inequality, among other issues afflicting contemporary Israeli society.

In my day job as a Professor of Israel Studies at the University of Maryland I teach courses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For the last couple of years I've been telling my students that, in fact, the Israeli-Arab conflict that has been around since 1948 is over – and no one seems to have noticed. Of course, I hasten to add, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is most certainly alive and unsolved, and gives no indication of going away. Many Arab governments are tired of it but their populations' sympathize with Palestinian grievances, so it is highly unlikely that many more Arab countries will join Egypt and Jordan in sending ambassadors to Israel in the foreseeable future, without a clear end to the occupation and the establishment of a viable Palestinian state.

The (unofficial) end of even the Arab-Israel conflict is not nothing, however - and conceivably could be seized

on by the Israeli Left to attempt a rejuvenation of Israel's progressive forces, not just by the Right, which is on the one hand building alliances with Arab states against Iran and, on the other, taking care that Israelis will never feel unafraid of the Arab states ganging up on it a la 1967. Or painting BDS – insidious as it is – as a serious national threat, which is absurd and counterproductive. Nor does bonding with Evangelical Christians on the basis of anti-Muslim belligerence, which doesn't contribute to Israeli security or possess the basis of shared values necessary for a longterm alliance. Recognizing Israel's successes and strengths – as well as its regressive neglect of Palestinians under occupation – could prove the basis of a new Israeli progressivism that would advance the vision of Israel's founders while dealing with the genuine and as yet unsolved issues left from 1948,

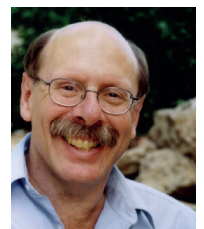
These are my thoughts as I recover from my Thanksgiving meals – the one American semi-religious holiday celebrated by most American Jews – and look forward to Chanukah, the xenophobic children's fest transformed here into an inoffensive alternative to Christmas. Here's wishing everyone a joyous and non-belligerent Chanukah and renewed energy in order to deal with the many issues on our American as well as our Jewish-Israeli plates which we'll face in the next 12 months. To end with Rabbi Tarfon as memorialized in Pirkei Avot, "It is not incumbent upon us to complete the work, but neither may we desist from it."

חג חנוכה שמח



Paul Scham

Paul Scham is President of Partners for Progressive Israel; Associate Research Professor of Israel Studies at the University of Maryland and Executive Director of its Gildenhorn Institute for Israel Studies.



Interview with Mickey Gitzin, Executive Director of the New Israel Fund in Israel

By Susan Hoechstetter



As part of a series on ongoing Israeli and Palestinian civil society efforts to bring about peace and promote Palestinian rights, Susan Hoechstetter spoke to several Israelis and a Palestinian American who work for social justice – active and effective leaders whom progressive Americans can admire. In part one of this series, Susan reported on her interview with Avner Gvanyahu, director of Breaking the Silence, an organization of former Israel soldiers. Her second interview featured Anna Garbar and Rawan Odeh, the managing directors of New Story Leadership, which works to develop a new generation of Palestinians and Israeli change agents.

In part three, Susan talks with Mickey Gitzin, Executive Director of the New Israel Fund in Israel. Mickey explains his recommendation for providing new Israeli heroes, an idea which serves as the title for this series. He stresses the need for civil society organizations in Israel to build a progressive movement, which can only succeed if it is based on an Arab Jewish partnership. He also emphasizes the important role American Jews can play in maintaining and strengthening Israeli democracy while there is still the opportunity to do so.

Susan Hoechstetter: Can you tell us about the New Israel Fund's past and current role?

Mickey Gitzin: The New Israel Fund (NIF) and its allies are victims of our own success. NIF was established in 1979 as a partnership mainly between American Jews and progressive Israelis as a strategy to heal civil society in Israel. And the strategy they started with was called "1000 flowers will bloom." The idea was that the more civil society [organizations and the people engaged in public issues] there were, the more Israel would become democratic and progressive.

NIF and its allies were able to create a very diverse, meaningful, and vibrant, civil society. But at the same time, because we were so fragmented, identity-based, issue-based and culturally-based, we lost the power to bring people together in order to have impact. Because every group had its own specific way of approaching an issue, we lost the ability to accumulate power.

I read an op-ed in a magazine here that NIF was very successful in impacting some policies such as getting decisions won at the Supreme Court, but not in creating and establishing a progressive movement that would support our values. And establishing such a movement is where we need to be.

SH: Do you have a strategy for bringing groups together to build power, given that NIF works with so many of them?

It sounds ridiculously hard for all of the Left to come together to fight on issues like annexation, the undermining of the Supreme Court, women's rights, definitely Arab rights, the occupation, and so on, but at the end of the day I don't see how to create change in Israel without bringing together them together in a movement that will support our values and ideas.

So far we've been fighting every policy that is put on the table. If the Minister of Culture brings forward some sort of loyalty



bill we fight against it; if the nation-state law is put on the table, we fight against it. We're not working enough to create a movement, but NIF is situated in a very favorable position to do more. We're the only organization today that is seeing the broader picture of the progressive Left because we work with social justice activists, anti-occupation activists, Israeli Palestinian activists, and those who work on religious freedom. The people in those organizations don't necessarily know each other, and they don't see themselves as part of the same movement.

Breaking the Silence works on ending the occupation. Avner Gvanyahu, the executive director, wakes up in the morning with one mission in mind and that's what he needs to do - fight occupation. I can't think only about the occupation. It's extremely important, but it's not the only story. It's part of the bigger picture. And those who work on social economic justice issues like expanding the amount of public housing in Israel because poverty brings populism, they focus on their issues. It's our place to say to all of them - we don't measure ourselves by the policies we change, but actually by the movement we create. It's also our job to bring these groups together.

So if you're an activist on the rights of women to pray at the Wall, you need to know your Palestinian friends who work on women's issues. It's incredibly important. Whatever your main cause is, it will stay the same. But if you come to a training course by Shatil, our capacity-building arm, you'll meet your colleagues who are also executive directors of organizations, and you'll see yourself as part of the same movement, and that will create change. And you're going to know that your goal is not only, for example, to bring up the occupation on the level that will make people aware of it, but also to increase the

number of teenagers and youth in Israel who visit Hebron with Breaking the Silence. That is a measurement related to changing the hearts and minds of people. It's important to balance the need to impact policy and the need to create a movement and that means that our very Israeli character of wanting results here and now will need to calm down a little bit because we're looking at a long-term process. Of the NIF investments today, 70% of what we do is policy and 30% is movement building, but that may change.

