



President's Message

Alert readers of Israel Horizons will note that many of the articles in this issue were inspired by our annual Symposium in Israel, held in late June this year. We spent a week in meetings in Tel Aviv and travelling through much of Israel from north to south, plus several trips to the West Bank, including to the settlement of Tekoah, and to the military court at Ofer prison. I had also spent the previous five weeks in Israel on a working vacation: participating in a conference, doing research, working on the academic journal I edit, and, of course, seeing many friends, old and new.

My two strongest impressions were these:

- The occupation, sadly, is alive and well and humming along smoothly. Of course this could change in a flash, as it did when the first intifada erupted in December 1987, confounding both the Israeli government and the PLO leadership. But I saw no evidence of that, for what it's worth. Many Palestinians seemed beaten down, simply trying to salvage a decent life from the situation. They are no more accepting of the Occupation than ever, but given both the situation on the ground and that in the international community, especially the US of course, it is hard to be hopeful.
- The second impression may seem diametrically opposite but I think that it, in fact, flows from the first. All of the symposium participants, very much including me, were heartened by the number of individuals and organizations who are working creatively and, I believe fruitfully, to both end the Occupation and to restore humanistic and liberal values to Israeli society and policies. This is, unsurprisingly, especially true of young people in their twenties and thirties, who have grown up largely since the second intifada and who want to restore a vision of Israel as progressive and inclusive. They fully realize the challenges they face, but I was frankly amazed at their energy and their numbers. They are the Israelis who Partners seeks to support in our programs.

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We Have a Dream: That the Nation-State Law will be Replaced by Israel's Declaration of Independence

By Hillel Schenker



The Nation-State Law hastily passed by the Knesset on July 19th, 2018, is a watershed moment in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It has already inspired two mass demonstrations against the law in Tel Aviv, one led by the Druze minority on Saturday August 4, with over 100,000 participants, and the other on the following Saturday night, organized by the Arab Higher Monitoring Committee, the representative body of the Palestinian-Israeli citizens who are 20% of the Israeli population, with over 50,000 participants. In both cases, there was a mass participation of Jewish Israelis, who came to protest against the law and express their solidarity with their fellow Druze and Arab citizens. I was one of them.

I just missed the March on Washington in 1963, so I didn't get to hear Martin Luther King talk about the dream that served as an inspiration for so many in the civil rights movement. The energy I felt at the two Tel Aviv demonstrations felt like a similar moment in Israeli history, and it inspired me to write the following words on my Facebook page, that received more "likes" and "shares" than anything I have ever posted, reflecting the hope that many people feel:

Last night in Rabin Square at the demonstration organized by the Druze leaders against the racist, nationalistic Nation-State Law, I saw the sun rise in the middle of

the dark night, and the emergence of new energy which hopefully signals the beginning of the counter-revolution against our extreme right-wing government, which is rapidly turning Israel into an illiberal democracy.

The Nation-State Law declares that "the Land of Israel is the historical homeland of the Jewish people, in which the State of Israel was established" and "the right to exercise national self-determination in the State of Israel is exclusive to the Jewish people." It also downgrades Arabic from an official language to one with "special status," and declares that "Jerusalem, complete and united, is the capital of Israel" and that "the development of Jewish settlement projects is a national value."

The law contradicts United Nations Security Council Resolution 181 — the 1947 Partition Plan that serves as the basis for Israel's international legitimacy — which calls for the establishment of two states, one Jewish and one Arab, in the area of Mandatory Palestine.

It also runs counter to the principles of Israel's liberal and humanistic Declaration of Independence, which states that the State of Israel will "foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights

to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations.”

Hopefully, the two demonstrations against the Nation-State Law in Tel Aviv are merely the first acts in a successful struggle to return the State of Israel to its more democratic and egalitarian roots and aspirations.

Speakers at both rallies harshly criticized the law as anti-democratic, and as creating an apartheid-like situation, in which Arabs are either second-class citizens or simply ignored. The common slogan at both rallies was the call for “equality for all,” and former Shin Bet (General Security Services) head Yuval Diskin, one of the main speakers at the first rally, said simply that “the Nation-State Law should be repealed, and the Declaration of Independence should become the basis of Israeli constitutional law.”

Ah, there's the rub. Unlike the United States, Israel has no constitution. Israel had a group of very wise and courageous founding fathers and mothers, led by David Ben-Gurion who finalized the formulation of the Declaration and read it out in Tel Aviv on May 14, 1948. He can be congratulated for his leadership qualities, even if he didn't always internalize the essence of democratic principles. Demonstrations of farsighted statesmanship include his readiness to declare the independence of the state, knowing that it would be confronted with invasion from the neighboring countries, and his decision to accept German reparations as an acknowledgement of responsibility for the Holocaust which saved the Israeli economy, both critical decisions in the history of the country. After he retired he also recommended to then Chief of Staff Yitzhak Rabin not to launch the preventive Six Day War in 1967 without which there would have been no occupation, and after the war ended, recommended that the West Bank and Gaza be returned in exchange for peace.

