

**Middle East Notes**  
**Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**  
**August 24, 2017**



*Please note: Opinions expressed in the following articles do not necessarily reflect the opinion of the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns.*

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Editors' Note: Starting on September 7, *Middle East Notes* will be published monthly, on the first Thursday of each month. The new monthly format will continue to offer four or five pertinent articles with commentary and links. During the interim weeks between monthly issues, special *Middle East Notes Alerts* will be available via email, as needed. These alerts will consist of only one current article of special interest with a brief commentary.

In this issue of the Middle East Notes, the four featured articles and the related links focus on the consistent under-reporting of Palestinian issues in the U.S. media, including self-censorship by the *New York Times*; flaws in the coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by U.S. media with little historical or political context provided, and seldom mention of the more than \$100 billion in aid given by the U.S. to Israel since 1948; a possible future convening of the Palestinian National Council after a hiatus of more than 20 years which would allow the Palestinian movement to move toward a change in leadership; a criticism of the leaders of the BDS Movement seeking to impose a one-state solution without majority support of either Palestinians or Israelis; and links to CMEP Bulletins and other articles of interest.

**Commentary:** During the real news reporting of the recent solar eclipse, the people of the U.S. (and world) were “eye-witnesses” as one people of the same solar event. The media only commented on what all could see with their own eyes. In the place of “eye witness” accounts of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict, people in the U.S have to rely on the “virtual reality” provided by the media electronically or in print. The media, by necessity, filters what it provides. Most of the U.S. media has an Israeli/Palestinian filter presenting Israelis, their country, its accomplishments and policies in a positive light, while the Palestinians, their history, accomplishments, repression by the Israelis are totally or partially “eclipsed.” One state, two state, no state solutions continue to be discussed and debated eclipsing the reality that the one State of Israel already politically and militarily controls an equal number of Israelis and Palestinians living between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River.

Featured articles:

- Jonathan Cook writes in *Mondoweiss* that Israel's treatment of Palestinians looks “a lot like apartheid,” as Jodi Rudoren, the *New York Times*' decidedly soft-on-Israel Jerusalem bureau chief from 2012 until her departure 18 months ago, said for the first time on August 1.
- Kelly Fleming states in the *Washington Report* that Noor Wazwaz, a producer for NPR's “Morning Edition” and “Up First” podcast, which regularly reels in around 14 million listeners, while speaking at the Palestine Center in Washington, D.C., noted flaws in the coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict by the U.S. media: no historical or political context and no mention of the more than \$100 billion in aid given by the U.S. to Israel since Israel's creation in 1948.
- Daoud Kuttab writes in *Al Monitor* that it appears that President Mahmoud Abbas wants to convene the Palestinian National Council, after a hiatus of more than 20 years, which would allow the Palestinian movement to move toward a change in leadership.
- Yair Rosenberg, in the *Tablet* states that the leaders of the BDS Movement seek to impose a one-state solution in the Middle East. Palestinians and Israelis beg to differ.

1) [Israel's treatment of Palestinians looks "a lot like apartheid"](#) Jonathan Cook, *Mondoweiss*, August 1, 2017.

"Guess who said this recently: Israel's treatment of Palestinians looks 'a lot like apartheid' – and not just in the occupied territories, but inside Israel too, where one in five citizens are Palestinian. 'I actually think the issue of apartheid is more relevant to how Arab Israelis [Palestinian citizens of Israel] are treated within the framework of the country [Israel].'

"No, it wasn't Jimmy Carter, the former U.S. president who a decade ago famously went head-to-head with the Israel lobby by publishing a book that compared Israel's policies in the occupied territories to apartheid.

"The author of this even more incendiary statement is none other than Jodi Rudoren, the *New York Times'* decidedly soft-on-Israel Jerusalem bureau chief from 2012 until her departure 18 months ago.

"Her apartheid comment is included in an interview with John Lyons, who himself served in Jerusalem for many years, in his case reporting for the Australian newspaper." ...

"In other words, Lyons shows that reporters covering Israel and Palestine are systematically targeted by Israel lobbyists in an attempt to pressure them and their papers into self-censorship. The goal is to skew the coverage to make Israel look much better than it would otherwise, and the Palestinians much worse.

"That has tragically dangerous consequences. By seriously distorting readers' perceptions of Israel and Palestine, the lobby ensures that the conflict continues to be seen as intractable – and continues inflicting a heavy toll on life in the region, especially Palestinian life." ...

"Just setting out these imaginary scenarios hints, of course, at their implausibility. The reason Rudoren kept quiet in the NYT about Israeli apartheid is self-evident, as Lyon's interviews make clear: to have done otherwise would have been career suicide." ...

"According to Lyons, Rudoren concludes that 'there is not a healthy debate in the US about Israel because of the power of pro-Israel lobby group AIPAC' – the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, whose muscle so terrifies the Congress that it receives settlement-building Israeli prime ministers like Benjamin Netanyahu far more rapturously than it ever does an American president.