SH: Is taking a long term view difficult when people have pressing security concerns?

MG: It's very difficult. Netanyahu is elected again and again and again because most Israelis feel the situation is too unstable and they prefer stability and security. And for middle-class Israelis, the situation may have even become better. But this is an important time to obtain power through coming together

When I speak about building the movement I think about three different investment elements. One is new ideas. So what do we have to offer to the public? We are offering the same ideas as progressives in the '90s offered - two state solution, welfare state, all the same. We have to ask ourselves - are we still relevant with the ideas that still sit on the table? Are the policies that we suggest the best we can offer?

Who are the best people who are equipped to answer the questions? Gaza has changed. The West Bank has changed. Israeli society has changed. The relationship between Jews and Arabs within Israel has changed. And we are offering the same thing. I'm not saying that these things have been resolved, but that we need to sharpen our thinking about them and provide new ideas to the table, something that not only the left in Israel but the left in all the world needs to be doing.

Second we need to think about investing in or creating the institutions or vehicles through which these ideas will be brought before the public, and the public includes both the masses and leadership. Institutions like think tanks, universities, and zazim.org.il, the Israeli equivalent of MoveOn.org that we created a few years ago, are those vehicles for ideas.

The last thing we need to invest in that creates a movement is the people. I'm talking about leaders, thinkers, local community leaders, and the general public. I'm talking about teaching people why social democracy is a better way of running an economy rather than a pure neoliberal capitalistic approach. We need to get to the people.

SH: One of the leaders I spoke with here in Israel, Rabbi Schlesinger of Roots (Shorashim), works with settlers and Palestinians to find common ground. Would NIF funding groups like Roots be a new idea?

MG: It's part of what we need to examine. We do not fund things on the other side of the Green Line which makes total sense to me. On the other hand it's an interesting thing to re-examine. What does the Green Line mean?

We are offering the same ideas as progressives in the '90s offered - two state solution, welfare state, all the same. We have to ask ourselves – are we still relevant with the ideas that still sit on the table? Are the policies that we suggest the best we can offer?

SH: what should American Jews be doing to help build a movement?

MG: I want to start with the right wing here and their relationships with the U.S. Over many years, but mainly after the Israeli disengagement from Gaza, the right wing in Israel, in cooperation with American Jews from the right, decided that their mission was to change Israeli society. They felt that the settlers were not given enough support by Israelis. In order to change that they decided to fight over the hearts and minds of Israel by not only living in the settlements but living in peripheral areas of Israel. They would bring their ideas there, they would be much more influential in the military and the political system, and so on. They felt that the Israeli society had betrayed them. The rabbis had promised them that the disengagement would not happen because it would be against God's will. And disengagement happened with the support of the majority of Israel.

And they decided to integrate more deeply into Israeli society, to take more senior roles in the army, public services, and education. Americans from the right wing went along with them. They stopped supporting Israel [as a whole] and started supporting the right wing effort to retake the hearts and minds of Israelis. That's the Sheldon Adelson story. Now, right wing American Jews support right wing conservative Israeli parties, while progressive American Jews support Israel as a whole. And then they [American Jews] are disappointed with the Prime Minister and other government leaders who are against their ideology.

My suggestion is to create a new partnership of progressives both here and there. They would support progressives only and their heroes would be Avner from Breaking the Silence or an asylum-seeker from South Tel Aviv, people who are progressive Arabs and Jews, people with whom they share values.

I was a *shaliach* for a Jewish organization in South Bend, Indiana a long time ago, before Mayor Pete made South Bend cool, and I know that American Jews often raise their children with Israel as a main story in their identity, and with

Israeli heroes. We need to create new heroes for our children so that they are proud of them because they fight against the occupation, because they are in line with the efforts for social justice, and because they are there when racism arises. Peter Beinart told me that the heroes of his children are the soldiers of Breaking the Silence instead of the soldiers of the occupation. That's an amazing opportunity to change the story.

SH: What else is important for building the progressive movement in Israel?

We're looking at a long-term struggle. And I don't believe the international community will save Israel. We of the left have always told Israeli society if we don't move towards a two state solution the international community will punish us. There will be an international tsunami. But actually, the international community has come closer to Netanyahu's than it has to our values, definitely with the leadership of President Trump, but not only with him. Israel is part of the populist wave and we're living it. Netanyahu is a true leader within the wave. And he has more powerful and meaningful international allies than anyone else on the ground here in Israel.



Another important point for this movement is that if you look both politically and value-based, this movement must be a Jewish Arab Joint venture. We cannot think anymore, as the center of the Israeli political landscape has thought for many years, that it can be based only on Jews.

We need to work again on the political partnership as was done during the Rabin time. To do so, first, we must legitimize the Arab citizens of Israel within Israeli Jewish society. Some Israeli Jews think "yes, the Arabs have the right to vote, but don't want to see them in any position that is actually influential." We must change that and we must humanize the Arabs.

Second, we need to convince the Arab minority that despite the history we can be true partners with them. It's really hard, and I can understand why they wouldn't want it, but we need each other. In 1999, Israeli Arabs voted for Ehud Barak, who let them down. They remember with great pain the demonstrations the next year in which 11 Israeli Arabs were killed by the police.

The third thing is to convince them that they will have impact on Israeli society because they don't feel that they can have any real influence, that it doesn't really matter. And I have to say there are critics against this approach of mine among the left because they say we take advantage of the Arabs; we use them to gain power as leftists. But I think it's the only possible option for both Jews and Arabs. Actually, neither group has any potential to succeed without the other.

Now, right wing American Jews support right wing conservative Israeli parties, while progressive American Jews support Israel as a whole. And then they [American Jews] are disappointed with the Prime Minister and other government leaders who are against their ideology.

SH: Are there Arabs on the NIF board?

MG: Half the board is Israeli, half is American. So out of the approximately 12 Israelis, three are Arabs, and I can tell you that we really want more Arabs on the board.

SH: Does NIF work closely with the other groups?

MG: Sure, a lot. The reason why I think that we can be the convener is because we are the only organization who meets with anti-occupation and shared society groups as well as many others. The anti-occupation organizations meet with each other, but not necessarily with a shared society organizations. And that's something we need to break. The groups will never be successful at creating change on a broader level if they don't go outside their own silos to work together. Organizations like zazim.org, or the new Jewish Arab movement called Standing Together, Omdim b'yachad, cross silos. When one organization is attacked by the government they don't want to see only human rights organizations supporting them, they want to see the entire movement supporting them. And the entire movement will not support them until the organizations see themselves as part of the same movement.

SH: Are NIF grantees being successful at energizing the base?