However he also made two very destructive decisions whose negative impact are still being felt today. He closed the separate labor movement track in the educational system, insisting that it should become a part of the general public school system, while allowing the National Religious educational track to continue. After 1967 this track provided much of the human resources for the settlement movement and the movement of the Bnei Akiva national religious youth

movement to the extreme right, while the closing of the labor track had a negative impact on the democratic left.

The second decision was not to finalize a constitution, which would have anchored the foundation of the state in the principles of the Declaration of Independence, and clearly defined the relationship between religion and state. The Declaration actually states that “a constitution (will) be drawn up by a constituent assembly not later than the first day of October, 1948...”, but here we are, 70 years later, and still there is no constitution. In 1948, Ben-Gurion and his colleagues had an historic opportunity to outline the guiding principles of Israeli society, similar to what the American founding fathers did with the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. They didn't do it, primarily because they were afraid of defining the always fraught relationship between religion and state.

Instead, a series of constitutional laws have been passed over the years which form the basis of Israel's constitutional infrastructure. The Nation-State Law is the latest addition to this series, and it unfortunately moves Israel further down the road towards an illiberal democracy, part of a global trend which includes Trump's U.S., Eastern European countries like Hungary and Poland, as well Erdogan's Turkey, which was a moderately successful secular democracy as recently as the beginning of this century.

Hopefully, the two demonstrations against the Nation-State Law in Tel Aviv are merely the first acts in a successful struggle to return the State of Israel to its more democratic and egalitarian roots and aspirations. It is encouraging that many mainstream American Jewish organizations, as well as the liberal ones like Partners for Progressive Israel, are strenuously opposing the new law. And even a conservative like Ron Lauder, President of the World Jewish Congress, was ready to publish an op-ed in The New York Times criticizing the Nation-State Law under the title “Israel, This is Not Who We Are.” ■

*Hillel Schenker is Co-Editor of the
Jerusalem-based Palestine-Israel Journal
(www.pij.org), a former member of the Meretz
Conference, and former Chair of Democrats
Abroad – Israel, and lives in Tel Aviv.*





PRESS RELEASE

Partners for Progressive Israel Vigorously Opposes Israel's Nation-State Law

- Partners for Progressive Israel, a member of the American Zionist Movement and affiliated with the World Zionist Organization, expresses its absolute opposition to the 'Nation-State Law', recently enacted by the Israeli government.
- The main purpose of the law is to provide the legal foundation for discrimination against non-Jewish Israeli citizens.
- The law directly contradicts the universalist principles expressed in the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel in 1948.

"THE STATE OF ISRAEL will be open for Jewish immigration and for the Ingathering of the Exiles; **it will foster the development of the country for the benefit of all its inhabitants**; it will be based on freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel; **it will ensure complete equality of social and political rights to all its inhabitants irrespective of religion, race or sex**; it will guarantee freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture; it will safeguard the Holy Places of all religions; and it will be faithful to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations." [Emphasis added]

- The law also aims to exploit the Jewish Diaspora in order to bolster the State's claim to represent the Jewish People. We in the Diaspora support Israel but reject this claim. We assert that many of Israel's current policies, most notably the Occupation, are repugnant to Jewish values historically and as they are practiced around the world.
- In expressing our opposition, we join with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, Deputy Attorney-General Raz Nizri, Former Shin Bet Head Ami Ayalon, and numerous Jewish and non-Jewish Members of Knesset including Tzipi Livni, leader of the Knesset Opposition and Tamar Zandberg, Leader of the Meretz party, and many other leading Israeli citizens who have spoken out against the law. The law has garnered opposition from many mainstream American Jewish organizations, including the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) and the Union for Reform Judaism.
- We call upon the Knesset to rescind this anti-democratic and anti-Jewish law and, in its place, affirm the principles of democracy and equal civil rights for all citizens of the State of Israel.