"Rudoren could have added that the debate in the US media about Israel is not healthy either. And that is because Israel loyalists in the US have developed, in parallel to the political lobby of AIPAC, a similarly sophisticated and bullying media lobby, represented by groups such as the Anti-Defamation League, CAMERA and Honest Reporting." ...

"Lyons has done sterling work by himself admitting – and getting others to admit – a great taboo: that a journalist writing with any kind of critical perspective on Israel is going to be ruthlessly pilloried by the lobby and their career put in jeopardy.

"Sadly, as a result, most journalists keep quiet. Their silence enables the Israel lobby to continue working largely in the shadows."

2) [How the Media Covers Israel and Palestine](#) , Kelly Fleming *Washington Report*, August 9, 2017.

"Her travels shaped Wazwaz's early experience in the field of journalism, and when she began to work around many large, competitive media outlets, she realized the flaws in the coverage of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

“One of the problems is that there isn’t context given. There isn’t historical or political context,’ Wazwaz said. ‘That’s what a lot of the mainstream media outlets are missing.’ When you don’t know the history of Palestine and you hear about violence there, ‘you lose the humanization of the story,’ she said.

“She also explained how the most important context that is missing is the role of the United States in supporting Israel, citing the more than \$100 billion in aid given by the U.S. since Israel’s creation in 1948. ‘Our news media does not really share the amount of influence the U.S. has had on this conflict,’ Wazwaz said, explaining that the U.S. favors Israeli security over Palestinian security.

“Another important context that is missing is an explanation of international law, she continued. ‘Under international law, settlements are illegal,’ Wazwaz noted, but the mainstream media is hesitant to state this fact. Under international law, she explained, Palestinians have a right to return home, which is powerfully symbolized by the thousands of refugees who left carrying the keys to their homes.” ...

**3) [Palestinians may be on verge of charting new political path](#) Daoud Kuttab, *Al Monitor*, August 16, 2017.**

“At a time of political indecisiveness and the absence of a vision or agreed-upon strategy, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) is seriously considering calling a full session of the [Palestinian National Council](#) (PNC), its decision-making body. At an August 9 meeting, [Fatah's Central Committee](#) recommended convening the PNC ‘with the participation of all parties,’ a clear reference to Hamas. Such a session could bring new blood to the organization.

“A full PNC session convened with a quorum would allow members to approve a new [political direction](#) for the PLO and elect members to the PLO’s Central Committee and Executive Committee. Such changes would set the stage for a [leadership transition](#). Palestinian President and PLO Chairman Mahmoud Abbas, 82, who is having health issues, has repeatedly said that he [will not run](#) for president in future general elections.” ...

“As noted, the PNC, often referred to as the Palestinian parliament in exile, has not been held for more than 21 years in part because of the creation of the PA and corresponding PLC. A convening of the PNC would therefore signal that the era that began with the Oslo Accords might be coming to a slow end. While it is unlikely that all the institutions connected with Oslo will be dissolved, the 23rd session of the PNC will be expected to chart a new political path toward Palestinian statehood and bring in new blood entrusted to carry out the new strategy.”

See also: [Israel's problem isn't Palestinian nationalism — it's Palestinians themselves](#)

**4) [Palestinians And Israelis Actually Agree On Something: They Really Don't Want The One-State Solution](#), [Yair Rosenberg](#), *Tablet Magazine*, August 9, 2017.**

“Last week, Israeli and Palestinian pollsters released their annual temperature check on the two nations’ attitudes towards peace. As usual, narrow majorities of both publics voiced support for a two-state solution, and as usual, this fact grabbed most of the [headlines](#). But a far more interesting finding, one that also represents long-running trends, was largely overlooked: both Palestinians and Israelis overwhelmingly rejected the so-called ‘one-state solution.’” ...

“This robust rejection of the one-state paradigm should not be surprising. In fact, it is entirely intuitive. Israelis and Palestinians have been engaged in a vicious intergenerational blood feud for generations. Naturally, they do not

think that the solution to their miserable and immiserating conflict is to move in together with their arch-nemeses. Rather, they want to hammer out terms of a divorce. Palestinians prefer to have their own Arab and Muslim state which would respect the rights of all religious minorities, as outlined in article 4 of the Constitution of Palestine, while Israelis prefer to have their own Jewish state which also upholds the rights of other faiths, in accordance with Israel's Declaration of Independence."...

See also: [Opinion Peace Plan for a New Era: Israel and Palestine Should Apply to Join the EU](#)

[A question of moral responsibility: an interview with Hagai El-Ad of B'Tselem](#)

#### **5) Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Bulletins:**

Aug 11, 2017 - [\[Bulletin\] Warren Comes Out Against Anti-BDS Bill](#)

Aug 18, 2017 - [\[Bulletin\] Trump's New Middle East Peace Push](#)

[Click here](#) for other excellent sources of information and links to articles concerning the State of Israel and the Palestinian people.