MG: I think so, and the question is what is the base? Is Women Waging Peace part of the base or not? I don't know. They are trying to be centrist in their approach and distance themselves from the political margins so they can bring in as many people as possible. I think it's a failing strategy.

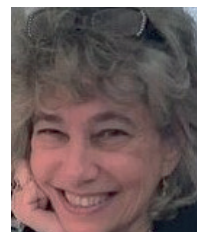
What do they [WWP] think? That they will be able to bring the two state solution, a peaceful solution, with the support of the Kahanists? But they're not willing to align themselves with the movement. And that's a fair strategy.

SH: what are your final words for American Jews?

MG: First, by the way, I see American progressive groups making the same mistakes we made 10 years ago. That is: making fun of the right wing, undermining them, thinking they're not intelligent enough, thinking Trump doesn't get what he does, thinking that being against Bibi or being against Trump is enough of a mission to bring people together. And I see Trump being reelected.

I want to go back to the example I gave about the right wing changing Israel. You know Americans have stood with Israel for so long in our external wars with the world. This now is a fight for Israeli democracy. Is Israel going to go with the vision of the Declaration of Independence or continue being part of the populist wave? This is the time to invest because maybe in five years it could be too late - the character of Israel will be so far from what is envisioned by Americans that Jews in America and Israel will really be two separate communities. There is a real chance for influence now, and it's the best time for influence, as difficult as it sounds. ■

Sue Hoechstetter lives in Washington, DC where she writes about advocacy, social justice, Israel, and other topics.



Sadaka-Reut: Educating Toward a More Just and Equal Society

By Yigal Elhanan and Rawan Bisharat



Who We Are

Established in 1983, the not-for-profit [Sadaka-Reut Arab-Jewish Youth Partnership](#) (SR) seeks to address the deep-seated injustices caused by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through our grassroots dialogue and leadership development programs. With a staff made up of both Arabs and Jews, we educate and empower Palestinian and Jewish youth in Israel to pursue social and political change through bi-national partnership in an effort to create a new generation of young activists promoting a shared society based on equality, solidarity, and justice.

Over the past decade, thousands of youth have taken part in our programs, and we have trained over a hundred facilitators who now use our approach as a tool for social change with hundreds of young people at Sadaka-Reut and other organizations. In addition, hundreds of our graduates are active in a variety of social change movements and organizations.

Sadaka-Reut's Educational Model

Racism, injustice, and inequality are heavily entrenched within Israeli society across a variety of different communities

and age groups. The goal of real and sustainable change for Palestinians and Jews alike therefore requires deep and meaningful educational activity.

Over the past two decades, Sadaka-Reut has been using a unique model in order to maximize our impact on Palestinian and Jewish communities and in order to reach new audiences to participate in our programs. The educational work in all of our projects is based on three main principles:

1. Uni-national and Bi-national Settings: In order to promote a shared society, each group of Jewish and Palestinian participants first needs to recognize and address challenges within their own society and community. The uni-national setting provides a safe, open space where participants can discuss issues unique to their identity group. The bi-national setting provides a framework for the participants to meet “the other,” where they can become acquainted with their culture, opinions, and reality. Through this approach, we aim to promote young people’s belief in partnership and motivate them to utilise bi-national partnership as a tool for social change.

2. Critical Education: In order to empower youth to become responsible social agents who understand the challenges of the society they live in, and are passionate about addressing those challenges, Sadaka-Reut endorses education as a tool for social change. With this in mind, we seek to instill in youth the knowledge and tools needed to examine their surroundings critically, and to challenge ongoing injustices and rigid conflict narratives. Re-examining and challenging the status quo empowers participants to suggest alternatives to the current political and social structures and help bring about a more just and equal reality.

3. From Personal Transformation to Activism: Personal experience is the best way to learn and it is also crucial for cementing the attitudinal changes that participants go through over the course of the educational process at Sadaka-Reut. Therefore, the development and implementation of concrete social and political initiatives plays a vital role in all of Sadaka-Reut's programming, instilling youth with confidence in their ability to be change-makers in society. Youth are trained to connect their personal and individual narratives with the social and political structures endemic to Israeli society.

Our facilitators encourage youth to act locally within their communities and understand how the problems they encounter there are connected to the broader political context. This allows our participants to integrate the personal, social, and political aspects of their experience in a powerful, meaningful way.

Sadaka-Reut's educational approach is based on our theory of change, which encompasses the entire transformational process that the participants go through. It begins on the individual-personal level, continues on the relational level as partnerships develop in shared spaces, and concludes on the cultural level, with participants widening the circles of influence as they carry forward the Sadaka-Reut model wherever they go in life – with their families, in their communities, and in wider social contexts.

Sadaka-Reut's Projects and Educational Framework

Education is sometimes said to be a privilege reserved for youth and children. Sadaka-Reut disagrees. We believe that education is a never-ending process that does not stop once you reach a certain age. Therefore, Sadaka-Reut operates three main yearlong programs that differ according to the participants' age and stage in life:



Building a Culture of Peace (BCP) is a youth-focused program that seeks to raise a generation of young people who are socially and politically conscious and involved in their local communities. Every year, some 500 Jewish and Palestinian youths, ages 14-17, participate in the BCP project. Most of the youth come from disadvantaged and socio-politically marginalized communities. The goal of the program is to encourage the youth to critically examine their reality, identify injustices, and initiate as well as participate in efforts to promote social and political change.

With a staff made up of both Arabs and Jews, we educate and empower Palestinian and Jewish youth in Israel to pursue social and political change through bi-national partnership.

Community in Action (CIA) is a volunteering and leadership-development program for recent Palestinian and Jewish high school graduates as well as university students. Each year, the CIA program produces a bi-national cadre of young committed activists and leaders who have the tools, knowledge, and capacity to promote socio-political change towards a more just and equal society.

Partners in Shaping Reality (PSR) engages university students in dialogue and action groups. Providing a space for civic, political, and social discussions about the conflict and Jewish-Arab relations on campus, PSR encourages students to play an active, hands-on role and to be involved in changing the world around them, while giving them the skills needed to continue strengthening their voice once the program ends.

The Products of Bi-National Activism

Our belief in bi-national activism as a tool for change is manifested in the social initiatives that emerge from our various programs.

Our facilitators encourage youth to act locally within their communities and understand how the problems they encounter there are connected to the broader political context.

In recent years, participants in the Community in Action project have created a bi-national learning center and also initiated a campaign to disseminate information about the Palestinian history of the city of Jaffa. The campaign had a profound impact on participants, as they came to terms with their differing identities and gained a sense of self-worth.