Contact for more information

Phone: +1 212 242 4500 Email: info@progressiveisrael.org

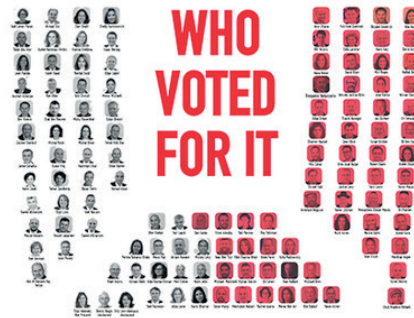
www.progressiveisrael.org



Last July, a narrow majority of 62 Members of Knesset voted to approve the Nation State Law, an appalling piece of legislation designed to denigrate minorities in Israel as well as diaspora Jews. This law is an attack on democracy and a danger to Israel's future.

Israelis and those who care about Israel deserve answers from those who voted for it. And we can help them get those answers. [Please click here to take the pledge](#) to hold the MKs who voted for this law accountable.

THE NATION-STATE LAW:
HOLD THEM TO ACCOUNT.
DEMAND ANSWERS.
TAKE THE PLEDGE.



I PLEDGE that if any of the 62 Members of Knesset who voted for the Nation State Law speak in my community, at a conference I am attending, or on a delegation to Israel that I participate in, I will demand answers from them about why they voted for a discriminatory and undemocratic law.

Many Israelis are already standing up and opposing this Law and reaffirming the principles of democracy and equality enshrined in Israel's Declaration of Independence. We need to join and work with them!

They are counting on us to stand up for equality too. Hold the MKs to account. Demand Answers.

TAKE THE PLEDGE

Thanks for your work in helping to make Israel more democratic.



A Letter from Dror Morag, Head of the Zionist Enterprises Department of the World Zionist Organization



Dear Friends,

I would like to share with you some insights about the work my colleagues and I are doing as the Meretz representatives in the World Zionist Organization.

The role we at Meretz play in the WZO is based on our representation in the Zionist Congress, the main Zionist institution in which world unions of Israeli parties, as well as major Jewish denominations and organizations are represented (e.g. the Reform and Conservative movements). The number of delegates each party has is based both on its relative power in the Knesset and the number of votes it receives in the Jewish world. Elections are held every five years; the next will be in the spring of 2020. Meretz has a better representation in the Zionist Congress than it has in the Knesset thanks to you – our supporters in the US and other communities around the world.

This strong representation has entitled us to an executive position on the WZO's board. In fact, the Zionist Enterprises Department is the only place today where Meretz holds an executive mandate. The ZED is charged with carrying out projects that make Zionism relevant in today's world. Using social action as a means to reach its goals, the ZED is widening its vision and establishing partnerships and projects to impact Israeli reality on the ground.

Some of the traditional and existing institutions within the ZED include:

- **The Central Zionist Archives**

Preserving the historic documents of Zionist history for future generations.

- **The Bialik Institute Publishing House**

Fostering and promoting Hebrew literature and research to enhance Hebrew culture.

- **The 'Magshimim' Movements**

The *Magshimim* (fulfillment) movements are responsible for the development of the future Zionist leadership in the Diaspora.

- **The Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive**

The largest Jewish documentary film repository in the world comprising Jewish subject matter, with over 18,000 titles.

Alongside these existing Zionist institutions, I've initiated these projects to advance our shared values of promoting social justice, pluralism, and democracy:

- **Back to the Declaration of Independence**

Emphasizing the democratic, humanistic, and egalitarian values on which the State of Israel is based, and seeking to strengthen these values in high-school students.

- **Mofet – The Social Accelerator**

Social initiatives and entrepreneurs were selected that have innovative and pioneering ideas for advancing social justice, bringing the periphery closer to the centers of population, narrowing income gaps, and furtherance of tolerance, equality and democracy in Israeli society. Projects are allowed a short and intensive period of 4 months to achieve a successful social venture.

Twenty-seven talented entrepreneurs successfully completed the first Mofet course and eight initiatives received start-up grants for their ventures run in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. The program is scheduled to expand to additional localities shortly.

I want to tell you about two outstanding ventures that we supported in the framework of the ‘accelerator’. Tech2Peace organizes seminars for young Arab and Jewish Israelis together with high-tech fields training, such as programming, development of applications, and 3-D printing. The participants hold dialogue workshops aimed at creating long-lasting connections between them and bridging divides among Israeli population groups.

Another venture is organizing a job fair for people with disabilities. The entrepreneur behind the project is a disabled woman who, with the Department’s support, is organizing a conference in October 2018 at Tel Aviv University. It will include lectures and workshops on the employment and integration of people with disabilities, which is expected to lead to choice positions in leading companies offered to new employees with disabilities.

- **The ‘Hatzuyah’ Theater Production**

This play is a dramatic adaptation of the stories of two young Ethiopian Jewish girls’ about their absorption and integration into Israeli society. It presents the identity conflicts they experienced with regard their dual identities and raises questions about the nature of Israeli society that we seek to place on the agenda.

- **A One-Year Leadership Program for Ethiopian Jewish Teens**

This program aims to develop the next generation of Ethiopian community leaders in Israel, strengthens feelings of belonging and pride in the community, brings the youngsters close to their heritage, and nurtures their Israeli identity. It climaxes with a 10-day trip to Ethiopia, in which the youngsters are exposed to their personal and family stories, visit the villages where their families lived, and learn about a significant and important chapter in the Zionist story.

- **Project Ten**

Setting up centers where young Israelis volunteer alongside other young Jews from around the world. One center is located at Kibbutz Harduf in the north, while the other four are located around the world (Ghana, Mexico, Uganda, and South Africa).

A new center will be located in Mitzpe Ramon, where the volunteers will work in the local community and in the unrecognized Bedouin villages in the area. By working in the center, the volunteers enhance values of *tikkun olam* and promote coexistence of Jews and Muslims from Israel’s periphery.

- **Launching a TV Program: 120 Years of Zionism**

This series was produced in honor of 120 years of Zionism and the 70th anniversary of the State of Israel. It is designed to provide children and youth with historical and ideological lesson on various episodes in the history of Zionism. A recommended episode for viewing is at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0scynERBAHA&t=>

- **Kibbutz Movement Leadership/Social Entrepreneurship Program**

Aiming to promote and foster leadership and social entrepreneurship in future generations.

- **Stipends to Students in the Druze Community**

A scholarship program to promote the integration of young Druze men and women studying the exact sciences in the labor market and in Israeli society as a whole.

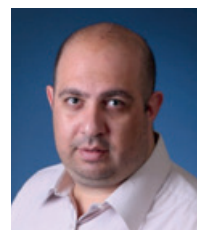
I hope this gives you an idea of the work we are doing to promote our shared values in Israel via the WZO. I want to thank all our supporters and Partners for Progressive Israel for their support over many years.

Please don’t hesitate to be in touch to get more information and offer ideas. My door is always open for you. ■

Sincerely,

Dror Morag

*Head of the Zionist Enterprises
Department - The World Zionist
Organization*



Barta'a Over the Years: A Meditation

By Lydia Aisenberg



The Wadi Ara village of Barta'a is less than a five-minute drive from Route 65, one of the busiest roads in Israel. I first visited it in the mid-1980s when the off-the-beaten-track village, tucked away in the corner of a valley and hugging the lower slopes of the Amir mountain range, was a fine example of a more than sleepy hamlet.

Three decades, a few wars, and two *intifadas* later, practically nothing has remained the same.

Involved in Givat Haviva's efforts to build up a department offering seminars in different languages to kibbutz volunteers and groups from abroad on the 'Middle East Conflict', I visited Barta'a and many other large and small Wadi Ara and West Bank Palestinian villages and Jewish settlements in my quest to find interesting people, places, relationships, and physical vantage points to incorporate in seminars and tours.

As a journalist I was also hoping to find relevant 'items' to write about. On that score and many others it has been and will surely continue to be an overwhelming experience.

Wadi Ara is also known as the Little Triangle, with vertices at Umm-el-Fahm, straddling one side of Route 65; Kafr Kara on the other side of the highway; and further inland the third point, Baka al-Gharbiya. In the late 1980s, Makor, the Givat

Haviva department set up for the planned seminars, worked out of a little wooden hut hugging the periphery fence of the sprawling Wadi Ara campus. At that time, Barta'a was roughly a quarter the size of what one finds today, and boasted just a couple of shops, a few mosques, and a very quiet atmosphere during the day, as most men left the village to work out of the area.

Since that time, Makor has become the Givat Haviva International Department. Offices and classrooms were constructed, innovative programs were devised attracting thousands of youths, students, and adults annually from overseas to seminars dealing with Arab-Jewish relations in Israel – and having them meet with the region's Arab and Jewish residents on guided tours.

WALKING THE LINE

Barta'a was split by the 1949 Israel-Jordan Armistice Line. What begins as a deep ravine peters out to a ditch running diagonally through the village. With the stroke of a pen on the Mediterranean island of Rhodes, that ravine cum ditch became a border between the State of Israel and the Jordanian-annexed West Bank. The residents, members of the same extended Kabha family, became citizens of different countries at war with each other. The ditch became a part of the 'Green Line', generally impassable for 19 years.

Since 1967 and the Six Day War the Green Line as a 'border' has somewhat been erased, but not really. After the war Barta'a residents were free to visit with each other and with their extended family living deeper inside the West Bank or Israel. However, much more turbulent water has flowed down the wadi since then. And in December 1987, the Kabha clan members once more found themselves in the eye of the storm with the outbreak of the First Intifada.