In 2017, a Jewish youth group in Bat Yam (a city just south of Tel Aviv) taking part in the Building a Culture of Peace program created an initiative that connected participants' personal experiences to the broader societal reality. The group, made up primarily of Jews of Ethiopian descent, had suffered from police discrimination and racial profiling for a long time. Led by their Sadaka-Reut facilitator, they designed and produced a sticker that reads "Officer, why did you detain me? My color is not reasonable grounds!" - implying that the reason they are frequently frisked, searched, and harassed by police has more to do with their skin tone than their actions.

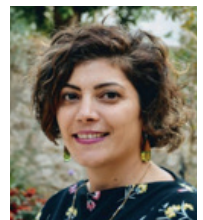
Two years later, after a police officer killed 18-year-old Solomon Tekka, an Israeli citizen of Ethiopian descent, the local Ethiopian community initiated a day of protest. Sadaka-Reut staff joined the protest with "My color is not reasonable grounds!" stickers. One of the original group participants saw this on the news and wrote to tell us how proud she was that the sticker had been distributed in the demonstration.

These are just two examples taken from over three decades of Sadaka-Reut's educational work. Stickers and consciousness-raising initiatives may seem small, but for our participants - some of whom go on to become facilitators and coordinators in Sadaka-Reut programs - they were meaningful experiences of initial success in their continuing journey as socio-political activists. We look forward to continuing our educational programs, which blend study with hands-on experience - a combination that enhances our participants' ability to become active leaders of social struggles, while also instilling in them a long-term commitment to Arab-Jewish bi-national activism. ■

Yigal Elhanan is the Co-Coordinator of Sadaka-Reut's "Community in Action" Project



Rawan Bisharat is the Co-Executive Director of Sadaka-Reut





THE 38th WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS- VOTE FOR HOPE - VOTE HATIKVAH!

Why should I vote?

- Because your voice matters
- Because the progressive American Jewish voice matters
- Because the World Zionist Congress elections are your opportunity to make that voice heard in Israel

The World Zionist Congress elections directly impact the flow of \$1,000,000,000 in budget annually. That billion dollars impacts every aspect of Israeli society and global Jewish life. Whether you are talking about the Occupation, religious pluralism, gender equity, LGBTQ equality or economic justice.

What is the World Zionist Congress?

For 123 years, the World Zionist Congress has been the democratic assembly of the Jewish people where every Jew in the world can have a voice in the most important issues confronting the Jewish state. The Congress makes funding and policy decisions for the World Zionist Organization, and its makeup helps determine the leadership of the Jewish Agency for Israel, The Jewish National Fund, and the United Israel Appeal.

Who is Hatikvah?

The Hatikvah slate is comprised of leaders representing a broad range of organizations, including ALPEH, Ameinu, Americans for Peace Now, Habonim Dror North America, Hashomer Hatzair, J Street, Jewish Labor Committee, National Council of Jewish Women, New Israel Fund, Partners for Progressive Israel and T'ruah, along with Rabbis, activists, academics, artists and others who have joined together to best represent you and your vision for a progressive Israel and world Jewry.

What has Hatikvah accomplished?

At prior World Zionist Congress, Hatikvah representatives have chaired the Settlement Committee and in doing so led a successful campaign to pass a resolution endorsing a two state solution and disallowing funding over the Green Line. This happened in spite of the violent objections of right-wing extremists from other slates. Hatikvah candidates have become leaders in the WZO and Jewish Agency Executive Committees on the strength of Hatikvah's delegation to the Congress, and those leaders are pivotal in maintaining financial support for youth movement shlichim, diverse religious streams, and other progressive priorities.

How do I vote?

Any self-identified Jewish person, who is or will be at least 18 years of age on June 30, 2020, lives in the United States, and who did not vote in the September 2019 Israel Knesset election, can vote in the American Zionist election for delegates to the 38th World Zionist Congress. You can cast your vote online starting January 21st, 2020 (until March 11th) at: www.zionistelection.org. Before then visit www.hatikvahslate.net or text HATIKVAH to 474747.





Vote for the Hatikvah Slate to Support a Democratic Jewish State!

OUR PLATFORM

We are inspired by Israel's Declaration of Independence –which proclaimed the State “will be based on the precepts of liberty, justice and peace as taught by the Prophets; and will uphold the full social and political equality of all its citizens, without distinction of race, creed, or sex; and will guarantee full freedom of conscience worship, education and culture.”

Our commitment is to democracy and the rule of law, believing that all citizens of the State of Israel must be treated equally, and their civil and human rights protected. We oppose policies of discrimination, fear, and tribalism.

We fiercely oppose the current policy of permanent occupation and annexation. It is unjust and will end Israel's democracy. The occupation is sustained by ongoing policies of repression that only serve to exacerbate conflict and require daily violence to maintain it.

We proudly stand with those Israelis searching for peace with Palestine. Their understanding, broadly shared at the highest levels of Israel's security services, that the current policies ultimately harm Israel's security, needs to be supported publicly and energetically so that a meaningful peace process can gain the popular support necessary to nurture and develop it.

Peace-seeking Israelis and Palestinians urgently need the encouragement and assistance of the Zionist movement to support their programs of dialogue, combined with political action to achieve our shared vision of a negotiated, mutually accepted two-state solution in which Israelis and Palestinians can live in peace and mutual security. This will also enable full and open peace with the Arab world and end Israel's growing pariah status.

We wholeheartedly support religious and cultural pluralism in Israeli society. For the State of Israel to be a primary engine for Jewish creative continuity, it must empower, not oppose, the wide range of Jewish cultural and religious expression.

We stand with Israelis demanding the protection of the rights of women, including equal pay for equal work, equal opportunity in politics, an end to enforced segregation, and an end to discrimination against women's full participation in public events, both military and civilian.

We stand with Israelis fighting against vigilante “modesty patrols” and other acts of harassment against women.

We stand with Israelis that welcome asylum seekers, treat foreign workers with the dignity that they deserve, and fight against racism in their society, be it against Jews of color or people of other faiths.

We stand with Israelis striving to ensure full legal and social equality for the LGBTQ community, including marriage rights.

We also stand with Israelis working to promote environmental sustainability and support working with Palestinians and neighboring countries to deal with regional threats to climate and to water resources.

Within our communities in North America, we also have much work to do. Against the challenge of anti-Semitism and white supremacist movements, we will work with communal partners, especially Muslim organizations, to promote a common defense to our shared safety and values through interfaith and intercommunal dialogue.