Palestinian East Barta'a participated in the uprising while their West Barta'a relatives holding Israeli citizenship were caught in the middle. They were emotionally torn bystanders as Israeli soldiers fought with members of their immediate family on the other side of the rubbish-filled ditch running through the middle of the village, a not-so-green line and former border between, as the local population phrase it, "over here and over there."

It is the same expression used whichever side of the line one might be standing, as is another oft-heard phrase, "us and them." If you are "over here" then "they" are "over there."

The 1993 Oslo Accords brought new hope for the Palestinian people to run their own lives. East Barta'a ended up becoming a 'B' area, with the new Palestinian Authority responsible for infrastructure but Israel maintaining the final say regarding security.

Through the 1990s, as areas changed from 'C' (under full Israeli control) to 'B', and with the large majority of Palestinians already living in autonomous 'A' areas, Israel was struck by a wave of horrific terrorism, followed by closures slapped on the West Bank – particularly around the autonomous areas - for long periods of time.

The government decided to build a security fence, supported by the majority of Israelis. By the beginning of 2008 the security fence was completed from the border with Jordan, across the Beit Shean Valley, up and over the Gilboa Mountain range, across the Jezreel Valley and then ascends the Amir Mountain range to Umm-el-Fahm, more or less on the Green Line all the way.

At Umm-el-Fahm the security fence suddenly veers off the Green Line course and cuts a few kms in to the West Bank, passing behind a bloc of four Jewish settlements.

Back to East Barta'a, now Area 'B' – with the security fence 3 km to the East, the "Israeli side."

With the realization that customers from Israel, Arab and Jew alike, would no longer drive in to the West Bank to do their shopping – considerably cheaper than in Israel – Palestinian shopkeepers, businessmen of all descriptions, as well as laborers no longer allowed across the Green Line, began to move to sites as close as possible to the former border. In Barta'a they not only encamped on the east side of the divide, but also placed shipping containers as makeshift 'shops' across the ditch.

Now East Barta'a has become a honky-tonk boomtown, boasting over 600 businesses and thriving industrial concerns. Here, on either side of the divide but mostly in the eastern portion, Palestinians manufacture garments, bed linen, and other items for export and a multitude of imported merchandise is for sale to the bargain hunters who still arrive. Most are Arab citizens of Israel but lately a good number of Jewish Israelis also show up.

The majority of workers in East Barta'a's sweatshop factories of the new millennium are women from Palestinian West Bank villages such as Yabed, on the other side of the security fence. The cutters, machinists, and packers have permission to pass through the Reichan checkpoint behind Barta'a on a daily basis to work in Area B - but not to cross over the Green Line.

Hundreds of men take the same route daily, clutching the documents allowing them to work in the land squeezed between the Green Line and Israeli side of the fence, which I call 'Limboland' – neither here nor there, where one can find both Jewish settlements and Palestinians in small villages living side by side.

Considerable numbers of Palestinian men also have permission to work over the Green Line and cross daily to labor in agriculture or construction in Israeli towns and villages. They arrive back at the checkpoint in the afternoon carrying sacks of oranges or grapefruits as they amble through a mesh tunnel leading to those who physically check their papers, personage, and packages.

Some of the Palestinians who pass through the checkpoint actually have Israeli citizenship, as they are married to Israeli Arab women from villages in the Wadi Ara area – particularly Barta'a. The majority cannot pass through the checkpoint in their own vehicles, thus leading to lines of waiting taxis on the 'Limboland' (western) side of the facility. Some are official Palestinian green-plated yellow taxis but the majority are private cars with white Palestinian plates, or yellow Israeli plates if the driver married an Israeli citizen. They all charge 5 shekels a head for the five-minute commute to or from East Barta'a. When you are only being paid 10 shekels an hour in East Barta'a, that's quite a hefty sum of money – 10 shekels a day, or one hour's work. Then many take another taxi from the other side to Jenin – another 10-15 shekels each way.

Barta'a has become the Dizengoff Center of Wadi Ara, attracting not only a large number of shoppers from among the 300,000 Arab citizens of Israel living in the Triangle (Umm al-Fahm to Taibe), but almost daily one also sees Druze from Haifa and the Galilee busily snapping up goods or eating in the local restaurants.

What started as my quest to gain more knowledge and build up a relationship with the people of the Wadi Ara region – down the road from my kibbutz abode, and a few minutes from Givat Haviva, where I work – has become an almost 30 year experience in what seems to be a never-ending story. ■

Lydia Aisenberg is an Israel-based educator and study tour guide and a journalist



The Bereaved Parents Circle (Parents Circle – Families Forum)

By Bob Peters



My wife and I had made two previous visits to Israeli as tourists, but the June 2018 Partners for Progressive Israel Symposium was our first trip with a political organization. We had no previous knowledge about PPI, other than what was on their website, and felt comfortable with their nuanced position on BDS. We signed up because we wanted to get a better sense of what is happening in Israel – and definitely accomplished that goal.