We are aligned with the values and policies of the Israeli Labor Party, Meretz, the Green Movement, and other like-minded Israeli movements, organizations, and activists. Together, we work to ensure that the Israel we leave to future generations reflects the best of the values, traditions and hopes we inherited from previous generations, while moving past endless conflict and toward a brighter future of peace.



HATIKVAH: Progressive Israel Slate is proudly supported by Aleph, Ameinu, Americans for Peace Now, Habonim Dror, Hashomer Hatzair, J Street, Jewish Labor Committee, New Israel Fund, National Council of Jewish Women, Partners for Progressive Israel and T'ruah along with Rabbis, social and environmental activists, academics, artists and others who have joined together to best represent you and your vision for a progressive Israel and world Jewry.

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“We all are Fighting to Save Democracy” *MK Nitzan Horowitz*



Head of Meretz Party, MK Nitzan Horowitz speaking at the 2019 J Street Conference in Washington, DC.

Dear friends, it's an honor and privilege to be here.

I attended your first ever convention 10 years ago in my first year at the Knesset and the work you have been doing since is utterly remarkable. Nevertheless, our common goal is not yet achieved. Ending occupation and promoting the two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians seem far and difficult. You're trying to harness American foreign policy to that end and that is essential. In order to succeed in this important battle we fight, we must see the bigger picture, and the bigger picture is about democracy.

We are fighting to save democracy. We are fighting to stop racism, discrimination, lies, and deception. We are fighting to stop fascism. All over the world, in Europe, in Latin America, in Asia, and yes, in Israel, and in the United States, we face a tsunami of hatred and bigotry led by rulers who have no redlines. These are people and political movements full of contempt to democratic values.

For them, these values in the institutions, the free media, the rule of law, the free-spirited culture, the freedom of speech, equality, all this for them is a nuisance, an obstacle which should be pushed out of the way. All these values are regarded by them as limiting, whereas they strive for power without limits. For us, Israelis and

American Jews, this is my friends a crucial battle.

In Israel, Netanyahu and his extreme right-wing allies are pushing aggressively for annexation of all of the Palestinian West Bank, for religious coercion, for racist legislation, and of course, for securing themselves endless term in power. We should not allow it. Because the very essence of this Zionist vision of our great dream, a Jewish and democratic state is in danger. Annexation, coercion, and racism would be the end of Israel as a Jewish and democratic nation.

Let me tell you that what I see concerns me and worries me a lot. The Jewish community here in this country, this prosperous and amazing Jewish community is facing growing and unprecedented anti-Semitism and violence.

This passing year alone was the most violent in the history of this community. Twelve people were murdered in two synagogues, many others wounded. Can we really close our eyes and say that there is no connection between all this hate and what happened in American politics since the last presidential campaign? Can we say that?

Those people attacking synagogues in Pittsburgh and Santiago and people attacking a synagogue in Halle, Germany on Yom Kippur are one and same. It is the same people, same criminals who burn a Palestinian boy in Jerusalem to his death. There aren't many sides to that, as your president put it after Charlottesville, Virginia. There're only two sides, either you are for democracy, for human rights, for peace, or you're against it. Each and every person in the US, in Israel, in France or in Brazil, should ask himself and herself, “Where do I stand, which side am I supporting?” This is the same fight and the same challenge in Israel and in the US. You cannot separate the fight against anti-Semitism from the fight for democratic values. It's the same front. You cannot fight against anti-Semitism and be quiet when Muslims or gay people are targeted.

An average American Jew cannot say, and I hear this a lot unfortunately. “I’m against racism in New York, but I keep quiet about racism in Israel.” No, this is the same battle. An average Israeli cannot say, “I feel strongly for freedom and tolerance and for my free secular lifestyle in Tel Aviv, but I don’t care about diminishing freedoms elsewhere in the world.” No, this is the same battle everywhere. The same forces are in motion here and in Israel, sometimes even, by the way, the same people and the same money.

In order to counter and defeat them, we have to be much more active and do it together. It's a two-way street. Israelis should be active, present and vocal in your struggle here, against racism and anti-Semitism. We should not follow Netanyahu's foreign policy in putting all the eggs in one right-wing republican basket.

All those tweets and statements by President Trump, that glorified nationalists and insulted American Jews. He said, “Voting democrat was disloyal.” And Israeli leadership, what did they do? Mumbled some words of sympathy, but took pains to shield Trump and his incitement from any blame. No, we should act differently. By-partisan support is essential to Israel, always been.

Let me say something about the US Democratic Party. The US Democratic Party is a valued friend of Israel, regardless of what Netanyahu is saying.

The US Democratic Party is a party of civil liberties and thus, a home for so many Jewish Americans over the past century. Israel must bridge the gap with the Democratic party, a gap created under Netanyahu. By the way, banning the American Congresswomen from entering Israel is not the way to do it.

At the same time, American friends of Israel should not follow Trump's lead in giving Netanyahu and the settlers a green light for annexation and discrimination. What should be done? Work together with the Israeli left, be who you are, let us be who we are; progressive left-wing defenders of democracy together here and in Israel.

Let us work together on the two-state solution but also minority rights, on LGBT rights. I'm going to tell you a secret. As it happens, I am the first head of a party in Israel who is openly gay.

Let's work together on freedom of religion and freedom from religion. There are so many things we can do and we can achieve mutually.

Finally, maybe there is a light at the end of this dark tunnel. Here and in Israel, we see strong movements resisting hate and corruption. So many young people here at your convention, amazing people, activists, volunteers, amazing people. We have to seize the opportunity and form a new government in Israel based on the center-left parties, including the Joint Arab List.

I'm telling this to you as head of a Zionist Party, as an Israeli wishing to achieve Jewish-Arab partnership in Israel based on equal citizenship, and yes, Netanyahu and all the right-wing racist parties must realize there is no future to Israel without Jewish-Arab partnership. This is the cornerstone to us.

I'm an Israeli, I'm patriotic, I love my country and I want it to be equal and just and peace with our neighbors. This is the Israel, this is my Israel, I think this is also your Israel.

Many people are skeptical and they have doubts, they don't know what will happen. They're frustrated with the situation here and in Israel and around the world, all those dark forces raising. I tell you my friends, we shall overcome. Because as Martin Luther King said, “The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” And he said this, for the first time I think in a sermon at Temple Israel in Hollywood, 1965.

Let me conclude with the words of Rabbi Max Nussbaum on that day with Reverend King at Temple Israel in Hollywood. He said, “I hope that together we may move away from the mountain of hatred and prejudice toward the large and glorious valley of human brotherhood.” That's our ambition, that's our goal and we will achieve it. Thank you very much. ■

MK Nitzan Horowitz was a featured speaker at the recent J Street Conference – this is an edited version of his remarks given on October 28, 2019.

EVENT

Partners' Speaker Series Event: Young Jews and Arabs Working Together

By Leonard Grob



Noon on October 31st saw two members of Hashomer Hatzair World Movement and two members of its sister Palestinian youth movement, Ajyal, assemble in a conference room adjoining Partners' office to speak about their joint work for a just, peaceful, and shared society within Israel. All four educator/activists opened the forum with brief accounts of the goals of their respective movements, noting both some successes of a variety of their initiatives and their attempts to meet the challenges confronting joint Jewish-Arab collaboration. May Qadah, head of Ayal's education division, and Ayman Kabha, Secretary-General of the movement, addressed the special challenges facing young Palestinians with Israeli citizenship as they attempt to reach out to their Israeli-Jewish counterparts. Oren Zukierkorn, Secretary General of Hashomer's World Movement, and Daniel Roth, Coordinator of the Movement's English-Speaking Countries, told of the array of grassroots activities sponsored by the two youth organizations. Of special note was their joint initiative helping victims of the conflict in Syria who had fled the war to land as refugees on the Greek island of Lesbos. In the spirit of active engagement integral to their collaboration, the four speakers opened the lion's share of the session to spirited dialogue with an audience eager to hear news of successful cooperation between young Arabs and Jews in Israel. Partners for Progressive Israel is proud to have sponsored an event that leaves its listeners with renewed hope for cooperative grassroots endeavors within Israeli society. ■



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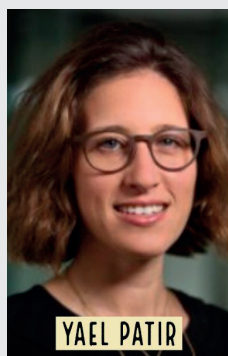
DECEMBER 2019 WEBINAR

CONVERSATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND PALESTINE SERIES

Can Progressive Americans Contribute to an Israeli Left Revival?

Wednesday, December 18, 2020 @ 12:30 pm ET

PANELISTS



Yael Patir

Israel Director
J Street



Uri Zaki

Founder, the Front
Protection of
Democracy



David Myers

Board President
New Israel Fund

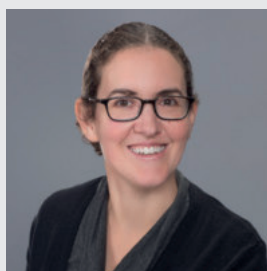
JANUARY 2020 WEBINAR

CONVERSATIONS WITH ISRAEL AND PALESTINE SERIES

Welcome the Stranger: Refugees, and Asylum-Seekers in Israel

Wednesday, January 8, 2020 @ 12:30 pm ET

PANELISTS



**Tally
Kritzman-Amir**



**Mutasim
A. Ali**

REGISTER

Gaza: Solutions in the Absence of a Two-State Solution?



On October 23, 2019, partners for Progressive Israel conducted a webinar in its monthly series, “Conversations with Israel and Palestine,” focusing on the situation in the Gaza Strip. This is an abridged and edited version of that Conversation. A recording of the full Conversation, running approximately 1 hour, can be found [here](#).

Daniel Nerenberg: My name is Daniel Nerenberg, and I’m the communications manager for Just Vision, a nonprofit dedicated to increasing the power and reach of Palestinians and Israelis who are working to end the occupation and build a just, free, and equal future. Tania Hary is the executive director of Gisha, a legal center championing freedom of movement. Mkhaimar Abusada is an associate professor and chairman of the department of political science at Al-Azhar University in Gaza. Tania, last year you wrote an article in *The Jerusalem Post* that stated that most Israelis and many Americans falsely believe that Israel left Gaza in 2005 when it pulled its troops and settlers from the territory. Few realize that Israel controls almost every aspect of life there.

Tania: Unfortunately, the situation in Gaza is not getting the attention it deserves. Gisha means access or approach in Hebrew, we were founded in 2005, before the disengagement, to look at what Israel’s responsibility would be to residents of Gaza in the

new situation disengagement created. We knew that it would be different from the West Bank, but you really didn’t have to be a fortune-teller to know that Israel would maintain control over movement and access, on the ground, by sea, in the air, and especially its control over the Palestinian population registry, and more. You can group these into categories of movement and access, but it really filters down into almost every aspect of day-to-day life. We believe owes responsibilities because of that level of control.

Mkhaimar: As a resident of the Gaza Strip, I know that what Tania says is true. Israel ‘disengaged’ from the Gaza Strip but it still surrounds the Gaza Strip from three sides; from the north and east sides and from the sea. This Israeli siege, which was imposed on Gaza after Hamas won the Palestinian elections in January 2006, was tightened after Hamas seized power in Gaza in the summer of 2007. It has turned Gaza as the biggest open-air prison on the face of Earth. Only a very limited number

of Palestinians are able to travel to the West Bank although, according to the Oslo Accords, the West Bank and Gaza Strip are considered one territorial unit. Egypt also limits access at the Rafah Border Crossing to the south. At least 70% of the two million Palestinians in the Strip rely on food aid from UNRWA (the UN Relief and Works Agency) and from the WFP (the World Food Program). More than half of the Palestinians in Gaza are unemployed; youth unemployment is about 65%. In 2012 the UN issued a report asserting that Gaza wouldn't be a habitable in 2020, which is not far off. Life is miserable here in Gaza in terms of electricity, potable water, health care, schooling, access and movement, poverty, unemployment, and more.



Daniel: Given that it doesn't seem as though Israel is likely to end the blockade any time soon, are there ways that humanitarian relief efforts can actually make significant changes short of being a political movement?

Mkhaimar: The two-state solution is just fading away for a number of reasons, including numerous provocations from Israel, such as the siege and blockade against Gaza, and Netanyahu's recent promise annex West Bank settlements. Also, I have to admit that the Palestinian support for the two-state solution is getting less and less attention in the face of Israeli actions. Still, let me say that we, the Palestinians, certainly we the Palestinian moderates, are still hopeful of a two-state solution, and are supporting a Palestinian state and the West Bank and Gaza that live in peace and security alongside the state of Israel.

Gaza is suffering as a result of three parties. One is the Israeli siege and blockade against Gaza as we have described earlier. Second, as a result of the PA punitive measures which had been introduced by the PA about two and a half years ago, starting from April 2017, when the PA cut down the PA salaries, cut down on the number of Palestinian patients who are referred to Israeli hospitals and to West Bank hospitals, and also sent

many PA public servants into early retirement. That has led to catastrophic daily conditions for the Palestinians.