The 8-day symposium, based in Tel Aviv, was filled with meetings and travel to all parts of Israel and the West Bank. The meetings were both informative and often emotional; we had frequent mood swings, from discouragement and despair to hope and belief that joint Israeli and Palestinian activities could actually make a difference for both sides.

For me, the most moving event of the symposium was a meeting arranged by the ‘Bereaved Parents Circle’, a twenty-year-old organization of families on both sides who had lost close relatives – usually children – to violence in the conflict. It describes itself as the only organization whose members hope desperately that it never grows by a single member. We met two bereaved fathers in a room in the American Colony Hotel in Jerusalem. The Israeli father had lost his 14 year old son to a terrorist bomb; the Palestinian father had lost his ten year old daughter to a bullet fired by an Israeli soldier.

The meetings were both informative and often emotional; we had frequent mood swings, from discouragement and despair to hope and belief that joint Israeli and Palestinian activities could actually make a difference for both sides.

The Israeli father spoke first. His son had gone to Ben Yehuda Street in Jerusalem on a Saturday night and never returned. The account from the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs reads as follows:

Adam Weinstein

Dec 1, 2001 [during the Second Palestinian Intifada]- Adam Weinstein, 14, of Givon Hahadasha, was one of 11 young people killed on Saturday night at the Ben Yehuda pedestrian mall in the center of Jerusalem.

At about 11:30 P.M., two suicide bombers detonated explosive devices on Ben Yehuda Street, the pedestrian mall frequented by many young people on Saturday night. A car bomb exploded nearby 20 minutes later. In addition to the 11 people killed, about 180 were injured in the terrorist attack.

Adam Weinstein was celebrating a friend’s birthday in a cafe in Jerusalem. At 11:30 he was on his way with his friends to take the bus home. A few minutes before the suicide bombing, his mother and brother called him, and he told them, “I’m on my way to the bus.” Five minutes later he was killed.

Adam lived in Givon Hahadasha, a community north of Jerusalem. He was the youngest of three brothers. “Adam was a computer genius”, said his brother Assaf. “He was a good soul, who never cursed. He had many friends, who were always with him. He was a good and talented ninth-grade student, who liked playing basketball and playing the piano,” said his older brother.

Adam Weinstein was buried in the Givat Shaul cemetery in Jerusalem. He is survived by his parents and two brothers, Assaf and Eidan, both soldiers.

I asked myself despairingly: “What could be more heartbreaking; what could fill you more with hatred for “the other side” than your own child being killed?” Hearing the story, I could not help feeling anger and rage toward a group of people whose main goal is to kill Israeli citizens. I could only imagine how I would feel if my son was killed by a terrorist bomb. What kind of people can commit such random acts of violence?

The Bereaved Parents Circle (Parents Circle – Families Forum)

Next we heard the Palestinian father's story. His 10 year old daughter was shot and badly injured at her school and taken to the hospital. A hearing was held at which an Israeli soldier who was at the school said the daughter must have been injured by other Palestinian children throwing rocks. The girl's father felt the soldier was belligerent and not credible in his testimony. After the case was dismissed for lack of evidence, the Palestinian father told the Israeli soldier that if he came to his house and apologized, he would forgive him. His daughter died four days later and the case was reopened. Investigators found that the bullet that killed his daughter had been fired from the soldier's gun.

At the second hearing, the soldier's demeanor was much less belligerent; the father felt the soldier may have been affected by the offer for forgiveness, i.e. recognizing that Palestinians too are human. Nevertheless, the case was again dismissed for lack of evidence. Why it was dismissed when the bullet clearly matched the soldier's gun was not at all clear, but that is usual in such circumstances.

How can an Israeli soldier kill a 10 year old schoolgirl, lie about it, and there be no repercussions? Is there any hope for mankind when there is so much hatred, so much disregard for human life?

It took years, but both fathers were able to overcome their initial feelings of anger and hatred toward the "other." The two men are now the closest of friends and frequently appear together to tell their stories, in the hope that their shared sorrow will help other Israelis and Palestinians to realize the waste and pointlessness of the ongoing conflict. Hearing them, and seeing the bond they have formed, I had to wonder if I would ever be able to overcome my own anger if my child was killed by "the other side," whichever side that might be. During their talk, my mood went from anger to frustration and sorrow, but finally to hope that if these two men could make peace with each other, maybe there is some chance for mankind after all. ■

Bob Peters is "mostly" retired. He has a PhD in Physics, was a physics professor, then a satellite consultant for INTELSAT, IRIDIUM, and NASA, and is a member of Temple Sinai in Washington, D.C.



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2018 Israel Symposium: A Visit to the Ofer Military Court

By Leonard Grob



As part of this summer's Israel Symposium, we visited the Military Court adjoining Ofer Prison in the West Bank near Ramallah. Gerard Horton and Slawa Duaibis from the NGO Military Court Watch, hosted us during a three-hour visit that gave further evidence of the well-planned, well-executed, and all-encompassing Occupation.

Before entering the prison proper, Gerard and Salwa explained to us that we would be witnessing only one of two very disparate systems of law that are applied in the West Bank. Unlike Jewish settlers who are subject to Israeli civil court jurisdiction, Palestinians live under military law. Since 1967, over three quarters of a million Palestinians have been prosecuted in military courts in the West Bank; the Ofer Court mainly prosecutes Palestinian juveniles aged 12 to 17, mostly accused of stone-throwing. They informed us that Israeli teenagers accused of a crime would generally be immediately released to their parents and would be unlikely to suffer any jail time. The experience of a Palestinian minor accused of the same crime is very different, for reasons that have everything to do with making the Occupation operate smoothly.

How, Gerard asked us, is it possible that 400,000 settlers can be protected from harm in an area inhabited by over two and a half million Palestinians, virtually all of whom deeply resent their presence? How can it be—not discounting the tragedy of even one death of a human being—that on average “only” 5.7 settlers have been killed annually over the past seven years? Most crimes prosecuted at Ofer, he explained, take place within 800 yards of a settlement; it would be too expensive to flood the Territories with soldiers. It is the intimidating force of mass administrative detention and imprisonment at points of friction across the West Bank that does the job. Resistance is perceived as futile.

Under this ongoing system of oppression, the crime of even one accused stone-thrower cannot be overlooked. The Occupation has its ways, we were informed: somewhere between 20,000 to 100,000 Palestinian informers help the police identify the culprits, further destabilizing and demoralizing a Palestinian population that now cannot trust one another. Both sticks and carrots are skillfully proffered: a potential informant may be told that upon compliance, he or she will receive a work permit for Israel; upon resistance, a needed hospitalization or any other “privilege” can be

withheld. The system works well, making clear that even if Israeli soldiers are not physically present; control by Israel is absolute for everyone at some point.

Gerard and Salwa continued a seemingly unending tale of the pervasiveness of the Occupation. A child suspect - frightened by a middle-of-the-night intrusion, taken from his home to be interrogated at a nearby settlement - is never told that he has the right to an attorney. He has already learned from the experiences of others that he must not resist. It is better to admit guilt and sign a (Hebrew language) confession- - whether or not he is actually guilty - and be sentenced to “only” two to four months of prison than it would be to request a trial. Such a trial might not be scheduled for up to six months, during which time he would remain in prison. The chances of being acquitted are almost nil: the conviction rate is 95%.

Salwa told the story an experience of Gaby Lasky, a well-known human rights attorney and Meretz activist, who won a very rare acquittal at Ofer. When the judge, in Hebrew, proclaimed the child innocent, the court translator, whose job was to translate the proceedings into Arabic, was suddenly quiet. When asked why he was holding up the conclusion of the trial, the translator told the court that he was not familiar with the Arabic word for “acquittal.”

Finally, our group entered the court precincts. We met two mothers, one of whom had been waiting futilely for over six hours to be told the nature of the charge against her son. Another, after two weeks of daily visits, was finally to attend the same trial which our group was about to visit. At the outset of the proceedings, the judge, pointing to one among a group of Palestinian attorneys standing near the back of the courtroom, proclaimed “you are the lawyer.” Although the defendant had been held for two weeks, he had never met with a lawyer before that. After a few minutes in which the attorney read the case file and spoke briefly with his client, the trial began. We had the feeling we were witnessing a play, in which all the actors knew their roles and spoke the lines expected of them. We were not privy to its outcome, since apparently sensitive matters were to be discussed, and all visitors were instructed to leave. It was over in a few minutes and we returned for the next trial. This was similar, though with the added presence of a Shin Bet agent who looked exactly as if he had walked in from the set of the TV series *Fauda* (available on Netflix, with subtitles).

How is it possible that 400,000 settlers can be protected from harm in an area inhabited by over two and a half million Palestinians, virtually all of whom deeply resent their presence?