Also, the two million Palestinians who live in the Gaza Strip are being held hostages by Hamas who is ruling as an authoritarian entity in the Gaza Strip with no civil liberties and no political rights. We remember what happened to the Palestinians who revolted against Hamas in March of this year and how Hamas security services have dealt with them in a very brutal way, against journalists, human rights activists, and against the Palestinian civilians in general.

It is the duty of the international community to intervene and put pressure on Israel to alleviate its siege and blockade against the Gaza Strip and also, and it's the responsibility of the international community and especially the EU to put pressure on the PA to alleviate its punitive measures against Gaza and to try to encourage more and more countries like Qatar who are investing in the Gaza infrastructure.

Tania: I do think it's important to take a step back and acknowledge, if it's not obvious, that what's happening in Gaza is a man-made crisis. It's not a natural disaster. At the end of the day, a man-made crisis has man-made solutions or as I sometimes like to say, maybe women-made solutions.

I think that we should acknowledge that there are technical things that can be done and improved in the meantime. At the same time, let's ask what policy changes need to happen, so that we're not just plugging holes in a ship that's sinking but steering a course to somewhere. Another point of context and to connect to what Mkhaimar said: no one actor in this picture, not the PA, not Hamas, not Israel, not the international community can operate alone to fix the situation.

I think that most people in Gaza, Mkhaimar, correct me if I'm wrong, if you ask them, "What's one of your most pressing concerns?" They're going to talk about their daily lives and they're going to talk about electricity. Everything connects back to electricity. I think that that is something certainly that needs to be paid attention to. The question of infrastructure. Electricity is everything, access to water, the sewage treatment network, education, everything. I think that right now, we're in a situation where things are a little bit better than they have been in the past. Gazans get eight, sometimes even 12 hours of electricity per day while a little while ago they were just down at three to four hours per day. That's because Qatar stepped in and it's paying for fuel

that is being brought in for Gaza's power plant. But, again, it's a temporary fix.

Life is miserable here in Gaza in terms of electricity, potable water, health care, schooling, access and movement, poverty, unemployment, and more.

If you look at the situation of the economy, electricity is one input, and the other major input is movement and access. I think it's something that people sitting in Brooklyn or Tel Aviv take for granted, but it's really the key to everything in your life, including things that are invisible to you, like the way that your goods end up in your supermarket and your ability to engage in trade.

Many people on this call might think, "Well, what about security? Isn't everything related at the end of the day to security?" I would like security to be the only bar when we're talking about movement and access. That's very far from the case. Really, so many other factors come in to play, including political decisions and calculations about putting pressure on the population, about protecting markets, about, for example, excess products inside of Israel being dumped on the Gaza Strip. Security is certainly not the only factor even though it should be.

My sense is that people in Gaza feel that there is nothing that is positive, that there's no solution on the horizon for them. I think that something we really need to do as Israelis, as Palestinians, as members of the international community is to restore hope for young people, especially to show that they are seen, that they are heard, that Gaza is part of the picture, that there are two million people living there and that they will be taken into account, that they will not be forgotten.

Daniel: What about the possibility of new elections, either round three in Israel or the possibility of PA legislative elections? Are these possible signs of hope?

Mkhaimar: Well, let me start by saying that hope is the only thing that keeps many people like me in the Gaza Strip. If we lose hope, it means that people are just going to leave. Many thousands have left. They are already in Turkey, or some have already reached Europe because they have lost hope. Speaking of all-Palestinian elections, it's something that all the Palestinians are calling for. But most Gazans are not looking to elections as a solution and not very optimistic about the possibility of holding elections in the West Bank and Gaza for a number of reasons. First of all, the Palestinian president has indicated that

he's going to call for only legislative elections for now. That is not acceptable to Hamas at all. Hamas is saying that either there will be elections for the presidency and for the legislative branch or there will be no elections. But more important perhaps than elections themselves, we are saying, "Before we go into elections, we, the Palestinians have to agree on the day after elections." Because we don't want to find ourselves in the same position as after the 2006 elections when Hamas won the elections and the international community refused to accept the results, and proceeded to isolate Hamas and the PA. Another issue is whether Israel will allow the Palestinians in East Jerusalem to participate. I think we really need a Palestinian national dialogue to try to reach an understanding or as we call it in Arabic, *mithaq sharaf* or an oral agreement or consensus to respect the results of any future elections in the Palestinian territories.

People in Gaza, and in the West Bank as well, deserve to live. They deserve not just to survive but to thrive. I think it's about recognizing the situation on the ground and not being satisfied just with a few more nautical miles or a few more hours of electricity.

Tania: I tend to be a fairly optimistic person. That said, I'm not very hopeful that either a government formed by Netanyahu or by the opposition Blue-White Party would be significantly different on this particular issue. Moreover, I think there are people who are determined to implement a certain vision in this region based on a concept of fragmenting the Palestinian population. We've already seen it being implemented over a number of decades. The peace of Gaza is the isolation of Gaza. Hamas coming to power certainly sealed the deal, but well before Hamas came to power, we already saw extreme restrictions on movement, inability to travel between Gaza and the West Bank, to relocate from Gaza to the West Bank.

I think that all of these tools of separation have led us to where we are today and have also paved the way for a negative vision of a different kind of two-state solution than what we've seen in the past, which would be Israel and the West Bank as one entity and Gaza as a separate entity. That's the bad news from my perspective.

That said, there's more talk about bringing stability to Gaza. You'll often hear people say that neither of the parties want another war, they don't want another military operation. From my perspective, Israel is managing the situation in a way to keep things quiet, to keep things calm. At the same time, what we're seeing is the desire

to keep the pot of water very, very hot but keep it from boiling, such as expanding the fishing zone in the last year, adding more permits for traders or even laborers recently. Yes, I am really scrounging for some optimism, but I think that the idea is to go to a situation where there is an agreement that it's not okay to experiment with people's lives, it's not okay just to manage the situation. People in Gaza, and in the West Bank as well, deserve to live. They deserve not just to survive but to thrive. I think it's about recognizing the situation on the ground and not being satisfied just with a few more nautical miles or a few more hours of electricity. Not saying the humanitarian situation is good enough as it is if people aren't openly dying in the streets, it's saying that people have the right to aspire to the highest standard of living possible. I think as civil society organizations, certainly, we have a role to play in articulating this vision.

Daniel: What do you think the odds are that the Rafah Crossing between Gaza and Egypt, will remain open long-term? How are young people able to leave Gaza, and where are they going to?

Mkhaimar: Between 2013 and May 2018 was opened two or three days every two or three months. Very limited number of Palestinians were able to go in and out of Gaza during those years. The situation right now is much better. Egypt opened Rafah Crossing as a result of the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza. And it came about as a result of mutual security understandings between Hamas and the Egyptians. Rafah is open five days a week between Sunday and Thursday, around 300 to 350 people are able to leave from Gaza on daily basis to Egypt and from Egypt they make it to the outside world. Still, there are thousands of Palestinians who are registered to travel or leave Gaza, and they have to wait on average about two to three months to be able to leave.

From Gaza, it's now easier to get to Turkey, to China, or to the US than it is to get to Ramallah, which illustrates how deep the separation is between Gaza and the West Bank.

Overall, the situation in the last year-and-a half is, I think, under the control of the Egyptian army, in spite of the fact that a number of terrorist attacks were launched by ISIS against the Egyptian army. Some people say that the opening of Rafah is a good thing, and others say the opposite. That's because, as a result of the opening of Rafah, thousands of Palestinian youth have already left Gaza on a one-way trip with no hopes of bringing them back

because of poverty, unemployment, and the other problems which we have discussed.

The international community could be doing quite a bit more; to demand, for example, greater movement and access that would allow the economy to function, allow infrastructure to function, allow people to live their lives with dignity.

Overall, I think Rafah will stay open and we will probably see more and more people leaving Gaza to Egypt, and going on to Turkey or Europe. But this can be a very deadly trip, and some Palestinians lost their lives in their trip from Gaza.

Tania: Rafah, of course, doesn't connect to the West Bank and certainly not to Israel. Rafah is an important access point to the outside world, but it can't connect to other Palestinians in the West Bank, and to the relatively resource-rich West Bank. Of course, from Gaza, it's now easier to get to Turkey, to China, or to the US than it is to get to Ramallah, which illustrates how deep the separation is between Gaza and the West Bank. And Palestinians need visas to go to most places in the world. Egyptians do not want the Palestinians to stay in Egypt. You may have seen reports that in Belgium recently it was reported that after Syrians, people from Gaza are the next largest group of people asking for asylum. At the same time, there's a bit of a pushback. We are hearing about several European countries trying to send people back to Gaza.

Daniel: Do Gazans feel that the Great March of Return in the spring and summer of 2018, these demonstrations on the border with Israel, have been an effective political tool of resistance to lift the siege and procure human rights, or rather just a political ploy by Hamas to gain greater control over the population?"

Mkhaimar: I'm not really sure. The Great March of Return started as a non-partisan Palestinian movement to try to bring to the attention of the international community and the neighboring countries that there is a humanitarian crisis in Gaza. It was intended to put pressure on Israel, to alleviate the daily conditions of Palestinians in Gaza.

It certainly brought the issue to international attention, even in the United States, but the price the Palestinians have paid is very heavy, almost 300 Palestinians killed and thousands injured. In the end Hamas hijacked this protest by influencing and manipulating the protesters for their own agenda. There's no dispute about the

fact that Hamas is now in very much in full control of the Great March of Return, but this is not how it started.

The Great March of Return started as a non-partisan Palestinian movement to try to bring to the attention of the international community and the neighboring countries that there is a humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Daniel: What power does the international community have over Israel, since any significant policy move will come down to Israel's choices?

Tania: I do think that it's important for the international community to use its leverage. It's certainly true that without international aid, without the support that is flowing into the Gaza Strip from different countries, we would be in a different situation. We would be having a different conversation. Aid is very much propping up the situation. I think it's a very false sense of stability that there is in the strip today. As Mkhaimar mentioned earlier, about 70% of the population relies on humanitarian aid, including food aid. If that aid disappears, we're in a very desperate situation. I think that the fact that the international community is essentially footing the bill, that they're essentially keeping the population alive, should give them a lot more leverage to speak openly about the fact that the situation is unsustainable.

The sense I have increasingly is that there is quite a bit of fatigue in the international community. Crises elsewhere are drawing the international community's attention, certainly in the US. You have your own issues that you're dealing with and following domestically, and the situation of Israel-Palestine is less and less central, it's less and less important. For the moment the aid situation is more or less stable, certainly after many countries rallied after the US pulled its support for UNWRA, but that situation is not sustainable.

I do think that the international community has a responsibility not just to throw money at the problem, but to actually articulate a clear vision for what needs to happen. Gisha doesn't have a position on the political solution to the conflict, but we very much have a position on the question of people's human rights, on the question of dignity, on the question of how people can live their lives.

I think that there is much that can be done, as noted earlier, that could transform the situation. Even absent the broader political questions, I think that the international community

could be doing quite a bit more; to demand, for example, greater movement and access that would allow the economy to function, allow infrastructure to function, allow people to live their lives with dignity.

Daniel: Can you talk about the gender implications of the situation in Gaza?

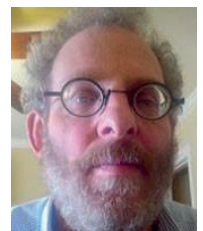
Mkhaimar: Arab society very much discriminates against women. I think that women's rights and the status of woman in the Palestinian territories in general, is much better than in many countries in the region. There's no doubt that women in Gaza are very much restricted in many aspects of life since we are speaking of a very conservative society. Palestinian women haven't received the dignity and honor and respect that they should get in return for their fight against the occupation, and for their outspokenness in Gaza against authoritarian rule by Hamas and its security services.

Tania: I do want to say just add to that, for Gisha, this is a subject that is near and dear to us. We will be publishing, I hope, a gendered analysis of the criteria regarding movement of people. Just to give one example, we've touched on the issue of permits for what are referred to as business people or traders. Unfortunately women, professional women who are working in civil society and small businesses, are not eligible for permits for professional reasons. It's simply not a criteria, it's not a category for which you can apply for a permit. This is something that can change overnight with a policy decision, and I think it really has nothing to do with Israeli security, and has everything to do with how we can take steps to improve the situation for everyone in the region.

Daniel: Thank you Tania for that. I want to thank both of you, Mkhaimar Abusada and Tania Harry for joining us, for offering us your insights. You can go to progressiveisrael.org to learn more about Partners for Progressive Israel and their future programs. ■

Thanks to Peter Eisenstein, a member of Partners' Board of Directors, for editing and condensing this discussion. The full video is available on the Partners' website [here](#).

Peter Eisenstadt is an independent historian who lives in Clemson, South Carolina. He is completing a biography of the African-American religious thinker Howard Thurman, to be published by the University of Virginia Press.



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