Some observations I drew from our afternoon at Ofer: The Israeli government frequently and forcefully denies the centrality of settlements as an obstacle to peace. This requires that settlers be well-protected, so that the human cost of the settlement enterprise (for Israel) seems minimal. Thus, the vast majority of Israelis, even the settlers themselves but especially the population living in the “bubble” of Israel proper, see an Occupation sustained with comparatively little shedding of Jewish blood. We members of Partners for Progressive Israel were given an invaluable lesson on the pervasive but barely visible evil of the Occupation, one that few Israelis ever have occasion to see.

One final note: Military Court Watch monitors the courts on a daily basis and issues a monthly newsletter reporting on the abuses they witness. Gerard, Salwa, and their colleagues often take foreign visitors like us to the Court to see firsthand how the Occupation dehumanizes the Palestinians – and desensitizes the Israelis. It is an experience that far more Israelis – and foreigners – should avail themselves of. ■

Interested in the next Israel Symposium in 2019?

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Leonard Grob is a retired Professor of Philosophy and a Vice-President of Partners. This was the tenth Partners' Symposium he has participated in.



President's Message

Can these two impressions be reconciled? Should we simply conclude that Israel is as polarized as the US – and that the ‘Tel Aviv bubble’ is going in one direction while the rest of the country, especially the 400,000 Israelis already living in the West Bank, are headed in another? Will the tensions between these two opposite visions tear Israel apart?

I genuinely don't think so. While the litany of dispiriting news this summer is long and depressing (including particularly the horrendous slaughter at the Gaza border and the passage of the ‘nation-state’ bill), Israel is not heading toward being a failed state. Even as PM Netanyahu welcomed Hungarian PM Orbán, the architect of his country's authoritarian and viciously anti-immigrant slide to the right, Israel's court system stopped Bibi from expelling asylum-seekers and the nation-state bill passed the Knesset with only a bare majority of 62 votes. I do not see Israel going down the road of countries like Turkey, Poland, and Russia, as well as Hungary; all states in which democratically-oriented governments have been subverted in this century, mostly in the last 8-10 years, by autocratic and illiberal strongmen.

One of the many hopeful indications I came home with originated, amazingly, in the West Bank, among the Jewish settlers. I have opposed Israel's settlement policies since they began, and had not set foot in a settlement for over 20 years. But this summer I had a number of meetings, both in Jerusalem and in the West Bank, with leaders and activists (primarily Orthodox) of a group called Shorashim (Roots) as well as leaders of a secular group working with them known as “One Homeland, Two States.” Though their approaches and views are not identical, both believe that the future of Israelis and Palestinians lies with a confederation approach, not two states – and absolutely not one state. Their approach is to recognize that Jews and Palestinians both have claims and rights to the whole of Eretz Yisrael/Palestine, and that the land set of political, practical, religious, and humanitarian considerations.

The settlers I spoke with were vehemently in favor of Palestinians having equal political and civil rights to Jews in the Land, and advocated two confederated states, divided at the Green Line, with both groups having equal rights, including the right of return, to all parts of the land (i.e., settlements would remain). Palestinians would vote in Palestine; Israelis (including Palestinians currently holding Israeli citizenship) would vote in Israel.

[Click to read Paul's rebuttal of Nimer Sultany's critique of Zionism.](#)

Let me make clear that I still think the two-state solution is preferable to confederation. But I think those of us who have supported the 2SS for years need to recognize that the political path to achieving it is problematic, to say the least. We see that it is currently blocked by a combination of Israeli and Palestinian domestic political forces, regional dynamics, and international paralysis. Thus, it behooves us to explore alternatives, as dispiriting and difficult as that may be.

One of the most difficult aspects of it is the huge gulf between the mostly secular traditional “peace camp,” primarily located in the Tel Aviv ‘bubble’, and the primarily religious settlers in the West Bank, oriented towards rightwing parties. Their cultures could scarcely be more different, and their suspicions of each other, built over decades, are monumental. As someone who has consistently identified with the ‘secular’ left, however, I was truly surprised at hearing my own values of peace, equality, and civil rights emerging from dyed-in-the-wool settlers, who are, apparently, working on a daily basis with their Palestinian neighbors.

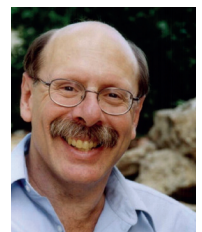
This is a weighty topic that I and, I hope, many others, will be exploring in the coming year. It by no means represents a disavowal by me, or by Partners for Progressive Israel, of our support for the two state solution. However, I hope it provides food for thought.

It is that time of year to wish our members, friends, supporters, and the whole Jewish people a Shanah Tovah. May we all be inscribed for a good year. ■



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